

'We Came, We Listened, We Changed' How People's Views Have Led to Big Differences

A County Council, has seen a remarkable series of developments that have come from their initial dialogue with large numbers of people who use services, carers and staff. The continuing influence of this has produced changes that include a realigned vision for 'Putting People First' (PPF), differences in social work practice and revised procedures. Alongside these changes there has been significant personal and organisational learning.

In September 2008 Senior Managers, in partnership with Mobius, brought together 75 people (carers, people who use services, staff) who created important messages about PPF and how people wanted things to be different in future. The stakeholder dialogue identified the following **'Priority Challenges'** that became the focus for action planning:

1. Ensure continuity of services provided.
2. Training for Supported Assessments including family and friends.
3. Ensure Safety, Protection and Support of Customers.
4. Ensure current services maintain standards that will attract people to use them.
5. Ensure shared understandings of Personalisation by all Customers, Carers, Citizens and Staff.
6. Get Everybody on Board Supporting the Philosophy.
7. Ensure Equal Access to Services (City vs Rural AND Across Cultures – Languages).
8. Ensure Services Support Real independence.

These messages have continued to influence the planning and delivery of services. The process skills and approaches were highly effective in building shared understandings across the different groups and creating commitment to new ways forward.

Following the September 2008 workshop a group of managers and staff brought together a number of people who use services and carers to work on Priority 3 above. They produced revised procedures for the management of risk that created a more positive balance of risk and support.

In September 2009 the Department produced a draft directional statement 'How Things will be Different in 2013' that addressed a number of the Priorities from September 2008. It was built around the three key themes of Communities, Citizens and Customers and responded to Priorities 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Shortly afterwards 33 of the Department's managers received 'Mobius training' to enhance leadership skills and to facilitate staff focus groups. Over 300 members of staff from the full range of roles and settings took part in focus groups facilitated by the above managers. As a direct result of the staff views, business plans were realigned and a '4th C' was added to the directional statement – 'Colleagues – enhancing the focus of workforce development relating to the commissioning and delivery of PPF.'

Many of the managers who facilitated the above focus groups came together again earlier this summer. They worked to develop processes for informing key stakeholders of progress with PPF and building deeper understandings of stakeholders' current perceptions. Again, focus groups have been facilitated by these managers and the views from these will be analysed and used to review current strategic directions. Stakeholder groups include Customers, Staff, Independent Providers, Faith Groups, Strategic Partnerships and NHS colleagues. This review will inform further developmental activity in support of PPF.

This story will run and run making full use of the skills and capacities that these highly committed managers now possess.

Do let us know if you think these approaches will be of benefit to your organisation.