

Driving up Quality at Achieve together

Achieve together played a leading role in developing the Driving Up Quality Code which was launched in 2013. Since then we have held a number of successful events across the country, attended by the people we support, their families, our staff and external stakeholders.

The purpose of the events is to get feedback on what we do well and what we need to improve. The events are designed to be accessible so the people we support are able to take part in a meaningful way.

Our main area of focus this year was to fully involve everyone in the shaping of our values and in promoting our Wheel of Engagement campaign.

The Driving up Quality code has 5 main principles:

1. Support focused on the person
2. The person is supported to have an ordinary and meaningful life
3. Care and support focuses on people being happy and having a good quality of life
4. A good culture is important to the organisation
5. Managers and board members lead and run the organization well

Each year we have changed our approach to keep it fresh. Last year we focused on health and well-being, employment and education and STOMP (stopping over medication of people with learning disabilities). We held one event in England and one in Wales.

At the end of the sessions, people were encouraged to make a pledge. They agreed an action to implement to improve the lives of the people we support. A number of people we support and their staff teams made pledges which we monitored during the course of 2018.



Examples of the sort of pledges people made include:

- Increasing people's involvement in sporting activities.
- People enrolling in the ASDAN (Towards Independence) programme which helps teach people independence skills and measures their progress over time.
- Managers committing to ensure that everyone they support who is on psychotropic medication should have regular medication reviews to try and reduce the level of medication they receive.
- Staff committing to support individuals to check their breasts or testicles for any signs of cancer.
- Managers committing to investigate opportunities for people to become more independent through use of assistive technology.
- A number of individuals committing themselves to look for paid employment.
- People committing themselves to participate in activities to help reduce stress and anxiety, like mindfulness.

This year was extra special, as these were our first events as the freshly merged organisation Achieve together. We held seven 'Driving up Quality' roadshows regionally, in Surrey, Exeter, Wales, London, Cheshire, Portsmouth, Bexhill and Cambridge and invited staff, people we support, commissioners and families. Each event was oversubscribed with over 100 attendees at every one.

At the beginning of each event we held group workshops exploring our values and culture and what this means to people. Individuals and staff brainstormed ideas and decorated life-size people cut outs describing what they expected from a member of support staff, how they would like to be treated and what qualities they would like to see in staff members. The input and ideas from the people we support, families, staff members and stakeholders were collated and put together to produce Achieve together's new values.

At Achieve together, our absolute priority is enabling the people we support to have the best possible quality of life. A key to this is ensuring they are meaningfully engaged in activities and relationships, both at home and in the community. The Wheel of Engagement is a visual aid for staff that is eye catching and identifies and promotes good practice in meaningful engagement.



There are 9 areas of engagement on the wheel:
 Total Communication, Active Community Support, Intensive Interaction, Leisure and Exercise, Positive Behaviour Support, Person Centred Active Support (PCAS), Voluntary Work, Sensory Stimulation and Paid Employment. We focused the roadshows on four areas; PCAS, Intensive Interaction, Sensory Stimulation and Total Communication.



Total Communication: Our learning and development team facilitated three sessions throughout the day looking at a range of augmentative communication devices, including signing, apps and social stories. These sessions enabled staff to learn new methods of communication to implement in their services. It also showed the people we support new ways for them to control their environment and make independent choices.

Sensory Stories and Intensive Interaction: Michael Fullerton, our Clinical Director, held informative and interactive sessions on sensory stimulation and intensive interaction. He talked about the difference between a linguistic being and a sensory being and the importance of positive touch, rapport and mindfulness. He also discussed when and why to use intensive interaction, which involved a messy play session that everyone enjoyed, particularly squirting foam everywhere. The most popular part of the session was the sensory story where Michael took people on a journey to the beach through the senses of touch, sound, sight and smell.



Michael reminded us of the importance of taking time to slow down, really ‘tune in’ and listen to the person we support. For people who don’t use speech, it is so important that they know we notice them, are interested in them and want to spend quality time together.

Michael said “I truly enjoyed each Driving Up Quality Day. In each session I facilitated there was a good mix of people with learning disabilities and/or autism, support staff, families and commissioners. Everyone got involved readily in the interactive parts of the session and this was a real joy. Aside from that, when I observed interactions between support staff and people supported outside of my session I was heartened to witness some really lovely and natural rapport. The Driving Up Quality days are a great way of gaining feedback and promoting best practice – already looking forward to next year!”

Person Centred Active Support (PCAS): These sessions were facilitated and planned by our Area Directors and although the concept was the same each time, each session was completely different. We had people gardening, Hoovering, making smoothies, doing sports, creating name plaques, decorating cupcakes, doing cognitive exercises, sock pairing, household chores and more. The idea of this workshop is to show that people we support can participate in every day activities with the right support.

Each event featured a special performance or presentation by the people we support from across the organisation. Campaign 4 Change (Self-Advocacy Group) gave a presentation about their new campaign #mindyourlanguage, the Dyke Road dance crew performed their latest play and the Makaton Choir sang and signed. The Town Farm Workshop taught people how to weave and create pottery and Penney Meadow gave an amazing performance showcasing all the activities they offer at their service, including forestry skills, animal welfare and outside sports.

