

## Person Centred Thinking Tool 2

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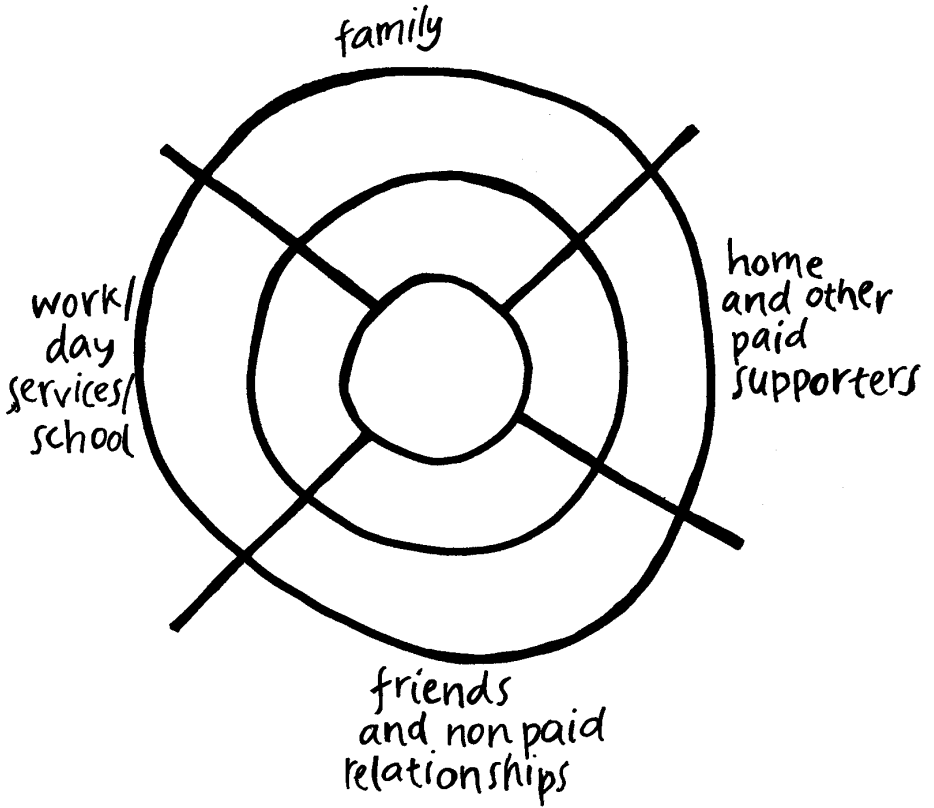
### Relationships

Relationships are everything. As Paul Tournier says,

*"It is impossible to over-emphasise the immense need people have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. No one can develop freely in this world and find a full life, without feeling understood by at least one person."*

A relationship map or circle is a good way of identifying and capturing who is important to an older person, to ensure that there is 'at least one person' and to actively seek to widen the connections and relationships that someone has. It can also identify the nature of those relationships i.e. how someone knows the people in their life, and in particular the one person or people who are important to them.

This can be represented in many ways; one commonly used approach was developed by Judith Snow and uses circles. The following is an adapted version.



## Jakob Kravits

Jakob is 78 and lives in a council flat in Portsmouth, but is originally from the Ukraine. He was a refugee in Germany before moving to the UK in the 1970s. English is his third language. His marriage to an English woman broke down many years ago, and it seems their child had died.

When we<sup>2</sup> first met Jakob he didn't know anyone in Portsmouth, and had no living relatives. Although he was not eligible for any social care service, he had been ringing the duty social work number several times a week, in great distress.

Jakob was very reluctant to leave his flat and was generally very anxious and unhappy. He talked about going to Leicester where he lived with his ex-wife - even though he did not know anyone who lived there. When social workers had visited him (following his calls) he had not wanted to pursue anything

that they suggested in the way of local support, such as the social services funded shopping service (to help him think about taking care of himself and eating well), the local Good Neighbours scheme (a volunteer run befriending scheme). Other than ringing the duty social work number, Jakob's only other contact was with his Tenancy Support worker. Using an adapted relationship circle helped Jakob to discover that he really wanted to meet people and make friends. He was lonely, isolated and very unhappy.

Jakob's Tenancy Support Worker, Julie, helped him to think about his relationships.

She was already involved in his life as she was helping him sort out some rent arrears and benefits claims. Julie was able to expand and adapt her job to include person centred approaches like Circles of Support. Jakob seemed very comfortable with this, because



*"This approach helped me to get further and faster with Jakob once the initial crisis (in this case, problems with finances) was sorted out."*

he had already begun to build a relationship with her. They had conversations about what he wanted in his life and how he might achieve that.

Jakob's life changed a lot over the next few months. He significantly expanded the number of people in his relationship circle. Equally importantly, where he was extremely reluctant beforehand to try anything, he began to try all sorts of things of his own volition.

Soon Jakob:

- Was going regularly to a new, monthly Age Concern 'Gentleman's Club', getting there on his own, on public transport.
- Was playing chess with a man he met there who shares his love of the game.
- Had visited the local D-Day museum with his new friend.
- Had attended a local voluntary organisation's Christmas lunch,

where he met more people who he wants to see again.

- Had offered to teach another man chess in return for computer lessons.
- Goes to his local pub occasionally on his own, for a quiet drink,
- Has asked to go on the waiting list for a Good Neighbours volunteer to visit him.

Julie also quickly no longer needed to see him as his Tenancy Support worker, because that role and its associated tasks was fulfilled. She had adapted her day-to-day work to include the Circles approach. Her involvement with Jakob did not continue for longer than it would have done in any case.

Jakob no longer calls the duty social work team and no longer seems worried about or interested in revisiting Leicester.



## Audrey Peters

Audrey, 73, had been widowed for 18 months when we first got to know her. Her daughter, who lived some distance away, was very worried that her mum had 'lost' her previous outgoing personality and sociability. Audrey and her husband had not long moved to Portsmouth (from South Wales) when he died.

At the beginning, she told us that some days she would get on any of the buses that stopped at the end of her road, and just stay on it in the hope that she would find someone to have a chat with that day.

Audrey worked with a Circles facilitator for five hours of visits. They began by developing Audrey's relationship circle. They had a focus for each visit or meeting that they held. Audrey particularly enjoyed being set a small task to report back on at the next meeting. Over five visits, these tasks

included: completing the mapping of her own circle; going to a local computer club for which her facilitator had found details; going to the local Methodist church and collecting a copy of their newsletter and details of services.

This approach seemed to help Audrey by enabling her to take several small steps that led cumulatively to large changes in her life. It also helped her facilitator to plan each visit, to start the conversation each time, and to make sure progress on Audrey's goals and wishes was kept on track.

By the end of these sessions Audrey told us she had:

- Joined a club.
- Made five new friends (including a potential friendship with her 'facilitator').
- Gone out twice to the theatre with some of these new

friends.

- Found and employed a regular gardener.
- Enjoyed a new craft session at the club and continued with it at home.
- Become much closer to her daughters, brother and sister-in-law.
- Made plans for a trip to the USA to see her Canadian based daughter.
- Had plans to find a Methodist church to worship at again.
- Had plans to learn to use a computer.
- Had plans to become a 'Good Neighbours' volunteer.

By the time her facilitator finished these five sessions their friendship and regard for each other was growing. They hoped to stay in contact even when the work relationship was over, and had already enjoyed a theatre trip together.

Audrey's circle has grown significantly. She has now added the following people to her relationship circle:

- Three friends at the Monday Club.
- A friendship with the local Mr KleenEzey.

- The gardener.
- Her facilitator.

Audrey also importantly identified that some of her existing (not close) relationships had changed. She had felt able to tell her brother and sister-in-law and her two daughters something from her past that she had kept secret for a long time. She also shared this secret with her facilitator, but did not want it shared with anyone else. She was willing to tell us, through her facilitator, that she felt much closer to those people as a result.

Audrey felt that the changes in her life were all down to the facilitator; but the facilitator was equally clear that nothing would have changed had Audrey not been willing to try and to do as much as she had. Audrey was very pleased when this positive message was shared with her, as she felt they should now both be shining our halos.

## How can this tool be useful?

Completing a relationship map can help to:

- Identify all the people in your own and someone else's life - and the range of different relationships you have with

them.

- Explore and understand the balance between family, friends and staff in someone's life. In particular relationship circles or maps can pinpoint when and where someone has moved from a situation of having had many people in their life, to maybe having one or two or only staff in their life - and the impact this may have had on that person.
- Improve or increase staff awareness - and family members - about who is in someone's life, who used to be in someone's life, the kinds of relationships that person has had before, and may or would like now.
- Discover relationships that could be developed - for example if someone has moved to live in a new area, or in supported (or sheltered) housing, or a care home - and they don't know anyone else there.
- This in turn can help to increase an older person's participation in community and family life.
- Understanding the network of relationships that an older person has (however small) can help family and friends to continue to be involved in that person's

life, by ensuring that those providing support (especially on a formal or intensive basis) are aware of and facilitate these relationships to thrive. This is especially important if circumstances change and the person's need for support increases or they move to supported accommodation.

- Give a much fuller picture of someone's life, which in turn can inform a support plan.
- Is an important first step in getting to know who is in an older person's life and what role they play, and could play in providing support and/or enabling them to have a good quality of life.

