

## CONCLUSION

*My sense is that the positive impact of having homelessness strategies that focus on ending homelessness, with service integration as a key driver of change, does pay off in the long run, but it requires governments and services to commit to a process of review and reform.*

*In the UK and the USA there was a strong acknowledgement that you can't end homelessness without access to sufficient affordable housing whether that be stand-alone apartments, bedsit accommodation or shared housing complexes.*

*In both the UK and the USA, the investment of funds to support the skills development of the non-government sector as they moved through a major change management process appeared to have had a significant and positive impact. A culture of partnership and collaboration was evident through all the meetings and discussions that I held. Also, the importance of strong data to support decision making was a constant refrain that was echoed across all the services that I visited.*

*What is clear is that there are no easy solutions to ending homelessness.*

*Joe Finn, the CEO of the Massachusetts Housing Support Alliance, shared these salient words which ring so true:*

*"The truth is there are no silver bullets, only struggle moving forward for a just and better way. I often feel we are hampered by those who propose cure-alls and are better served by those willing to wrestle complexity."*

## PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

### HOW TO GET FRONT LINE SUPPORT WORKERS TO FOCUS ON THEIR CLIENTS THROUGH EMPOWERING THEM WITH SIMPLE TOOLS AND AN UNDERPINNING MODEL OR APPROACH

*This article addresses the age-old problem of what is the role of a support worker? How can we reduce the role as much as possible while still providing much-needed assistance? Tan is a well-known specialist in behavioural management and her thoughts make challenging reading.*

#### **What is a support worker?**

A support worker is simply any person who is supporting another to manage the requirements of their day-to-day life ... as an employed position or an informal role. A support worker's role is to aid their clients to better manage in their home, place of employment, school, community and/or any other environment their client frequents.

#### **Who are support workers?**

We are all support workers in some way. Whether you are a manager supporting your staff; a staff member supporting your client; a mother supporting your child; and so on. We all at times play the role of 'support worker'. As a formal role, a support worker is simply one who is paid to support their clients in their natural setting! The key for all support workers, no matter whether in a formal or informal capacity or the industry in which you are supporting is to: *Make your role with one person or one skill redundant by equipping people with the tools to become as independent as they are capable of becoming.*

The more we focus our attention on



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equipping people with the skills they currently don't have, the more:

- Capable that person becomes
- That person can contribute to their own life
- That person feels a higher sense of control over their own life
- That person's level of self-esteem and self-worth will increase.

If you teach a person to contribute in some

manner to any skill required to be more independent you are offering two key factors:

1. You are making your role redundant with that particular skill, that is, you are no longer required to perform that skill for that person as they can now do it for themselves (don't worry, there will be many more skills and people your talents can be utilised with)

but much more importantly ...

2. You are supporting the person to contribute to their own life and thus:
  - a. Increasing their sense of responsibility over their own life
  - b. Increasing their perceived level of control over certain factors within their life
  - c. Decreasing the person's anxiety level over the same certain factors within their life
  - d. Increasing a person's feeling of self-worth and self esteem.

How awesome is that ... so not only are you a "support worker" but you are contributing to how a person feels about themselves ... what other role in life could possibly hold more responsibility than that?

### How DO support workers make their role redundant?

1. Teach a person to do for themselves what they are not yet capable of doing for self
2. Stop doing for a person what they are capable of doing and allow the person to take responsibility and do for themselves
3. Offer non-judgmental, accepting support as the person attempts to integrate and utilise their new skills.

If any person you are supporting is at the same skill level at the end of the shift (or time with them) as what they were at the beginning of that same shift (or time with them); thus just as dependent on you now as they previously were, you should question...

- (a) Have I really been supportive or have I further entrenched dependence?

- (b) Have I negatively or positively contributed to how this person feels about themselves?

- (c) HAVE I REALLY OFFERED TRUE SUPPORT?

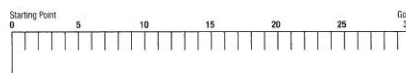
### How DO you Teach New Skills?

Before you stop "doing" for any individual what has previously been done for them, we must ensure the person has been TAUGHT and developed the required skills ... would you ever give a person a key and car and say "drive" without first checking whether they know how to drive? Every new skill you are working towards developing requires opportunity for advancement at a pace that the learner is reasonably capable of based on their natural strengths and weaknesses!

Every new skill can be measured on a 30cm ruler.

**(zero) 0cm** = our starting point

**30cm** = our goal ... the specific goal may range from some independence to total independence depending on the particular skill and the individual person you are working with.



### Walking along the ruler at a pace that is manageable for the individual client:

I've always said if there was a "Masters Degree in procrastination" there would be many graduates. The reason why any one person procrastinates is because: **(1)** we do not know what the next step is **(2)** we don't want to do the next step or **(3)** the next step feels too overwhelming. This can be for many reasons but most times is a result of the person fearing failure to some degree so staying at 0cm feels more within their control rather than trying and potentially failing which feels totally out of the person's control. Without judgment, it is important to be aware that we all move along this 30cm ruler at different paces. With one particular 30cm goal identified, John may be capable and confident to take 5cm steps in any one

step; Brad feels overwhelmed by such a big step but would feel confident to move past 0cm if his steps were broken into 1cm steps; Harry on the other hand is overwhelmed by the 1cm steps and unless the steps are broken down even further into 1mm steps he is likely to stay at 0cm. In each example, if the steps are presented to the person in the size they feel confident in achieving then eventually they will all get to 30cm... just at different paces. The key here is identifying the size of the step that a person feels confident in achieving in any one step ... determined by the person themselves, not what you have judged the person capable and confident of achieving!

*A good guide ... if the person has not left 0cm or gets to a certain point along the ruler and stays there ... the next step feels too overwhelming for that person; our role is to find out why and assist in re-evaluating the next step to support success!*

### Developing an awareness of your client's natural strengths and weaknesses:

Each person is born with areas of skills that they will perform better at over another and styles of learning that suit them better over another - our natural strengths and weakness. For example, many people learn better when information is presented visually in comparison to information that is presented verbally. It is important to have an awareness of each person's natural strengths and weakness so that you can design skill development via teaching strategies that utilise a person's strengths ... thus increasing their opportunity to actually learn what you are teaching them.

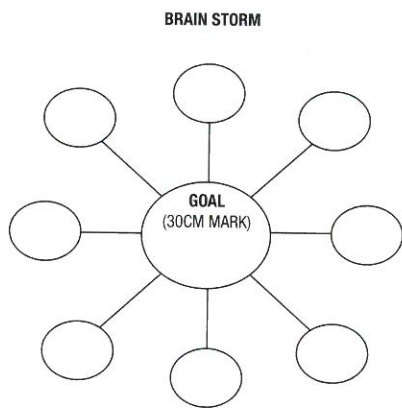
### Combining the 30cm ruler with visual templates:

Many people (including you and I) benefit from each of the ruler steps (5cm, 1 cm or 1mm) being provided in a visual step-by-step recipe of "How to get from 0cm to 30cm". Following are the templates and required steps to writing recipes ... for all 30cm ... including getting dressed independently, writing a book, starting a

business, making a 3 course meal or simply a peanut butter sandwich ... they all follow the same 0cm to 30cm path! You can use the following two templates to individualise one person's 30cm recipe:

1. Brain Storm Template
2. Visual Template

**Brain Storm Template:**



1. Identify your 30cm goal and write it in the middle circle.
2. Identify ALL steps (5cm, 1cm, 1mm) required to reach your goal. At this point we are not asking for an order of steps rather ALL the steps required. If we ask for an order people can become fixated on trying to identify the 'RIGHT' step and then not move forward. Write all steps in the circle in no particular order. Once all steps have been identified:
3. Write a number above each circle as to the order in which you will complete them ... now you have your order and need to add them to the step-by-step visual template

**Visual Template:**

Step Number	What To Do	Tick When Completed
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

1. Complete the visual template by adding the identified steps above and put them in a step-by-step procedure
2. Provide information to the person using concrete instructions (ie words and/or pictures interpreted in the same way by ten different people).

*A completed example used for an adult with intellectual impairment who had been having EVERYTHING done for him by his support workers ... thus creating dependence. Four years after first using this schedule, and with many more 30cm goals, this man was independently cooking a BBQ meal for his family*

Peanut Butter Sandwich			
Number	Words	Picture	I Did It
1	Butter Knife		<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Bread Slices		<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Butter		<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Peanut Butter		<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Butter Spread on 2 Bread		<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Peanut Butter on 2 Bread		<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Bread Together		<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Eat Sandwich		<input type="checkbox"/>

\*Exactly the same format would be used to teach a higher functioning person more complex skills relevant to their 30cm.

**Dependent Worker or True Support Worker**

Whether your role is supporting a person to make a peanut butter sandwich, or another more advanced skill, it all comes down to our role is to make our role redundant by equipping the person with the skills to become as independent as they are capable of becoming. If a support worker keeps doing for a person what they could otherwise learn to do for themselves we are in fact harming the person by creating dependence and stunting their own advancement.

By using the simple tools discussed within this article, you are able to support the progression of each person you spend time with to move along their own individual ruler in closing the gap to their own independence with their identified 30cm goals. Your approach to supporting another person can create:

- (a) Increased or decreased anxiety
- (b) Low or high confidence
- (c) Decreased or increased self-esteem and self-worth
- (d) Dependence or INDEPENDENCE
- (e) Negative or POSITIVE FEELINGS ABOUT SELF

What sort of support worker will you choose to be?

**YOUR EXPERT**

**Tan Curtis is the Managing Director and Founder of FABIC (Functional Assessment & Behaviour Interventions Centre). FABIC is a national behaviour specialist centre that supports people to understand and change behaviour. Tan is the author of "Challenging Change...behaviour strategies for life"; a helpful tool to support all people to understand and change behaviour for self or other people. Tan has also authored a number of behaviour specialist courses that are presented nationally by herself or one of Fabric's behaviour specialist consultants.**