Some people work toward compliance, making us jump through hoops to satisfy some sense of audience. Some people work instead toward connection, teaching us how to want a place in our own lives.

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ACTIVE SUPPORT: ORGANISATIONAL PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Active Support: Organisational preparation and implementation

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Introduction

Active Support is a systematic approach to assisting people with disability to become engaged in a range of everyday activities that are meaningful to them and enhance their quality of life. It is a person-centred approach, in that the support provided is individualised according to the interests and needs of each person supported. Furthermore, it is an evidence-based approach to providing support. Over the past 30 years research has consistently demonstrated that where Active Support is implemented, people with disability do become more involved in everyday activities, acquire new skills, show improvements in mental health and show positive changes in their behaviour. Importantly, Active Support can benefit people with a range of support needs. However, some of the greatest successes have been observed when it has been applied to the support of people with extensive to pervasive support needs and/or severe challenging behaviour (Stancliffe, Jones, Mansell, & Lowe, 2008).

Jones and colleagues (2010) define Active Support as a service model ‘designed to make sure that people who need support have the chance to be fully involved in their lives and receive the right range and level of support to be successful’ (p. 3). Essentially, Active Support involves training staff in specific skills and procedures to focus their work on the direct support of people in meaningful activity, and to establish formal systems that allow for the ongoing evaluation and modification of service provision informed by measurable outcomes for individuals.

Active Support provides both a philosophical and a structural framework for organisations and their direct support staff. These various aspects of Active Support at an operational level are summarised by Mansell and colleagues (2002) in terms of:

• Everyday activities – People with disability are offered a wide range of everyday activities to become involved in, both in their home and out in the community.

• Teamwork – Support staff work together as a team to generate ideas and plan for available opportunities. This requires staff to plan activities and
collaborate to determine who will do what and when, to ensure that opportunities are not missed and that support is provided in a consistent way.

- Recognising every moment has potential – Staff recognise that the people receiving support are able to engage in parts of every task or activity, through appropriately tailored support to achieve completion of individual parts.
- Outcome measures – Staff closely monitor and record the level of engagement in everyday activities of the people being supported and the form and level of support required to achieve maximum engagement. Regular person-centred meetings provide staff with opportunities to monitor their own service achievements and update colleagues on how to implement new strategies.

Whether to address the needs of people with high support needs, people with behaviours of concern, or people with disability more generally, to sustain the changes made at the individual level the organisation as a whole must look at systems and procedures to ensure they are compatible with Active Support. Personnel practices that encourage staff development and teamwork at all levels are essential, to ensure an environment that is knowledgeable and skilled, and which promotes opportunity, choice and respect for human rights. A developmental and action learning focus in which the organisation is committed to obtaining important measures and holding itself accountable to further and continuous growth is also essential to keep Active Support fresh and viable.

**Purpose of this guide**

There are a number of good resources already available to support the professional development of staff in Active Support. However, this guide is the first to specifically address organisational and management issues relating to the establishment, implementation and continuous growth of Active Support at an organisational level.

To date, organisations have typically drawn on either one or a combination of two training resources. The training package developed by Jones et al. (1996/2010) focuses on the practical application of the Active Support
principles and includes designs for the delivery and recording of meaningful activities and opportunities. The training materials developed by Mansell et al. (2004) place an emphasis on staff culture and the philosophical values behind Active Support. Both training packages emphasise opportunities for staff to develop specific skills to enable the planning, delivery and evaluation of support for people with disability, and both emphasise the importance of delivering these professional development opportunities using structured workshops conducted in conjunction with on-shift mentorship programs. Furthermore, details of how to conduct mentorship programs, sometimes referred to as interactive training, are described in Toogood (2010).

However, much more than just staff training is needed to establish and sustain Active Support. Indeed, Active Support is much more than just an approach to staff training and direct service delivery. It is both a philosophy and a system to advance major organisational development in services supporting people with disability. Consequently, there needs to be a well thought through organisational approach, and a soundly established organisational infrastructure. Discussion among service providers in Australia and elsewhere has highlighted that the different cultures and available resources within support services has resulted in the widely varied implementation of Active Support across organisations. Successful organisations will often have a certain level of readiness prior to engaging in Active Support. Much of the background information needed by organisations and the practical details of what needs to be done to prepare for, implement and sustain Active Support to date has been passed by word of mouth via various trainers, or discovered by organisations as they go about the implementation process – often when unforeseen challenges have been encountered.

This guide has been prepared to help fill that information gap, with respect to the organisational issues that affect the success of Active Support. Without being prescriptive with respect to how Active Support is to be implemented, the guide provides a menu of implementation options that will support organisations to adapt Active Support to their own settings and cultures, while still remaining consistent with the procedural integrity necessary to achieve the well established person-centred and evidence-based outcomes associated with Active Support.
As this resource is focused entirely on how to implement Active Support at an organisational level and how to go about setting up services and preparing individuals for the implementation of Active Support, it is not intended to replace the existing training packages. Rather it complements these training packages by supporting boards of management and service managers to prepare and plan for a consistent service response prior to commencing staff training, during the implementation of Active Support, and when embedding and sustaining it within their organisation.

For further reading on how to implement staff training in person-centred Active Support, we recommend reading:

- *Person-centred Active Support: A multi-media training resource for staff to enable participation, inclusion and choice for people with learning disabilities* (Mansell, Beadle-Brown, Ashman, & Ockenden, 2004)
- *Active Support: A handbook for supporting people with learning disabilities to lead full lives* (Jones et al., 2010)
- *Interactive training: Supporting people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities in meaningful activity* (Toogood, 2010).

For further reading on sustaining practices, we recommend:


**Development of the guide**

This guide is the result of a collation of information and views gathered from service providers and researchers who have had direct experience of implementing Active Support. Leading practitioners in Active Support from government and community sector disability service providers participated in this project. Many came from the Active Support community of practice at Melbourne, Australia; however, participation extended to at least one provider from each Australian state. International expertise and feedback was sought through existing professional links with the Tizard Centre, the Welsh Centre for Learning Disability and the University of Minnesota.
Contributors have included:

- Researchers – involved in developing and trialling techniques, consolidating and disseminating information, and monitoring ongoing service developments
- Trainers – involved in developing curriculum and providing both classroom-based training and on-shift mentorship for direct support staff
- Managers and project officers – with key roles in policy and resource development, and service review; involved in turning theory into practice and evaluating the impact of Active Support
- Team leaders, coordinators and supervisors – involved in forming and mentoring teams to deliver effective Active Support (working from the ground up).

The development of this resource was guided by an iterative, action research approach (with ethics approval provided by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC 145/09). Information gathered from practical experience has informed the development of the resource, grounding it in the reality of current service practice. Themes were drawn out of interviews, discussions, focus group meetings, case studies and anecdotes that highlighted positive and negative experiences, for replication, adaptation, or avoidance by other organisations.

This evidence-based resource guide for organisational preparation and implementation is available as a printed document or as an electronic resource for disability service providers. It is expected that this resource will be of benefit to both government and community sector service providers, and will provide a firm foundation to support the successful implementation of Active Support.

**Using this guide**

Active Support is not simply an addition to the services an agency provides. It involves much more than simply a one-off staff training program. Active Support involves a comprehensive program of cultural change and systemic realignment within an organisation. It will affect many stakeholders: people supported, front-line staff, managers and those with executive and
governance responsibilities. Family members might also be affected, as they see their relative supported in a distinctly different way, as staff focus on doing activities with the person, rather than simply for or to the person they support. Often it will involve working with external trainers, other experienced service providers and researchers. This guide is designed to alert the organisation to these many facets of Active Support and to assist in navigating the labyrinth of implementation.

Service providers might be reading this guide for various reasons. Your organisation might have heard about Active Support and want to know more about whether they are ready to implement. Your organisation might have started the process and since discovered that there is a lot more to Active Support than first thought. Your organisation might be quite experienced in the implementation of Active Support and is interested in continuing to learn from others regarding best practices in implementation. This guide has been designed with each of these potential audiences in mind.

This guide has been divided into five main sections. Each describes a different phase of the Active Support implementation process:

1. Assessment of organisational readiness
2. Implementation at the organisational level
3. Assessment of team/site readiness
4. Implementation with each team/site
5. Embedding and sustaining.

In reading through the phases in this guide, it is recommended that consideration be given to how an organisation can adopt and adapt various processes for successful implementation. In addition to suggested phases and processes of implementation, this guide includes suggested roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders involved in each identified phase. Many of the processes within this guide have suggested key stakeholder/s to be involved. However, it is recognised that organisations vary in size and capacity. Therefore, it is suggested that the reader consider aligning existing organisational roles with the positions outlined in this guide. It is also important to note that some organisations have discovered the need to
create new positions that are dedicated to, or are at least substantially focused on, Active Support implementation.

Information has primarily been gathered from Australian organisations. However, most principles and aspects outlined can be readily applied to service providers in other countries, where community-based support for people with disability is the service paradigm of choice.

Key terms

In conversation with the many contributors to this guide, it was clear that a variety of terms to describe similar constructs in the provision of Active Support and related services were being used. These terms varied across services and funding jurisdictions. We therefore provide below a list of terms that frequently occurred in discussion, and that often required clarification among contributors. There are different definitions available in the literature for each of the terms. However, those provided in the current guide reflect how the contributors conceptualised the terms in relation to the implementation of Active Support.

**Active Support** – A person-centred and evidence-based system of support designed to promote the engagement of people with disability, especially those with extensive to pervasive support needs, in meaningful everyday activities that enhance their health, wellbeing and quality of life. Active Support is characterised by individualised, person-centred activities that are planned (though not to the exclusion of spontaneous or opportunistic activities), systematically implemented, and evaluated in an ongoing way as part of a structured organisational quality assurance system.

**Advanced Practitioner** – A person within the organisation providing support who is, by formal qualification or professional reputation, recognised as having knowledge and skills to both successfully implement Active Support in a way that positively impacts the lives of people with disability, and to train and mentor others in the provision of effective Active Support.

**Behaviour Support Plan** – A formal guide for the people who support a person with disability who uses behaviours of concern (challenging behaviours). The information gathered and observations made in a functional behaviour assessment and other assessments inform the plan by
identifying the best possible practices in reducing/eliminating the use of maladaptive behaviour. The Behaviour Support Plan may include ways to change the environment to support the person, when and how to promote skill development, and what to do in an emergency.

Cost–benefit analysis – An approach to evaluating service provision that includes both a comparison of the cost of either implementing or not implementing a given strategy and an examination of the potential outcome of either scenario. Costs and benefits can include client outcomes, financials, infrastructure, staffing and values-based/cultural considerations.

Direct support staff – Front-line staff, including front-line managers, who work to support people with a disability, sometimes referred to as disability support workers, or disability support professionals.

Evidence-based practice – Practices and techniques that have been consistently demonstrated to be effective, through the findings of scientific research, consistent practitioner experience or widely expressed views from the people supported.

Gap analysis – Methods for comparing existing systems, processes and practices with alternative systems, processes and practices, and identifying what will be required to achieve maximum potential.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) – Measures of organisational success, based on what is most important for the organisation to achieve in order to attain its goals and fulfil its mission. They are constructed in ways that can be easily understood by staff and which allow for the collection of objective data to substantiate their achievement. For example, frequency of client participation in domestic, community or social activities, or measures of client satisfaction with their participation in such activities, could all form the basis of KPIs for an organisation implementing Active Support.

Organisational planning – The process of establishing goals or targets for an organisation and the process of using various planning systems to identify how organisational goals will be achieved, and measuring if they have been achieved.

Outcome measures – Tools used to assess change over time in performance, ability or function, that are intended to reflect change in meaningful areas of a person’s life. Measures can be:
• Standardised – A measure that has been subjected to thorough empirical analysis, with established validity (i.e. it measures what it claims to measure) and reliability (i.e. its results can be trusted on repeated occasions and under various conditions of use). There will usually be normative data available from previous studies that allow for meaningful comparisons between current results and previous results that are said to be representative of a typical sample. Examples of standardised tools include some measures of adaptive behaviour or mental health status.

• Nonstandardised – A measure that might provide a guide to assessing what is currently occurring but for which the results are typically open to subjective interpretation. There is at best a limited capacity to compare results with those obtained in other situations or settings. Examples of nonstandardised tools include some checklists derived within organisations for quality assurance or measuring compliance with organisational procedures or government standards.

*Person-centred* – A stance or approach that is characterised by primary attention being placed on ascertaining a person’s individual aspirations, preferences and needs, and then working with the person in ways that are consistent with the person’s expressed or implied priorities.

*Person supported* – A person in receipt of a disability support service. It may refer to someone in receipt of Active Support or soon to be receiving Active Support.

*Positive support strategies* – Supports which are responsive to a person’s needs and that use encouragement, empowerment, validation, recognition of strengths, and skill development as tools for helping each person maximise their potential and achieve their goals.

*Process measures* – Tools used to assess change over time within organisational systems and performance that are intended to reveal the performance, productivity and efficiency of the practices in place.

*Quality of life* – Quality of life is a theoretical construct used to assess and describe how people experience their everyday lives and anticipated future prospects. It can be considered in terms of both objective and subjective factors. Objective factors are measured through culturally relevant indices (e.g. health, housing, education, employment, income, relationships).
Subjective factors are measured through questions of personal satisfaction or personal wellbeing.

**Strategic plan** – The organisation’s process for defining its overall strategy or direction and decision-making regarding how resources will be allocated in pursuit of achieving the strategy within a determined timeframe.

**Support needs** – The type of support required by a person in relation to duration, frequency and intrusiveness of that support:
- Intermittent: Support which is only required occasionally
- Limited: Support which is time and occasion specific
- Extensive: Support which is needed over an extended period of time
- Pervasive: Support which is frequent, intensive and likely to be life-sustaining.

**Training needs analysis** – A process to identify what to include in training and why. It will usually include documenting what the clients of the service need, and what staff can currently do in response to client needs. The currency of staff skills will also be considered, especially where some skills require regular practice and updating.
Chapter 1: Assessment of Organisational Readiness

Thorough assessment of organisational readiness is recognised as essential for any organisation intending to implement Active Support. It includes the process of assessing existing culture, systems, procedures and resources. This phase provides the information needed by board members, executives and senior managers, so that they can be confident in making the decision to go ahead with the implementation of Active Support. Organisations have spent anywhere between three and twelve months of reflection and planning prior to embarking on the implementation of Active Support.

Depending on the organisation and type of service/s considered, the readiness assessment process will typically involve asking a number of questions. Some of the answers might arise from discussion among staff. Other answers might require more detailed investigation and analysis.

This section of the guide addresses the following:

1. Is there evidence within the organisation to suggest an existing alignment with Active Support?
2. Does the organisation know enough about Active Support?
3. Which of the organisation’s existing characteristics are consistent or inconsistent with the implementation of Active Support?
4. Do strategic and organisational plans need to be developed or adjusted?
5. Are there funding options available?
6. Is the organisation really ready?
1.1 Is there evidence within the organisation to suggest an existing alignment with Active Support?

At the very early stages of implementation, there might only be a few people within the organisation that have heard of Active Support and are determined to adopt it. However, for the successful implementation of Active Support it is essential that all board members, executives and senior managers understand and want to commit to the Active Support model of service delivery. Presenting a proposal with strong evidence suggesting that the natural progression for the organisation is to adopt and implement Active Support will be key to engaging all relevant stakeholders. Central to this is presenting Active Support as the means by which the organisation can translate its core values and mission into daily practice. Building evidence in support of the case in favour of adopting Active Support may include thinking about existing values and systems, seeking feedback from service users, auditing staff skill, and much more. The following questions have been posed to help in building the case in support of a shift towards Active Support:

- **Values and systems** – Do the existing philosophies, values and systems of the organisation align with Active Support? How might vision statements and existing policies align with the concept of maximising the involvement of the people supported in the full range of everyday activities that need to be undertaken around the home and in the community?

- **Service user feedback** – Does feedback from the people supported, their families and direct support staff indicate a positive outlook for services to employ person-centred practices, to increase engagement in activities around the home and in the community?

- **Staff** – Are staff wanting (or needing) to enhance their professional skills in contemporary practices that support people to live quality lives? Do staff feel good about person-centred practices? Do staff function well as a team, and have good coordination and communication?

- **Environmental capacity** – How much of the current living environment/s supports independence (e.g. accessibility)? What capacity is there to adapt and enhance the environment to better meet the needs
of the people being supported (e.g. maximising accessibility to all areas of a house or service facility, providing adaptive equipment and other aids to support participation in the full range of activities associated with their daily life)?

- **Data collection** – Is there an existing culture of accountability to the people supported (and their families) with respect to person-centred outcomes, and are there mechanisms in place to ensure this accountability? Do staff and managers understand and value the importance of effective documentation? If not, how will Active Support change this? If so, how does the organisation do this and how will it be beneficial to Active Support?

- **Partnerships** – Has the organisation been approached to work in partnership with other organisations, to share information and resources? Might there be opportunities to work in collaboration with other service providers (especially those who share the support of particular people supported by the organisation – such as a day support or accommodation service) or universities?

- **Time lines** – Does the organisation have the time to progress through the various stages and processes of implementing Active Support? Are there any other major priorities that could compete for limited resources across the time lines considered?

There are various opinions concerning how resource intensive the initial stages of implementing Active Support are. Some organisations believe it is crucial to ensure that there are no other major initiatives in progress or occurring simultaneously (e.g. relocating people to new living arrangements, or implementing a new person-centred planning system). However, there have been organisations that have successfully implemented Active Support while simultaneously undergoing an organisational restructure and found that it worked to their benefit as a leading opportunity to initiate a cultural shift towards congruency with the goals and activities of Active Support. If the organisation is going through changes and it is still believed that this is the best time to implement Active Support, be sure to include and consider all changes in any strategic plans and time lines to avoid discovering too late that there are insufficient resources – money, time and human energy.
1.2 Does the organisation understand enough about Active Support?

While there might be evidence of a potential alignment between the organisation and Active Support, it is important to ask if the organisation knows enough to make an informed decision about adopting Active Support. Determining if board members, executives and senior managers know enough about Active Support in order to make a commitment to its implementation is an important next step. The knowledge and commitment of board members, executives and senior managers will be essential to establishing and sustaining the necessary internal drivers in the organisation.

Here it should be noted that the organisation might already have a number of the key internal drivers in place and that is why the organisation is considering Active Support as a practice framework. However, there might be a number of additional internal drivers that need to be established prior to the implementation of Active Support.

As part of the process of determining the knowledge and commitment of key leaders in the organisation, it might be productive to:

• Discuss among the board and senior staff the reasons why the organisation is motivated to implement Active Support (e.g. person-centred principles, evidence-based practices, quality of life for the people supported, a distinguishing market edge for the organisation)

• Develop a vision statement that represents why the organisation strongly believes in the principles of Active Support

• Invite a speaker (a researcher or fellow service provider from another organisation) to assist the board and all senior managers develop their understanding of the research and practice evidence in support of implementing Active Support, what it can achieve and its limitations as a practice framework

• Provide reading material, such as journal articles and selected book chapters, to key people in the organisation and then follow up with them to talk about what they have read

• Visit other organisations that have already implemented Active Support, and discuss with them what they have achieved and how they have gone about the process of implementing and embedding Active Support.
Importantly, there needs to be a shared vision of what Active Support can offer and why the organisation is proceeding with Active Support. Where Active Support is only understood by a limited number of people and/or seen as one individual’s pet project (or bandwagon), success is unlikely, or at best will be limited and short-lived.

1.3 Which of the organisation’s existing characteristics are consistent or inconsistent with the implementation of Active Support?

Once it has been established that Active Support will be adopted, management and senior staff need to consider the changes that will need to take place. Directions with regard to the necessary adjustments to be made within the organisation are discussed throughout this guide. To ensure that existing quality services, or services which might be struggling, flourish when adopting Active Support practices, the organisation needs to conduct a preliminary gap analysis of existing structures and services to identify where values and systems might or might not align with those of Active Support. This gap analysis will provide greater insight into how the organisation will plan for implementation, address financial needs, outline expected time frames and identify which people are to be involved at various phases of the implementation.

The greater the common ground or capacity to accommodate Active Support within the organisation’s existing values and systems, the easier will be the transition to Active Support. While finding no inconsistencies would lead to the smoothest of transitions, it is inevitable that there will be some inconsistencies. It is how the organisation recognises and forecasts the shifts required that will determine the ease of transition. However, it is important to remember that it will be an ongoing process to review and identify service gaps, and to appropriately plan for changes as they arise.

Items to address in a gap analysis might stem from the questions that have already been raised when identifying the body of evidence existing within the organisation in support of adopting Active Support (phase 1.1); and ensuring the organisation understands Active Support (phase 1.2). Further aspects to be
addressed in a gap analysis might be guided by the information found in the remainder of this guide. The other phases of the guide have been developed to stimulate thinking about questions, opinions and suggestions of various ways in which an organisation might be challenged during the implementation of Active Support, and ways to overcome such difficulties. More specifically, the phases that follow address areas of possible concern such as realigning values, updating systems and processes, forecasting staffing needs, facilitating consumer awareness, gaining and analysing feedback, and determining how to measure success and enhance environmental capacity.

1.4 Do organisational plans need to be developed or adjusted?

Before introducing Active Support to the rest of the organisation, members of the organisation’s board of management, the CEO and senior staff need to review their organisation’s current strategic plan and identify any modifications necessary to successfully adopt Active Support as the overarching framework for service delivery. It is critical to be aware that the successful implementation of Active Support requires more than just a training activity for front-line staff. It involves a comprehensive organisational change management process that will affect all levels of the organisation and require a considerable focus and commitment of resources.

The information in this section of the guide could be useful when evaluating the extent to which the organisation’s existing strategic and operational plan might be conducive to the implementation of Active Support, and where review and realignment might be necessary at higher levels within the organisation prior to embarking on staff training and implementation at the level of a team or operational site.

Here, a gap analysis will provide much of the information necessary to develop an implementation plan. The implementation plan will provide details of what needs to be done over the following 12–24 months: the specific changes that will occur, when they will occur, what resources will be required and who will be responsible for overseeing specific actions.
1.5 Are there funding options available?

During the planning phase, it is necessary to consider the financial viability of Active Support within the organisation. To do this, a budget will need to be developed and a cost–benefit analysis conducted to understand and consider the costs involved in implementing Active Support, and of not implementing Active Support. The organisation needs to understand what is likely to come about from an investment in Active Support and what the organisation is likely to forego if the choice is made not to implement Active Support. The organisation’s finance staff should be engaged to assist with this task. Those responsible for negotiating the organisation’s funding and service agreement with any statutory authority should also be involved at this point, especially when considering how Active Support might help the organisation to meet service or performance standards associated with funding agreements.

As the successful implementation of Active Support will rely on financial viability of the organisation, it is important that different funding options are explored. Consider all avenues, both government grants and philanthropic initiatives. Having an internal action plan and budget outlined (as noted above) will assist in identifying the type and amount of funding required. It will also provide the basis for any funding application to government or a philanthropic trust.

When reviewing the available funds and a possible funding submission, it can be advantageous to consider strategic partnerships, such as with like-minded organisations that might share an interest in providing similar support models (e.g. a residential service might like to partner with a day support service to promote continuity of support provided to specific individuals). A partnership with a local university might assist with the rigour of the evaluation, and even involve students in the gathering and evaluation of data as part of a longer term workforce development strategy.

Here it should be noted that the pursuit of funding and the associated activities are not just about the monetary outcomes. Making applications for funding to government and philanthropic trusts can be one way of enhancing community awareness of the organisation’s vision and future
direction. Preparing applications in partnership with other organisations can help to bridge service divides. Involving researchers and university students can help to enrich the future workforce for the sector.

1.6 Is the organisation really ready?

All organisations involved in the preparation of this guide reported some degree of uncertainty at the time of implementation, as to whether their organisation was really ready to move forward and commit to Active Support. A few observations for reflection include:

- Where there are doubts, it is suggested to have a pilot group, which can provide an opportunity to reflect and review before making any necessary changes and rolling out to the rest of the organisation.

- Organisations have spent anywhere between three and twelve months of reflection and planning, prior to commencing the implementing of Active Support.

- The implementation of Active Support does itself involve a process of questioning organisational values and procedures, affirming some and realigning others. Therefore it is not necessary, nor should staff feel the need, to have everything completed prior to commencement, or indeed in the first few months of implementation.

- Deciding on the time to begin implementation involves taking ownership of Active Support: ‘It is going to be embedded and we are going to have a good time doing it!’

- Although it is important to reflect on and build organisational capacity prior to the implementation of Active Support, waiting for the ideal time could mean never trying Active Support. Sometimes you just have to give it your best possible start and build from there.
Chapter 2: Implementation at the Organisational Level

Once a commitment to implementing Active Support has been made, disseminating information about and engendering enthusiasm for Active Support throughout the organisation is the next step to take. Guided by the organisation’s plan/s, time lines and budgets, now is the time to begin preparing for the rollout of Active Support by engaging in conversation with staff, the people receiving support and their families. Being clear about roles and responsibilities and having a clear communication strategy will be essential to success.

This section of the guide addresses the following:

2.1 Are roles and responsibilities identified and understood?
2.2 Who to appoint as Advanced Practitioner/Active Support Champion?
2.3 How might the existing organisational culture support the implementation of Active Support, or what changes might be necessary?
   2.3.1 Corporate knowledge
   2.3.2 Documentation
   2.3.3 Outcomes and process measurements
   2.3.4 Training and induction materials
2.4 What type of communication materials to prepare?
2.5 How best to disseminate the information?
2.1 Are roles and responsibilities identified and understood?

Reading through this guide provides a starting point to understand the various tasks that are necessary to implement Active Support and the people who need to be involved with each of these tasks. Identifying the roles and responsibilities of each person involved in the process can be a key determinant in the success of any implementation of Active Support.

It is advisable to establish a dedicated project team. This team will provide a mechanism for continuous improvement during the implementation process. It can provide a forum for strategic decision-making, delegation of responsibility, receiving reports, monitoring progress and preparing updates for senior management and the board. As noted earlier, if Active Support is viewed as only the responsibility (or bandwagon) of a single person, success will be at best limited. When forming the project team, the organisation might also identify a need to second existing staff or recruit new staff, with specific skills, to fill key positions and provide the human resources necessary to implement Active Support.

Some of the key issues for the project team to consider when establishing roles and responsibilities include:

- Remembering to outline the roles and responsibilities of everyone, especially the roles of the CEO and board members. Effective leadership from the most senior levels of the organisation is as important as the development of skills for front-line staff. Here it will be important to plan for and be explicit as to how various levels of staff, from board members to direct support workers, will be present and participate in the implementation of Active Support.

- Never leave responsibilities to chance as they may be missed and cause more issues in the long-term. It is better to over-determine roles and responsibilities and then to revise them, than to under-determine and leave out key issues. These responsibilities then need to be formally considered during individual staff review sessions.

- Outcomes and deliverables for staff are easier to achieve when they are detailed at the outset. Generally, people also feel more confident when...
they are clear about what is expected of them, and what they can expect others to do as part of the bigger picture.

• Set the appropriate levels of delegation for decision-making, as near to the point of service delivery as possible, though it is important to take into account the skills and support needs of those who will be expected to take responsibility. So too, establish clear lines of supervision and management.

• Documenting roles and responsibilities helps to determine the training required by staff and the appropriate forms of supervision and support that need to be available at different levels throughout the organisation. For each specified responsibility ask the questions: what knowledge and skills does the person need to exercise this responsibility; what knowledge and skills do they already have; what professional development might they need; and what support or supervision arrangements are necessary to maintain safety, accountability and quality?

• Organisations collectively believe that regardless of title (e.g. coordinator, trainer, coach, mentor, Champion, or Advanced Practitioner) at least one person in the organisation needs to have a particular focus on Active Support, to achieve a successful implementation.

• As both personnel and the requirements of different roles can change over time, be sure to build in regular reviews of roles and responsibilities with opportunities for mentorship and to act up in senior roles.

Consider the following suggested basic levels of responsibility for existing staff:

• Front-line staff – Provide support to people using the Active Support approach; document activities; day-to-day decision-making about resources and approaches; record and enter data every shift; engage in reflective practice using data and personal experience; contribute to program development through regular team review sessions and reviews of each person supported; and support each other, especially new and casual staff, by providing advice and where necessary instruction on how things need to be done
• Coordinator, team leader, supervisor – Work directly with the people supported and their families to ensure they understand what Active Support is designed to achieve and to resolve questions or issues they might have; mentor staff in the implementation of Active Support; provide support through on-shift modelling of support activities and facilitating reflection through regular supervision sessions; set clear expectations; use the Active Support shift data to assist with clinical and operational decision-making; prepare graphs and charts based on individual data to assist front-line staff to reflect on accomplishments and adjust programs according to the needs of the people supported; recognise and reward desired behaviours of employees and teams

• Managers and project officers – Ensure policies and procedures are conducive to and support the implementation of Active Support; develop and implement the resources necessary to implement and sustain Active Support; monitor and review the implementation of Active Support by focusing on key performance indicators and questions that focus the attention of staff on the implementation of Active Support; consolidate data from individual people supported and prepare graphs and charts to assist the management team and the organisational executive to reflect on accomplishments and adjust programs and resources according to organisational needs related to outcomes for the people supported; recognise and reward desired behaviours of employees and teams

• Executive managers and board members – Allocate time to attend information and training sessions, as well as visiting homes where Active Support is being implemented to recognise and reward desired behaviours of employees and teams and provide encouragement to staff; affirm from the most senior levels in the organisation that ‘Active Support is how this organisation will deliver services’; reflect on the people supported and service level data, to inform evidence-based decisions with respect to policy and resource allocation.

At this point, it might be useful to begin to draw up an Active Support implementation flow chart for the organisation. This chart could include key activities, responsibilities and the people to be involved at each step along the implementation path.
2.2 Who to appoint as Advanced Practitioner/Active Support Champion?

Identifying an appropriate Active Support Advanced Practitioner/Champion within the organisation can be a challenge. However, appointing someone with this responsibility can provide great benefit in the long-term. Even where an organisation might work with a consultant or an academic for the initial implementation, having a person in-house to provide longer term continuity will be essential.

There are some key skills and traits to look for when assessing a potential Advanced Practitioner/Champion. The organisation’s Active Support Advanced Practitioner/Champion needs to be a person with a range of qualities and skills, including:

- Experience in the provision of direct support
- Recognition by colleagues and the people supported as a credible person, committed to and skilled in the direct support of people with disability
- Leadership skills, especially the ability to lead by example
- Mentorship skills, especially the ability to work alongside staff on shift
- Educational skills, especially in the use of technology (e.g. computer skills, use of a data projector and DVD set-up)
- Ability to facilitate training sessions, using the principles associated with adult learning such as recognising and building upon staff’s existing experience and skills, creating opportunities for participation, exploration and discussion of ideas, and promoting opportunities to rehearse and apply knowledge and skill to familiar work tasks
- Creativity, especially with respect to program innovation for the people supported and developing solutions to both practical and systemic barriers that might impede the implementation of Active Support
- Negotiation skills for working with staff, management, people supported and families
- Analytical skills, with respect to using program data to inform service developments
- A commitment to evidence-based, person-centred practices.
Consider the following points in appointing a Champion:

- What number of Advanced Practitioners/Champions is required to ensure an appropriate ratio of Advanced Practitioners/Champions to staff, and to provide mutual support among the implementation team?
- Are the implementation resources that are available appropriate and do they coincide with the tasks required of the Advanced Practitioner/Champion?
- Does the organisation have the capacity to assemble a skilled and cooperative Active Support team to support the Advanced Practitioner/Champion in their role?
- What are the qualifications and skill sets required by an Advanced Practitioner/Champion involved in a Train-the-Trainer program?

Some organisations have sponsored people into the position of Active Support Champion for the purpose of encouraging involvement in the organisation or creating opportunities for promotion. The experiences of those involved in preparing this guide suggests that it is ill-advised to select a person that is struggling in their existing role, where they are already responsible for, and unlikely to be relieved from, coordinating services for clients with complex support needs (e.g. clients exhibiting seriously disruptive or dangerous behaviours), or where they are likely to have ongoing responsibility for managing complex or demanding staffing situations.

In larger organisations, it can be easier to develop a small team of Advanced Practitioner/Champion/s who can support each other. In smaller organisations, it might be a good idea to consider collaboration with another agency, to develop a small community of practice among key people to share ideas and be of mutual support. Working across services with mutual clients, such as a residential service and a day support service working together, has been found to be an effective model. In such instances, both agencies appoint an Advanced Practitioner/Champion who work together as a mutually supportive team. This team can then work across both agencies to conduct staff training to develop Active Support programs for individual clients and when evaluating progress data.
2.3 How might the existing organisational culture and systems support the implementation of Active Support, or what changes might be necessary?

There are various ways of building upon, incorporating and adjusting an existing organisational ethos to align with Active Support. These may include reviewing and realigning:

2.3.1 Corporate knowledge

2.3.2 Documentation

2.3.3 Outcome and process measurements

2.3.4 Training and induction materials

2.3.1 Corporate knowledge

The project team should ensure that the knowledge base within the organisation is consistent with contemporary evidence-based practices. Consider consulting any one or a combination of the following:

- Academics and practitioners
- Talking and working with people who have studied the development and implementation of Active Support across a variety of different settings
- Asking researchers and other experienced practitioners to speak with the board of management, staff, people supported and their families about what has been achieved elsewhere with Active Support
- Identifying undergraduate and postgraduate students who may conduct service evaluations or assist with training as part of coursework or research requirements
- Communities of practice
- Meet with service providers from other organisations to share and discuss knowledge of implementation, practice and improvements
- Understand different approaches to Active Support from a direct support perspective to a senior managerial perspective
• Reading materials
  – Journal articles and guides published by leading academics in the field
  – Books and information documents available to support and consolidate knowledge
  – Academic, organisational and Active Support specific websites
    (e.g. www.activesupport.org.au, www.personcentredactivesupport.com)
• Access to reputable, peer-reviewed journals is available through membership of various scientific associations such as:
  – The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disability (www.asid.asn.au)
  – The British Institute of Learning Disabilities (www.bild.org.uk)
  – The International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability (www.iassid.org)
• Conferences and forums
• Provide the most recent information concerning advances in Active Support
• Discuss new perspectives on current practices
• It should be noted that it is becoming increasingly important for frontline managers and direct support staff to participate in formal education and attain qualifications that provide the foundation knowledge and skills necessary for delivering effective, evidence-based support services. The implementation of Active Support can be enhanced where staff work within an organisational culture that values education and where they come to Active Support training with an existing skill set such as provided for in a minimum of Certificate 3 and Certificate 4 courses, or their equivalent. For further information, in Australia, refer to the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (www.cshisc.com.au). In the UK, the equivalent qualifications are referred to as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). Where staff do not have these minimum entry level qualifications, training in Active Support can take longer and require additional mentorship time.
2.3.2 Documentation

Preparing the organisation will include reviewing and revising the organisation’s existing documentation and protocols. There might be documents that need to be revised before commencing the implementation of Active Support and others that will be revised following the implementation process.

In an analysis of existing policies and procedures, it may be found that a lot of language, values and ethos will need to be debated, and then affirmed, amended or abandoned. Such a review at an organisational level will help to create the culture and policy environment necessary to incorporate Active Support into the organisation. Among the key documents for review will be the position/job descriptions, which will be discussed below.

Using the term ‘Active Support’

All organisations surveyed during the preparation of this guide highlighted that it is important to review staff position descriptions, policies, procedures, job advertisements, brochures and information sheets to reflect Active Support practices. However, how this is done has been debated. Some organisations have intentionally avoided the explicit use of the term ‘Active Support’ while others have made specific reference to it. The decision essentially is the organisation’s; however, in making the decision the consideration of the points below as to why the organisation might or might not overtly use the term ‘Active Support’ could be helpful.

Why use the term ‘Active Support’:

• Provides a clear and unambiguous statement, internally and externally, that the organisation embraces and commits to the values and processes of Active Support

• Provides a common language that links research literature to policy and service practices, and in turn makes clear what can reasonably be expected of an implementation program

• Provides a focus for the organisation and something to which staff can readily refer when considering how to go about their job and what is expected of them

• Promotes procedural fidelity to the core principles that have been identified in research as central to Active Support.
Why avoid the term ‘Active Support’:

- Minimises the possibility of a separation emerging between the implementation of Active Support and organisation’s other activities, hence promoting the concept that ‘it’s just the way we do things here’
- Avoids the risks of staff compartmentalising their work and adopting practices whereby sometimes they do Active Support (e.g. when they believe they have the time) and at other times they opt out of Active Support
- Places greater focus on the specific principles and values (e.g. do with not for; every moment has potential; use graded assistance) rather than running a more general program
- Demystifies the approach so as not to alienate people who might not be familiar with the term ‘Active Support’, or where the term might only confuse people.

Some organisations have adopted the term ‘Active Support’ in training and in the initial stages of implementation. However, as time proceeds and the organisation further engages in Active Support there is no longer a need for the term and it is referred to indirectly. Regardless of whether the organisation chooses to use the term or not, documents should be updated to reflect Active Support principles.

**Policies and procedures**

Rather than having a specific Active Support Policy, many organisations have opted to align their existing policies and procedures with Active Support. This approach has been viewed as a way to ensure Active Support is adopted as an organisation-wide approach, rather than as a discrete program within the organisation, again fostering a culture within the organisation of ‘it’s just the way we do things here’.

However, some organisations have at the outset produced an Organisational Active Support Statement of Intent. The statement of intent has been used to inform people about the basics of Active Support, what it offers the people supported and how staff will be trained to work. It provides a clear statement of commitment by the organisation to its service users in terms of what sort of support they can expect to receive, and a clear statement of expectation that the organisation has of its staff with respect to how they will go about delivering services.
While reviewing organisational policies, procedures and other documents, consider how the documents will:

- Align with person-centred practices and a commitment to value each individual’s quality of life
- Promote the engagement of people with disability in a range of everyday activities
- Enhance opportunities for choice and self-determination for the people supported
- Enable and support the people supported and staff to take considered risks
- Reflect the expectations required of staff in relation to the implementation of Active Support, both in terms of their work with the people supported and record keeping related to quality assurance
- Explain the support available to staff to enable them to successfully implement Active Support
- Explain the repercussions where staff are unable or unwilling to consistently implement Active Support
- Include language that reflects Active Support, both in terms of its principles and technical procedures
- Include the process of addressing and reflecting on Active Support practices (e.g. engagement, participation, activities) for a minimum designated time allocation (approximately 20 minutes) at each supervision or team meeting
- Outline the knowledge, skills and professional development required to successfully implement Active Support.

The concepts of duty of care and dignity of risk need to be discussed among managers and front-line staff, and supporting policies need to be developed. The implementation of Active Support will require staff to support clients in situations that will by necessity involve risk. Staff should know what the organisation’s expectations are, the boundaries within which they are to work and the support that is to be available to them.
Managers and project officers involved in updating policies are advised to:

- Ensure policies and procedures adapted to support the implementation of Active Support comply with legislation and local licensing regulations or funding contracts.

- When revising policy, ask questions such as: Are there existing policies that might prevent the people supported from being fully engaged in activities at home and in the community, or pursuing meaningful and supportive relationships; if so, how can these be updated? Question the prevailing culture to see if risk assessment is a mechanism used to justify why people can’t do things, or if risk assessment is used as a tool for finding out what supports need to be in place to enable people to do things that might include some risk.

- Host discussions and review processes in collaboration with the organisation’s human resources department, to ensure that all areas of the organisation understand the roles and responsibilities of Active Support (and if necessary refer back to the internal drivers of the organisation to remind people of why Active Support is being implemented). Within these discussions it should be emphasised that in order to achieve quality outcomes for the people supported through Active Support, advertisements need to attract the right staff, interviews need to screen candidates for the necessary values, knowledge and skills that are needed, and induction programs need to get staff off to the right start from day one.

- Ensure the occupational health and safety officer/s understand the underlying principles and supporting practices of Active Support, and that they are on board with the principles and philosophy. Without their support, conflicts may arise in the workplace.

**Position descriptions**

Clarification of roles is essential for any position: the more defined a role the greater understanding staff have of their responsibilities, and the greater confidence they have to do what is expected of them. Position descriptions are the most evident reference for staff wishing to clarify and understand their role. It is suggested that position descriptions be reviewed and revised as early in the implementation process as is feasible, to explicitly reflect Active Support values and practices.
When reviewing position descriptions and other recruitment documentation, such as advertisements and interview questions, consider the following:

- Values of Active Support and person-centred philosophies are integrated into all position descriptions, and not just for those that focus on direct support activities
- Language is revised along with context; avoid using ‘carer’ language but instead using support language (e.g. do things with, not for; in the community; each person)
- Responsibilities of those supported and staff accountability to support enhancing those responsibilities (e.g. cleaning roster, cooking roster, resident meetings, Person-Centred Plan meetings).

On a practical level, when proposing to revise position/job descriptions it might be important for there to be some discussion with the staff industrial/union representative about Active Support and what the organisation is trying to achieve.

### 2.3.3 Outcome and process measurements

Valid and reliable measures of service outcomes and service processes are becoming increasingly important as the disability sector emphasises evidence-based practice and greater accountability in person-centred approaches. In addition to the direct support of people to become engaged in daily activities, Active Support can provide an organisation with the mechanisms necessary to monitor, evaluate and plan future developments. Such developments could include adjustments to the support provided to specific individuals, the way a particular team operates or how, overall, an organisation provides services.

Importantly, data collection should not be considered as an optional extra or an additional burden. Recording, evaluating and planning service developments based on the regular review of activities and the associated outcomes is part of the evidence-based approach of Active Support. Remember, Active Support is not primarily about data collection and analysis for its own ends. Without regular data collection, analysis and
reflection on the facts, it is not possible to identify with any certainty success in the implementation or the need for revision and adjustments to individual support programs.

In considering the tools and measures to use there are a few important aspects to think about:

- What information to collect, is it already collected, when is it analysed and how is it reported?
- What information does the organisation already collect?

There is a lot of information that services already record, which can easily be used as part of the Active Support monitoring and evaluation process. When considering these the organisation might like to ask:

- What information currently collected measures organisational responsibility/accountability, service delivery and person-centred outcomes?
- How useful is the information currently collected in informing services and meeting other organisational obligations?
- Could the information currently collected be documented in another way that is more time efficient and easier to analyse, with reports that readily and directly inform and enhance services?
- Is there information currently collected that is not used, does not need to be collected, or is duplicated elsewhere?

Following the review of existing measures, the organisation may now explicitly understand what is or is not being measured or reported well. Where there is still ambiguity the following questions could provide further clarity:

- Is there additional information that is needed, to better describe and understand what we do and what we achieve for the people we serve?
- Are there recognised baselines and standards within the organisation (e.g. hours of participation, types of engagement), against which we can measure change over time?
- Does the organisation feel confident with the ability to provide evidence of continually improving, reportable and accountable services in relation to organisational responsibility, service delivery and person-centred outcomes?
• What is not currently collected or the organisation does not feel confident with in terms of measuring organisational responsibility, service delivery and person-centred outcomes, but if collected would provide better, more accountable services with a stronger evidence base?
• Are there measures used to inform ongoing service improvements and adjust individual supports?
• Which of the measures/tools used by other organisations might be useful, and what might the organisation need to design for itself?
• What measures/tools to adopt?

Within the Active Support approach, there are numerous ways to gather data and monitor service practices and client outcomes. Organisations need to establish mechanisms that are relevant to the interests of the people supported within their services, their legal and contractual responsibilities, and their capacity to be sustained over time within the organisation.

Data collection tools may vary from paper and pen to online database systems. When selecting tools to collect data, it is important to consider the people that will be using the tools and the associated training in their use. Some organisations advise technology is a great development for staff, while other organisations lack the infrastructure and staff skills necessary for computer-based data collection. The amount of technology support available within the organisation may influence this decision. It is, however, important to remember that although some people may initially shy away from the use of computerised technology, in the long-term it might be of greater benefit to organising, record keeping and reporting Active Support practices.

**Measuring the implementation of Active Support**

The three basic tools used by most organisations to plan for, monitor and evaluate the implementation of Active Support are:

• Activity and Support Plans – In addition to providing direction to staff (especially casual or agency staff) as to what the person supported is expecting to happen across the day, these plans, when used dynamically on shift, can also act as a recording tool to provide a useful way of monitoring the amount of time across the day and week that a person is
engaged in activities, and the type or profile of activities in which they have been engaged. Some organisations have used Activity and Support Plans to replace shift records and diaries.

- **Opportunity Plans** – These are used to prompt staff to ensure specific opportunities or activities are available. They are used to monitor the achievement of specified goals for engagement in particular activities that have been prioritised from the person’s Person-Centred Plan. Some organisations build these plans, based on the actions or goals agreed to during individual or person-centred planning meetings. Sometimes goals are included on Opportunity Plans based on discussion at a team meeting and the agreement that the team is going to work on a particular goal over the next few months, as this activity has been informally observed or tried and found to be of interest or benefit to the person supported. Plans usually include goals that address domestic and community-based activities, and goals to support personal relationships (e.g. regular contact with family and friends).

- **Protocols** – These are used to promote consistency among staff in the presentation of specific tasks, or the support provided with a particular task or activity. Some organisations construct these in the form of task analysis sheets that staff then use in regular training programs with the individuals they support. When used as a recording tool, they are useful for monitoring the person supported’s progress in the acquisition of skills and the development of independence in the exercise of specific routine activities.

### Measuring outcomes for the people supported

Where the overall outcome of a disability service is improving the quality of life for the person supported, it is often sensible to consider using standardised measures to monitor such improvements. Standardised measures provide a base of evidence for all relevant stakeholders on how Active Support practices encourage greater wellbeing and quality of life in the domains of physical, social and psychological health for each person supported.

Some standardised measures which have been used in the monitoring and evaluation of Active Support include:

- **Index of Participation in Domestic Life** (Raynes, Wright, Shiell, & Pettipher, 1994)
• Index of Community Involvement – Revised (Raynes et al., 1994)
• Scales of Independent Behaviour – Revised (SIB-R)
• Inventory for Client and Agency Planning (ICAP)
• Mood Scale (Evans, Cotton, Einfeld, & Florio, 1999)
• Psychiatric Assessment Scheduled for Adults with Developmental Disability (PAS-ADD) (Moss, 2001)
• Choice Questionnaire (Stancliffe, & Parmenter, 1999)
• Social Network Index (McVilly, Stancliffe, Parmenter, & Burton-Smith, 2004).

Some measures are easily accessible and publicly available. Others need to be purchased from test publishers. Assistance identifying suitable tools is often available through consultation with a local university.

**Measuring organisational culture and accountability**

In addition to planning for the measurement of processes and outcomes directly related to the implementation of Active Support, it would be useful for the organisation to have some understanding of its own culture, prior to implementing Active Support. There are a variety of approaches to measuring organisational culture, including analysing roles, responsibilities and structures, the way different people throughout the organisation are involved in decision-making, and the language used to formulate policies and procedures.

Formal surveys of service user and staff perceptions can provide useful insights. Assessment of the personality traits of management and staff can reveal the nature of the underlying organisational culture. So too assessment of the degree to which leadership in the organisation is characterised as transactional or transformational might influence outcomes for the people supported. How the organisation responds when under pressure or when facing difficult times can also be a good barometer of culture.

There is research literature that addresses issues of organisational culture and organisational climate, but it is beyond the scope this guide to address this issue at any great length. Suffice to say, there is need for further research to determine how organisational climate and staff factors might act
as facilitators or inhibitors to the effective implementation of Active Support. This research is worthy of consideration when planning for the initial implementation and ongoing evaluation of Active Support.

It is important to be able to exercise due diligence in monitoring and measuring compliance with various legal obligations. These issues could include financial and human resource issues, contracts management, as well as risk management. Organisations that are not confident that they are across these issues should seek formal advice from a legal, financial or clinical practitioner, whichever is appropriate to the question. Often times, seeking advice from the body that provides funding, particularly in the case of community service providers, can be useful.

Implementation of Active Support can often enhance an organisation’s capacity to comply with funding and service contracts, and to meet statutory service standards. For example, the implementation of Active Support will by necessity promote the involvement of the people supported by the agency in both planning and a range of daily activities, and involve the promotion of skill development and opportunities for choice and self-determination. The data recorded by the various Active Support monitoring tools will provide objective evidence to support an agency’s compliance with statutory standards and contractual obligations.

When and how to use measures and report outcomes

Recording activities, analysing and interpreting data, and reporting outcomes can be a time consuming process. Often, such activities are viewed as taking resources away from the direct support of the people served by the organisation. However, if services are to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of practice, these activities need to be considered as an essential part of the agency’s operations, particularly where the agency seeks to implement an evidence-based practice framework.

Given the importance of measuring and reporting outcomes, and the limited resources available to achieve these purposes, it is critical that consideration be given to what needs to be measured, how such measures will be made and how often. To determine when and how to use measures and report outcomes, the following points are suggested for reflection:

- Some tools are best used daily, while others are better used only periodically (monthly, biannually or annually). It is important not to
attempt to measure everything all the time, or the quality of reporting is likely to be poor. Select carefully what you need to measure and how often you need to measure it.

- Some of the tools require training while others are mostly self-explanatory or require minimal training. However, in most situations staff will require some form of training and mentorship in how to use measurement tools. The quality of the data (its effective use and accurate interpretation) is largely dependent upon the quality of the training provided to those who will collect the data.

- Some organisations evaluate their data by reviewing paperwork as a team at each staff meeting, while others have coordinators/managers analyse data weekly and then summarise details to discuss trends at supervision sessions and staff meetings.

- Some organisations have developed databases, using commercially available software (e.g. Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Access), to collate data and conduct basic analysis, including the production of graphs and charts can assist with making sense of what is happening; visual presentation of data is often very helpful when seeking to promote discussion among a team.

- Some organisations have an ongoing relationship with a university, to assist with the regular analysis and interpretation of data.

Data can be used in a variety of ways throughout an organisation, and in its interactions with external agencies (e.g. with funding and regulatory bodies). Data, however, needs to be collated and presented back to those who have collected it. Active Support emphasises the importance of direct support staff using data to promote discussion and inform decisions about how best to provide and adapt support to the people they serve. Seeing and using the data will also promote the commitment of direct support staff to collecting accurate data, and contribute to their overall professional development.

Regardless of what data is gathered or how it is gathered, the important thing is that both direct support staff and managers regularly review these data, to evaluate service provision and to inform decisions about how to adjust services to better meet people’s needs and priorities. This is one of the major strengths of the Active Support approach – evidence-based practice supporting person-centred services.
Importantly, at the pre-implementation phase it is advisable to confirm which tools will be utilised for measuring outcomes and begin the process of collecting baseline data before staff training. Organisations often wish to describe the benefits of Active Support following implementation. However, without collecting the relevant information prior to implementation the organisation runs the risk of relying on retrospective feedback reducing the validity of apparent outcomes.

Note – where external evaluation, especially when conducted by universities, is to be undertaken, compliance with local requirements for ethics approval will be necessary. Refer to the National Health and Medical Research Council, National Statement of the Ethical Conduct of Human Research (www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/ethics/human_research/index.htm), or equivalent in the relevant country. Further advice on the ethical conduct of research involving people with intellectual disability is provided by the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability, in their ethics guidelines for international multi-centre research involving people with intellectual disabilities (Dalton, & McVilly, 2004) (www.iassid.org).

### 2.3.4 Training and induction materials

Organisations will vary in their approaches to training and orienting new staff to their services. Some have materials very specific to on-the-job requirements, whilst others use position descriptions, policies, processes and on-the-job training. Those organisations that have systematic training and orientation might require the project worker/managers, along with assistance from external trainers, to update these systems, processes and materials. Organisations without such systems might like to consider developing some systems in line with Active Support, to further embed the appropriate practices and principles in the organisational culture from the first day of employment for any new employees.

Note – the induction materials could also be adapted for the purpose of refresher training, annually if applicable, or where individual staff are identified as requiring additional mentorship as part of an individual professional (performance) development program.
Questions to consider when developing or updating orientation and training materials include:

- Is the current staff induction and in-service training process consistent with Active Support? For example, do we conduct workshops and provide on-shift interactive training; do we emphasise the provision of professional support to enable engagement of people with disability in their own lives, and not just the provision of personal care and domestic assistance; is the emphasis on do with not for?

- Does everyone in the organisation receive current disability awareness and inclusion training?

- Does the organisation need to consider developing a training package specifically addressing Active Support for new employees? For example, specific pre-service reading material, a video, examples of good practice/bad practice, and interviews with people supported, family members or staff with experience of the benefits and challenges of Active Support.

- Is there any training required for tools and measures to be used? If so, are these incorporated into the training and induction materials to understand when, why and how to use them, and how to interpret the data and apply it to service planning for each individual supported?

- Does information in training or induction programs cross-reference with updated position descriptions, policies and procedures?

- How is the training material to be made available to different categories of staff, including part-time, casual and agency staff?

- Organisations implementing Active Support have typically observed it is vital for all categories of staff to have some knowledge of Active Support. A number of organisations have worked closely with services providing their casual/agency staff to ensure that such introductory material is made available to staff engaged through these external employment agencies. In some instances, a basic introduction to Active Support has been made part of the mandatory training program, in the same way that all staff are required to have training in first aid, safe lifting and manual handling.
Some organisations have found it useful to develop short video modules to introduce staff to some key concepts of Active Support and provide examples of fellow staff working with people supported by their service. New staff can view these videos and discuss them with a team leader or other more experienced staff member prior to starting work in a service.

There is a wealth of evidence-based practice advice on the use of video in training and education specific to the support of people with disability.

For further details on available resources, see section 3.6.3 Classroom/workshop/interactive training.

2.4 What type of communication materials to prepare?

It is important to carefully consider what types of communication materials will be used and how to get the Active Support message diffused throughout the organisation to all employees, the people supported and their families. Whether using memorandums, flyers, resident statements, intranet, information sheets or brochures it is good to consider the audience and the best format for each audience. Some organisations have staff with expertise in marketing and communications, and others might need to outsource advice on these issues.

It may be helpful to:

• Use forums for discussion, including existing or regular meetings where Active Support could be placed on the agenda
• Use information cards, posters, key rings or marketing campaigns within the organisation
• Have statements released or endorsed by senior people such as a government minister or the chairperson of the board or the CEO
• Remember Active Support involves everyone: all employees, people supported and their circles of formal and informal supports (including people in other organisation that support the person served); information needs to be accessible to a range of people
• Ensure information enhances understanding of individual roles and responsibilities during the transitional phase as well as during the overall sustainability of the model
• Prepare materials that can be used multiple times, that will not go out of date too soon, which can be readily reproduced at minimal cost, and which will be easily accessible
• Provide factual information, and give examples wherever possible
• Provide information which is clear and concise, and use pictures showing examples of good practice
• Tailor materials to formats that are likely to facilitate understanding for people in different situations (e.g. different languages, videos)
• Remember a picture (or short video clip) can speak a thousand words
• Avoid jargon, systems speak and abbreviations (e.g. the term ‘PCAS’ - Person-Centred Active Support) as this can confuse people or fail to communicate the full message
• Use plain language unless a clear definition is also provided (e.g. when introducing new terms such as ‘Activity and Support Plan’, ‘Opportunity Plan’, ‘Protocol’).

2.5 How best to disseminate the information?

Some organisations have commenced with organisational-wide information sessions and others have targeted specific teams/sites which are to be the first involved. Some organisations have conducted information sessions for families, while others have approached individual families, building upon existing case management or person-centred planning arrangements. Regardless of the broad information dissemination approach consider a few communication basics:
• Provide information as early as possible and at multiple points and in multiple formats
• Help people to make the connection between existing service directions and initiatives, and Active Support; help people to understand how what is proposed fits with and improves upon what they already know
• Speak with people directly and leave them with some written information in plain language to read later
• Listen to what people have to say and the questions they have
• If questions cannot be answered on the spot, commit to getting back to them within an agreed time (and get back to them quickly)
• Provide temporary solutions when needed and plan for ongoing adaptations to policy and resources
• Provide a follow-up contact, with whom people can make contact if they later have questions
• A picture can speak 1000 words; use photos and video examples wherever possible when talking with staff, family and people supported
• Anticipate that some people might be worried about changes, and be pleasantly surprised if they are not – have answers or at least reassurances at the ready.

If there is difficulty understanding exactly when and how materials will be communicated to various stakeholders (especially for larger organisations), you may like to consider writing a formal communication plan for Active Support within the organisation.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Team/Site Readiness

Following discussions at an organisational level and the establishment of the necessary infrastructure, the next phase will involve working with individual staff teams to prepare for the implementation. At this phase, it is important to recognise that individual teams and individual staff will have varying degrees of understanding of what will be expected of them and varying skills and capacity with which to take on the challenges of implementing Active Support. Some teams and some staff will embrace the implementation of Active Support, while some staff might be sceptical or even resistant to the changes that are proposed. Senior staff in the organisation will need to carefully consider who to involve in the process at the early stages and how best to engage and support them.

This section of the guide addresses the following:

3.1 Is there sufficient evidence of team/site stability and flexibility?
3.2 Are the service site and staff prerequisite internal drivers in place?
3.3 The importance of preparing front-line staff
3.4 Team planning
3.5 Site selection
3.6 Planning for training
   3.6.1 Rosters
   3.6.2 Approaching trainers
   3.6.3 Classroom/workshop/interactive training
3.7 Are the teams and staff ready?
3.1 Is there sufficient evidence of team/site stability and flexibility?

To ensure that existing quality sites/teams, or teams which might be struggling, flourish when adopting Active Support practices, the line managers need to have an understanding of the reliability and adaptability of each team. Recognising existing subcultures that exist between and within teams will provide direction in ways to encourage cooperation, commitment and responsibility when implementing Active Support.

The dot points below are provided to stimulate thinking about and discussions with each team/site, to open up and view the subcultures that might exist, which in turn could influence the type and amount of support needed for staff to successfully implement Active Support.

- **Service user feedback** – Are there processes for collecting and analysing feedback from the people served and their families? How does the team respond to feedback from the people served and their families? What is already known about how the people supported and their families view the service and what they are wanting from the service?

- **Staff feedback** – Are staff provided with the opportunity to comment on how the existing service operates? Are staff provided with the opportunity to voice concerns and are they heard and acted upon?

- **Leadership at the site level** – Is the supervisor confident in his or her role? Does the supervisor have a good sense of the organisation’s mission and how it might fit with Active Support? Does he or she have good organisational and management skills, respect the staff and people supported, and work collaboratively and effectively with the staff teams and support networks?

- **Staffing** – Are staff available and are there resources to cover for staff during training? Are there experienced staff within the team/site who could be identified as mentors? Is the staff team relatively stable? How reliant is the team on casual or agency staff? Are there ways to minimise reliance on casual or agency staff before implementing Active Support? Are there strategies to involve casual or agency staff in Active Support training programs?

- **Time lines** – Is the service site about to undergo any major changes, such as changes in the people to be supported? Are people moving in or people moving out? What consideration has been given to timing of staff
leave arrangements, especially for the team leader, whose active involvement will be important on a fairly consistent basis over the first few months? Are there any major capital works that might disrupt or distract service provision?

- Environmental capacity – How ready is the site for use by the people supported? Is the environment set up to welcome independence (e.g. support aids, accessible cupboards)?

- Financial viability and stability – Are some sites more resourceful than others? For example, is there existing individual funding that allows easier adaptability of the site, or the way staff can work with individual people.

- Human energy demands – How much energy are staff already expected to expend in the usual course of their daily duties? How many people are supported at the site? How many people supported have extra support needs (e.g. behavioural, medical)?

- Shared values and team cohesion – Do the existing philosophies and values of the individual staff that make up a team/site align with Active Support (e.g. person-centred principles, evidence-based practices, empowering people)? Do teams feel good about what they are doing? Are they eager to improve practices?

- Systems – How much do staff follow the systems and processes in place? Why or why not?

- Motivations – What motivates staff in the team? Do these motivations align with Active Support? (e.g. ‘I really enjoy working for an organisation that invites the people supported in any decision-making process’; ‘I am happy with the flexibility of working hours offered to me’.)

- Beliefs and assumptions – How much are past and present factors influencing staff assumptions? Do staff already hold beliefs and assumptions about Active Support? Are staff currently guided by perceptions of their abilities or inabilities? Do staff trust the organisation in their ideas and projects?

These points of reference provide a baseline to assist with understanding the level of commitment and responsibility everyone in the organisation has to ensuring that Active Support happens and provides outcomes as suggested. It is again important to note that the inclusion of staff at this point is not only advisable, but necessary in building team cohesion and support.
It is unlikely that managers, coordinators and supervisors are able to address each individual staff assumption prior to implementation; however, appropriate leadership and modelling practices aimed at addressing individual staff assumptions is likely to enhance cooperative behaviour and reduce counterproductive or resistant actions during implementation.

3.2 Are the service site and staff prerequisite internal drivers in place?

Determining if Active Support is something that the service sites would like to do is an important step in determining if the site/team is ready to implement Active Support. Similar to the way in which the assessment of readiness at the organisational level was conducted, service sites might need to determine if the internal drivers exist and, if not, what changes need to occur within the specific site prior to implementation.

What does Active Support mean to staff and the people supported? Managers, coordinators, supervisors, team leaders and Advanced Practitioners might like to:

- Have an open discussion with the front-line staff about why the organisation is motivated to implement Active Support (e.g. person-centred principles, evidence-based practices, quality of life for the people supported)
- Share vision statements and ensure that any enquiries or concerns with support staff are addressed. Ensure the process of shared and continual communication.

Ensure all staff clearly understand:

- What Active Support is
- The value of Active Support to the people supported, their families, staff and the organisation
- The expectations and requirements involved in making the change to a model of Active Support
- What Active Support can offer, and its limitations as a practice framework
• The organisational commitment to the implementation of Active Support and the evidence of that commitment (e.g. statement of intent, updated policies, procedures, position descriptions).

Involving staff in the review of their position descriptions, either directly or through a representative committee, can be one means of promoting discussion within the organisation as to what is to be expected of staff. Importantly, the emerging position descriptions will not just reflect the view of management, but also take into account what standard of professional practice staff expect of each other in their daily work.

Preliminary discussions with staff might include not only discussion of the practical details of implementing Active Support, but also issues concerning contemporary standards of professional, ethical practice in the support of people with disability.

For further details, refer to the Australasian Code of Ethics for direct support professionals, published by the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (www.asid.asn.au).

### 3.3 The importance of preparing front-line staff

The comprehensive orientation of staff where Active Support is being, or about to be, implemented is a vital part of making Active Support successful. Some people will embrace new initiatives and change. Others will be sceptical. Still others might actively resist change. It is important to remember that Active Support relies on staff commitment, and how staff are introduced to Active Support at the very outset can make a big difference to the success or otherwise of the implementation. Much of this will be easier if you have appropriately completed phase 2 (Implementation at the Organisational Level), as outlined in this booklet.

Understanding the values, needs and internal drivers of a team and individual team members will be important when preparing them for the changes necessary to implement Active Support. It will be important to be able to reinforce their current capabilities, and link these to the principles and procedures of Active Support. So too it will be important to be able to
identify the changes that will be necessary, why things need to change, and how these changes will benefit both the people served and the team. It will also be essential to identify and explain to people how they will be supported to enact the proposed changes (e.g. with training, mentorship, variations to rosters, new equipment and resource allocations).

Some staff might see Active Support as simply more work to do, while other staff will recognise Active Support as an opportunity to develop skills and to be more professional in their work. It is this latter perspective that needs to be cultivated. However, the former perspective needs to be acknowledged, and time spent working through relevant issues with staff on an individual level.

Importantly, staff need to be provided with factual information, clear expectations, and reassurance of the support that will be provided to them. Staff need to understand how the implementation of Active Support will benefit the people they support and how it will also benefit them in their professional role. Where clear and factual information is not available, staff can become worried or even fearful of proposed changes. They can develop assumptions about what they believe Active Support will involve and in turn pass these misconceptions to the people supported, family members and colleagues.

It could soon become evident that individual staff might or might not be the right people for the position or role they are expected to play in the implementation of Active Support (i.e. they do or do not share enough of the organisational values to provide a good quality service, or they lack the necessary skills) or that there are people who have difficulty understanding their role. Such people might find this an opportunistic time to reassess their motivation and reasons for why they are in their current position. For some, this might mean additional professional development or moving to a new position. For some people, they might come to the conclusion that they need to find a new job altogether, possibly with another organisation. All such eventualities need to be considered and a plan established to manage these. In some instances, where staff are clearly not suited to working in the new paradigm, it might be necessary to seek advice on industrial management issues.
3.4 Team planning

Experienced organisations recommend that individual team implementation plans are developed in agreement with each team. It is recommended that discussions are held with the team/s before putting in writing any measurable outcomes, time frames and allocation of responsibilities.

Include in the discussions with teams information about:

- Definable key performance indicators (KPIs) for the team (and explanations as to how these contribute to the organisation’s overall KPIs) in relation to Active Support
- How Active Support fits with existing organisational quality requirements; in doing so, emphasise that introducing Active Support is part of the organisation’s existing continuous quality improvement process
- The organisation’s overall mission and strategic plan; this will assist the teams and individual team members to understand how their activities fit within the larger implementation process
- Data collection and reporting requirements, and how data that is collected by team members will be used by both the teams and the wider organisation to the benefit of the people served and the staff
- Any resources required, particularly how staff will be backfilled during training and for mentorship activities
- Who to contact regarding any concerns or questions relating to policies and procedures
- The number of staff required to successfully implement Active Support and who will be required to be hired or seconded specifically for Active Support implementation
- Setting up the environment to support the implementation of Active Support, especially where any physical changes need to be made to the environment in which the people supported live and where staff work
- The number of people supported that do or do not have existing Person-Centred Plans, and Behaviour Support Plans if applicable, and the requirements to have these plans in place to support the implementation of Active Support.
3.5 Site selection

Once the services and staff are aware of the rollout of Active Support and what will be required, it is often best to pilot with a single team/site, which can then provide reflection prior to rolling out Active Support to other sites. It is generally accepted that the first pilot group to implement Active Support within the organisation should be the team with the most stability and the one which is most willing to accept change.

To determine the best group/team, consider the evidence of stability and flexibility of the sites as already outlined from the groundwork completed at the beginning of this phase (e.g. service user and family feedback, staff reliability) and professional judgement. In some larger organisations, the agency has called for expressions of interest to be among the first group of teams to be provided with Active Support training. This process has been found to motivate staff to be involved and promote their commitment prior to the commencement of training. Other agencies have emphasised that a team has been selected as a reward for their efforts in already striving for excellence. It is generally agreed that Active Support should not be seen as something imposed on a team as a consequence of their dysfunctional state or their need for radical reform.

Active Support has been observed to be effective as part of a comprehensive program to support people with serious behaviours of concern. However, it needs to be acknowledged that sometimes the pressure under which staff are working in such situations is not conducive to their taking on new learning and new modes of working, as might be required for the effective implementation of Active Support. If considering the implementation of Active Support in a setting where staff are supporting a person with serious behaviours of concern, careful consideration should be given to the current capacity of staff in these circumstances. It might be best that staff first establish the basics of the Behaviour Support Plan for the person whose support is of greatest concern, and only then move to developing a more comprehensive Active Support program for all persons supported in that setting.
Stability of front-line leadership and stability of direct support staffing can influence the effectiveness of Active Support, especially in its initial establishment. Once embedded, the Active Support procedures should help with the induction of new staff. It will be important, however, for there to be a period of relative stability at the outset. This might include minimising the use of casual and agency staff until such time as the regular team members are in a position to model and induct other staff.

3.6 Planning for training

3.6.1 Rosters

A component of the planning process will be to revise rosters in order to:

- Match support staff shifts to the needs of the people being supported
- Cater for training arrangements.

Existing staff may raise concerns regarding roster and employment changes. Often staff have existing family or study commitments, which make roster changes difficult in the short-term. Prior to changing rosters, consider:

- Providing a forum for staff to discuss proposed changes and outline procedures for them to raise individual concerns
- Working with individuals through personal staff supervision sessions
- Having meetings with relevant staff unions and delegates to encourage open discussion and ensure that industrial representatives understand what the organisation is attempting to achieve through the adoption of person-centred approaches generally, and Active Support in particular.

3.6.2 Approaching trainers

There are commercially available training packages to assist organisations to implement Active Support. Training is, however, generally conducted by people who have been mentored into the Active Support processes by the originators of Active Support, and those who have been involved in researching its implementation. These experienced trainers typically work with an organisation to build their internal capacity to deliver and sustain Active Support training, using a Train-the-Trainer model. It is important for
organisations to consider and plan for a few key people in their agency to work closely with any external trainer, so that the organisation can sustain the training and evaluation process with minimal reliance on external expertise.

Engaging Active Support Trainer/s external to the organisation might play a large role in determining when training will be held, dependent on their availability. The length of training will also depend on the trainer/s and the needs of the organisation. When engaging an external trainer, organisations should consider how the trainer will:

- Build the capacity within the organisation to implement Active Support based on the organisation’s needs
- Train Advanced Practitioner/Champion/s or others in the organisation to provide future training for new staff
- Work in concurrence with existing staff schedules, especially for the on-shift mentorship/interactive training component of the program (e.g. at nights, weekends)
- Be adaptable and open to sharing resources
- Foster collaboration between organisations that support the same people (e.g. a residential service and a day support service), so that the people served can receive a seamless program of Active Support. Inter-agency collaboration can also help to reduce implementation costs.

3.6.3 Classroom/workshop/interactive training

Typically, introductory Active Support training consists of two to three days of workshop-based discussions and training. During these sessions, staff learn about the values and concepts of Active Support, and how these fit within their existing organisation. They learn about the practical application of Active Support to the people they support in a person-centred way, and the importance of gathering and using data to inform and improve their service delivery in keeping with the principles of evidence-based practice.

The workshops are not theoretical in their content, but do include an introduction to the philosophy and research findings informing Active Support. Importantly, the workshop sessions are typically conducted as a
whole-of-team session, which provides the opportunity for a single team to work together to plan how best to support the specific individuals they serve as a team.

The workshop sessions should produce a number of specific products, to be used by staff when they commence Active Support with the people supported, such as an Activity and Support Plan for the group; individualised Opportunity Plans for each person supported and a series of individualised or group Protocols to guide staff in the consistent provision of support. To achieve this, staff need to bring with them to the workshop sessions as much information as they can about the people they support, including any existing Person-Centred Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, individual program plans, existing weekly schedules for the people supported and any task lists outlining the regular chores staff are expected to undertake on shift. Using these existing resources further reinforces the principle that Active Support should not be an extra activity for the organisation, but a way of enhancing what it already does.

Organisations have noted upon reflection that tools to be implemented must be consistent across the organisation and there should be no compromise for any teams/individuals. All teams need to be working with the same basic documentation. This is especially important where staff work across several different teams or services within the same organisation, or where there are casual or agency staff in use. This may mean that some staff might need extra training and support. If this is the case, be prepared, plan for it and integrate it into supervisions!

The team-based workshop sessions are then complemented by individual on-shift mentorship for each staff member, sometimes referred to as ‘interactive training’. Each interactive training session typically lasts between two and three hours per staff member for their initial induction. Ongoing mentorship is usually necessary, depending upon the needs of individual staff. During the on-shift mentorship, staff try out, modify or refine the programs and strategies discussed and pre-planned during the workshop sessions (e.g. the Active Support Protocols). For detailed guidance on the implementation of interactive training, the reader is referred to Interactive training: Supporting people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities in meaningful activity (Toogood, 2010).
During the interactive training, the use of video can be very helpful to assist staff to capture and reflect on their practice and gather data to help with program modifications. It can be particularly useful where staff then use the video from their on-shift session to later share what they have learnt about supporting a particular person with other team members and discuss how others could replicate what they have discovered works for that individual. These videos can later be used as a training resource when inducting new staff.

For further information on the use of video in staff training, the reader is referred to research and references relating to:

- Video Interaction Guidance – VIG (http://www.dundee.ac.uk/ewce/research/centres/veroc/index.htm)
- Marte Meo (www.MarteMeo.com)
- Video Feedforward (www.creating-futures.org/keystosuccess/feedforward/).

Two to three days of workshop activity (i.e. 16 to 24 hours of classroom training) for each team has been the typical way of introducing Active Support. However, various organisations have adapted the training to be conducted anywhere between one and four days. Sometimes these sessions are conducted on consecutive days and sometimes they are spread over several weeks. Where there are breaks between sessions, staff often benefit from homework exercises which ask them to reflect on their own practice and try out new activities or approaches with their clients. Reporting back on homework activities can then be built into subsequent training sessions. It should be noted, however, that where classroom sessions are kept to a minimum, the time allocated to interactive training on shift needs to be significantly increased.

The number of days of training and type of training may also need to be revised if staff have special needs (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse workers). This might also require that any reading materials or worksheets used during the training are adapted and greater emphasis is placed on discussion rather than written work.
A few organisations have reported that staff have chosen to not attend training or have only attended part of the training. Some staff have indicated that they did not understand that the training was part of their expected rostered duties. These expectations need to be clearly communicated to staff from the outset.

When deciding how many days will be required for Active Support classroom training, it is suggested to discuss the following with a trainer:

• The extent to which the staff are already familiar with, and work in accord with, the values and principles of Active Support. Some teams just need time to develop the operational structures to implement Active Support, while some teams need to spend extended time developing a new approach to their work before they can develop new systems of work.

• How familiar and responsive staff are to extended periods of in-service training. Some direct support staff are not often exposed to classroom-style training, or training at all, and may benefit from sessions being broken into shorter days rather than whole days.

• The organisation’s existing paperwork and how this might support the implementation of Active Support, or any revisions that need to be made. Where there are existing recording and reporting systems with which the staff are already familiar, consider how these can be used in the Active Support training and implementation. Consider modifications that could be introduced as part of the training or any new systems that need to be introduced.

It might be useful for the organisation to work with the trainer to conduct a needs analysis for each team. Some of the issues to cover might include:

• Staff background: Do staff already know about Active Support and can they talk about the basic principles?

• Do staff understand and already implement the values of Active Support?

• What are staff expectations and concerns?

• Are all staff able to follow a training manual or will there be other modes of training required (i.e. reading vs interactive training)?
• What experience do staff have of recording information, interpreting data and applying their analysis of data to the support of the people they serve?

• Do staff need skill development in areas related to the implementation of Active Support, such as computer use, program planning and documentation?

• Do staff and supervisors have the skills to provide positive feedback and reinforcement strategies not only to the people supported but to each other?

• Do staff know how to work together as a team?

Regardless of when, how long and who conducts the training, direct support staff will need to commit to attending the training sessions. Before staff commit to the training process, they will need to be informed of the process and the importance of training. Providing staff with an information sheet prior to training might prove useful. Such a form could include:

• When and where workshop and interactive training will be held (be sure to roster interactive training within one week of workshop/classroom training)

• Who will be attending

• When and why extra supervision time for staff and their supervisor will be held during the implementation process

• The impact of staff sickness or people supported issues preventing successful training and ways to reduce them

• A communication strategy regarding what staff involvement will require as this may avoid staff uneasiness

• Processes for staff that are unable to attend or do not attend training.

Some organisations have identified regular casual or agency staff, and included them in the initial training program. Here it should be noted that strategies to involve casual or agency staff have been found critical to the initial establishment and long-term sustainability of Active Support.

Remember to organise relief staff (e.g. casual or agency staff) to cover shifts during training and, wherever possible, discuss such arrangements with the people supported. Consideration should be given to the logistics of
scheduling rosters and training sessions so as to avoid, wherever possible, the need for staff to come to training directly from having just completed a night shift, or for staff who have finished a day-long training session to go straight on shift in the afternoon. Such arrangements can detract from staff’s ability to both participate in training and provide effective support for the people they serve.

If the organisation is working with a university as part of an ongoing evaluation of Active Support, it might be necessary for staff to receive a Plain Language Statement describing the research process that accompanies the implementation of Active Support, and a Consent Form approved by the university’s Human Research Ethics Committee.

### 3.7 Are the teams and staff ready?

The implementation process has now reached a stage where the organisation should feel fairly assured that all staff are able to handle any enquiries about Active Support, or at least know who to contact with enquiries. Teams should now be feeling relatively confident to start informing the people supported and their families about Active Support and the service’s long-term goals.

As already stated, the implementation of Active Support does itself involve a process of questioning values and processes, affirming some and realigning others. It also involves affirming existing skills and learning new skills. Therefore it is not necessary, nor should staff feel the need, to have everything perfect to commencement.

Prior to training and implementation at each site, it may be time to reconfirm the project budget, confirm resource allocation and funding (what is necessary, not necessary) and what has been missed and should be revised. Always be prepared to answer more questions!
Chapter 4: Implementation with each Team/Site

Following the stages of finding out and setting up, the organisation, staff and people supported can then begin the process of implementing Active Support. While the staff training and mentorship process are major components of this phase, these are not the only things on which the organisation has to focus.

This section of the guide addresses the following:

4.1 Planning for each person supported

4.2 Site preparation
   4.2.1 Preparing people supported and their families
   4.2.2 Preparing support staff
   4.2.3 Preparing team leaders and front-line managers
   4.2.4 Preparing partner agencies that work with individuals
   4.2.5 Auditing the environment, communication strategies and support needs with respect to each person supported

4.3 Planning for initial training

4.4 From the classroom to the field
4.1 Planning for each person supported?

As Active Support is person-centred it is fundamental that all individuals are considered in terms of their personal aspirations, and how Active Support will assist in achieving short- and long-term goals for each person. Therefore, planning for the people being served and their families should ensure that:

• Everyone has at least a Person-Centred Plan or a similar individual plan in place that outlines their aspirations, personal priorities and individualised goals, together with strategies to support personal relationships, domestic and community-based activities, skill development and so on

• People have plans that address physical health, mental health, and behaviour support needs

• People have support plans in place that outline strategies which uphold their human and civil rights, and their dignity (refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, 2006).

If there is an individual or person-centred planning system in place, it might be timely to instigate a review meeting prior to commencing Active Support. As plans are reviewed, be mindful that health and behaviour needs are not constant and may alter over time.

If plans are not in place, use this time as an opportunity to engage the people supported and their families in the process of goal development. These goals can then contribute to the basic data needed to inform the development of people’s Activity and Support Plans, and Opportunity Plans (these documents are typically developed by staff teams during the classroom training sessions, or at least form the focus of discussion and planning during these sessions). Plans typically include details concerning domestic and community-based activities, and strategies to support personal relationships (e.g. regular contact with family and friends).

The people supported (and where appropriate, their families) should be met and wherever possible involved in discussing the implementation process, and what it will mean for them. This does not have to be a formal meeting.
Meetings with the people served, their families and/or case managers can communicate on an individual level the implementation of Active Support. It may be useful to:

- Discuss and outline program and practical issues
- Demonstrate Active Support through videos and good news stories (e.g. from other organisations or from the pilot site)
- Gauge the interest of the people supported in doing more of the things they currently do, or to find out about new things they would like to try
- Address concerns for each person, promoting confidence in everyone about when and what support will look like and how, or if at all, they will be affected
- Do some planning for preparing: Include how the environment will need to change to suit individuals’ needs. Although not all may be catered for initially, it should become part of the individual plan when supporting the person. You may also like to consider various funding avenues to support individuals if unable to make the necessary changes at the initial time of implementation.

These processes will be important to support people in the transition to Active Support. Of equal importance, the information gathered during these preliminary processes will form the basis of discussions and planning during the staff training sessions.

4.2 Site preparation

Preparation for the site needs to include consideration of each of the stakeholders and the resources at the site.

4.2.1 Preparing people supported and their families

Prior to commencing the staff training, it will be useful for the trainer and team leader to spend some time with each of the people served and their family members, to prepare them for the changes that are planned. This might include reiterating what Active Support is and how it affects the individual. There could be discussion with the people served (and their
families) about doing more of the things they currently do, or about trying new tasks or activities. Discussions might include advising the people served that staff may not be around during training and assuring that appropriate staff will be present. There may also be initial discussions regarding why trainers may be visiting and what interactive training might look like for the people served.

4.2.2 Preparing support staff

It is useful if trainers get to meet staff prior to the commencement of training. It is a good opportunity to answer staff questions and address any misconceptions they might have. It is important for staff to realise that what they are about to undertake is not just more training, but that it involves a longer term commitment to practical and cultural change that will affect their work and the lives of the people they support. Pre-training meetings are also a good opportunity for the trainer to assess how best to conduct the training, tailoring it to the particular needs of individual staff members in terms of their experience, skills and concerns.

4.2.3 Preparing team leaders and front-line managers

Team leaders and front-line managers are vital to the success of Active Support. It is helpful if they can provide motivation and encouragement to their team prior to and during training. It is therefore useful to prepare them ahead of time. For example, involve them in the initial preparation and planning for the people served and the auditing of the environmental set-up in which the support is to be provided (see below).

4.2.4 Preparing partner agencies that work with individuals

Active Support can and does influence the behaviour of the people supported. Sometimes this can lead to people behaving differently at other places they go. Sometimes the programs and activities developed during Active Support will require cooperation of staff from other services involved with the people served. It can be beneficial for the key people in other services to be made aware of what is happening.

Some organisations have invited key workers from other agencies to join them in the training sessions. These joint training sessions, for example
involving residential staff and day support staff, have been found to be effective in promoting inter-agency cooperation and the delivery of a seamless service for the people supported.

4.2.5 Auditing the environment, communication strategies and support needs with respect to each person supported

Prior to commencing the training, it will be useful for the trainer and team leader to conduct an audit of the environment in which people are to be supported and the communication strategies and aids already available for each person. The audit might include both physical features of the home or centre, equipment, and the current schedule or routine.

Opportunities where people are currently involved in activities can be cross-referenced with their person-centred plans. These can be cited as examples of existing good practice and provide the basis of a safe place to start, by extending people’s engagement with tasks with which they are already familiar.

New opportunities, with the right support, can enable people to become involved. It is important that barriers to involvement are considered, such as physical barriers or routines and work practices that might require modification, or barriers to effective communication between the people supported and their staff. Existing good practice and possible modifications can then all be discussed during the training.

There are many environmental and communication factors to consider before Active Support can be fully implemented in a home/facility/community. So too it can be vital to fully understand the strengths and support needs of the people supported (e.g. their level of comprehension, memory, and psychosocial maturity and physical abilities). The person-centred planning involved with implementing Active Support can highlight the importance of having good assessments undertaken by various professionals. At this point, it would be prudent to consider what access the organisation has to the services of an:

- Occupational therapist (www.ausot.com.au)
- Physiotherapist (www.physiotherapy.asn.au)
- Psychologist (www.psychology.org.au)
Consider:

- The physical infrastructure and the accessibility of the facilities, such as:
  - Size, door frames, rails, ramps
  - Power and light switches are at an appropriate height where the person can safely use them
  - Locks and latches that are accessible to those that can use them
  - Possessions, property and equipment are stored in places where people can get to them with minimal assistance

- The aids and equipment required, such as:
  - All dining utensils are in an accessible cupboard
  - Where computers and phones are available, and whether they are appropriate for the intended user/s (e.g. large icons, speaker phone, large buttons)
  - Communication aids are accessible for a person to use out in the community
  - People supported have available aids and equipment that make accessing the community easier (e.g. non-spill drinking cups are taken to a restaurant)

- The supports necessary to promote effective communication between the people served and their staff, and to aid the comprehension and memory of the people supported concerning daily activities:
  - Communication aids and equipment
  - Picture symbol systems
  - Skills in sign language.

### 4.3 Planning for initial training

Some trainers have gone into training never having met staff or the people supported, although most have devoted time to it. Trainers who familiarise themselves with both the people supported and the context in which staff are to implement Active Support typically report feeling more prepared and feel that the time allocated for the workshop sessions can be used more efficiently.
It is therefore recommended that trainers should schedule a time to meet the people served and orientate to the environment where the supports are provided (e.g. the in-home environment and general community in which the people supported live). Trainers also benefit from having developed an understanding of staff profiles, ratios and shift patterns.

When familiarising themselves with the people supported, the staff and the environment, trainers are able to:

- Discuss the challenges of Active Support and people’s initial concerns
- Develop an understanding of the context in which Active Support is to be implemented so as to be able to tailor the training sessions to address the needs of the people served and the staff
- Gain credibility in the eyes of the people served and the staff, and demonstrate that they are authentically interested in getting to know the situation and work with people and their staff in partnership.

Many organisations have reported that it was important for both senior managers and team leaders or front-line managers to be involved in the initial site visits. This provided an opportunity for them to meet with the trainer and talk through particular issues for the people supported, the staff and the organisation more generally. These situations also provide an opportunity for the trainer to identify the information that should be brought along to the workshop sessions (e.g. Person-Centred Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, current skills programs, existing documents detailing support routines and protocols, rosters).

During the pre-workshop visits, it is recommended to have available brief, plain language information sheets or even a short video about Active Support. These can then be left so that staff and the people supported, especially those who might not have been there at the time of the visit, can have access to accurate information about what is occurring.

Some trainers have observed that where staff have the prerequisite computer skills, it is often productive to get them to take a lead in directly typing up the various plans during the workshop sessions. This both promotes ownership of the plans that they will eventually be using and at the same time builds staff capacity (and confidence) to continue to revise the plans as individual circumstances change over time. An important
outcome from the training is that staff know that they are allowed to (indeed are expected to) and have the capacity to write and revise plans as the need arises. It is therefore useful in such circumstances to make provision for several laptop computers to be available during the workshop sessions, so that staff can work directly on typing up Activity and Support Plans, Opportunity Plans and Protocols.

Trainers and the project team might need to allocate some time outside of the training sessions to finalise the products of Active Support (e.g. Activity and Support Schedules, Protocols and Opportunity Plans). In practice, where there are two or three successive days of workshop training, it is often the case that the trainer and a few key people need to stay back after the workshop sessions to tidy up the draft plans so they can be presented and discussed the next day.

It needs to be emphasised that the documents produced during the workshop sessions only represent a first draft. They will usually need to be revised and refined during the initial implementation. Most notably, revisions will typically occur in the first few weeks as new information becomes available during the on-shift interactive training/mentorship sessions. Thereafter they should continue to be revised on a regular basis, informed by reflection on the implementation data generated using the Opportunity Plans.

People who have been involved in the provision of Active Support training have noted that there are some important facets that might not be specific to Active Support, but which are important to consider when planning the training sessions. These include:

- Understanding evidence – Staff often do not understand the role of science and the scientific method in evaluating the effectiveness of the services they provide, or in the process of discovering new, and improving on, ways of providing support. Staff need to learn about being systematic in their approach and the value of recording and using data to inform their practice.

- Reading graphs and charts – Staff often need support and practice to learn how to read and interpret graphs and charts.

- Listening ability – Staff often benefit from training and modelling in how to be with and listen to the people they serve; especially how to
listen and interpret the communication of people with limited or no verbal communication abilities.

- Providing and receiving feedback – Staff benefit from developing communication skills for use with their colleagues; how to ask questions, to challenge each other, to provide constructive criticism, praise and encouragement, and to resolve conflicts.

- The broader framework – Staff can benefit from developing their understanding of the bigger picture and broader context of the work they do, such as the organisation’s mission and wider community imperatives to promote people’s quality of life, and support the exercise of their human rights.

### 4.4 From the classroom to the field

Once the workshop/classroom training and planning sessions have been conducted the time comes to practice the skills learnt, by directly working with the people served. Active Support interactive training should be conducted for all staff as soon as possible after the workshop sessions; ideally within the first week after the workshops. The sessions should be on a one-to-one basis with each member of the team. Sessions typically last two to three hours, depending upon the staff members’ needs and the activities involved for particular people served.

However, resourcing and timetabling the interactive training sessions can be difficult. Sometimes in actuality it can take two to three weeks to get around to providing interactive training to each staff member in larger teams. To help with the logistics, the individual interactive training session times should be planned and rostered for each staff member as part of the preparation of the workshop sessions. It has been the experience of most agencies that attempting to plan the timetable for individual interactive training sessions during or at the end of the workshop is too time consuming and is leaving it too late for most staff to plan their shift activities. Planning the times for the interactive training ahead of the workshops helps staff to develop their understanding of all that is expected of them, and that what they are about to embark upon is not just another training workshop, but rather a long-term change management strategy.
It is crucial during the first few shifts that the Active Support Advanced Practitioner/Champion/s are around to work collaboratively with the trainer. Being present during the interactive training, they can:

- Emphasise the organisation’s commitment to implementing Active Support
- Facilitate the involvement of staff in exploring the available opportunities for the people supported
- Provide positive feedback and encouragement when staff initiate and explore Active Support opportunities in practice
- Promote discussion relating to Active Support opportunities found during interactive training sessions that were missed during the workshop sessions (e.g. ‘I wonder if ...?’; ‘How do you think we can do it better?’)
- Encourage staff reflection on their practices and encourage discussion around what staff are seeing in each other
- Provide clarification of organisational protocols and requirements, especially where proposed activities might involve risk or a departure from the usual way of working.

The Active Support Champion can also be available to relieve staff from their usual responsibilities, so that they can focus on their individualised interactive training session without having to respond to the needs of all the other people they would usually be serving. In addition, the Active Support Champion can be available to assist with videoing some activities and with the write up of revised or new Opportunity Plans and Protocols that are developed during the interactive training.

It will be important that the Active Support Champion gains an overview of all that has taken place during the interactive training so that they can facilitate discussion among the staff team at subsequent meetings. During subsequent staff meetings, the Active Support Champion can support individual staff to discuss their interactive training experience and what they learnt. They can also assist all staff to gain a better understanding of what has been discovered about how best to support individuals as a result of the interactive training sessions. It is at this point that staff will begin to see the importance of sharing their experiences and reflecting on the data they have generated during their initial endeavours to implement Active Support, to inform and plan their future activities and support strategies.
Chapter 5: Embedding and Sustaining

The organisation’s commitment to the implementation of Active Support does not cease following workshop sessions and interactive training. Where Active Support is successfully embedded in an organisation, these organisations continue to reflect on their support practices and continue to evolve and redefine Active Support procedures to suit the people served.

This section of the guide addresses the following:

5.1 Post implementation
5.2 Sustaining Active Support
   5.2.1 Reviewing recruitment and selection processes
   5.2.2 Adapting and revising management practices
   5.2.3 Adapting and revising support practices
5.3 Final thoughts

5.1 Post implementation

Following the implementation of the workshop sessions and interactive training, organisations have benefited from developing a range of strategies to support the ongoing commitment to and practical application of Active Support. Some of these strategies have included:

- Ongoing analysis of the risks in establishing new person-centred activities and routines, and the development of strategies to manage such risks and empower front-line staff so as to maximise opportunities for participation
- Regular feedback of data analysis to front-line staff, and the provision of advice and support on how to use these data to evaluate current activities and plan for future supports
• Compiling data about the engagement of people in activities as part of the organisation’s quality assurance program (i.e. key performance indicators), and regularly reporting these data to the CEO, board and funding provider

• Publishing Active Support activities and achievements on the organisation’s website and in various publications, such as newsletters, information brochures and in the annual report

• Rewarding individual staff and teams for particular achievements when supporting people to become more engaged in activities using the Active Support processes and techniques

• Developing a library of video resources which document people’s engagement in activity, that can be used when supporting individuals, orientating new team members, conducting future training across the organisation, and in evaluating changes in service quality over time

• Asking staff to research and present at meetings on critical areas of contemporary practice that can affect the implementation of Active Support (e.g. Positive Behaviour Support, Person-Centred Planning, Augmentative and Alternative Communication strategies)

• Writing protocols together at meetings

• Reviewing at each staff meeting the principles and values of Active Support, and linking these to current examples of good practice in the organisation

• Having people observe each other implementing protocols, and providing peer feedback

• Recognising each other at staff meetings for a job well done.

### 5.2 Sustaining Active Support

If not already part of organisational processes, the adoption of Person-Centred Planning and Positive Behaviour Support practices (McVilly, 2002/2007) are important steps to supporting and sustaining the implementation of Active Support. However, these need to be seen as fully integrated with Active Support. Some organisations have reported that staff can form the view that Active Support is secondary to these other practices. In these situations, Active Support can be too easily abandoned by staff who do not see the bigger picture.
Essential to the embedding of Active Support within an organisation is the personalisation of forms, processes and procedures that support and reinforce an organisation’s commitment to Active Support. Updating these documents, first created during the implementation, assists in the sustainability of Active Support. Inevitably, direct support staff must take on the primary responsibility for these actions, rather than external trainers or a project team. Consequently, skills associated with documentation review and update must be transferred to front-line managers and their teams.

Sustaining Active Support is a long-term commitment. Many of the organisations involved in the development of the current guide expressed the view that they were only just consolidating their implementation, even after four or five years of working with Active Support. There is clearly a lot of work yet to be undertaken to research and document the critical elements that will contribute to a sustained implementation of Active Support. However, organisations have identified a number of activities, outlined below, that appear to be important to consider.

5.2.1 Reviewing recruitment and selection processes

Some organisations make the values and working practices of Active Support explicit when advertising for new staff, or when working with recruitment agencies to identify casual agency staff. Some organisations host information sessions for new applicants that include a segment on Active Support, so that people can make an informed decision about applying for a position with the agency. In some instances applicants are given a DVD with their application form, so that they can watch the information in their own time, before they proceed to applying for a job. Many organisations include questions and scenarios in their interviews that explicitly seek to identify applicants who already have values and working practices which are consistent with working in an Active Support model. Goals and performance criteria for probationary periods are established, that reflect the values and working practices of Active Support and include participation in data recording, collation, interpretation, and application to planning support services for individuals.
5.2.2 Adapting and revising management practices

Organisations will typically conduct an audit of all their existing documentation to ensure they reflect the values and principles of Active Support. Such documents subject to review might include policies and procedures, quality assurance tools and key performance indicators and, importantly, staff position descriptions. Reporting processes within the organisation will usually benefit from review, both in terms of the content and form of such reports and documents. These might include daily shift records, weekly and monthly reports to line managers, and quarterly reports provided to the CEO and board.

When and how staff meetings are conducted, and the content of these meeting, will also be subject to review. When reviewing the conduct of staff meetings, the emphasis is typically on increasing the time spent discussing individual client activities, reflecting on Active Support data, and using those data to plan activities and support goals for the next few weeks. Agencies will usually attempt to minimise the time spent on discussing, and find other mechanisms to circulate, operational information.

How individual staff are inducted, mentored and provided with ongoing training and support needs to be reviewed. Active Support cannot be sustained on the basis of a one-off series of workshops and interactive training sessions. Staff require ongoing mentorship to maintain fidelity to the Active Support model and to further develop their competence in the implementation of Active Support. To these ends, it will be important for team leaders/line managers to work in close collaboration with the organisation’s Active Support Champion/s to ensure all staff receive regular supervision sessions and opportunities for coaching. Importantly, human resource management practices need to be directed towards developing an environment for staff that values and supports ongoing professional development and continuous quality improvement.

5.2.3 Adapting and revising support practices

Active Support is based on a set of values and principles, together with a number of key systems and practices which have been demonstrated by research to make a real difference in people’s lives, increasing engagement in activities, enhancing their skills and decreasing the need to use behaviours of concern. If organisations are to achieve the outcomes for the
people they serve that Active Support is known to facilitate, it is important that organisations maintain fidelity to the fundamentals of Active Support. However, it can also be important for organisations, after they become familiar with the basics of Active Support, to adapt Active Support to best fit with their culture, operational structures and available resources.

The adaptations by an organisation to their support practices might include some of the language associated with various Active Support procedures and documents, so that these reflect what will be most readily understood and used by staff throughout the agency. So too, some of the documentation formatting might change to reflect the agency’s preferred way of operating. For example, some organisations have replaced daily diaries with the Activity and Support Plans, which staff update at every shift, with more personal information recorded in an individual client file. Other organisations have incorporated learning logs into their Active Support documentation. The learning logs are used by staff to record new activities that a person has tried, and which could later be discussed at a team meeting for the purpose of developing a new goal for the person’s Active Support Opportunity Plan.

Organisations might consider changing the way shifts are structured, or the number of staff that are on shift at key points in the week, so that staff are available to provide support when the people they serve need the support most. Organisations have also paid particular attention to rostering of specific staff at particular times during the week, where these staff are recognised as having particular skills to facilitate activities scheduled at particular times in the person’s Activity and Support Plan.

Other issues to consider include:

• Open communication within the organisation at all levels in regard to progress, what is working well and what is not working well
• Schedule and attend follow-up meetings regarding Active Support
• Proposing and revising Activity and Support plans, Opportunity Plans and Protocols, as well as program development
• Authorising protocols – some organisations have formal adoption processes of activities where there is a perception of higher than usual risks programs
• Consistently and constantly engaging in activities that are person-centred and congruent with appropriate Active Support.
5.3 Final thoughts

Active Support has been shown to make a positive difference in people’s lives. Even where people have multiple and complex support needs, research in every-day practice settings has demonstrated it is possible to increase people’s engagement in a range of ordinary activities, that their skills can increase, their health can improve, and that they can exhibit more positive behaviours. However, to achieve these ends requires commitment, effort and patience. Active Support is not just about changes in the lives of the people supported, but also changes in the lives of the people providing the support, and indeed substantial changes in the organisations that facilitate that support.

Considering and planning for the implementation of Active Support involves much more than simply booking in a staff training session. To be successful, it is necessary for the organisation to consider a range of operational, resource and, importantly, cultural issues. All levels of the organisation need to be involved, from the board through to the senior management team and front-line support staff. Importantly, the people supported and their families need to be involved in what is a substantial change management process.

Organisations need to be prepared to undertake a full review of their values base, policies, procedures and support systems. Organisations need to be prepared to make a commitment to long-term change. They need to be prepared to commit to person-centred approaches and to take on the scrutiny and accountability that comes with the implementation of evidence-based practice.

Though the expectations and demands of implementing Active Support are arguably high, the potential gains for the people supported are substantial. The organisations involved in preparing this guide would not say that the implementation of Active Support has been easy, but they would say that it is achievable and attest to how rewarding it has been, for the people they support and the staff providing that support. They would also seek to stress how important it has been to work together, in various local communities of practice, to share their ideas and practices and to sustain their motivation for and commitment to Active Support.
References


cover
Circus Hoops (detail)
by Donna Williams

’Some people work toward compliance, making us jump through hoops to satisfy some sense of audience. Some people work instead toward connection, teaching us how to want a place in our own lives’.

www.donnawilliams.net