

Person Centred Thinking Tool 1

Appreciations

Although in many cultures older people are honoured and revered for their wisdom and experience, in western society – including the UK - this is often not the case. The famous poem, ‘Crabbit Old Woman’ reflects the way older people may be seen in hospital, and certainly how older people themselves feel themselves to be seen.

A key aspect of person centred practice is appreciation, and having a focus on what we like and admire about people. This is counter-cultural, and therefore focused attention is required to remind us how important it is, and the difference it can make.

What we appreciate about someone is crucial for developing and building a relationship with someone, so for staff it is a critical but often overlooked first step in getting to know someone and playing a part in the most intimate aspects of their life.

Appreciation can also help families and friends to re-discover their relationships with an older relative or neighbour, so is therefore important for maintaining and renewing the ties we all have with different people in our lives. This can be particularly helpful if someone has developed a dementia and has lost aspects of their memory or association with other people in their lives.

Appreciation then, is fundamental to person centred thinking and person centred support.



Asking ourselves what we appreciate about somebody can be a really good way of starting to work in this way - to taking a step back and seeing who that person is, and appreciating their qualities and strengths. This helps to counter our tendency to focus on how much support an older person needs.

Mary Groves

Mary says she has had a great life. She is 91 and has lived at Oakwood House for the past two years. She says;

'I have a lot of living to do yet. I'm not going anywhere until I'm at least 200!'

She is happy and content, and likely to burst into song when you least expect it. Every Saturday, her sister and niece, Susan and Agnes, visit. Mary loves these visits. Staff asked Susan and Agnes to consider

what they appreciate about Mary. Not many people are asked these questions about their relatives, and they were surprised and delighted to contribute.

This is what they came up with:

What We Appreciate About Mary

- A fantastic, cheeky sense of humour.
- An eternal optimist.
- Affectionate and loyal.
- Very nurturing.
- Sociable and caring.
- Infectious giggle.
- Very kind.
- Honest.
- Laughs so easily.
- The warmest person I know; you instantly care about her.
- Positive attitude and so funny.
- Always lifts my spirits.



- Feel better for talking with her.
- A smashing character.

Mary glows as this list is read to her. She uses it to introduce herself to new members of staff, and says that it makes her 'feel loved and valued.'

Florrie Ward

Florrie is 98 and has lived for 21 years in Tree House, a residential care home just outside Manchester. (*Gill Bailey explains how she got to know and worked with Florrie and the staff at Tree House*). When we first met, I noticed how isolated she appeared. The staff at the care home rarely talked to her. When I asked staff to tell me a little about Florrie, they did not seem to know who she was as an individual. She was another mouth to feed, someone else to clean and dress. The fact that she sat quietly in the lounge gave staff time to attend to other people.

After spending time with Florrie and getting to know her I discovered a gem of a woman, full of wonderful stories and humour. She captivated me with her tales about her life in service from 1920 to 1970.

Cooking and baking have given Florrie great joy over the years. She loved nothing more than to cook slap up meals and bake delicious cakes for the household where she worked. She will tell you she was 'married to her job' but had to give it up when 'her legs gave up on her'.

I began to gather information about what mattered to Florrie and how she wanted staff to support her. I worked with the staff team on this, and we wrote the information on one page (a one page profile). This helped staff see Florrie differently. Six months later, to develop the information further, I asked the team what they liked and admired about Florrie. Florrie

What we like and admire about Florrie

Her wonderful outlook on life!
Her ever present smile & the joy she brings.
Her total honesty & integrity.
Her stories
She is so charming
Her charisma & beautiful nature
I just love her.



Florrie's gifts

Her wonderful recipes that cook follows to make wonderful Victoria sandwich cake, Lemon Meringue pie & numerous others.
The squares she knits to make lovely warm blankets to keep us warm in the winter and for our grandchildren

Florrie

does not have any family, so the list reflects solely staff perceptions. We wrote this on a separate page, with a photo of Florrie, and it hangs in her bedroom. I was amazed at how the responses differed from those of six months ago. As a result of knowing what is important to her and how best to support her, staff now truly see Florrie for who she is.

One staff member said,

"I was really upset that after working at Tree Lodge for 9 years, I didn't even know that Florrie had led such an interesting life or worked as a housekeeper. We never get chance to talk because we would get in trouble if the chores don't get done".

How can this tool be useful?

First contact with a service

As outlined by these stories, the Appreciation tool and one page profiles can make a huge difference to both older people and their families, and to staff in getting to know someone and understand who they are – rather than just seeing an older person as a set of needs or problems to be sorted out. It can help to build trust and

confidence in the service for the older person and their family. It sends a very strong message that this person is important, that staff care about you, and that knowing you matters to us.

Moving to a new place

It is not just with services and staff that getting to know someone and their unique personality and story is important. Many older people move on retirement, if they are bereaved or if they suddenly become unwell or disabled. All of these circumstances may of course bring them into contact with services of some kind; but will often bring them into contact with new people in their lives - some of whom will have a specific role or purpose, which may be short term. If an older person is moving to a new kind of domestic arrangement - for example to supported or warden assisted housing or a care home, Appreciation and one page profiles can be a practical and insightful way of finding out what's important about and to an older person as the first step in building new relationships and friendships.

Assessment

At the beginning of any assessment for identifying support or other needs (and

therefore what services might help), one page profiles give a more complete picture of who someone is. In addition, this person centred thinking tool is an important aspect of assessment itself and can be built into the first or contact assessment (of the Single Assessment Process), and added to as additional information, reviews, etc are built up over time.

Planning support and care arrangements

Following assessment, because of the richer, personal information that this tool elicits, what follows in terms of support plans and care arrangements are more likely to be of direct relevance to the older person, shaped by their own version of events, circumstances, and their personal situation. It is really important to think through, with the older person and others in their network (or circle) how to translate the information from a one page profile into the kind of support that really makes a difference to that person's life, health and wellbeing.

Reviews

As part of a review, a one page profile will help the person and staff/others working with them, to focus on what is positive

as well as anything that may be difficult. Asking staff what they like and appreciate about someone helps to identify who has a personal connection to someone and who knows what is important to them.

Day to day activities

One page profiles used in tandem with the other tools in this book should also reflect the wider picture of someone's life, not just what they need to help them do certain tasks. It is important therefore to make sure that appreciation and one page profiles are not used in isolation from these wider aspects of the person's life, but instead deliberately set out to capture and record them.

Families, friends and neighbours

This is where friends, neighbours and family members have an important part to play, especially if the person has memory or orientation problems or a particular way of communicating that needs to be explained and understood. Involving family and friends in building this personal portrait of someone, alongside the older person, is a good way of establishing positive relationships with that person's network.