

Special Needs Jungle Wikis in EHCP – Guest Post <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/one-page-profiles-and-ehc-plans-the-wiki-way/>

Gosia Kwiatkowska, 15/10/2018

The SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Reforms, launched in September 2014, introduce a system of support which focuses on putting children and young people (aged 0-25) at the heart of planning and decision making. They and their parents/carers must be able to participate in this process, putting the new Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) into place through person-centred practice and co-production with their education, health and care professionals. The focus is on support to improve *outcomes* for children and young people rather than simply *provision* of support.

These reforms demand that support professionals work together with children, young people and their families to ensure they have choice and control over their futures and enjoy full healthy and active lives. It requires not only a legal but a cultural change.

RIX Research & Media is at the forefront of this change. As a non-profit R&D centre of the University of East London, we have worked for over 15 years to transform the lives of people with learning disabilities, their families and carers, by developing and exploiting new multimedia technologies. Pioneering research in partnership with thousands of individuals with SEN, their families and supporters has enabled us to develop specific tools and training – the RIX Wiki and Wiki courses - which are now proving very helpful for person-centred planning.

RIX Wikis have now been adopted by around ten Local Authorities and over 100 schools and organisations in the UK, EU, US and Australia to embed person-centred approaches. These services and organisations are actively working with RIX Wikis to support individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to live the lives that *they* want to lead.

So what is a Wiki? The RIX Wiki is a simple, accessible and easy-to-build personal website that can be used to create multimedia person-centred plans that capture the voice, skills, aspirations and needs of the individual. The Wiki is built around the person with learning disabilities, putting them centre-stage. It embodies the multimedia advocacy (or self-advocacy) approach of RIX and can be described as a ‘communication passport’, enabling them to create and share their own words, videos, pictures and sound, to communicate and share their lives.

#### ***Insert – what is a wiki animation***

RIX Wikis are private and secure as all the information on the Wiki is owned by the individual and their families, and is password-protected. They can choose what information they share and with whom, keeping control of exactly who sees what.

The sharing of information and content means that Wikis really bring people living and working with the child or young person with learning disabilities together, working as a team. There, and with a positive focus on the person’s strengths, goals and outcomes.

#### ***Insert – link to blog from Margaret Mulholland, Director of Development and Research, Swiss Cottage Teaching School Alliance***

- The RIX Wiki offers an holistic view of the individual pupil quickly due to its compelling format; this helps schools and colleges focus on meeting the needs of the individual rather than their SEN label. It has been co-developed through close collaboration with the Learning Disability community and is fully accessible.

- The RIX Wiki helps to focus on the individual's strengths rather than their limits, placing the emphasis on their personal goals and outcomes; it enables young people to have their choices and aspirations heard, and can support them in participating at meetings such as annual reviews.
- RIX Wikis can improve the home-school partnership; they enable parents and teachers to communicate and work together much more effectively by sharing a wide range of content and information; this also allows greater collaboration between education, health and care professionals.
- This can be particularly helpful where English is a second language or parents have IDD themselves.
- RIX Wikis support children and young people to progress in their learning and to be well prepared for transition and adulthood; the wikis can change as the individual changes and they can facilitate a growing independence.

A pilot based at Charlton Park Academy in Greenwich and commissioned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich Pathfinder team to evaluate the effectiveness of Multimedia Advocacy approaches on person-centered planning commenced in April 2012.

Various staff and 24 students (aged 12 – 16) from Charlton Park Academy, parents and carers, along with staff from the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Greenwich Pathfinder Project team, and the Rix Centre collaborated to support the pilot which ran until March 2013.

Person-centred planning using multimedia approaches showed a 93% increase in the awareness of person-centred planning where 13 plans were set up within the experimental group and a 0% increase within the control group.

Multimedia Advocacy enabled over 50% of the young people to understand their plans more than they did before the pilot.

Within the experimental group 78% more members from the circle of support contributed to the young person's person-centered plan when using the Multimedia Advocacy approach.

Both, the experimental group and the control group increased their IT skills over the duration of the pilot.

We also found the use of Multimedia;

- aids students and professionals to develop person-centered plans
- helps to capture the complex communication of individuals
- helps to improve behaviours
- is easy to use, flexible, visual and is fun

gives an holistic picture of a complex individual

Richmond Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Cllr Paul Hodgins, said: "Wikis are marvellous communications tools, and are very flexible, accessible, and easy to use. The sites are completely secure and password protected and there's lots of scope for children across the borough to share their lives with people who care for them. This is a wonderful new service and I'm sure it will prove to be very popular."

James Mannion, Business Systems Project Manager for AfC, said, “We want to empower our children and young people who face challenges because of their communications difficulties, to show how they can use wikis to get across their preferences and viewpoints by using pictures, sounds, video and words – to give them a voice and enable them to take control of their lives. We call this **multimedia advocacy**.

“We want people to take a full and active role in the EHCP process, and we believe that using Wikis will lead to genuine collaboration between parents, teachers and professionals.”

The wiki presents as a user friendly, up to the minute way of engaging a child/young person in the process of creating their EHC plan in a positive meaningful way, without appearing an overwhelming, bureaucratic or overly corporate process in which they may feel they don't belong.

I think I could develop a Wiki for /with my autistic Son and use it to collate a full picture of his strengths, aspirations and difficulties

amongst family and professionals to have a greater understanding of my child when he can't always express things himself for his needs

Visual and audio collection of things important to our child, in one central location, and also as a way to communicate with his carers about special requirements

not having to explain how my child is affected by his condition to everyone all the time