

Comments from a staff team who ran a DHS group home like it was their own business

Practical Active Support:

Active Support is an approach aimed at supporting people with disabilities to become more involved in the day-to-day activities within their home.

A number of DHS houses have had staff undertake training, and piloted the approach. A staff member from one such group home, back in 2005, made the following observations about the implementation of the approach.

Residents:

The residents are all interested in the activities and seem to really enjoy the positive nature of these interactions. Boredom has been greatly reduced and there has been a decrease in challenging behaviours. The environment in the house is happier, with more opportunities for residents and staff to engage in positive activities and interactions. In fact, one of the residents now frequently congratulates himself with phrases such as "Good work" and 'Good cook'.

Staff:

It quickly became obvious that this initiative would be very much "staff driven" and that the success (or lack of) would be directly influenced by the imagination, enthusiasm and determination of staff to put in the thought and effort required.

It was necessary for us to adjust our way of doing and thinking to accommodate the concepts of active support. This is an ongoing process, but we have gradually 'grown' into these new habits and this is happening at an ever-expanding rate.

The most significant change for staff has been in our perceptions of how we see the people we work with. We are now definitely more "ability" orientated in the way we look at the residents.

Instead of looking at the challenges that some people's disabilities present, we are now looking at what each person may be capable of, and presenting the activity in a way that is most likely to succeed and be enjoyable.

We have also greatly reduced the amount of tasks that we automatically carried out on the resident's behalf. Instead, it has virtually become automatic to look at how we can involve any or all of the people living in the house"