

Pave the Way Newsletter

April 2008

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"As we plan what happens in the everyday we need to keep our vision and long term plans in our heads so that the everyday is in step with the broader vision."

The importance of planning

When we think of planning for the future, we might think of planning as something that happens in a particular gathering or meeting. We bring people together and, usually with the help of someone to lead or facilitate the planning session, spend 2 or 3 hours working on the goals we want to achieve and the steps we need to take to achieve them.

This sort of planning session can be very powerful. It helps us clarify our vision for the future and to focus on the important issues. Importantly, it allows us an opportunity to invite others to join with us, to be part of our journey, and to contribute in a practical way to achieving a good and valued life for our family member with a disability. Important close family and friends can feel that they are making an important contribution to the development of our dreams and decisions.

If our family has set up a support circle, the circle might assist with planning. However, it is not necessary to have a support circle in order to have a planning session. We can ask people to come together specifically to assist us with planning, which is different from asking them to be part of an ongoing support circle.

Planning as a state of mind - a way of thinking

Planning is also a state of mind, a way of thinking. Planning does not only happen in a facilitated planning session. We might clarify our vision and goals in a planning session but we need to ensure that our vision and goals then inform and direct our everyday decisions and actions. As we plan what happens in the everyday we need to keep our vision and long term plans in our heads so that the everyday is in step with the broader vision.

One way that Pave the Way can assist families with their future planning is to facilitate one or more planning sessions.

We can:

- meet with you to discuss the sort of planning session you would like and who you would like to invite
- facilitate one or more planning sessions
- meet with you after the planning session to "de-brief" and check how Pave the Way might be able to assist further.

If you are interested in planning or would like further information, please contact Jeremy Ward on (07) 3291 5800

What if...?

“What if my son/daughter is offered Public Housing but we are not ready?”

This newsletter contains the first of an occasional series of *What if...?* scenarios which we hope will become a means for families to share ideas with each other, via the newsletter and website, about strategies they have used when they encounter obstacles in their planning. The first of these raises the question, *What if my son/daughter is offered Public Housing but we are not ready?*

Not being “ready” can, of course, mean anything from not having adequate support organised, to not having thought through all that such a step would entail, to simply having the common feelings of fear and apprehension that many parents experience when their children move away from home. How could they possibly survive! Whatever the situation, the most important learning about this scenario is the need for planning. Putting your relative's name on the Department list for housing is not enough. Even if the wait time is said to be long the planning for supported living must start early. House sitting, holidays away from home, setting up a part of the house for your son or daughter to have the opportunity to live more independently and to take more responsibility for their own life can all be part of the preparation for moving out. Planning and “rehearsing” in this way can help give an indication of the kind of support that may be needed.

“A period of transition is quite common...”

Even with the best plans in place, however, families may still feel insecure about the move. It is quite common for Department of Housing tenants to work through a period of transition, paying rent but moving into their property gradually. So, rather than reject the offer, some families realise that perhaps there will never be a perfect state of readiness and that a first step must be taken sometime. Transition plans could include the person staying for weekends for a while or for a couple of evenings a week before they move in permanently. In some cases the amount of support a person will need may not be clear. Friends and family might then be organised to take turns to stay overnight or to cook and share a meal. Families sometimes find that this high level of involvement from others is needed less as the person becomes more independent and begins to feel more confident living with a less intense level of support. Moving away from home need not be an all or nothing situation, however. Friends and family, and for some people, their network or support circle, will always remain important for ongoing contact and support.

The importance of planning...the future starts now!

Sometimes the lack of readiness on everyone's part will mean that an offer of housing may need to be rejected. Further offers will be made, however, so taking the first step in thinking through what it means for your son or daughter to live away from home is important. It is never too early, or too late, to start planning and remember, the future starts now!

If you have ideas to share about the transition to more independent living, please contact Catherine Raju on 3291 5800

“No failure like success....I guess” Paul Kelly

What does success mean?

Songwriter, Paul Kelly throws out the challenge. Do any of us really understand what success or failure is? It is subjective and not always clear to us at the time. You will all no doubt have had experiences where you thought at the time, that the outcome was the worst one possible. Yet as time passed, the event or incident led you to a new path or opportunity which you would not have imagined.

Life is full of bricks, events and happenings beyond our control. Whilst we can plan well and use sound strategies, when we are thrown a brick, it is what we do with it that makes the difference. We can build a fence, a wall or we can build a bridge that will connect us more deeply to friends, family or community.

Whilst working with families, we sometimes hear people being hard on themselves when things work out differently than expected. It is understandable to become discouraged sometimes by “failure”. Is it really failure though or is it just what happens in life?

Pave the Way suggests that planning for the future is richer when we invite people we love and trust to be part of the process. This often requires a different way of thinking, a different way of being. All people, including families who have a member who has a disability, encounter setbacks and disappointments in life.

True success may be measured, **not** in the outcome, but in our ability to look at changing strategies and adapting. In our experience, families show remarkable resilience. They manage to sustain themselves, their sons and daughters and their efforts as they continue to support them to have good lives now and into the future.

It is not useful to compare our efforts to those of others. We all continue to do the best we can with the resources we have at the time. Whilst we can seek assistance and information from others, each family will determine the path, the timing and the strategies that work best for them.

Similarly, relationships are not measured by what we get from them but from mutual fidelity and endurance through good times and bad. Success may lie in being able to see clearly what is important to you and yours. Safety and security will more likely be determined not by perfect systems but by enduring, deep and abiding connectedness to imperfect people just like us. These kinds of connections take time and need time to evolve. Maybe “failure” will lead us to something better in time.

“We can build a fence, a wall or we can build a bridge that will connect us more deeply to family, friends or community.”

“Safety and security will more likely be determined not by perfect systems but by enduring, deep and abiding connectedness to imperfect people just like us.”

For further information, please contact Sharon Bourke on (07) 3291 5800

Pave the Way

Pave the Way assists families throughout Queensland to clarify their vision for their family member with a disability and to plan to implement that vision. We encourage planning which is vision driven, 'whole of life', developmental, outside service planning and which safeguards family members in the long term. We believe it is other people who keep people safe and support the development of personal networks, including Support Circles.

Contact us

Please contact us if you would like to be on our mailing list, or would like information or assistance developing a vision and plan or developing a support circle or similar network. If you are part of a group of families and would like us to come and talk about these issues, let us know.

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1300 phone number

Pave the Way now has a 1300 number, which allows you to contact us from anywhere in Queensland for the cost of a local call. The number is **1300 554 402**. This service has been introduced to assist those families who live outside the Brisbane area.

Upcoming events

"Planning for Now, Tomorrow and the Future" – Jeremy Ward

Sunshine Coast 7 June 2008 (PTW)

Building Lifelong Supports & Safeguards – Exploring Support Circles & Networks

Gold Coast 22 April 2008 (PTW)
Brisbane 7 May 2008 (PTW)
Caboolture 3 June 2008 (PTW)



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To book into one of the above workshops, please phone Pave the Way (PTW) on 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402, or email pavetheway@mamre.org.au. For further information about these workshops, our workshop calendar can be viewed on our website www.pavetheway.org.au.