



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission

# Person-Centred Practice



May 2025

## Evidence Summary



This is a summary of the [Evidence Review — Person-Centred Practice](#)<sup>\*</sup> undertaken by the NDIS Commission.

## Why did we do the review?

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) found people living in group homes need greater engagement to support their choice and control in the [Own Motion Inquiry into Aspects of Supported Accommodation in the NDIS](#)<sup>†</sup>. The NDIS Commission has developed actions to improve the quality and safety of services and maximise the choice, control and experience people with disability.

We did the review to:

- ◆ Understand what person-centred practice means.
- ◆ Understand the different ways that organisations and workers can be person-centred.
- ◆ Understand what person-centred practice has been tested that works well for people with disability.

## Six person-centred practice values<sup>1,2,3</sup>

1. Promoting quality of life and personal goals.
2. Recognising and facilitating what matters to that person.
3. Addressing psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs.
4. The right to make independent and informed choices, free from paternalism, undue influence or discrimination.
5. Enabling and supporting the person to participate in their care and life at the level they desire.
6. Having the education, information and support to make decisions.

## Five ways to be person-centred<sup>4</sup>

1. Honouring the person
2. Building relationships
3. Being strengths-based and capacity-focused
4. Facilitating participation, engagement and social inclusion
5. Being compassionate

<sup>\*</sup> [ndiscommission.gov.au/rules-and-standards/pcp-review](https://ndiscommission.gov.au/rules-and-standards/pcp-review)

<sup>†</sup> [ndiscommission.gov.au/resources/reports-policies-and-frameworks/inquiries-and-reviews/own-motion-inquiry-aspects#paragraph-id-6135](https://ndiscommission.gov.au/resources/reports-policies-and-frameworks/inquiries-and-reviews/own-motion-inquiry-aspects#paragraph-id-6135)

# How did we do the review?

Our researchers searched databases to find good quality studies and information about different views on person-centred practice and different ways to do person-centred practice. This information helped find good quality, rights-based resources, tools and guidance that might be helpful for NDIS providers, workers and people with disability to use.

We included research of any age with any type of disability, and looked at studies done in healthcare, nursing, mental health, aged care, disability and in group homes.

## Our findings

### **Finding 1:** **What does person-centred practice mean?**

Every person has their own specific needs and wants. A person-centred approach aims to personalise a person's supports to meet their needs in the context of their lives. The term 'person-centred' by its very nature suggests the person at the centre, focusing on their needs and circumstances. It is directed by the persons' needs and preferences based on their world, individual expression, values and beliefs.<sup>5,6</sup> Person-centred practice puts people and their families at the centre of decisions to plan services and supports.<sup>7</sup>

We found that person-centred practice is shown in the values organisations and workers have, and what people do every day.<sup>4,8,9</sup> As values, person-centred practice is based on equality and the self-determination of human beings. In everyday practice, it is about interacting with the person with dignity, compassion and respect.

### **Finding 2:** **What are the different ways to be person-centred in disability?**

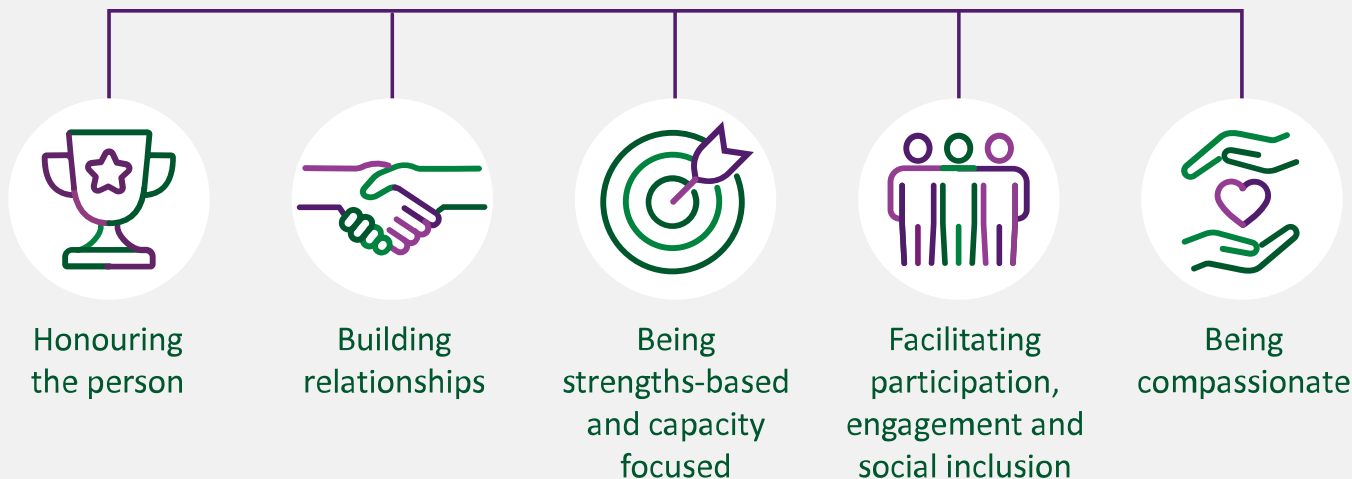
Being person-centred considers the persons' given environment, relationships, strengths, future plans and their rights.<sup>9</sup> This helps to deliver respectful and responsive services, supports, and outcomes for the person.<sup>9</sup>

There are five key ways to be person-centred that organisations and workers should consider.<sup>4</sup> They highlight that every person is unique, and that the persons' values, strengths, preferences, priorities and needs should be considered when providing services and supports.



### Person-centred practice:

Based on the values of equality and the self-determination of human beings



## 1. Honouring the person

Honouring the person sees the person as an individual who is the expert in their life.<sup>4</sup> The person is central to making decisions and choices about their life.<sup>4</sup> This requires knowing and understanding the person well and having meaningful engagement based on their personalities, history, lived experience, and interests.<sup>10,11</sup>

It is reflected as providing individualised supports based on interests, skills and needs by ensuring the person is involved in Person-Centred Planning.<sup>10,12</sup>

### How can you honour the person?

- ◆ Understand, respect and support the person as someone with their own unique perspective, history, needs, strengths and preferences;
- ◆ Get to know the person using a variety of methods and strategies;
- ◆ Assume the person has the capacity to self-determine, be involved and make decisions and choices such as in the design and provision of their services and supports;
- ◆ Acknowledge and advocate for the person as the expert in their life;
- ◆ Support and involve the person as much as possible to have control over their life in planning their services and supports.



## 2. Building relationships

Relationships between providers, workers, the person with disability and their families is an important way of being person-centred. Relationships help shape goals and give tailored supports that are right for the person, especially for people with intellectual disability or with limited verbal communication.<sup>2,3,12,13</sup> This requires knowing about a person's background and social context to support maintaining existing relationships and developing new ones.<sup>4,14</sup>

It is reflected in the process of Person-Centred Planning as a goal and outcome.

### How can you build relationships?

- ◆ Understand the important role of relationships to humans and therefore for the person;
- ◆ Support the development of new and existing relationships between the person and their family and friends, the workers and other paid and unpaid supports in their lives;
- ◆ Engage in friendly conversation that support connection and sharing between providers, workers, the person with disability and their families;
- ◆ Provide services that actively engage with and welcomes the family perspective.



## 3. Being strengths-based and capacity-focused

Being strengths-based and capacity focused is about the person being able to make decisions and having control by focusing on their strengths, interests, abilities and choices in a supportive, confidence-building environment.<sup>4,9,15</sup> This requires workers to be positive in their outlook towards the person regardless of the level of support they require, having high expectations of the person and a commitment to achieving positive outcomes without being limited by barriers.<sup>4,12</sup> This may mean redesigning a task to better suit the needs of the person.

It is reflected in the practice of Person-Centred Planning and participation in Active Support.

### How can you be strengths-based and capacity focused?

- ◆ Understand and recognise that the person has unique capabilities, strengths and abilities, and is not someone who needs to be fixed or managed;
- ◆ Support and encourage opportunities to use and retain the person's skills, strength and abilities;
- ◆ Assume the person has capacity and can contribute regardless of their support requirements, reflecting what is possible, not just what is available now.



## 4. Facilitating participation, engagement and social inclusion

Participation and engagement is about doing meaningful activities and jobs that a person chooses to do.<sup>4,10</sup> This requires knowing the person well to understand their personal preference and to maximise their potential while knowing the level of engagement support they need.<sup>1516</sup>

This is best reflected in Active Support and in the Person-Centred Planning processes and procedures that promote their involvement.

### How can you facilitate participation, engagement and social inclusion?

- ◆ Understand that participation and engagement in activities and social inclusion are important to health and wellbeing;
- ◆ Acknowledge and support the person's preferences to participate and to be engaged in activities of their interest, choice and strength;
- ◆ Encourage the person to be involved in their everyday community and using mainstream services;
- ◆ Provide opportunities for engaging in meaningful social activities and fulfilling relationships;
- ◆ Enable and support independence, choice and positive social networks.



## 5. Being compassionate

Being compassionate is about respecting personhood and human need for feelings of comfort, safety, reassurance, compassion, hope, freedom, belonging and empathy.<sup>4,16,17</sup> It can be shown in care that the person is being listened to, informed, understood, respected, responded to, involved, and that wishes are honoured.<sup>4,18</sup>

### How can you be compassionate?

- ◆ Respect and value the person as a human being, equal to one another, with needs of comfort, empathy, hope, compassion, love, belonging and safety;
- ◆ Support access to people, objects, items and activities that provide comfort;
- ◆ Consider the person with unconditional positive regard by accepting the person as they are in a nonjudgmental, caring way;
- ◆ Support the person to experience a sense of hope and purpose in life;
- ◆ Respond and communicate in a compassionate manner through mutually respectful relationships, care, empathy, and sensitivity to needs and values;
- ◆ Support the person to establish and maintain positive and loving relationships;
- ◆ Support the person to experience a sense of belonging and togetherness with others.

## Organisational factors of person-centred practice

An organisations' culture also plays an important role in how a service expresses person-centred practice and delivers outcomes.<sup>4</sup> A culture of an organisations includes their views, attitudes and beliefs about the person they support. It is also about how they choose to deliver services and supports, and their willingness to change and adapt services to suit the individual.<sup>19</sup> Person-centred organisations typically have cultures that reflect the five ways of being person-centred.

Person-centred practice can be successful if an organisation's culture supports workers to work in a person-centred way within its values.<sup>20,21</sup> This requires leadership modelling, commitment to practice development, continuous feedback, critical self-reflection, and engagement methods that enable all voices to be heard for service improvement.<sup>4,20</sup> Sufficient resources, such as training and reinforcement in person-centred practice, needs to be provided.<sup>21</sup>

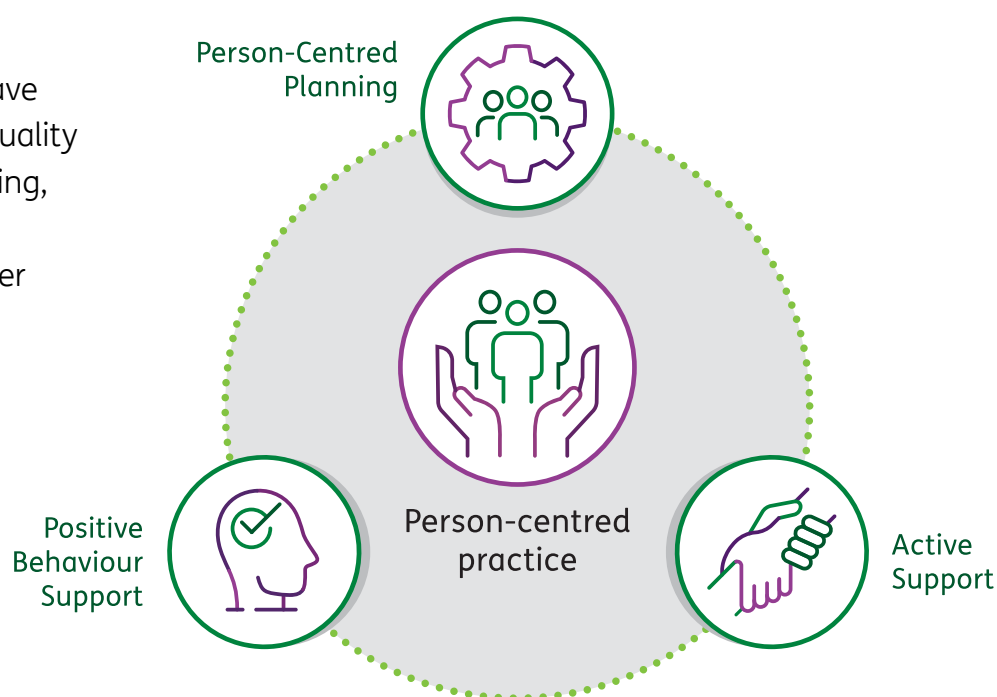
### How can you create a person-centred culture?

- ◆ Encourage and support a person-centric focus with leadership modelling, continuous feedback and reflective practice;
- ◆ Establish and promote functional relationships with the person, their family, workers and community;
- ◆ Promote and encourage management and leadership to work collaboratively with people with disability;
- ◆ Provide resources and organise work to support and empower workers to respond to the person's needs and desires;
- ◆ Use feedback and data to monitor and improve the quality of services.

## Finding 3:

### What person-centred practice works for people with disability?

There are three person-centred practices that have been found to improve quality of life, health and wellbeing, decrease behaviours of concern and achieve other significant outcomes for people with disability.



In disability, Person-Centred Planning, Active Support and Behaviour Support are examples of rights-based, individualised person-centred practice in action. Person-Centred Planning, Active Support, Behaviour Support complement each other and when used consistently it can significantly increase the engagement, choice, control and social inclusion of people with disability, particularly for people with intellectual disability. This can contribute to better quality of life, health and wellbeing.<sup>1,22,23,24,25</sup>



## Person-Centred Planning

Person-Centred Planning is a way to support people with disability to plan their future and organise their support structures.<sup>25,26</sup> There are different ways to do this but all focus on including people with disability in discussions and decision-making to support the person to build their quality of life based on choices, preferences, shared power, rights and inclusion<sup>25</sup> and develop ‘meaningful life goals based on his or her strengths and talents, utilizing individual, natural, and creative supports and services.’<sup>26</sup>



## Active support

Active Support helps people with intellectual disability, particularly in supported accommodation services settings, to participate in meaningful activities and social relationships in everyday opportunities.<sup>27,28</sup> It is defined and practiced as ‘an enabling relationship by which staff and other carers provide graded assistance to ensure success’.<sup>29</sup> This means assistance is tailored to the needs, pace and preferences of the person to be included and have more control over their lives.<sup>29</sup>



## Behaviour support

Behaviour Support, also referred to as Positive Behaviour Support, seeks to develop an understanding of the reasons why a person may display behaviours of concern, understanding that the behaviour is functional to the person and often a means of communication or exerting control in their life.<sup>30</sup> It includes an ongoing process of assessment, intervention, and data-based decision making<sup>31</sup> to find evidence informed strategies to reduce the impact of behaviours of concern enhance the person’s quality of life.<sup>30,31,32,33,34</sup>

When Active Support is used in daily practice in conjunction with Behaviour Support it can achieve therapeutic effect.<sup>29</sup>

## What do the findings mean?

The evidence review and resource map is intended to assist NDIS providers with developing and implementing an evidence informed position on person-centred practice within its organisation. People with disability and their families and carers may also use this information to understand what person-centred practice should look like.

The findings highlight the benefits to people with disability on their participation, engagement and wellbeing. There is also evidence of positive outcomes for workers in increased job satisfaction, job commitment, and in turn enhanced high-quality individualised supports.<sup>4,2,18</sup> It identifies core principles and practical approaches to embedding person-centred practice at the individual worker level and organisation level.

If person-centred practice is to be achieved and sustained when working with people with disability, attention needs to be paid to:

1. Ensuring strong leadership to support the development and maintenance of person-centred practice and cultures in the organisation.
2. Ensuring that systems and practices are in place to achieve the implementation of person-centred initiatives.
3. Ensuring that people with disability, families and workers are involved, well supported and educated in what person-centred supports are.

By reinforcing person centred practice in disability services, NDIS providers can ensure more responsive, empowering and effective supports.

## Person-Centred Practice — Resource Map

A [Person-Centred Practice Resource Map](#)<sup>\*</sup> is available with different good quality tools and guides to help NDIS providers and workers understand and use person-centred practice

when delivering supports and services. People with disability and their families and carers may also use this to find person-centred resources that work best for them.

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<sup>\*</sup> [www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/files/pcp-resource-map.pdf](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/files/pcp-resource-map.pdf)

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