

Person Centred

“If I were to wish for anything I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of what can be, for the eyes, which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating as possibility”. (S. Kierkegaard)

An overarching theme and a key component of Sunnyfield’s vision is being **Person Centred**.

Background

Historically, services provided to people with a disability have been largely driven by what *others* have considered to be important in the life of a person with a disability. In most cases, “others” have been those professionals and administrators charged with providing the care and operation of services for people with a disability. Over the past 20-30 years and around the world, this approach has been gradually but consistently challenged by families, people with a disability and their advocates. In some cases legal systems have been asked to challenge systems and procedures as a consequence of people with a disability being abused or poorly served. In a few cases, the death of a person in care has resulted in authorities having to significantly review and adjust the way care, support and services are provided. Needless to say most western governments have been asked to address these issues from a system’s approach while on other fronts some families, individuals with a disability and advocates have been demanding changes, proposing new ways of doing things and ultimately where necessary, doing it for themselves.

Out of the complexity about how to provide services and support to people with a disability arose a strong community demand for thinking and acting upon things like deinstitutionalisation, being community-referenced, age-appropriate and functional, achieving normalisation, inclusion, and being individualised. The development of Individual Plans, Individual Support Plans, Individual Program Plans, Individual Service Plans, Individual Education Plans and Essential Lifestyle Plans etc became the system’s new way of describing how planning should occur, obviously based upon trying to meet the individual needs of each person with a disability rather than the person having to accept something that was prescribed for them. These terms have been used interchangeably for many years now but a perennial barrier has always been that people *other* than the person with a disability were primarily responsible for driving the development and delivery of services.

Arising from this approach has been the gradual development of a person centred approach. A philosophical framework designed to actively and deliberately empower people as well as engage closely with family, friends, and support staff to take charge of the planning and implementation of the services and support required. From a system’s perspective, person centred practices seeks to turn the relationship completely around in order to achieve a service and support system shaped and designed by the people it serves.

In simple terms, being person-centred has been defined as:

“a process of learning how a person wants to live and then describing what needs to be done and then helping that person move towards that life”¹.

What does this mean and why is it so important?

Sunnyfield commenced its journey nearly four years ago to adopt a person centred approach as a driving force and philosophical framework for all of its activities and operations. Significantly, Sunnyfield has targeted Person Centred Thinking and Culture as a key strategic initiative.

¹ Holburn, S & Vietze, P. (2004). *Person-Centered Planning - Research, Practice, and Future Directions*. Brookes Pub: Maryland

In the development of this approach Sunnyfield was supported by the Melbourne based organisation – SCOPE (formerly the Spastic Society of Victoria) who specialise in person centred planning. As Sunnyfield's approach to service and support has been reshaped, we have continued to develop our own person centred approach and ways of thinking. To assist us in this development, Sunnyfield has drawn from a strong supportive relationship with Helen Sanderson Associates (Australia) a development, training and consultancy organisation, specialising in working with people to change their lives through Person Centred Thinking and Planning.

Sunnyfield has adopted the following framework for its person centred approach:

- Planning must reflect the aspirations of the person we support, rather than just addressing their deficiencies.
- Planning must make use of the person's natural support networks (such as family and friends), as well as formal supports (such as disability and health services offered by community organisations).
- Planning must emphasise the support required to achieve the person's goals, rather than limiting goals to what we or another disability service already provides.

Sunnyfield has adopted a person centred approach to lifestyle planning for all people within Sunnyfield's service network. The approach models a design that enables people to increase their personal self-determination and maximise their own independence by placing the person we support at the 'centre' of planning for today and the future. For Sunnyfield person centred practices provides:

- A way of working with people to achieve the lives that they want for themselves on their terms.
- A way to help people to plan for the lives and futures they want in a way that is structured, facilitated and creative.
- A process of continual listening and learning; focussed on what is important to someone now and for the future; and acting upon this in alliance with their family, friends and services.

Sunnyfield's commitment to these principles is demonstrated through the establishment and funding of a Person Centred Practices Team. The team consists of seven person centred advisors and facilitators who work across each of the operational divisions assisting and supporting key staff in the development of person centred plans and practices.

Sunnyfield believes that every individual deserves the opportunity to have a voice and for that voice to be heard. Sunnyfield aims to celebrate each person's gifts, hear their hopes, dreams, and aspirations and support their contributions within their community. Everyone who wants a plan will receive one.

Sunnyfield, above all else, values the people as individuals because they are our fellow human beings. We demonstrate this in the way we facilitate and encourage the people we support to make honest and open choices about the way they would like to do things and to have things done for them.

Sunnyfield is committed to providing the best support possible to each person by embracing these principles.

Sunnyfield acknowledges that its role as a person centred organisation may also be as a *facilitator of an individual's plans* and not necessarily as the provider of services to an individual.