

Learning creates discomfort as we...

- ...face the gap between what we say we value and what people actually experience
- ...find that the routine ways we do things don't work for people
- ...discover that our time is taken up with activities that keep us from listening to people and acting with them to make changes
- ...deal with the conflicts that come up because involved people have different ideas, values, and points of view
- ...feel the increasing uncertainty that comes from shifting power to the people who use services
- ...admit that we don't know all the answers and trusting others to help us to invent them
- ...experience tensions between implementing models prescribed from above and responding in a practical way to the needs people communicate

Ways to shift power towards people

- Direct payments
- Giving people a say in hiring staff
- Involving people with more experienced self-advocates as mentors and advocates
- Investing in the development of self-advocacy organizations; not asking too much too fast; allowing time for people to build skills and relationships
- Individualizing services
- Giving up jargon
- Providing support to people involved in consultation and governing groups

John O'Briens notes on 13 November 2000
"Celebrating the Ordinary" Workshop
David Towell and John O'Brien



The keys...

- ...building trust by taking the time people need to communicate their experiences and desires, listening carefully, and taking action on what we hear
- ...recognizing that people know what they need and want but can make mistakes in getting what they want; support people to learn from mistakes and difficulties rather than using risks or mistakes as an excuse for taking over people's lives
- ...realizing that people have a history that makes a difference: for example, some people who lived in institutions need safe places to tell their story; they may find it hard to say what matters to them when staff or carers are present; peer support is important
- ...inventing actions with people that will produce definite, often small, positive results for people instead of trying to implement large scale models on people
- ...providing the support people need; not getting in the way
- ...finding new partners and exchanges that expand available resources
- ...reduce fear so that people can speak honestly about what is working and what is not

Ways our organizations can support learning

- ... make time to reflect; were doing lots but not stopping to notice and draw lessons
- ...celebrate achievements
- ...invest in developing new skills and ways to understand
- ...make connections with others doing similar things
- ...look for things that work in other kinds of services and organizations
- ...put people with learning disabilities in teaching roles
- ...assist people to make plans for themselves before they negotiate with care managers
- ...develop our own ways of looking at our work with fresh eyes by asking : "What is life like for people?": invite outside teams to review, invite local people (committee members, media people, etc) to review; involve people with disabilities and staff from other local services
- ...define our own standards, assess ourselves; make and implement plans for improvement: don't wait for inspections
- ...provide feedback on the ways policies affect people's lives: what works and doesn't work about care management; what has changed for people because of "best value"?
- ...make connections to other agendas, like primary health care
- ...build up the courage to speak honestly