

**Bringing Together
What We Know
About Effective
Working Together
in Adult Support and Protection**



**A Briefing Paper for the Better Involvement in Adult
Support and Protection Working Group**

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Introduction

Adult Support and Protection seeks to help people work through risks they are facing in their life. This often means helping a person sort through difficult feelings in stressful circumstances. It may mean rethinking important relationships or making decisions that will have a long term impact on their lives going forward. It may involve the person working with several different services together which can be confusing. Finding good solutions to risk needs to involve the person at risk, keep their interests central and use their strengths and ideas. All these things can be summed up as participation.

The purpose of this briefing is to inform the work service users and practitioners will be doing together to develop ways and tools to support a person's participation should they need the help to work through the harm they are facing. In this briefing we will look at the participation that informed the development of the act, what has been learned about how the policy is working, and what changes and new tools are being used to help people participate. We will also look at how agencies involve service users and carers, in developing and running an adult support and protection service. This work is described as co-production.

What are the situations, issues and challenges people are finding within adult support and protection?

The policy has been working for just over four years. A lot has been learned about what kinds of situations people face and what helps people the most in working through these situations. A great deal of work has also been done to make people aware that the policy is there and can help people. Service users in some places have been involved in developing information about the help that is available and in events to share information. Lessons from this work can help us learn how to involve those who need help better in the protection process as they go through it. This process starts with an inquiry and may move on to involve an investigation, a case conference, a risk plan and a review conference. There need to be more resources to help people understand and feel confident going through each of these steps. To summarise this process we will refer to it by the initials of the law that created the policy: ASPA (Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007).

A Policy of Listening from the Start:

It is important to remember that service users contributed to the development of the policy. Their views were listened to and helped shape how the policy was worded (Mackay 2008, Scottish Government 2009). For example

- the term 'vulnerable adults' was replaced by 'adults at risk of harm',
- age and receipt of community care services were deleted as criteria
- the term 'abuse' was replaced to that of being 'at risk of harm' which has a more open ended meaning

Listening to Those Who Have Been There

Service User Views

East and Midlothian Adult Protection Committee's APC (2010) evaluation found that some services users spoke highly of ASPA, but many had mixed feelings. SCLD has carried out some service user evaluation. One report that interviewed 8 service users in East Dunbartonshire found that most communication was verbal with only one respondent reporting they were given anything in writing. Respondents were unfamiliar with terminology of proceedings and were unsure what the process was, or, if an investigation had been carried out. Of the 5 respondents who said they had attended a case conference, 3 said they were given help to prepare for the meeting and 4 said they had had support in the meeting. However, many of their comments reflect the unease that they felt at the meetings:

"You walk in 'blind'"

"You walk in a stranger. They all know each other and you're the odd man out"

"They all had crib sheets in front of them"

"I didn't know my role"

"I was like a fish out of water"

"They had all attended these meetings a hundred times"

Those who had help preparing for the meeting reported the most positive experience of the meeting itself (Miller 2012). It is interesting to note that one respondent highlights their lack of a crib sheet in contrast to everyone else around the table. Which prompts the question if they had accessible "crib sheets" that they were able to bring to the table would this have put them on a more equal footing with more confidence to participate?

This help beforehand can be done in a number of ways. For example in Dumfries and Galloway the chairperson of the case conference meets the person beforehand. Many people use an independent advocacy worker to speak for them or to help them speak for themselves. The papers a person brings to the table so that they have a "crib sheet" to use the words of the person in the East Dunbartonshire evaluation, could be a list of things they want to say and questions they have. There are other ways in which a person can be helped to have their say. For example, a study that brought views together across four different local authorities (Mackay et al 2011) also found that one person was helped to express their views about the type of contact he wanted with his family through use of Talking Mats. This was then shared with other workers and the family (Mackay et al 2011). Talking Mats is a way of exploring and recording issues through the use of pictures.

This study (Mackay et al 2011) also found that the process of investigation was stressful for people: there was anxiety about what social work might do, having to answer personal questions and attending case conferences. Some service users experienced losses as well as gains around changes in relationships.

The Altrum Risk Research Project (2011) consulted with service users more generally about the new policy. Many of those consulted had experienced harm in the past, but only a few had worked with social workers about issues of harm since the new policy has been implemented. Service users did express concerns about what the adult protection process might be like. Their experience suggested any inquiry process can affect a person's sense of self. They raised concerns that risk assessment forms, capacity assessment, and case conference reports may act to further damage a person's sense of self. They wanted attention to be given to the person's own sense of what they can do to recover and gain resilience.

Carers' Views

East Dunbartonshire Adult Protection Committee also conducted an evaluation of carers' views. Carers highlighted that whilst the outcomes were generally positive, there was criticism about the process. They felt ill-informed, found case conferences too nerve wracking to be able say what they wanted to say and generally felt they were not always listened to. They raised concerns that language was intimidating and showed a lack of sympathy for the stress carers were under. Of the four carers contributing to the survey two felt that "more information should have been provided and help should have been offered earlier".

Social Workers' Views

The study that looked at ASPA across four local authorities listened to social workers and involved them in writing up the findings (Mackay et al 2011) This study found that ASPSA has enabled social workers to make sensitive efforts to gather and weigh up information and build relationships with those at risk of harm (Mackay et al 2011). Social workers reported that service users engaged with this process in a range of ways, from welcoming openness to cautious acceptance to occasional rejection of contact, which was respected in some cases depending on the situation and the presence or absence of undue pressure. Social workers and those helped agreed that the adults at risk were safer and had a better quality of life as a result of the plans put in place through adult support and protection work. Positive outcomes included

- feeling happier,
- being able to make decisions,
- staying at home,
- having debts cleared
- and being more socially active.

However social workers also recognised the process could be stressful and involve losses for the person as well as gains. This led to them making a number of recommendations about how to reduce stress within the process, help the person

participate more meaningfully, draw on alternative forms of capturing the person's story and look at different types of case conferences. Practitioners also talked about the possibility of the relationships built whilst developing an ASPA plan laying the ground work for the person to be better at protecting themselves in the future. For this reason it is important that social workers consider using forms of communication beyond standard interviewing that would enable this protective process. Some key challenges are balancing the individual rights with practitioners' legal duties and developing better inter-agency working that is accessible to the person at risk. Wider research also highlights these concerns (Calder, 2011; Hogg et al 2009, Mackay, 2008 and 2011; Patrick and Smith 2009).

Members of the Altrum Risk Research Team and Kathryn Mackay who led the study with social workers across four local authorities carried out several workshops to discuss findings with social workers and other professionals who do ASPA work. Those who came to the workshops discussed the findings and the issues and challenges they were facing in their own contexts. At eight such events a total of 154 participants contributed comments. Some of the common themes raised were:

- Balancing respect of life style choices with duty of care,
- Being aware and responding to the needs of adults with minimal or informal means of support who cope for the most part on their own in the community
- Working through issues around intimacy

What do we know about service users and practitioners working together to develop resources and tools that help service users participate?

In a meeting that brought together social workers from the Mackay study and service user researchers carrying out the Altrum Risk Research Project several themes of mutual interest were identified:

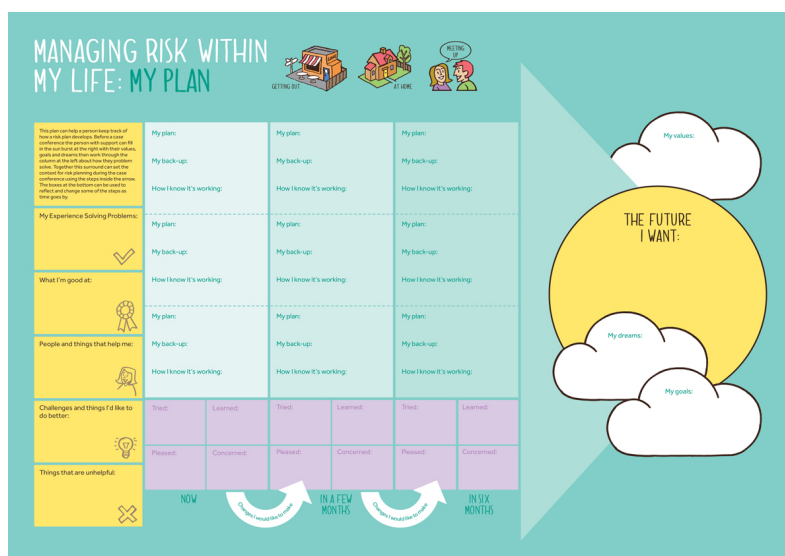
- The importance of the cyclical relationship between information sharing and building trust.
- Recognition that cases rarely involve clear cut distinctions between goodies and baddies. There is a need to develop ways of working with complex situations.
- Concern that in negotiating the need to assess capacity there is a tension between building rapport, involving the person in an empowering way and being clear with them about what is at stake.
- An interest in looking at how life planning approach and use of visuals can be integrated into risk planning based on an understanding that it is not about the right piece of paper, but about discussions.
- Recognition that service users and social workers may have different views on how information was given and then understood.

These insights point to the need for resources and tools that adults at risk of harm can access. For the most part the resources available focus mainly on recognising when harm is happening and how to contact local services. There are fewer resources to help a person harmed participate in ASPA and reach good outcomes for themselves. There are tools for general decision making about care that have been developed for working with people with mental health concerns and learning disabilities but work needs to be done to adapt them to use in situations of risk faced by many different adults in many different situations. Also social workers who carry out much of the ASPSA work do not often make use of these different ways and tend to ask specialist workers to help them (Mackay et al 2011).

In the work undertaken by the Altrum Risk Research Team, participants valued honesty about options, costs, capacity assessment, and other procedures, with clear explanations. They wanted this approach to be part of the relationship they had with any of the practitioners taking part in the investigation. They also highlighted the importance of flexibility about how case conference and risk planning is carried out. They suggested that visual tools can make the most of a person’s communication strengths, and can let everyone in the room be human. These techniques could potentially transform a person’s inclusion in formal Adult Support and Protection proceedings. Participants expressed the strong view that a successful process needs to incorporate supportive relationships --not one-off support, but sustainable support (Adult Risk Research Team 2011, Brookes et al 2012).

The Altrum Risk Research Team took these concerns and suggestions and developed resources that could provide examples of what would be helpful. The intention was that these would prompt those working in ASPA to adapt and further develop resources with service users and carers in their local area. The resources available for adapting are:

- An information leaflet for service users that maps the different stages of an ASPA process and suggests question it may be helpful to ask those helping them at each stage.
- A similar leaflet for carers with suggestions of ways they can support a person.
- A diary tool to keep track of the person’s involvement in decisions and actions through the process.
- A planning tool that provides a visual way



of recording the goals a person wants to reach, the experiences and strengths they bring to problem solving and a process for developing and reviewing steps along the way.

- A cover for the risk assessment which provides a space for the person themselves to record important information that gives them co-ownership of the assessment.
- A suite of video clips that show how we worked, dramatise issues for discussion at each stage of ASPA process, demonstrate how to use the visual tools we developed.

Insights into how to work together

All along when presented with dilemmas about how to facilitate further exploration the Altrum Risk Research team found the same basic lessons have been reconfirmed: “trust yourself, question your fears, use and extend what you’ve already found builds bridges”. The team chose forum theatre to get a story on the table so that they could reflect on the moment by



moment experience of going through risk without exposing any one person’s story to that kind of public view. Forum theatre is a process of acting out a situation you want to discuss rather than describing it in words. In all their work with the participants, the Altrum team tried to be open and

receptive to what people may want to say about their experience without putting them in a situation where they would feel they had to disclose anything. Forum theatre also gave people the opportunity to show the team what they meant by stepping into role instead of telling them what they meant. Sometimes showing instead of telling built a common sense of things that made talking easier. The team also found that playing a scene was a



good way to get a clear sense of what each person was picturing by words. The team played through proposed activities in planning meetings and presentations as well. Sometimes by acting things out instead of talking about them, the team realised members had different assumptions. Once these assumptions came to light, the team could talk through them much better. From this experience, they recommend using forum theatre as part of a planning process.

The Altrum Risk Research Team have come to think of their process as working within a research studio (McFarlane et al, forthcoming), with different media and tools to hand that can be drawn upon as they learn about what ways of communicating work best for the strengths within the group they are consulting and the issue they want to explore with them. This approach meant the team combined a number of different ways of working that others doing further work might find useful:

- Using images to evoke place and space in order to ground research issues that would otherwise remain to abstract.
- Inviting participants to sculpt facilitators into images that depicted key facets of relationships
- Recording knowledge in a way that puts contributions side by side so that the relationships between them can be looked at rather than in a list that indicates one is better or more important than another. Acting and re-enacting scenarios so as to drill down into the specificity of how things are done that can be glossed over in procedural description.
- Visualising through a story line or comic strip a protracted process that takes place across time and multiple spaces, particularly the spaces that service users have limited access to, so as to make the issues across the process accessible, tangible and revisable
- Continuing to use all these strategies throughout sharing research with others so that doing this remained accessible to those whose views were being presented. (Brookes et al 2012)

Summarising what we know about participation

Adults and carers have had mixed experiences of ASP: some have been good but some have felt more could have been done to help them understand what ASPA was about and to help them have more say along the way. There are ways in which we can support people's participation through giving people more time, changing the way meetings are run, use of drama, pictures and accessibly written tools. The mixed picture of good and bad experiences can be found in England (SCIE, 2011) and in Wales (Magill, Yeates and Longley 2010) as well. What is needed is to build on the work that has been done so far and to get the examples of how to improve an individual's participation in ASPA out to all practitioners and agencies.

Co-production in Scotland

Co-production is the practice of service providers and service users developing and delivering services together. There are many points within the delivery of a service where people who have used it, or might use it, and the people who run it can work together. For example they can help to train staff, develop information sheets, advertise the service within their local area and review services together. Below we describe some of the places where ASPA work is done that can benefit from a co-production approach.

Adult protection committees

The ASPA policy (Scottish Government, 2009) recommends that the local adult protection committees who oversee ASPSA work have members who have received services and carers. The majority of committees now have some form of service user and carer involvement. Some sit on the main committee and have support to do this. Other committees have set up a sub-committee where more service users and carers can get together in a less formal setting to share views that are then forwarded to the main committee (Scottish Government, 2011). The important thing is that the ASPA committee has to be accountable to this sub-committee or else it just becomes a talking shop. This can be done by the ASPA committee members meeting with them and sharing their paperwork and decisions and explaining why they may not have accepted recommendations made by the sub-committee. In some cases volunteer groups and forums for older people, mental health issues, and disable people choose their own committee members to represent them.

Reference groups

Reference groups are like forums that are set up to advise services. These can be at local and national level. The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) has led the way in developing a co-production approach. For example they established a reference group of people with learning disabilities to help them with their work with local area coordination groups who are responsible for supporting and promoting

independence of people with learning disabilities. They have also developed resources to encourage co-production and hosted events that introduce co-production to more services and organisations.

Raising awareness

There are different ways to raise awareness. Several ASP committees have asked service users to develop leaflets. The service user on the Dundee ASP Committee and the peer advocacy group she is part of developed an accessible information leaflet. In Forth Valley a similar group also produced a video, alongside a leaflet that told the story of someone who had received ASPA support.

The design and wording of such leaflets is important as sometimes agency leaflets are not easy to read. For example the Dundee group also helpfully reviewed the leaflets developed by the Altrum Risk Research Project and provided insight into which images were helpful or not. Also some people will require information in a different format.

A second way to raise awareness is with tools developed by Talking Mats. Talking Mats is a project that uses a specific visual methodology to help anyone with communication support needs to get their views heard in different situations where they may be asked questions about any aspect of their life. They have developed their methodology to cover ASPA issues and have run workshops with practitioners and people with communication needs to help them use them. They discovered that very few people knew about ASPA. They use a co-production approach to piloting the packs they produced including the one for ASPA.

A third way to raise awareness is the use of drama. Several local authorities, drawing on the drama approach of the advocacy group The Good Life, are developing use of co-produced Forum Theatre to raise awareness of risks people can face and encouraging them to seek help if they are. Fife Council is also using this approach to help service users understand better how a person harmed and social worker could work together to protect them and help them recover from harm. Fife Council has also begun to use the Altrum Risk Research visual tools in awareness raising events such as the annual Carer and Service Users Conference.

Summary of Co-production Possibilities within ASPA

There are a wide range of different ways and different service user groups getting involved in co-production. This ranges from designing leaflets to getting the message across through use of drama and training sessions to communities and to practitioners. They are also starting to take on more of an active role in the ASPA committees. This is a good start and hopefully we can learn from each other and share the activities developed in our project widely across Scotland to make ASPA a policy that works better for everybody.

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Appendices 2: Thoughts on Resilience from Altrium Risk Research Team (2011)

Working towards Resilience

Overall:

Much of the work on resilience focuses on children and more work needs to be done to articulate what resilience means for different adults facing different challenges and recovering from different past forms of harm. Generally the literature is in agreement that resilience relies on the foundation of a sense of security in relationships, self esteem and self-efficacy (Windle, 2011). We came up with key factors that contribute to a person developing or rediscovering these:

- Knowing how to lessen fears and increase strengths.
- Ability to reinvent one's self.
- Being connected to the wider world and the bigger picture.
- Being able to see others' points of view and work with them.
- Being able to contribute or give back to others using one's strengths and experiences.

Although many participants were at first unfamiliar with the term resilience, when we opened it up for discussions many rich images of what it could mean emerged. An important image that members of the research team felt encapsulated this is that of keys. The keys that open the door to relationships a person can trust, in turn, open the door to services – these together open the door to resilience.

At Each Stage Along the ASPA Process

Preparing to Meet: Participants stressed that at the beginning it's important to help a person see there is light at the end of the tunnel. Going through the tunnel itself may be scary and difficult, and a person will want to know how they are going to be helped to get through before they will want to commit to stepping into the tunnel.

A person understanding for themselves the nature of the risk they face is important for how they will be able to manage risk in the future. Although the person may be at risk, there may be many things about the risky situation or relationships that the person values. Support to articulate both what is harmful and what is valued can help a person retain a sense of value and develop different ways to seek out what they value. This has important implications for their sense of self and sense of trust within relationship

Getting Around the Table: Thinking of the tunnel metaphor, team members reflected that the more open choices a person is given the more windows open in the tunnel, the more hospitable place it becomes. The tunnel does need to lead to the light a person wants to have in their life, but the less it feels and looks like a tunnel the easier the journey. In practical terms participants felt this meant planning that started with open options rather than fixed choices.

Feedback at the end of a meeting can help with developing resilience. Feedback can aim to help a person regain or develop the ability to relate to the wider world.

Feedback can acknowledge that meetings can be tough for all, including

professionals. Feedback about stamina, ability to hear others, and ability to express one's self as part of the meeting process are all helpful. As one research team member put it: "Feedback keeps you going".

Putting the Plan into Action: If the person has been able to use the tools and feel they own the plan it can mean the difference between feeling like a passenger on the train through the tunnel and feeling like they are in the driver's seat. Reassessing risk at this stage and acknowledging increased ability to manage risk, where relevant, can play an important part in helping a person regain a sense of self. Team members talked about the importance of the person being able to tell their own story. It takes time for this story to emerge and for their voice to develop. If the risk assessment is written from an outsider's point of view, it is all the more important that the person at risk be given time to tell the story of their recovery in their own way. Research team members who have recovered from harm commented that at first all people who intervene for you may see is the problem. "You have to be patient and know if they stick around as things get better they will begin to see you – the person you want to be." The message the research team wanted to convey to the person at risk was to be patient, it may take time for people working with you to get to know you. The message for those working with the person is twofold. Firstly, start looking for the person and how they want to reinvent themselves early on – picking up on this can be very encouraging. Secondly stick around to see this through, or if that's not possible make sure this thread is picked up by others that get involved. Continuity is important.

Reviewing the Plan: This is an opportunity to reinforce work done earlier. Celebrating improvements in a person's ability to cope and their ability to communicate their decisions, goals, and plans is important. Discovering these improvements may require gently taking steps back to let the person take steps forward.

Getting on With Life: Having something to give to others can powerfully lift a person's sense of self and relation to others. Feeling that one can make a difference for others that come after can make a difficult process seem more worth it. There was a strong consensus from participants that peer support was very important and that learning from each other's stories was a valuable way of developing their own knowledge about services and thinking through how they want to relate to them. The story the person has to tell about all phases of the process can be very helpful both to practitioners across the multi agency team and to other people who find themselves at risk. Formats that make stories accessible and awareness of where and how to access these stories are all worthy of resources and statutory commitment. One social worker with lead responsibility for Adult Support and Protection in her local authority summed this up when she observed: It's the stories that stick with you.