

Multimedia Advocacy for Person Centred Planning Small Research Pilot Report

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Lifelong Learning Programme Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency



Introduction

The Rix Centre has been commissioned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich to devise and conduct a pilot study of the Multimedia Advocacy Approach being applied to Person-Centred Planning with the young people from Charlton Park Academy in Greenwich. This commission was one of the initiatives as part of Greenwich Special Educational Needs and Disability Pathfinder project. Royal Borough of Greenwich is one of 20 Pathfinders across England appointed by the Government to test new approaches to supporting children with special needs. The principle aims of the Pathfinder project are to:

- Help design a better, more transparent, less adversarial system of assessment and a single plan with each service committed to delivering the plan, including through the use of personal budgets.
- Test the extent to which arrangements work for all disabled children and young people as well as those with SEN, who require statutory support, across a wide range of circumstances.
- Give parents and carers greater choice and more control.
- Explore how the changes can help to address inequalities in the access to and provision of services.
- Explore how the reforms will impact on children and young people from birth to 25, particularly at key transition points.
- Explore how they fit with other initiatives and policies both local and national – particularly health reforms.

(Greenwich 2012)

Since the Government's White Paper 'Valuing People' in 2001 (DoH, 2001), in the UK Person-Centred Planning has been recognised as one of the leading approaches that enable families and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities to take an active role in a transition planning process. Young people and their families are at the centre of planning for their futures, enabling the transition of young people to suitable services that meet the needs of the individuals. The fundamental principles of Person-Centred work are those of independence, empowerment, advocacy, self-determination, choice, inclusion and equality (Helen Sanderson Associates 2013, DoH 2010).

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) green paper reveals that parents find the system is bureaucratic, bewildering and adversarial and that parents of children with SEN have limited choices about the best schools and care (DoE 2012). It has been pointed out that the best outcomes for young people could be achieved if Person-Centred approaches are used from birth. It is believed that the use of such approaches would enable all those supporting the young person to listen to what is important to each person and recognise the qualities that they can meaningfully contribute to society, challenging stereotypes of low expectations (DoH 2010). It can therefore be argued that involving parents and the young people in every stage of transition planning and inter-professional working is paramount.

The Rix Centre (www.rixcentre.org) is a charitable research and development organisation dedicated to the exploration of new media for the benefits of the learning disability community and their families. The Centre works with the learning disability community to ensure that the benefits of technologies are realised. The work of the Centre crosses the fields of Social Care, Health and Education. Since its establishment in 2004, the Rix Centre has led many research projects (detailed at: www.thebigtree.org) and as a result has developed a number of software platforms and accompanying working approaches that are being used by children and adults' services on an international level.

The 'Multimedia Advocacy' approach (Kwiatkowska et al 2012) to Person-Centred Planning was developed by the Rix Centre, as a process designed to involve and engage young people as much as possible in order to enable them to identify and communicate their feelings, wishes, likes and choices in all aspects of their lives. It is based on the fundamental principle - which lends itself so readily to of Person-Centred Planning - that the person is at the centre of the decision making process, and family and friends act as partners (Forrest, M et al 2005). It is a way of conveying preferences and viewpoints using body language, pictures, videos and sounds – as well as, or as a substitute for the spoken or written word. It has been tested in many projects within schools as well as adult services (Minnion et al 2006, Minnion et al 2007, Minnion et al 2008, Williams 2008, Kwiatkowska et al 2012). The studies show that Multimedia Advocacy is an inclusive way for parents, teachers, therapists and other professionals to work together with the young person, learn from each other, and document relevant information in a way that is clearly understood by everyone and open for narrower interpretation. During the process multimedia resources are captured in the form of pictures, videos and sound recordings and are organised on a multimedia platform e.g. PowerPoint or a purpose built online system such as the Easy Build wikis', which are the Rix Centre's own prototype system.

The process of Multimedia Advocacy is increasingly simplified as developments in everyday technology that most people use, such as mobile phones, ipads, digital camera; quick and easy ways for anyone to record information anywhere anytime.

The aims of the pilot

The Multimedia Advocacy for Person-Centred Planning pilot ran from April 2012 to March 2013. The aims of the pilot are to:

- Test and evaluate the effectiveness of the Multimedia Advocacy approach on Person-Centred practice and compare it with standard paper-based planning;
- Engage young people with a range of skills and abilities in the Person-Centred Planning process using multimedia advocacy tools and principles;
- Involve school staff, therapists and parents and carers in training course on Multimedia Advocacy for Person-Centred Planning;

- Pilot ways to train and support all stakeholders in a sustainable model of learning and skills development.

The above pilot study aims are closely aligned with those of the Pathfinder project. It is hoped that this study will demonstrate how the use of Multimedia Advocacy, Easy Build wikis and Person Centred practice can enable parents and carers to get more involved and have greater choice and control.

Rational

Person-Centred plans can take many forms. Traditionally they would be paper based with drawings and writing (Falvey et al 1997). The plans could also be stored on a computer using Ms Word or Ms PowerPoint or other similar software (Cavet & Grove 2005). Creating any Person-Centred Plan is a valued process in itself, during which people learn from each other, important information is being discovered and shared, and positive changes can happen in people's lives as a result. However, in order for a plan to be Person Centred, the person should be at the centre of planning, s/he should be actively involved in the planning process and present and active at the meetings where the information from the plan is being shared with relevant people.

It has been noted that an individual may not always easily understand a paper-based plan, for example, because of difficulties in reading. It can also be difficult for other people to contribute to such a plan and record progress. Multimedia based Person-Centred Plans can present information in multiple and multisensory forums and are therefore more likely to be understood by an individual. Moreover, someone with a learning disability and complex communication needs, for example, can also contribute to such a plan through the use of video; demonstrating preferences or viewpoints in their own preferred communication format.

The Rix Centre has developed an online Easy Build wiki platform called 'Klikin' which is password protected and allows Person Centred plans to be stored and accessed only by those with permissions. The benefits of using a password-protected wiki as a platform for Person Centred Planning include ease of use, support for all media, ease of access or 'accessibility', accuracy of information and great sharing capacity. Sam Bergin Goncalves, Parent Representative from the Royal Borough of Greenwich took part in previous project run by the Rix Centre and immediately spotted the potential benefits of using this platform for her son's Person Centred Plan. Sam brought this to the attention of Children's Services Team and played a key role in setting up this pilot study.

Methodology

Participants

Young people – 24 students from Charlton Park Academy, age 12 – 16, from varied ethnic backgrounds, representative of the Charlton Park Academy population, with a range of disabilities: ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder), PMLD (Profound/Multiple Learning Disabilities) Complex (Severe or Moderate Learning Disability). English levels varied between 1A (equates to National Curriculum Standard) and P3 (relates to non-verbal communication where pupils begin to communicate intentionally).

The total of 10 young people from the control group completed questionnaires, both at a baseline level and at the end of the pilot.

The total of 14 young people from the experimental group took part in the pilot and completed questionnaires both at the baseline and at the end of the pilot. 13 of the young people created at least one page on their wiki and 1 person did not create any pages within their wiki.

Trainees – This report uses the blanket term ‘trainees’ for all of the participants who undertook training in Person-Centred Planning delivery. These included teaching assistants, teachers, speech and language therapists, music therapists, parents, carers.

Overall 21 trainees took part in the pilot. They all took part in both baseline and post study questionnaires and all attended at least one training session.

Pilot plan

The Multimedia Advocacy for Person-Centred Planning Project was designed into four phases:

Phase one (April 12 – June 12) was primarily concerned with project set up and ethics application. During this stage of the project we:

- Refined project methodology
- Gained approval to carry out the study from the University Research Ethics Committee¹).
- Selected a potential participants’ sample that was representative of the school’s general population
- Divided learners into two groups: an experimental group and a control group
- Identified a group of trainees (staff/parents/therapists, as described above)
- Sent information letters and consent forms to all potential participants
- Identified and purchased technical equipment – this was to be borrowed and used by trainees over the duration of the project.

Phase two (July 2012- September 12) Recruitment of participants and baseline assessment. The following activities were undertaken:

- Two project briefing days were held at the school where trainees were invited to attend and had an opportunity to ask questions about the study and raise any concerns
- Each potential participant was given a consent form to sign before officially taking part in the study
- Parents of all the young people identified as potential participants were asked to confirm that they would like their child to be part of the project

¹ Granted on the 3rd of September 2012

- Baseline questionnaires were applied to participating trainees and the young people in order to assess and capture the understanding that all stakeholders had of Person-Centred Planning, their experience and expectations before the use of multimedia.

Phase three – (September 2012 – October 2012) Training

This included four, two hour training sessions that covered the principles of Multimedia Advocacy, the use of Easy Build wikis, digital photography, recording and editing sound, and recording and editing video.

Phase four (November 2012 – December 2012) Implementation

During this phase trainees were encouraged to apply the principles of Multimedia Advocacy, Person Centred practice and the use of multimedia tools to support their Person-Centred planning work with young people from the experimental group. The control group used the standard paper based planning approach.

Trainees were offered additional support as required via email, telephone, Skype and many face-to-face meetings when needed.

Phase five (January – February 2013)– Post project impact study.

At the end of the study questionnaires were applied to the same participants' sample, as at the baseline, this was to measure the change that occurred over the duration of the study and compare results between the experimental group and the control group.

Unstructured interviews were also carried out with selected trainees and young people in order to get a richer picture and to highlight any additional factors that were not included in the structured questionnaires.

Baseline assessment results

Young people - Person-Centred Planning Experiences at baseline:

Baseline assessment revealed that only one young person from the control group and none from the experimental group had previously participated in Person-Centred Planning and had an existing plan. The one young person who had a plan stated that he understood it. The plan was being kept at home and his parents and teacher contributed to its development. He felt that people listen to him and help him to achieve his goals. However, he also said that he did not know what his goal was. He felt that he could not add information to his plan whenever he wanted. The participant also stated that he did not like his Person-Centred Planning meetings.

The above results suggest that young people in both groups were not familiar with Person-Centred Planning and the concept was new to all but one young person. Even the one person who was familiar did not appear to be benefitting too much from the arrangement.

Trainee group – Person-Centred Planning knowledge and experience at baseline:

The second part of initial baseline research showed that 65% of respondents had never been involved in Person-Centred Planning before and had no previous knowledge or understanding of Person-Centred tools and processes. This was an important finding that contributed to further customisation of the proposed training and it highlighted the need for further more in-depth training in this area beyond the scope of this project.

Training

The Multimedia Advocacy training delivered as part of this project was for school staff, therapists, parent and carers only and it did not include the young person. The sessions were offered at flexible times, some in the morning, some in the afternoon and some in the evening. Trainees could choose which training session they wanted to attend. There was also an opportunity to attend a one to one session with the trainer if more explanation or practice was needed. The flexible sessions during the school day and evening were used by some of the trainees. There were four training sessions, each lasting an hour and a half to two hours and all trainees were encouraged to attend all sessions. The four sessions covered the following topics:

- Introduction to Multimedia Advocacy theory and practice with emphasis on principles of Person-Centred work
- Introduction to the use of Easy Build Klikin wikis, digital photography and file management
- Introduction to the use of video and video editing
- Introduction to the use of sound and sound editing
- Planning for successful implementation using traditional, paper based, Person-Centred Planning tools.

During and after the training all trainees were encouraged and supported to apply the principles and ways of working learnt in their day to day practice, especially around their work with the young person when planning for their transition. The training was completed and the trainees left to work with the individual young person for 10 weeks before the end of project evaluation process started. During that time equipment and technical assistance was available to everyone involved and some additional sessions were scheduled for those who requested help.

As Multimedia Advocacy, by definition, involves applied use of ICT, baseline assessments of various appropriate skills in this area were undertaken prior to training, in order to target this aspect more efficiently. Results and a short commentary appear in the Appendix.

End of project evaluation

After the project ended an evaluation was carried out using a comparative analysis approach. The aim of the evaluation was to measure the levels of awareness and participation in Person Centred Planning over the duration of the pilot, between both the experimental and the control groups and to evaluate the impact that the Multimedia Advocacy approach might have on this process. Post project evaluation questionnaires were applied to both groups. The purpose of

these was to capture the current awareness and understanding of person centred planning, which was then compared to the results from baseline study. Separate questionnaires were applied to trainers, which aimed to evaluate the impact of the Multimedia Advocacy training. Unstructured interviews were also carried out with selected trainers to get a deeper insight into their experience of training and using the principles of Multimedia Advocacy and the Easy Build wiki to facilitate the Person Centred Planning process.

The results (Figure 1) showed a significant improvement with a 93% increase in the awareness of Person-Centred Planning where plans were being set up within the experimental group and a 0% increase within the control group. That is somewhat surprising as the Person-Centred sessions were scheduled in all classes and everyone should have been involved in Person-Centred Planning during the term. The results might suggest that although all young people were exposed to some planning, the progress was slower and therefore the results are not yet noticeable.

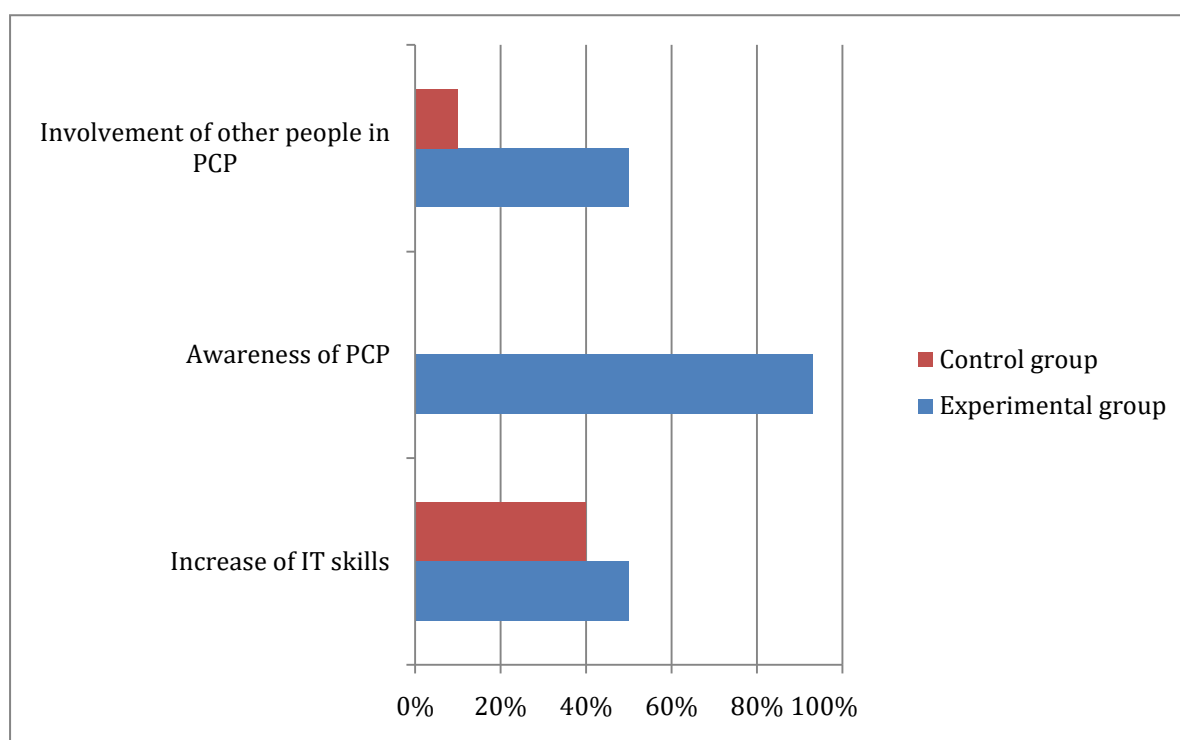


Figure 1 Increase in the young people's awareness and understanding of Person Centered practice, involvement of support circle in the planning process and the increase of IT skills.

The evaluation revealed 93% increase in the awareness of Person-Centered Planning within the experimental group. This was not surprising as most trainees were able to engage the young person in the Person Centred Planning process using the Multimedia Advocacy approach. The use of digital cameras and the Easy Build wikis lends itself to active participation which in effect enables young people to make personal connections and stronger associations with the process and in the gathering of content and effectively engages them more fully and aids their memory and understanding.

The control group did not show any increase in the experiences of Person Centred Planning. This is surprising as this group had the same amount of Person Centred Planning lessons as the experimental group - on a weekly basis over the semester - albeit in the more traditional paper-based format. One possible factor which impacted on this result is that working with paper may be less likely to create memorable experiences for the young people. They would be less likely to remember what they did last week during their traditional Person Centred Planning lesson, as compared to a similar session with the use of rich media with visuals and sounds. These interpretations are speculative and in order to gain a deeper and more scientific interpretation and understanding of these findings a follow up study would be required.

Furthermore, within the experimental group 50% more people contributed to the young person's Person Centred Plan. When using the Multimedia Advocacy approach more people from the circle of support were able to contribute to the planning process and the plan itself. This result was not surprising as the use of Easy Build wiki lends itself to increased participation as it can be accessed and viewed at different times and places. The trainees and the young people themselves were able to contribute to their Multimedia based Person Centred Plan without the need for a physical meeting. The use of multimedia has proved that the commitment to Person Centred Planning - and more importantly the commitment to help achieve goals - is much greater when information is being presented in a rich media format (<http://multimediaadvocacy.com/get-connected.html>).

The study also showed that both experimental and control groups increased their IT skills over the duration of the pilot (Figure 1). The experimental group's increase was 10% greater. This is an interesting finding. The experimental group's use of Multimedia Advocacy approach and the Easy Build wiki technology on a weekly basis only marginally improved their IT skills as compared to the control group that had no extra IT activity. One of the interpretations of this could be that the use of the Rix Centre's Easy Build wiki does not require users to acquire additional skills. It builds on users' existing skills and does not make exceptional technical demands. The result is therefore very much welcomed as it confirms the ease of use of the Easy Build wiki.

At the end of the pilot a questionnaire was applied to all trainees and the findings revealed improvements in the inter-professional working and increased levels of engagement. The findings showed that the use of Easy Build wikis enabled over 50% of the young people to understand their plans more than they did before the pilot and allowed them to personally contribute to the creation of their Person-Centred plan. The levels of engagement varied as it was often linked to individuals' abilities and levels of their disabilities. Some of the young people were able to choose their own pictures and video clips, participate in creating these media and adding them to their wikis, while others may have been only able to choose a picture. It was felt that each engagement was significant and it allowed the young person to be involved on their terms and in line with their level of abilities. It was generally felt that the Easy Build wiki was simple and

easy to use and understand; as a result many of the young people were able to take active part in the process of their Person-Centred Planning.

The engagement of various members of the support circle increased significantly and it was felt that the use of wikis facilitated and enabled the engagement to be more meaningful and productive. The fact that various professionals, family members, carers and the individual themselves could access their plan from various locations meant that they were able to contribute effectively without necessarily attending specific meetings.

The Easy Build software used by the experimental group was seen as a tool that enabled, not only contributions from various members of the support circle, but also timely and successful sharing of information. The use of videos and pictures meant that the information shared was understood better and had a bigger impact on the reviewers.

Easy Build wiki content and ownership

The PCP template (see Figure 2) for this pilot consisted of the following sections: About Me, My Communication, My Family and Friends, My Health and Care, My Hopes for the Future, Hobbies and a blank section for young people to decide for themselves. Although the template was provided as a starting point the young people, staff and families were encouraged to adapt the template as required. When reviewing the plans we found that young people used the suggested template and have only changed the name of some sections to reflect the person's communication. For example, for the Easy Build wiki designed "My family and friends" section was renamed "People in my life". The extra section was often used for "My Education" where young people recorded their school life, learning and achievements. (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Person-Centred Plan template used

There were 13 wikis created during this project, some clearly represented and involved the young person but others did not. The results from this research showed that the template allowed young people and their circle of support to capture holistic information about the individual and new information was revealed in the process. Everyone involved was able to find out or discover something new about the person and therefore enabled progress.

“Information about family life was something that school staff found really nice as they knew nothing about his private life before. Staff felt that they got a really good picture of my son as a person. “

The issue of ownership was one worth noting here as it closely relates to the principles of Person-Centred work. It is clear from the baseline assessment and the post study evaluation that Person-Centred work is not always a common practice and staff struggled to implement the true principles of Person-Centred working at times. It was reported by staff that involving the young person was not possible on many levels. For example the person was not interested in looking at the screen, or it was feared that it might trigger undesirable behaviours from the individual or their classmates. In these cases the involvement of others in the process was absolutely crucial and some staff managed to do this really well. Families who became involved were happy with the progress and the use of wikis and saw real potential in this approach. It was generally felt that the ownership should always be a partnership, where families can lead and be supported by various professionals as and when required.

Pilot findings and analysis

Training and the use of Easy Build wikis as a tool for Person Centred Planning

The training offered played a vital role in the project. All participants felt that their training needs were met and that they have received good support during the project life. Participants valued the level of support and training offered. Our research showed that there was a small number of participants who identified their basic computer skills as very poor although at the end of the project everyone felt that they have made progress and become more confident in using technologies with their young people. Moreover, it gave many participants confidence in sharing their skills and teaching others.

“Involvement of the trainer and the staff was all very helpful - any time I needed support I would get it.”

“The training given was very clear and I’m probably the Numpty in regards to technology but I am pretty confident that we will be able to share and cascade the skills learnt.”

“I feel it works really well, now I take more pictures and videos and document what the young person does at school a lot more, we then organise this information on the young person’s portfolio and everyone can see what he does at school.”

“It definitely improved my skills, knowledge and confidence in working with technologies with young people.”

“Really easy even for parents with low IT skills, after 15 minutes of training all parents were confident that they can do it themselves.”

“With minimal support anyone can do it.”

Based on the above findings it can be argued that the Easy Build wiki system is suitable as a tool for Person Centred Planning; it is easy and simple to use and easy to learn. It does not require additional IT skills and most people who use digital technologies, social media, and mobile phones on a regular basis will not have any difficulties learning and adopting the use of the system and developing Person Centred Planning skills.

Person-Centred Support in children and adults services is now recommended as standard. Our research showed that there are a number of challenges that staff face when reflecting on their practice. It appears that applying the principles of Person-Centred work to plan for the future is often complex and difficult. The use of wikis in this process was seen as beneficial as it helped to engage the person on their terms.

“Prior to this I knew quite a bit about the PCP and the person needed to be at the centre. But I find this is not always the case. I have learnt about Person-Centred practice but it’s always professionals and families making decisions rather than the person being actually at the centre listened to.”

“We are supporting young people to develop their self advocacy skills. I am working with the group who have high support needs and am facilitating with the staff team the process so they can support each young person and understand the principles of Person-Centred work. Its difficult but we are doing it.”

“We have one or two staff who really understand it now, we also have now few parents who also understand the whole partnership and are able to move this forward.”

“Instead of a Person-Centred paper format, long and often difficult to understand - wikis allow this to break down visually.”

“We are different in different situations and different environments and being able to show this can help to build a better picture of the person. It’s not a competition but rather a way of showing a true reflection of the whole person – getting to know you better and engaging the person in the process can also help them to understand their own identity as well.”

The Benefits of a Multimedia Advocacy approach to Person Centred Planning

The research showed that the use of Easy Build wikis and the Multimedia Advocacy approach for Person-Centred Planning could bring many benefits. Below is the list of benefits that emerged through the interviews and the post

study evaluation questionnaires. Each point made is accompanied by a quote that gives a specific and relevant example.

- Improves participation of young people in the transition planning process. Transition planning involves a number of agencies working together and it could be daunting for a young person with complex needs to take part. Our research showed that the use of Multimedia Advocacy during transition meetings could make a real difference to participation.

“So this year he came to his year 9-transition review and it was the first time ever that he managed to participate... So he came to his review and with the support from his mum and dad, with our support we helped him to show his wiki.”

The above finding is very exciting as it is one of the main principles of Person-Centred Planning and the Multimedia Advocacy to engage the young person and help them to be at the centre of the planning, actively involved not stuck there. This links to the next benefit was observed during this pilot study.

- Help the person to be at the centre of the planning process “not stuck there but actively involved” and actively participate in meetings:

“And he was an absolute star, he managed to stay for 35 min, and I must admit there were quite a few tears from admiration of him and of his achievements. Everyone clapped and he felt really important. I was very happy because he participated, because we were planning for his life so he should have been there. So this was a really good way of using a wiki.”

As the quote above clearly demonstrates the power and affect of Multimedia Advocacy can be substantial and can change the outcomes of the meeting completely. Multimedia can not only convey messages in a more clear and interesting and engaging way but also make a bigger impact emotionally on staff and people who support the young person who are then more likely to commit on actions and help to secure services that are suitable for that individual. Each person is different and it might be difficult for professionals to get a full picture of a person during a short meeting.

- The use of Multimedia can aid professionals in the process of learning about the young person in a holistic way as the next quote demonstrates:

“It was fun doing it because you know like any parent we are always taking pictures and videos of our children and it was a way of not only enjoying watching the video but also incorporate it into the wiki giving other people an opportunity to really learn about him.”

- True Person-Centred Planning is based on ‘continuous learning’ about the young person that enables progress and growth. The next quote demonstrates how the Multimedia Advocacy approach allows this by enabling parties to be involved in the planning process:

“As a professional we find that it is difficult for an intervention to be implemented at home without writing a letter and get this consistency. Whereas if you record what you are doing and you can video it, it is an easy way to model to the parent and they can do it at home so you can have that consistency.”

Continuous learning is only possible if sharing takes place. Sharing of information between professionals and families can be bureaucratic, bewildering and time consuming as discussed by the SEND green paper. One of the objectives of the Pathfinder project is to help design a better, more transparent and less adversarial systems of assessment; it feels as though the above and the following quotes demonstrate how the use of Easy Build wikis and the Multimedia Advocacy approach can make this goal achievable:

- It makes sharing information and experiences easy:
 - “My daughter is not interested in doing any school work at home so it gave me an opportunity to watch her work in the school on her wiki.”*
 - “It can save a lot of time in terms of sharing information because usually if you wanted to share information at home or with professionals you would need to write different letters to explain in an appropriate language without visual support. Sharing the information on a wiki will have a picture or a video and you could write in a professional way but less formal, so sharing information could be quicker and more effective.”*
- It ensures continuity and consistency of support:
 - “Few months ago my son’s teacher changed and for young people with complex needs, the change of staff could be quite disruptive. It is important that people who work with my son understand his needs but especially understand how he communicates. So we went to share the wiki with the new teacher and she got a good understanding of my son before she even met him. So she was given a tool to be able to set up lessons plans, knowing exactly his strong points and where he needed extra support. So that was very positive.”*
- It supports integrated working:
 - “I have done Person-Centred work last year with graphic facilitation and I can really see that the wikis are going to help us to facilitate it and integrate working.”*
- It reduces bureaucracy:
 - “When we do get reams and reams of paper, I can put it on the wiki, I don’t have piles of files all over the house anymore.”*
- It enables consistent and adequate long term care:
 - “The young people can carry this over to their adulthood and their adult services. The goals that they were working on, the positive*

things about them, and where they like to be, who they like to keep in contact with, things that are important to them, things like that. From one service to another you have to start again with this you can have a nice flow across the services.”

“Another benefit I can see, which many parents think about, we don’t like that but you know, what is going to happen to my son when I am no longer here? And by having everything explained, not only the way we would like, but also the way my son would like to be cared for or supported. It means that we can feel a bit more relaxed knowing that vital information is not going to be lost.”

- It can give an holistic picture of a complex individual:

“When I go to the hospital with my grandson I can say look at this and if you tell me something new I can add to it. It’s so much quicker and easy to understand because I have a great reserve that professionals don’t always listen to carers and if they see it in black and white and with videos on television they would get more sense of the person, and you can tell them this happened last week, and so on - very useful, very useful for education.
- It gives the young person a voice. Young people with SEN and Disabilities may have difficulties in conventional communication and their voices therefore are often not being understood or heard. The use of Multimedia Advocacy has helped some young people on the pilot to have their voices to be heard and responded to.

“It’s really good for people like my daughter. She is non-verbal, so it’s hard for her to explain things to others. So through the use of the wiki she can express herself and it helps others to see how good she is.”

“I wanted to get involved for the benefits of my son, as it is much easier for people involved in his care to understand him through his wiki, within a short period of time, you don’t have to read files before you get to know him”
- It supports transition from one service to the next. Transition is a process during which a number of agencies meet together to discuss and plan for the future of an individual. Previous research showed that transition is not always successful (Hesslop 2002). Information is often being lost and the continuity of support is disturbed, resulting in regress and crisis. Successful transition relies on sharing of information between the agencies.

“My son’s speech and language therapist did a really good video on how to support and recommendations around his communication – she did this before she moved on – we were able to use this information not only on my son’s transition review but also we were

able to share with the new speech and language therapist and she found that very valuable”

- It captures important information in a way that is much more understandable:

“Whomever we show the wiki to, professionals actually enjoy seeing it, I think they get more out of watching my son as opposed to reading reams and reams of paper.”
- It captures the complex communication of individuals:

“As a speech and language therapist I was working with the experimental group young people and meeting with an adult and the young person and facilitating the process of putting the information on to the wiki. I was checking on consistent use of yes and no.”
- It helps to improve behaviours:

“A teacher asked me: What is my son’s sign for toilet? So I decided to make a video and stick it on a wiki. By understanding how the person communicates you can react to that communication which obviously has an effect on their behaviour. Because if my son is being supported by people who don’t understand his communication, he gets frustrated, and when he gets frustrated he may show some behaviours which some people may call challenging.”
- It is easy to use, flexible, visual and is fun:

“Well structured and flexible – young people are able to change sections according to their individual needs and interests. So it’s not about my school, it’s about me. And I can amend headings and sections. I really like the flexibility of it.”

“It has been a good experience, definitely. I can see the benefits of using the wiki and it’s fun and easy on the iPad.”
- It improves working relationships. Research shows that cross agency working can sometimes be difficult, where communication between home and school may not always be successful (White, 1997). It was felt that the use of wikis had further positive impact on bridging the communication gap between the school and home.

“I had one carer who did not involve the young person at all, so we asked a school employee to get involved and engage the young person. This created a conflict, which highlighted some issues. Involving everyone can often create conflict but the use of wikis could actually help change or improve these relationships.”

“School staff always were happy to help, it also helped me to find out more about his school life - I like to be a fly on the wall to see what he is like at school, and what he does in a day and I can see some of that now and that’s really good.”

The pilot findings show that the use of Multimedia Advocacy for Person-Centred Practice can bring a lot of benefits. All of the above benefits of the use of Easy

Build wikis and the Multimedia Advocacy approach directly relate to the Pathfinder project objectives and we are pleased that this pilot was able to evidence the potential impact as well as provide solutions to some of the challenges that services face.

Multimedia Advocacy for Person Centred Planning – Effective working approaches

The project reinforced some of the working principles the Rix Centre has identified that Multimedia Advocacy need to be applied to succeed as an approach. One is that media must only be used to show the person in a positive light. It requires all parties involved in the process to constantly check with each other what is the appropriate image and language that is being used. Whoever helps to put the plan together must also try to involve the individual in this process as much as possible. The involvement will be different for different individuals but must always be attempted. If the person is not able to be physically involved, the use of video and images must be carefully selected and clearly described. The video and images used with the multimedia plan must truly represent the needs and wishes of the individual. Statements that are made must be supported by clear video or photo evidence that was discussed and reflected upon with the circle of support.

An ethical policy within the code of practice for the use of multimedia must be defined and shared so everyone involved understands the underlying principles and is able to respect the individual at all times. We did not come across any individual during this project who rejected the use of media but this must always be considered as a possible outcomes and understood an individual may not like to be represented in pictures and videos for various reasons. Additionally, we recommend that pictures and videos used within the multimedia plan are accompanied by text that clearly specifies the shared understanding of the message of the circle of support. For example, if you have a video of a young person looking through a book and the person is enjoying looking at the pictures, if you don't explain underneath that the person is enjoying looking at the pictures, another professional looking at this might think that the person can read.

“There should be an agreement of what kind of information should be put on the wiki. There should be good dialogue and trusting relationship between everybody and discussions about how the information on the wiki portrays the person.”

Charlton Park Academy continues to implement Person-Centred Planning and the Multimedia Advocacy approach within their curriculum and the school is now committed to wider implementation. Miss Kathryn Stowell, Head of ICT and Communication Team said:

“We now have PCP in our curriculum and I am now incorporating this into my ICT lessons. In the future I would like to see it being used by everyone, at

school, at home, everywhere. It's a way for young people to keep progress in their life."

Mrs Sam Goncalves, Parents Voice, Greenwich, said:

"More training will be required, a lot of parents see this as a great tool which might help them to show their children's needs, which would help in securing funding...As a lot of young people are moving to adult services it would be really good if the residential settings also had good awareness and understanding how to use these wikis."

Conclusions

This section draws together the results outlined above to elicit the factors that influenced the success of the use of Multimedia Advocacy approach within Person-Centred Practice and makes recommendations on successful implementation of the approach within Charlton Park Academy.

The pilot aimed to evaluate the effect of the Multimedia Advocacy approach being applied to Person Centred Planning with young people from Charlton Park Academy. The results show that the use of this approach to Person-Centred Planning was successful in enabling young people and their families to be more involved in the planning process and effectively contribute to services responding to the aspirations of these service users as set out in Greenwich's Children and Young People's Plan. The Easy Build wikis enabled many young people to actively participate in and understand their Person Centred Plans and share them more effectively.

Implementation of Multimedia Advocacy for Person-Centred Planning within the school needs to be planned and managed carefully. Findings suggest that only few members of staff have previous experience of Person Centred practice this suggests that further training is required along with a set of rules and the governing guidelines that would help everyone involved truly understand the principles of Person-Centred practice. This would enable the development of plans that have real value in people's lives, that are current, and that truly represent the best interests of those with whom they are devised.

Recommendations

This section consists of a list of the recommendations of the research team for successful implementation of the Multimedia Advocacy approach in line with the Pathfinder project agenda:

- 1) **Communicate** - inform all staff, families, therapists and young people about the Multimedia Advocacy implementation plan and the Pathfinder aims. Tell them why and how you are going to engage with Person Centred planning, Multimedia Advocacy approach and wikis and what are the expected outcomes for each child.
- 2) **Engage and delegate** - really engage young people and their circle of support from the start. Engage everyone within your academy or school and spread the workload by giving everyone a role within the implementation process. The more you delegate the more ownership staff will take and help you to drive the change - this will address the need for culture change.
- 3) **Set priorities** - set your priorities for starting small with identified young people and spreading the practice gradually within the academy or school as things progress. Choose where to start, who to engage first, which staff, which young people etc
- 4) **Offer training** - offer required training that addresses the technical skills as well as knowledge and understanding of Person-Centred practice.

Refreshment training should be offered on an annual basis for those who may need it.

- 5) **Align your goals** – what are the Charlton Park Academy and the Pathfinder project goals? Ensure that the implementation of Multimedia Advocacy and Person Centred practice is aligned with other goals within the school.
- 6) **Think sustainability** - share the progress on a regular basis with everyone and engage middle managers and teachers to support and monitor progress in staff reviews and supervisions to keep it going.
- 7) **Share** – share the outcomes within your academy and with external agencies. Use Easy Build wikis and the Multimedia Advocacy approach in meetings and reviews and share your experiences.
- 8) **Identify champions** – identify potential leaders (who we call ‘Champions’) who will support others and remain positive, optimistic and Person Centred.
- 9) **Measure your achievements** – have clear expectations that will help everyone to see how well they are doing.
- 10) **Integrate** – include Multimedia Advocacy and the principles of Person Centred practice routinely within daily activities, staff meetings, reviews and school’s daily life.

This pilot study would have not been possible without the funding from the Greenwich Pathfinder Project, the commitment and support from the Royal Borough of Greenwich staff, Greenwich Pathfinder Project team, Charlton Park Academy staff, parents and the young people. We found this process extremely effective and productive as everyone was working really hard to achieve the same goal. Mrs Sam Bergin Goncalves, parent and member of Greenwich Parent Voice said:

“Working in the wiki pilot Steering Group has been a really positive experience for me. I felt having Charlton Park Academy staff, Local Authority staff, the Rix Centre and myself, a parent working on the project together made it a true viable study on the impact of using this tool from varying perspectives. Everyone had something to contribute with no voice being left unheard. It truly was a good example of joint working and partnership, which resulted in good outcomes for the Steering Group, but most importantly for the young people who participated in the project. I would recommend all local authorities embrace the valuable contribution parents and parent forums can make”.

Kathryn Stowell, Head of ICT and Communication Team said:

“This research pilot has been a very valuable experience for us at Charlton Park Academy. It has helped to inform future developments and how we effectively implement Person Centred Planning as an inclusive part of our work. The pilot made us aware of the complexities of keeping planning and documents Person Centred and the possible time restraints of involving the teams around the person. The wikis and use of multimedia have

demonstrated that they can assist with overcoming these difficulties. We have learnt to start small and build on the best practice. The openness of the Rix Centre and their willingness to share their extensive knowledge and resources has really assisted with the strategic planning to ensure we keep our students and families at the centre. Person Centred Planning is a weekly session on our timetable and by the end of 2013 we plan for all students to have a wiki. The wikis will initially be developed with students and families in their ICT lessons. We also hope to work with our extended community in transitioning in and out of the school. The research project has meant we have a far more achievable plan in place and have the opportunity to ensure we have a truly Person Centred approach”.

It is appropriate to finish with a quote from one of the trainee participants, Mrs Patricia Tregunno, Carer, which, we feel encapsulates the ethos and practice of Multimedia Advocacy:

“Go for it full heartedly, this is the best thing for your child and their life, and their problems will be much more understood, after all we all work together to achieve the same goal.”

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Appendix: Computer skills at baseline

Young people - Computer skills at baseline

Below is a graph that illustrates the comparison of computer skills between the experimental and the control group at the baseline level.

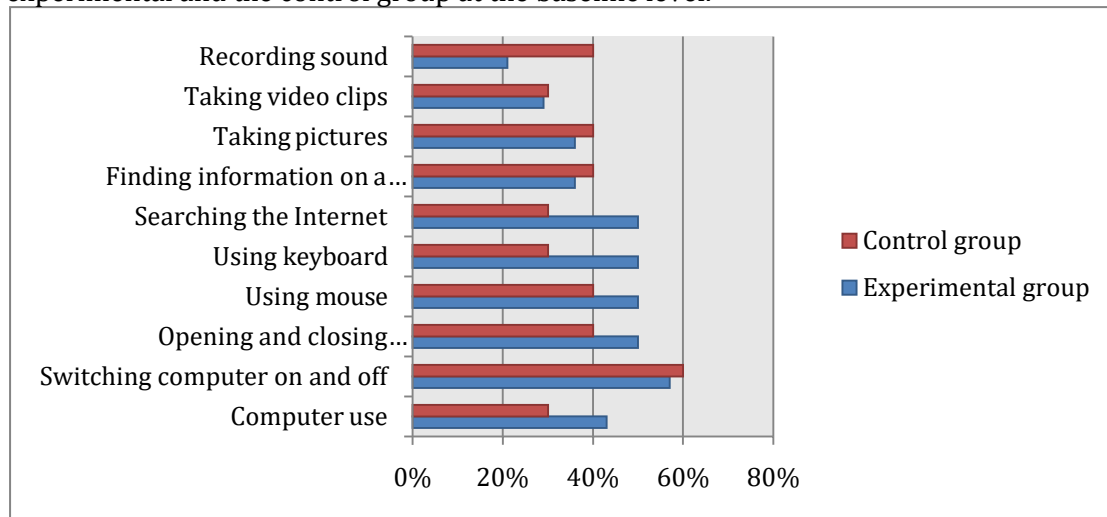


Figure 3 Percentage of young people that found the following computer tasks easy

The results showed that both groups had similar skills and abilities. The experimental group seemed to use computers more often and was more familiar with the use of the Internet while the control group found it easier to use digital cameras, take pictures and video clips and record sounds. Overall, the perceived skills levels were similar. Although the difference in skills level did not matter significantly for this research however, it was worth noting that the groups were not identical at the baseline level.

Trainees – Computer skills at baseline

Below is a graph showing the results of the baseline skills level assessment of the trainees. Generally, respondents felt that they have good computers skills. However, there are a few areas in which quite a lot of them felt that their level of skills was poor.

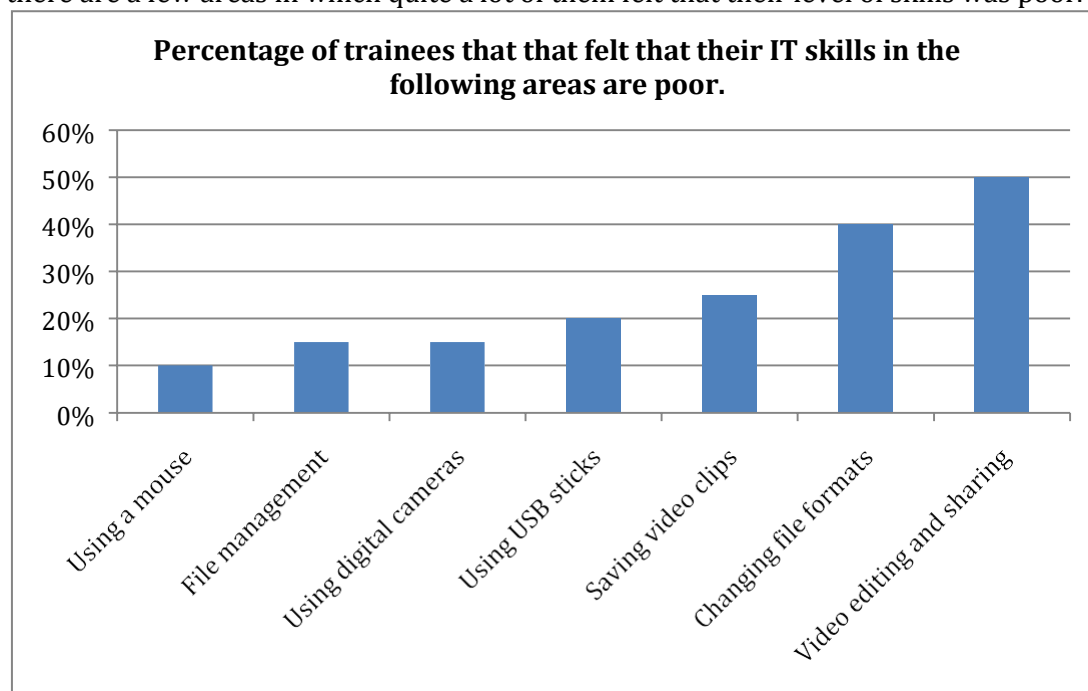


Figure 4 Trainers perception of their IT skills before the project.

The areas that stand out are related to file organisation, working with various file formats and recording and editing video. The results are not at all surprising as on a daily basis staff, therapists and parent will not have had many opportunities to work with video or changing file formats, whereas using computers for email is a daily occurrence. Editing video and changing file formats is less frequent and many staff would not have had the need to practice that skill.

The results highlighted the need to include these poor skills level areas in the initial staff training.