

## Who is being nominated?

Stephen Plunkett

## Organisation

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland

## Award Details

### Category

Category 7: Leading for Impact 2019

### Q1: Overview

Erin Stevenson is a senior support worker with the Richmond Fellowship Scotland Care at Home and Housing support service in South Lanarkshire. Erin leads a team that supports 5 adults with Learning Disabilities, some of whom are autistic and / or experience mental illness. The people Erin supports have complex needs and require 24 hour support.

Erin has transformed the way her team go about providing support for people in their home. She has introduced 'Active Support' approaches and methods which have empowered the supported people to do things that we previously unable, or prevented, from doing. The sense of achievement this has created has had a profound impact on the overall wellbeing. By leading through example, and learning from the challenges and setbacks along the way, Erin has also empowered her team to take a different approach to positive risk taking.

Where Erin has lead others have followed. Now lots of her colleagues have learned from Erin and have received training in order to implement 'Active Support' in their own services. They are now training each other and sharing learning, and in doing so they are improving lives and continually building a positive / enabling culture throughout their teams.

### Q2: What did you do?

Through person-centred support planning, Erin's Team support 5 people to live safely at home; manage their health, achieve key goals and outcomes that matter to them; be active in their communities; and have fun. However, Erin believed that they could do more to empower supported people, particularly around tasks in the home; making cups of tea, preparing meals or cleaning were almost exclusively done by the support staff.

Erin explored why that was the case, and found these tasks had been assessed as too high risk, as they would involve working with things that could injure. Also, for individuals with complex needs, many tasks are not straight forward or require a lot of time to complete.

Erin recognised these as real challenges, but still believed there was value in the people being involved. Erin took it upon herself to research different social care approaches and contacted our Positive Behaviour Support Team for advice. They told Erin about new training on offer around 'Active Support', an evidence based method to enhance engagement and participation in all aspects of life. Erin decided to apply the core principles of Active Support to her own service. These are:

- Every moment has potential
- Little and often

- Graded assistance to ensure success
- Maximising choice and control

No-one in Erin's team had any knowledge of active support and were concerned that something might go wrong. Her manager had limited knowledge of active support, but trusted Erin's judgement to test it out.

Erin began to engage supported people in household tasks, particularly around food. To learn from the experience, she kept detailed running notes and photos (later turned into training materials for her wider team). An example of Erin's approach to active support can be seen in enabling a supported person to make a cup of tea. This began by working with them to select the cup they wanted. Through encouragement, support and recognition, they worked through each stage of the tea making process, enabling the person to build skills and confidence as they progressed, over a period of weeks.

It wasn't easy. Erin had to take time to learn the best ways for each individual to participate; identify achievable goals (no matter how small), actively manage the risks involved and ensure that the supported people understood their achievement. There were some failures along the way. Supported people could become upset and agitated if the task became too difficult. Erin learned from mistakes and with the support of PBST colleagues found a way to re-engage people by setting more manageable goals and gradually work towards completing bigger tasks but a slower pace.

Erin began mentoring her team in this approach and gradually they integrated aspects of Active Support into their practice. Erin encouraged her team to take positive risks so people could experience a real sense of achievement; 14 members of the wider South Lanarkshire team have now completed formal Active Support training and have embedded the methods within their own services.

### **Q3: What did you achieve?**

By being proactive, Erin has enabled supported people to experience a real sense of achievement in their daily lives. This has had transformative impact. People's formal support plans are being regularly updated because they have achieved goals and outcomes that matter to them. The supported individuals are continually identifying new tasks that they want to participate in and are developing skills and increased confidence. There has also been an observed and recorded reduction in challenging behaviours amongst people with complex needs who are supported using Active Support methods. Erin was the catalyst for these improvements.

The learning that Erin gathered has been turned into a suite of training materials and Erin now delivers workshops on Active Support for other teams. Erin was the first person in her team to be trained in Active Support, but 14 of Erin's colleagues have completed this training and another senior support worker is now a certified Active Support trainer.

Support staff are now more confident in helping people take positive risks and they are supported by management to do so. This is because Erin was able to evidence the positive results that can follow. As such, there has been changes in both practice and culture within the service teams. Learning and experiences (including learning from "failure") are now being shared more widely and openly, and staff are continually looking for ways to innovate. This has been recognised by the Care Inspectorate who have assessed the 'quality of staffing' within this service as 'excellent' (6).

### **Q4: Why should you receive an award?**

When working in social care, it's not always easy to take risks; even positive risks. Erin faced this challenge and led by example. It wasn't easy, but Erin learned from setbacks and found ways to make Active Support work for people with complex needs. By doing so Erin has empowered not only supported people, but her team who now practice differently and have a more positive relationship with risk. Most

importantly, people are experiencing real achievements everyday and their wellbeing is enhanced as a result.