

Feedback from the Advocacy Groups Network about Reviews. January 2012

35 people with learning disabilities discussed reviews in the Big Meeting, the Loud and Clear advocacy group and the Tuesday Speaking up group. A reviewing officer attended the Big Meeting and the Tuesday Speaking Up group.

People with learning disabilities awareness around reviews:

- Some people knew exactly what their review was and who it was for.

'The review is once a year and the staff get together with you and the staff get to hear if you are alright, see if there are the same things as last year, and see if you want to change things.'

One person thought it was a meeting specifically about moving house.

'when you move house you have a review to ask if you like where you're living. It is for people who want to move.'

- Some people were unclear and didn't remember anything about their reviews.
- A few people saw it as a meeting for the keyworker, the manager or the social worker rather than their opportunity to bring up issues.

'For the keyworker. It is for the manager.'

'Social worker when he comes down to see you.'

- People didn't know who or what the role of a Reviewing Officer was or whether they came to their review.

The experience of reviews for people with learning disabilities.

Being able to speak up in reviews.

- For those people who find it difficult to speak up and know their rights, it is very hard for them to understand it is an opportunity for them to review their life and services.

One person in an advocacy group immediately on being asked about his review was triggered to say,
'I am a good boy'

- Some people felt very able to speak up in their reviews

Feeling comfortable, prepared and in control in your review.

- When asked who is in charge of the review, people said keyworker or social worker or placement officer.
- A lot of people felt listened to in their reviews.
- Some people felt there were a lot of questions.

For one person who finds it difficult to speak in groups she said
'People always talking. E (the manager) does a lot of talking.'

- Several people talked about feeling uncomfortable in the review.

'When they want me in a room I think they will tell me off about something. It's nothing to do with that but I get frightened. I think they are going to gang up on me and tell me off. They don't. They just talk about something in my life. I think I'm going to get picked on they don't but I just think that.'

This could be due to numbers of people, venue or issues being discussed.

‘Sometimes I like to be just five people. Not all different types of people. If ten people I get crowded and nervous. I did have 10 people when I first came to the house.

- For people with anxiety issues, talking about the issues may make them feel upset and not able to speak.

‘I didn’t feel right. Didn’t feel I could speak up as much as I wanted to. I couldn’t have the confidence to say ‘cause I felt worse. I just wanted to go.’

- One person with mental health issues felt she was speaking to a brick wall when speaking to professionals and felt any forms were too complex.

Knowing when your review is

- Most people aren’t sure when their next review is ‘If I not got a diary how am I going to know.’

Privacy

- Several people felt embarrassed by the issues being discussed like their relationship

‘Uncomfortable, a bit embarrassed.’

Venue

- Where the review takes place can make a difference to how much the person with a learning disability feels able to speak up

For example, they may feel that staff from their home are more likely to listen to them at the day centre.

‘ Like it better here. When he comes here, he talks to me. At Belgrave.’

For some people having it at home helps them to feel more in control and comfortable.

Length of review

- Some people found reviews too long. Better to break it down into smaller chunks. Have more breaks.
- A few people found it boring and not accessible.

Follow up of actions

- List of actions is not accessible.
- Carers/Managers have copies of review and a copy is in folder at day centre. People with learning disabilities want their own copies.

Things that help people feel more comfortable

- Being encouraged to invite a friend or family member yourself helps people to feel more in control.

‘ D, the manager lets us invite someone and I invite my sister or brother.’

- One person said that showing her art work made her feel more in control.
- Getting to know the reviewing officer in the company of their peers in one of the self advocacy group meetings enabled members of the group to build up trust and to voice problems they have in residential care services.
- Having keyworkers from the day centre at the review is important to some people as they know you better than other people. Sometimes they can't come.

Summary of Issues

**A lot of people were happy about their reviews.
The issues that came up for some people were:**

- Misunderstanding about who or what a review is for
- The reviews feel uncomfortable or during certain discussions embarrassing for a few people
- Where the review takes place and who is there can affect people's confidence to speak up.
- Notes and action from the group are not in an accessible format
- Not everyone with learning disabilities has their own copy of the action agreed
- Many people did not know the role of the reviewing officer.

Recommendations to improve people with learning disabilities experience of reviews.

- Improve awareness of who and what a review is for
- Make sure people know when next review is
- Make sure people with learning disabilities know that they don't have to discuss personal things in front of everyone. Alternative ways of communicating information can be found if need be.
- Support staff/ keyworkers etc to make sure person with learning disabilities is prepared and in control and has made choices about venue and who they want there
- Make sure the people who the individual wants to attend are available
- Accessible notes and actions need to be produced (reviewing officer mentioned software does not allow it at present: need to look at that)
- Person with learning disabilities needs to have accessible copy of action.
- Give time for Reviewing officer to speak briefly to the person before the review starts (according to one review officer this does not always happen)
- Make sure support is given for people with learning disabilities to feedback on the review soon afterwards.