

## 5a1

# Circle of Friends

### Do

Use the process championed by Judith Snow to involve friends in making life better for the person. (*Pearpoint 1990*)

I've never seen him so enthusiastic. It's like he knows that within his circle people will actually listen to him.' (*McIntosh & Whitaker 1998, p57*)

### Story

'My brother's circle has been working for about two years. Andrew is definitely the focus of attention. It's his circle – he owns it and he knows this is different he plans the dates, we talk about what he wants to do in the meetings, hold them where he wants to, and do social things that he wants to do.

**Hints & Hazards**

The person who needs support invites a group of people he already knows to meet together to help improve his quality of life. The focus is not solely on community connections, but the model is based on the belief in 'inclusive community' – that many citizens can and will make efforts to improve the richness of the wider community for all members, including those with awkward needs, and that all will benefit from this effort. A support team or Circle of Support can be enlisted from an individual's present peer group or anticipated peer group in a new setting. The Circle of Friends meets weekly for problem solving with the individual and offering ongoing support. (*Newton & Wilson 1999*)

People who know you too well may be reticent to criticise or push you forward when it is needed.

You can see a comparison of traditional planning, person-centred teams and circles of support in *McIntosh & Whitaker 1998, pp58-9*

Some people using services have become isolated from other community members and their families, and so their 'circle' may be drawn entirely from paid people. While there is nothing wrong with paid people becoming part of someone's circle, there is a danger that a circle of paid people becomes a part of services. If this happens, perhaps their first task could be to support the focus person to develop new relationships, and the some of these people may like to join the circle.

A Circle of Accountability is a special kind of Circle that supports someone who has committed serious offences. See *Wilson et al 2005* for more on this.