

Person-Centred Partnerships

Valuing People and person-centred approaches have given many people a desire for real change and energy to make change. But energy gets drained away by ways of working that don't fit *Valuing People's* principles and desire for change turns into frustration when it takes a long time to dissolve the barriers to people having better lives.

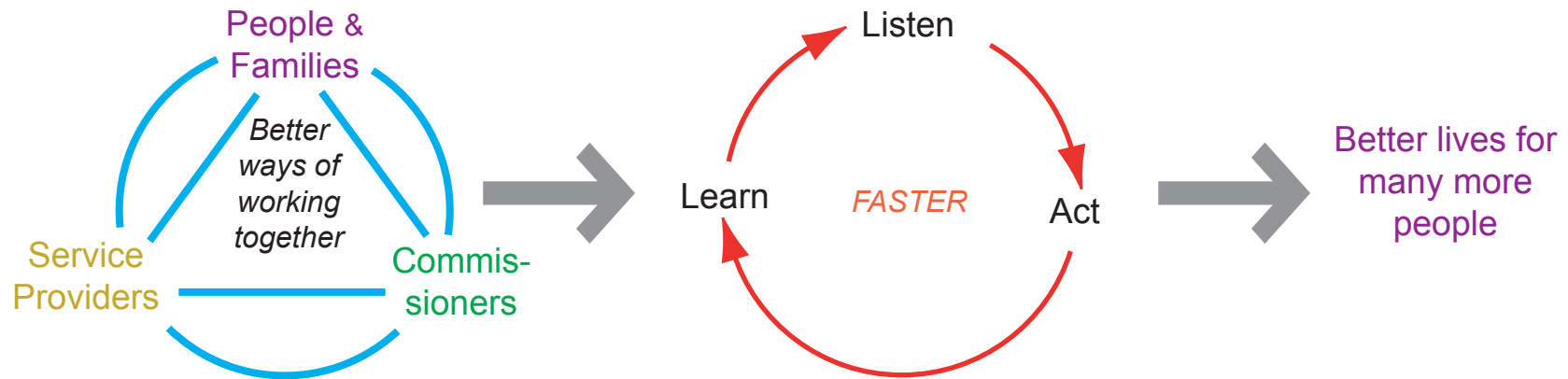
Where do the barriers come from?

There are many specific barriers to realigning services to support better lives, but most of these barriers come from the ways that four common causes work together:

- **Society has still not learned to value people** with learning disabilities as equal citizens. It is common to underestimate what people with learning disabilities can contribute, to expect that they should settle for poor conditions, and to discriminate against them. Mainstream services figure that people with learning disabilities will be looked after by specialist services. These beliefs are so much taken for granted that people can discriminate against people with learning disabilities without even being aware of it. The goal of such positive policies as *Valuing People* and *Improving Life Chances for Disabled People* is to change

John O'Brien wrote these notes for the people who came to York on 25–26 April 2005. They are only an outline of some of the main points he heard in our discussions. Each team kept its own notes on what is happening in their local area and what they want to do about it.





these negative beliefs and practices, but there is a long way to go and many priorities rank higher among local and national decision makers.

- Most of the **services and procedures we have now were not set up to support people with learning disabilities being included in their communities and in control of their lives.** They were set up to control people and not to challenge their exclusion. Much of what we have isn't what we would create if we could start over knowing what we know now.
- Many people responsible for public services and for service provision feel like more is demanded of them than they can deliver, that they are squeezed by scarcity of resources, and that they are caught by contradictory requirements. This can lead us to **doubt that they have the power to make necessary changes.**
- People with learning disabilities, family members, service providers, and commissioners have little experience of

working together as equal partners. History makes it easy to slip into power struggles and excluding others and **hard work to find effective ways to listen, act, and learn together.**

What can we do about it?

The diagram above shows our answer. Making progress calls for the kind of learning that can only be done by listening respectfully to the people involved, taking action based on what people say, reflecting on the lessons that result, and repeating the cycle. What's more, the change needs to matter to each of the groups involved: people with learning

The Design Council is experimenting with a process that has interesting lessons for us. It is based on the idea of collaborative learning through changes that can be implemented rapidly in high leverage areas. Read about their first health projects at <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/mt/red/health/index.html>.

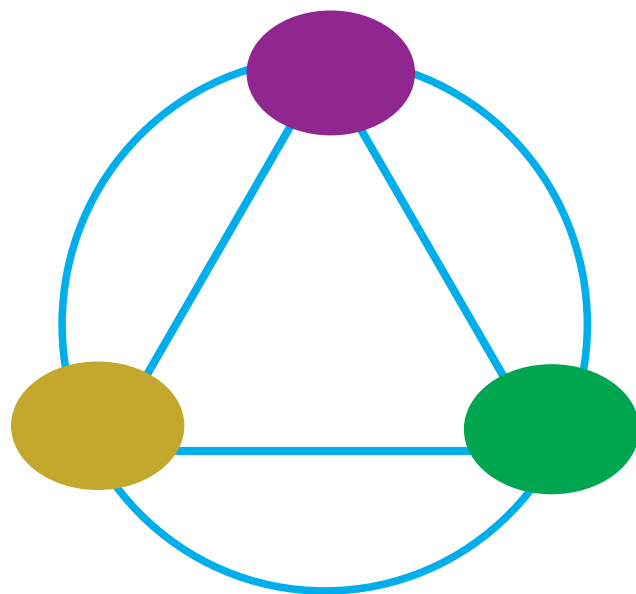
Design Council

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HEALTH: Co-creating Services

Hilary Cottam and Charles Leadbeater

disabilities, family members, service providers, and service commissioners. The more of these learning cycles that people can create together around problems that really matter, the better the chances that services will change in ways that support more people to have good lives.

By working together over the next two years, we aim to support two sorts of learning partnerships.

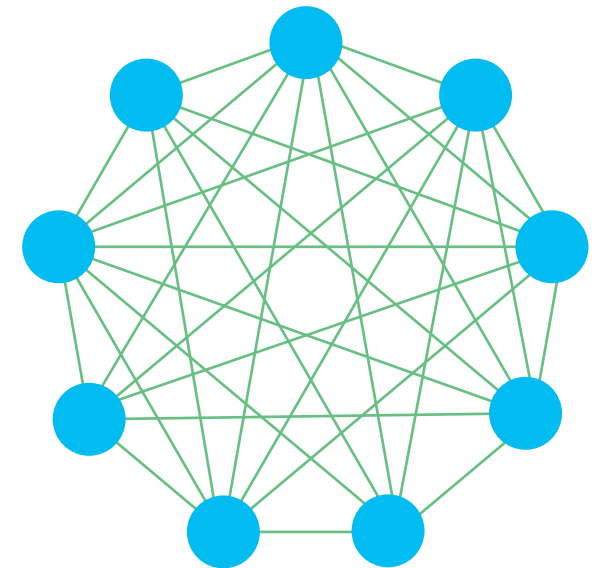


Local teams who take responsibility for identifying opportunities for important and do-able changes and making them happen in their local areas. We think that local teams will work best if they include leaders from among people with learning

disabilities and their families, service commissioners who are personally committed to implementing *Valuing People*, and service provider leaders whose organizations are strongly interested in changing to make the best of person-centred approaches. This allows people to practice working better together and increases the chances that people will be able to get the authority necessary to make a stream of changes.

A **network of teams**, supported by a group of resource people and a page on the *Valuing People* Support Team web site. The network will bring the teams together two or three times a year over the next two years, offer local teams some time from resource people, and encourage people to figure out ways to support each other's efforts. The network will make it easier for local teams to...

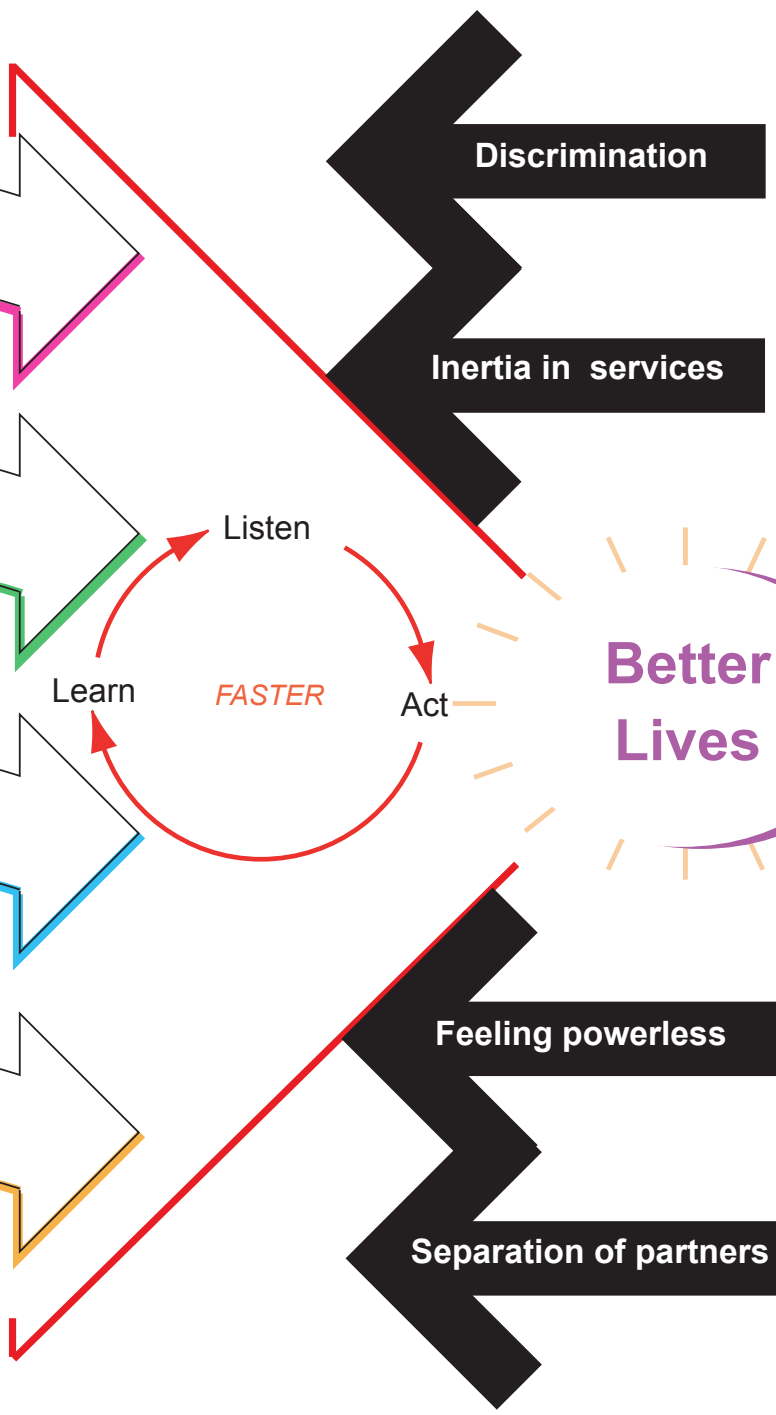
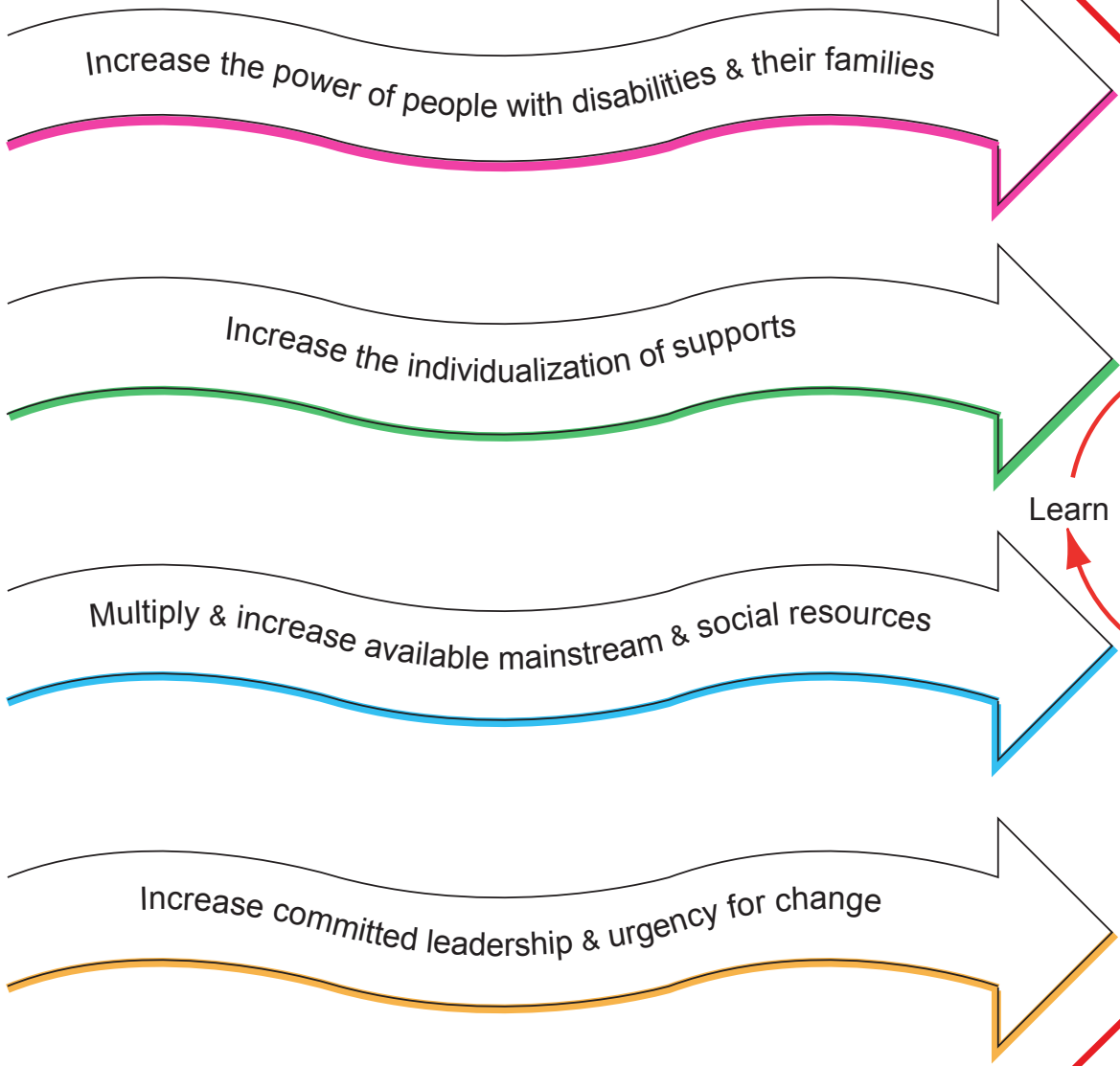
- ... get help with the changes they are making and help other teams with their changes
- ... think about what they are doing and discover and share the lessons from their action
- ... connect with other regional and national change efforts.



What action will make the most difference?

The diagram on the next page represents our current thinking about the kind of actions that will make the most difference to many more people with learning disabilities living better lives.

Learn through local action how better to...



It will take many circles of listening-acting-learning to dissolve the barriers to better lives that people with learning disabilities face. Positive action begins when people accept that it is little use waiting for someone else to take the barriers away. Barriers just are, and it is our responsibility to learn how to get them out of our way. The best place to start is with the ways in which our own beliefs and practices contribute to the problem. This gives us a strong foundation for asking others to help with changes. We can't start thinking and acting outside of the box until we accept that we are in a box and that the box belongs to us.

There are so many barriers that it would be easy to get discouraged or distracted. The actions that will make the most difference weaken the main roots which shoot out into many barriers. In our discussions we identified four streams of action-learning that will make the most difference.

Increase the power of people with learning disabilities and their families by such actions as...

- Investing in organizing and training people with learning disabilities and their families. Partners in Policy Making and other courses like Tomorrow's Leaders, Sharing the Challenge, and Kindred Spirits have made a positive difference. More and more help with training and organizing is available from people with learning disabilities, including two of the resource people for this network.

- Making the most of the learning from the **In Control** pilot projects. **In Control** (www.selfdirectedsupport.org) discovers practical ways that people with learning disabilities and their families can be in charge of the supports they count on. Two of the resource people for this network are involved in directing the **In Control** project.
- Making the most of the learning from the person-centred planning communities of practice. Done well, person-centred planning creates energy for change. It also pin-points the barriers that block people living the lives they want. Two of the resource people for this network are involved with learning from person-centred planning efforts.
- Continuing to improve the ways in which decision making bodies like Partnership Boards include people with learning disabilities and family members as active and influential participants.
- Using the team formed for this network to practice strong involvement of people with learning disabilities and family members.

Increase the individualization of supports by actions that greatly increase service providers ability to act on what they hear when they listen carefully to people with disabilities and their families about how they want to live their lives as included and contributing members of their communities. This includes finding ways to...

- ... offer more diverse and flexible supports based on differing individual preferences
- ... support, strengthen, and if necessary establish relationships rather than cutting people off from the natural supports that family members, friends, and community members can offer.
- ...develop the capacity to quickly redesign supports in response to changing needs or opportunities or preferences.
- ...re-design care management after a thorough consideration of what has been learned so far from the **In Control** projects.
- ...establish commissioner - provider relationships that clearly and strongly establish mutual accountability for implementing the principles of *Valuing People* through local plans, contracts and monitoring efforts.
- ... strengthen the capacity to allocate and administer individual budgets.
- ...improve the ways that service costings are calculated and negotiated to assure people with learning disabilities the greatest possible individual choice within funding limits.
- ...find productive ways to deal with risk assessments so that they do not act as a drag on people's ability to live an ordinary life with its ordinary risks.

Multiply and increase available mainstream and social resources by actions which...

- ...Make sure that the requirements of people with learning disabilities and their families are high on the agenda of the people responsible for housing, jobs, health, transportation, and economic and community development. This will require building relationships and influence across the boundaries that have separated people with learning disabilities from mainstream resources. The focus is for people with learning disabilities to have the same individual access as any other citizen rather than attracting mainstream funds for specialist services.
 - ... Strengthen the capacity for managing budgets so that it is possible to deal as well as possible with the requirements and uncertainties that come along with new sources of money.
 - ... Invest in learning how to involve community member's in ways that allow supportive ties and connections to grow.
- Increase committed leadership and urgency for change.** Leadership as we understand it is not a job role but a way that people act. Leadership shows when a person speaks up for the principles of *Valuing People* at times when it would be easy to compromise them. Leadership shows when a person finds a way to encourage action when people are overwhelmed or discouraged. Leadership shows when people finds ways to take action when people are reluctant to accept

responsibility. Without strong leadership the barriers win. Inertia can only be overcome by people who feel the urgency to do something together that will result in positive changes. Actions like these will increase leadership...

- Raise expectations by investing in discovering and widely communicating what is now possible for people with learning disabilities.
- Keep an eye on the bigger picture: the changes in larger environments that influence our ability to move forward.
- Test ideas and measure investments in terms of real positive changes that people with learning disabilities experience in their lives.

- Encourage people to identify ways in which we are pretending to implement the principles of *Valuing People* and find ways to move out of pretending into making the principles real.
- Take time to reflect and deepen understanding of the principles and why they are important.
- Recognize that people have different ways of understanding the world and different concerns based, in part, on the role that they have taken. This diversity can be a source of conflict and the conflict, if people listen respectfully and look for positive ways forward, can be a source of creativity.