

Families leading person centred planning How are we doing? Where are we going?

Good practice ideas for Partnership Boards



Preface

This guide will remind Partnership Boards of what the Department of Health's Guidance on Person Centred Planning expects with regard to supporting families (<http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/PCPGuidance.htm>). It is designed to provide local groups with responsibility for developing person centred planning with a simple way to check progress and decide on next steps to support families.

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The guide is in 5 sections:

- Introduction
- What is expected?
- Where are you now?
- Practical next steps
- Some examples of what is happening

There is also a linked list of Resources and Courses.

Section 1 – Introduction

Why should Partnership Boards help more families to lead planning?

People who have learning disabilities and their families have called for the realisation of their rights, inclusion, choices and independence and this has been the central theme of Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century (Department of Health 2001). Person Centred Planning is at the heart of Valuing People and is described as " a process of continual listening and learning focusing on what is important for someone now and for the future: and acting on this in alliance with their family and friends." It naturally places people who have learning disabilities in the context of their family and community. Valuing People recognises that families want their opinions and expertise about their relatives to be an integral part of decision-making about the people they love.

The Government has produced extensive guidance for Partnership Boards to act upon to ensure that Person Centred Planning is implemented at a local level (<http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/PCPGuidance.htm>). There is a clear expectation that families will be supported to learn about planning and what it could mean for them. The Guidance calls for training and materials to be made available to families so that they are able to develop their skills to lead plans should they so wish.

There is an expectation in the Guidance that there will be an increasing number of families that are telling positive stories about how they were supported to learn to plan and that services welcomed their planning. This will result in flexible and responsive supports based on the plans leading to people's lives changing in positive ways.

Person Centred Planning recognises that families have unique knowledge and understanding of the history of the person, details that other people need to know to support them effectively and an understanding of the person's aspirations and fears. Many families have already started to plan in lots of informal ways

- be it discussions around the kitchen table, at family social gatherings or even as individuals in their own private thoughts. Often this is enough for families to achieve creative and resourceful solutions with and for the people they love. We have to be careful not to make Person Centred Planning something that you can only do if you have lots of training and certificates. For some people, though, there will be an interest in learning more about how to lead one or more of the well known styles of person centred planning. Family members are often referred to as 'content experts' – they know about a person's life. Often people who have solely worked in services have been taught about the process of person centred planning – these people are referred to as 'process experts'. Valuing People is calling for family members should they wish, to be supported in becoming process experts in person centred planning.

Families are there for the long haul, they therefore have a natural interest to ensure a plan evolves and is put into practice so their relative can get the best possible life that they deserve. Family involvement in, or leadership of planning can be of benefit both to families themselves but also can improve planning done by professionals (for example transition plans and care management assessments).

It is clear that we need to inform families in a variety of creative ways about person centred planning. Many families feel strongly that they should be able to expect assistance with planning whilst others wish to learn how to plan (as advocated in the Department of Health Guidance). Families are excited about how together with the people they love, and people that support them and/or deliver services, that the plan leads to action now and in the future for their relatives.

Now let's hear from a family member about her experiences of leading a plan for and with her daughter:

“ A friend went along to one of the PCP awareness days in Stockport and was really encouraged by the parent who was talking about her son, his plan and what had been achieved through it so we decided to go on the 'family training course' to learn more about PCP and start making plans for our children.

I felt quite sceptical when I first heard about PCP, was it just another 'idea' to come from America? But the more I learned about PCP the more I realised the value and importance of it for individuals in planning their lives. I knew PCP had been used in adult services for some time but never in children's and as my daughter is 13 I wanted to get everyone working and planning together as she moves towards adulthood and thought it was a really good time to start. However, I was worried that the needs of our family wouldn't be reflected in my daughter's plan, as we all require support to care for her so I'm pleased that Family Centred Planning is being considered for those who still live at home.



The 4-day training course was spread out over a few months but was quite a commitment to make and I soon began to realise what a huge job it was going to be to gather the information from everyone in my daughter's life and start making her first plan. It was nice to be able to share experiences with the other families on the course and support each other. The resource pack provided was clear and well thought out so people could work through at their own place or even alone if they couldn't attend the course.

It took a considerable amount of organisation, time and gentle encouragement to gather all the information sheets from everyone but I had a fantastic response and was really touched by the thought and effort people had put in to completing the forms. This information formed the basis of the draft plan and was really important that it truly reflected my daughter's needs and was accurate as she has great difficulty expressing herself.

The people running the course were very helpful and available for support at any time. They kept me pointed in the right direction and offered guidance and encouragement to get my daughter's plan checked through and eventually being used to support her appropriately and consistently by everyone in her life. The next step is to design a visual plan my daughter can understand and help her to become involved in planning the type of services she wants now and in the future. “

The following are quotations from other family members who have taken the lead in planning for with and for their relatives:

“It’s a living record of my son’s daily choices.”

“It’s given me so much positive hope for the future.”

“Once you get going on the plan you suddenly realise the benefits of what you are finding out.”

“There are so many reviews, reports and everything else that they put together about your child. They do not talk about the person, their character, their gifts or anything like that. I had never been asked what I like about my child until I did Person Centred Planning.”

“Person Centred Planning enables you to dream without denying the person’s support needs and gives hope for a wonderful future.”

“Inspired, enlightened and empowered”

“Even though my child’s plan is not yet complete I am confident enough to have started the ball rolling for direct payments. I wouldn’t have done it without the knowledge I have gathered and the confidence I have gained.”

“Took it to a transition review and got very positive feedback. Care assistant wants to learn how to do one!”

“This is the way forward for all our young people.”

“Person centred planning has given us hope and a vision for a better future for Mohammed. We feel now we can have a say in how and what service support he receives. We no longer believe that only professionals know best for our son. Mohammed’s faith and cultural needs are recognised and responded to.”

What do we mean by families leading planning?

Person centred planning can be used by self-advocates, families, friends and paid support staff. When someone wants to think about their life using person centred planning, they may have the energy and drive to ensure that their plan happens themselves.

If the person does not want to, or for whatever reason is not able to, she may ask other people to help - a family member, a friend or paid worker. This is what most of us do when planning changes in our own life. If a family member is strongly involved in person centred planning with and on behalf of their relative, we call this 'families leading planning'.

In practice, person centred planning means:

- Finding out what is important to someone through talking and gathering information and ideas
- Connecting with others to get a shared understanding
- Planning and taking shared action

In some styles of planning, this all takes place in meetings – for example, [Path](#) and [Maps](#). Family members can lead or co-lead these meetings, contribute to the meeting and be very involved in preparing for the meetings.

In other styles of planning, for example, [Essential Lifestyle Planning \(ELP\)](#), information is gathered and a plan is developed before the meeting. Family members can take the lead in gathering information and developing the plan. The ELP meeting could be led or co-facilitated by the family, or facilitated by someone else with expertise in planning (person centred planning facilitator or co-ordinator, family mentor).

A [Personal Futures Plan](#) can be developed at a meeting, in a similar way to a MAP, or by recording information beforehand and using a meeting to agree actions, similar to an ELP. Therefore families can lead

through organising and preparing for the meeting or gathering information to present with the person at the meeting.

Even though many families plan naturally - by sitting together “around a kitchen table” and putting a plan together their own way, families should be given the opportunity to learn about other styles of planning so that they extend the ways in which they can plan should they wish.

Supporting each other – Family Trainers and Mentors

Some family members want to help other families in planning with their son or daughter. This specifically helps to address the experience this mother describes:

“I have experienced first hand the progress that my son has been able to achieve through using person centred planning but have struggled in the maintenance of this because of the lack of guidance, understanding and external support.”

A ‘family mentor’ is someone who works alongside families to enable them to use person centred planning. Family mentors are family members themselves and add to the resource of local people who can support families to plan. Therefore family members who have the training, expertise and personal experience, can guide families through ‘the maze’ to produce a person centred plan which is both honest and ‘do able’.

Family mentors have first planned for themselves and with and for the people that they love. They then go on to support other families who are learning about planning. This can be on course or through supporting people to work with families in their own homes. Family mentors, like all facilitators, will need on going support and the ways that this can be provided are being explored now.

Additionally family members have become trainers in a range of PCP methods and are now supporting other


family members to do this.


Family Leadership and Person Centred Planning

Regardless of what sort of planning people have started or not, it is evident that many families would benefit from support in how to find their way around community and service systems and having information about what is possible. Through family leadership courses, which are starting to become available, we know that there are increasing numbers of families who are developing leadership skills. These families are enabling positive changes to happen where they live. When family leadership courses and opportunities for families to learn about person centred planning is offered together the potential for change in the lives of the people they love really grows. Additionally, services start to learn how they can respond positively to their requests for supporting people as documented in their plans. Families want to share their skills, thinking and creativity to give all people a positive future.

Section 2 - What is expected?

In the Department of Health Guidance on person centred planning, Partnership Boards were expected to enable families to lead planning. In the table below we remind you of these specific expectations and tell you what we are learning about best practice:

Questions used to check progress	What is expected in the Guidance?	Ideas for improving practice
 <p>Are families informed about person centred planning? (described as the 'breadth approach' in the DH guidance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families are included within awareness raising days• Person centred planning co-ordinator/lead person from the group leading on person centred planning has explained to local family/ carers groups what person centred planning is and what is available locally for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some awareness days are organised just for families and carers, run by and with families• Partnership awareness days take place – where families learn alongside people with learning disabilities, staff and managers. Families are part of the training team.• Families with experience of person centred planning talk to families and carers groups to share what person centred planning is and what is available locally• The group leading on person centred planning have mapped out where local family groups are and have developed a strategy for sharing information with them in different ways

Questions used to check progress	What is expected in the Guidance?	Ideas for improving practice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a resource library that is available for families to use. This has resources specifically for families and is made accessible for families to use at convenient times.
 <p>Do families have the opportunity to learn about how to lead Person Centred Plans should they wish? (described as the ‘depth approach’ in the DH guidance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of places are allocated for families on facilitator training courses (locally, or places funded for families to attend national courses) 	<p>Different ways of families leading planning are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example on facilitator training there are equal numbers of family members and staff and there are ‘family only’ facilitator training courses for families who do not want to train with staff • A dedicated budget is available to provide support and training for families to lead planning • Families from different ages, groups generations and backgrounds learn together. This enables people to share their rich experiences together.

Questions used to check progress	What is expected in the Guidance?	Ideas for improving practice
 <p>Are families who do not feel that they can lead the plan given support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families are linked with a facilitator when they request support in planning • There is a supply of facilitators available for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families know that there are independent facilitators available to plan with families - these could be family mentors • Services look at how they can support families to plan using their existing resources of people who have learnt about planning
 <p>Are families who lead person centred planning given on-going support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing on going support to families and learn from their experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an agreed local process for developing family mentors and trainers to support other families to lead planning • Person centred planning co-ordinators or family trainers or mentors support the development of “communities of practice” where families come and learn from each other on a regular basis • A family led organisation is commissioned to train facilitators or family mentors in person centred planning and provide independent facilitation

Questions used to check progress	What is expected in the Guidance?	Ideas for improving practice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service workers are taught how to help support families who have led plans and respond to their leadership. Service workers are helped to become allies to families. • There are opportunities for families to join family leadership courses locally. • Family members have opportunities to hear what is possible locally, nationally and internationally in terms of supporting people to have the lives they wish. • Family members are supported locally to use technology to develop the plans - e.g.. using photos, video clips

Questions used to check progress



Are families influencing the local development and quality of person centred planning and contributing to the evaluation of Person Centred Planning for Partnership Boards, for example:

Is person centred planning changing peoples' lives for the better?

Is it changing services for the better?

What is expected in the Guidance?

- There is a family member on the person centred planning group

Ideas for improving practice

- Family members are active, full members of the person centred planning group. They have whatever support they need (E.g. meetings arranged at times that suit family members)
- There is a clear way of capturing and sharing the learning from families with the group leading on person centred planning
- A person centred planning coordinator is based with a family led organisation
- There is a family member person centred planning coordinator
- Evidence is collected from people about their experiences. Stories are shared.

Questions used to check progress



Are families leading planning linked to Valuing People priority groups?

(Transition, day service modernisation, older family carers, people leaving hospitals and NHS campuses)

What is expected in the Guidance?

- The person centred planning group has a plan for gradually increasing the numbers of families leading person centred planning within the priority groups

Ideas for improving practice

- There is a steady increase in families leading planning in the priority groups

3) Where are you now?

Here is a simple exercise that you can use with your local person centred planning group. We suggest that you invite additional families to the group to review progress using this exercise. Another way to gather information would be to go directly to families/carers groups and ask them, or set up focus groups of families to gather this information.

You can start by asking people about how are things going locally - these questions are a good way to find out about what is happening:

What are we pleased about?

What have we tried?

What have we learned?

What are we concerned about?

You then can share with the group what is expected from Partnership Boards and the ideas for best practice for each of the 6 areas and ask families whether this is happening (using the “what would you see” as ideas).

The 6 areas are:

1. Families are informed about person centred planning
2. Families have the opportunity to learn about how to lead Person Centred Plans should they wish.
3. Families who do not feel that they can lead the plans are given support
4. Families who lead person centred planning are given ongoing support.
5. Families are influencing the local development of person centred planning and contribute to the evaluation of person centred planning for Partnerships Boards.
6. Families lead planning linked to Valuing People priority groups.

You can then get people to work through this grid filling in:

- a) Is this happening for families?
- b) How will we know and what might we see happening?

Examples have been given to get you started.

	Is this happening for families? (fill in this box)	How will we know? What might we see?
<p>Families are informed about person centred planning</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families attending awareness days • Families asking for more information about person centred planning • Families asking for support or resources to begin planning • Families talking about person centred planning at the Partnership Board, on task groups, family/carer groups (you may see evidence of this on agendas, and conversations recorded as actions) • Families asking the person centred planning group for feedback on progress. Person centred planning coordinator/ lead person from the group has explained to local family / carers groups what person centred planning is and what is available locally for families.

	Is this happening for families? (fill in this box)	How will we know? What might we see?
<p>Families have the opportunity to learn about how to lead person centred plans should they wish</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of places are allocated for families on depth training courses • Families taking places on facilitator training and completing the course/follow up days
<p>Families who do not feel that they can lead the plans are given support</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families have requested support with facilitating plans, and have been linked up with a facilitator
<p>Families who lead planning are given ongoing support</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular local meetings are held for family members who are planning by the PCP coordinator • Families are linked with a facilitator when they request support in leading planning • There is a supply of facilitators available for families

**Is this happening for families?
(fill in this box)**

**How would we know?
What might we see?**

Families influence the local development of person centred planning and contribute to the evaluation of person centred planning for Partnership Boards

- Family members attend meetings of the person centred planning group
- Family members play a leadership role in this group
- Families have had involvement in writing the evaluation that goes to Partnership Boards
- Family members have developed information that shares what is possible through planning, that can be given to other families. It shares their experiences.

	Is this happening for families? (fill in this box)	How would we know? What might we see?
<p>Families lead planning to Valuing People priority groups</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are families leading planning as part of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition • Who are older family carers • Day service change • With family members who are leaving hospital or NHS campuses • There are more families leading planning in these priority groups than there were last year

4) Practical next steps

What does the exercise tell you?

The above exercise will have helped you to decide whether you are:

Just getting started in enabling families to lead planning

You could describe yourselves as 'getting started' if there have been few, if any awareness days that have included families or, there is just one family member on the person centred planning group.

or that you are

Making progress and already have some families who are leading planning

You could describe yourselves as 'making progress' if:

- There have been several awareness days that have been attended by families
- There is a family member on the person centred planning group
- Family members have attended facilitator training
- Someone from the planning group has met with family/carers groups to talk about person centred planning
- Facilitators are at least available for families when they ask for them
- Some families are leading planning in at least one of the Valuing People priority groups

This section has ideas for practical next steps for each of the above. Some of you will fall between the two, in which case look at the practical steps for both groups.

Practical next steps for people who are getting started

You now need to:

1) Build more ways to share person centred planning with families

Suggestion: In the person centred planning group map out the different family and carer groups (formal and informal). Find out for each group what could be a good way of enabling them to hear and learn about person centred planning. Ask family members what could be the best ways for this to happen. Design a range of ways to do this, for example:

- People from the person centred planning group going and meeting the groups
- Putting on awareness events at times and venue that suit families
- Sharing written information with families, distributed through family groups, social workers, care managers, day service staff and others in regular contact with families

2) Support families to lead planning

Suggestion: If you are getting started with training and supporting families to lead planning, then it is important to think carefully about who to invite on courses and ensuring that these families are very well supported, and link this to letting people know about person centred planning (above)

Suggestion: Start small and look for between 6 – 8 families to begin with. It can be effective to begin with families who are already in formal or informal leadership positions; families in the Valuing People priority groups, and families from minority ethnic groups. If you begin with at least some families who are in leadership positions, they are well placed to then share their experiences and support other families, and influence the development of families leading person centred planning.

Think about who these families are and how you could contact them. Then meet them, and ask them whether they would be interested in learning about families leading planning. For example:

- You could meet with the families who are on local Partnership Boards and person centred planning groups and ask them
- You could ask ethnicity minority link workers, or community leaders who may be interested and what would be the best way to see whether they may be interested,
- You could ask transition workers and Connexions staff who may be interested
- If you have families who have had leadership training, then they could be great families to invite.

Suggestion: Ensure that there are at least 4 places for family members on each facilitator-training course or fund families to attend nationally available courses

- Invest in family-led person centred planning training for families
- Make sure that there are facilitators available to help families, and that families are aware of this
- Invite families who are going through transition, or who are in one of the other Valuing People priority groups to be part of the training
- Link the families with someone from the person centred planning group, a person centred planning coordinator or facilitator to ensure that they are supported through the training, and have somewhere to go for support

Suggestion: Once some families are interested, then work out with them how they would like to learn more and be trained to lead a plan for their daughter or son

For example:

- Attending facilitator training with staff
- Work on a one-to-one basis with a trainer, person centred planning coordinator or experienced facilitator
- Learn on their own with support materials and be part of a list serve (a way of keeping in touch with other

people through e-mail, where your e-mail automatically gets sent to a group of other families to respond to – there is a list serve specifically for families and person centred planning – see below)

- Learn with other families as part of a ‘families leading planning’ course

Suggestion: As well as finding families, working out with them how they want to learn, you should also discover what support would work best for each family, to answer questions, help solve problems and simply be encouraging!

For example:

- Being linked up with a person centred planning coordinator, experienced facilitator or a member of the person centred planning group
- Regularly meeting up with the other families who are learning about person centred planning
- Linking up with another family, perhaps from another area, who has some experience planning (e.g. family mentor)
- Using the list serve to contact other families
- Attending the person centred planning group meetings to share how they are doing

3) Learn from families and plan next steps

Suggestion: Once you have started to try different ways of sharing information about person centred planning with families, set aside time to reflect on what has worked and not worked about the approaches you have used. This could be a regular agenda item for the person centred planning group.

When the families have made some progress in planning with their daughter or son, invite them together to learn from them about what has worked or not worked, and what this tell us about how the service needs to change, and how the person centred planning group can respond to that.

Practical next steps for people who are making progress

Generally, it would be a good idea to look at each of the best practice ideas and see what is possible locally.

Here are some other practical ideas:

1) Families are informed about person centred planning:

Suggestion: Think with families and the rest of the person centred planning group about what has worked and not worked about the ways that you are keeping families informed about person centred planning. You may want to use the mapping exercise suggested above so see if there are family groups that you are not reaching, and set actions for this

2) Families have the opportunity to learn about how to lead Person Centred Plans should they wish: Expand the ways that you are supporting families to lead planning, for example:

Suggestion:

- Could you reserve more places for families on a range of facilitator courses?
- Could you get families who have attended courses together to learn about what worked and did not work about them attending the course, the support they received afterwards, and what the person centred planning group could do differently/better?
- Could you invest in a family led course?

Think about the families who have attended any training - do they represent family leaders, families from minority ethnic communities and families connected to the Valuing People priority groups? Look at the mapping exercise above and see whether this could be helpful in getting more families from these groups involved.

3) Families are supported:

Suggestion: Expand the ways that families are supported by asking the families involved in planning what they are finding helpful at the moment and what else could be useful, for example:

- Being linked up with a person centred planning coordinator, experienced facilitator or a member of the person centred planning group.
- Regularly meeting up with the other families who are learning about person centred planning.
- Linking up with another family who has some experience planning (e.g. family mentor), perhaps from another area.
- Using the list serve to contact other families.

4) Families influencing service and system developments:

Suggestion: Talk to the families involved about different ways that you could connect what they are learning to service development. This may mean:

- More families being part of the person centred planning group
- Having a families sub group
- A person centred planning coordinator or someone from the planning group meeting up with families regularly to learn from them and share this with the planning group.
- Running focus groups for families on what is working and not working from their perspectives.
- Having an annual retreat with families, self advocates and staff to share celebrations and challenges around person centred planning and service development.

5) Some examples of what is happening

We know that these are just some of the interesting things that are happening. If you have examples that you would like to share please send them to us at Zoe@valuingpeople.gov.uk so that we can share them on the VPST website.

In **Cheshire** the person centred planning coordinator, and a family member from the implementation group met with a group of families from across the county. They drew a map of all the different informal group of families (mums who meet in the schoolyard to drop their kids off at school) carers groups, and advocacy groups. They added to the map the names of the people who were respected, well connected, and 'opinion leaders' for families. They worked out what are the best ways of sharing information with these families. Who would they listen to? How could they make contact? They then agreed who would share what information with whom! As a result of this, a family member who was also a teacher, put information about a person centred planning course in the lunch boxes of children from her school, there was an evening gathering of some of the families who had already shown some interest in planning in a local pub, and individual invitations were made from family to family.

Contact: Judy Jennings: judy.jennings@cheshire.gov.uk

In **Coventry** and **Warwickshire**, family members have been learning about how to develop plans. Local service workers have been so interested in supporting these families and have explored what it will take for them to do this successfully as allies. Each local authority has provided some service workers to support each family. Families and Services workers are learning together about action planning, implementation and how to keep the plans alive. Contact www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk or jackiegrove@warwickshire.gov.uk or Clare Wightman grapevine.the@talk21.com

In **Oxfordshire**, the Partnership Board commissioned a 'families leading planning course' specifically targeted at families who wished to facilitate plans for their children who were entering the 'transition' process. Some families chose to use a 'gathering information' exercise at their local respite centre. Large sheets of paper were pinned to the wall and a photograph of their son and daughter were pinned in the centre. Staff members were invited to write on the paper what they 'liked and admired' about the children they supported and about what made a 'good day' for them. The families concerned were delighted to hear how much the staff loved working with their children and what understanding they had on how to support them to keep them happy and safe. The respite centre has now adopted this approach to gathering information with all the children they support and use this exercise for training new staff. Contact: Barbara@familiesleadingplanning.co.uk

At the local carers centre in **Rochdale** there was a session for families on person centred planning during carer's week. The person centred planning co-ordinator organised cakes, comfy chairs, and even aromatherapy and massage for the families who attended. She organised travel, and for some families, support for their son or daughter, and as people arrived their car parking or bus fare was immediately reimbursed (without having to fill forms in!) Four family members presented on the day, mainly telling stories about what person centred planning had meant to them. www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

Also in **Rochdale** an ELP course was run for family members and staff members. Families were Partners in Policymaking graduates. Part of the course involved sharing stories of 'morning routines'. As families shared what their mornings were like in terms of supporting their daughters and sons, staff began to have a new respect for the families. At the end of the course people were individually asked what had been most useful. Without exception every staff member and family member said that working alongside staff/families had given them a different, and much more positive understanding of each other. Contact: Margaret@familiesleadingplanning.co.uk

Merseyside Partners in Policymaking is an established family led organisation with a long history of investment in person centred planning and family leadership. The experience of Merseyside Partners has informed the development of Department of Health and Valuing People Support Team guidance. Merseyside Partners have brought person centred planning alive and made it real for many people by giving their time and sharing their experiences with other families and service providers both locally and nationally. Work in the north-west includes: the development of family mentors; supporting person centred planning with young people and families in transition from school; linking people with plans with those who can help implement them (for example via Direct Payments); support for planning “communities of practice”; joint training for families and service workers; delivery of awareness and values training. Contact Julia Erskine at: merseypartners@policymaking.fsnet.co.uk

In **Sefton**, Action Learning Sets (problem solving groups) meet every six weeks. There are two groups - one for person centred planning facilitators and one for managers who are seeking to work in increasingly person centred ways. Family mentors are part of both groups, and say that this has enabled them to have a different understanding of the challenges faced in services as well as contributing to people thinking differently about their work. Staff attending these action-learning sets have also enabled families to see possibilities in how they plan with and support other families. Contact: Sarah Bickerton: sarah.bickerton@social-services.sefton.gov.uk

In **Stockport** there is a training team of families, self-advocates and the person centred planning co-ordinator which puts on regular events for self-advocates, families, staff and managers to learn together about person centred planning. These events were designed with a team of family members, self advocates and staff, who agreed the format of the day. The content is a mixture of stories, exercises, short presentations and small group work. The day ends with everyone thinking about their own ‘next steps’. Up to 60 people attend each event, the numbers usually include people from other districts in the North West who have heard how successful these days are and who have twisted Julie’s arm to let them attend! For more information, Contact Julie.Bray@stockport.gov.uk

The family led organisation, **Wigan and Leigh Scope**, are investing in training and supporting family mentors, in partnership with Wigan Council, and an independent service provider called IAS. Caroline Tomlinson identified family members and some of her own staff to join a programme where they are training and supported to link up with other families. This enables families to gain knowledge about person centred planning by doing their own plan and their daughter or sons, and then gain experience in supporting families in planning by coaching families on courses. For more information on the accredited family mentors course contact caroline_tomlinson@hotmail.com

A national family-led organisation was launched in July 2004 to promote and develop families leading planning, and provide training and support by family members. Visit the **Families Leading Planning** website at www.familiesleadingplanning.co.uk to find out more. The website includes video clips, audio recordings and stories about families' direct experiences of leading plans.

Salford Social Services have employed a family member to lead on families leading planning. Margaret supports families to lead their own plans and explore how they can link them with service provision. She also provides a link between family leadership courses and person centred planning
Contact: Margaret@familiesleadingplanning.co.uk