



Module 1: Introduction to Picture My Future

How can Picture My Future help people with disability?

Picture My Future offers many benefits to people with disability including:

- A way to organise thoughts
- A way to express themselves
- A way to become more empowered and engaged in their planning
- Motivation to explore new avenues and options
- A way to document important things now and in the future

A way to organise thoughts

Picture My Future offers another way for people with disability to organise their thoughts and communicate those thoughts in a different way. Many people with intellectual disability have communication and cognitive impairments that impact on their ability to talk about their hopes and dreams. In addition, abstract concepts can be difficult for people with disability to understand. Using pictures of people and things that are important to them or that they would like for their future can assist people to communicate more effectively with planners. The process of getting people with disability to think about the things that they like and dislike and the things that are important to them, helps them to anchor their thoughts in the present and gives them a context for thinking about the future. Picture My Future encourages people with disability to consider other areas in their lives that they may not normally think about. Choosing pictures that represent the people, places and things that are important to them, then organising those pictures according to their wishes allows people with disability to produce a personalised record of their goals and aspirations.

A way to express themselves

For people with disability who do not communicate verbally, Picture My Future can be a valuable tool by offering an opportunity to tell their stories through pictures. Several studies have confirmed that using pictures to support communication can be an effective approach to eliciting responses from people with disabilities (Davies and Wilson, 2006; Hewitt, 2003; Lorenz and Chilingerian, 2011, Ottmann and Crosbie 2012). People with disability may be able to communicate their hopes and dreams for the future through pictures

where previously their voices might not have been heard. The Picture My Future process may also offer an opportunity for a person with disability to explore difficult or unpleasant things in their life (Booth & Booth, 2003). This may occur through the selection of pictures or through discussion that arises even when pictures have not been selected. Picture My Future offers another option for people with disability to tell their stories.

A way to become more empowered and engaged in their planning

'Photovoice' was originally developed to enable marginalised communities to participate in research. Using pictures to communicate different aspects of their lives allows people with disability control over the picture that they choose and the story that the picture tells. Several studies have reported the successful use of 'Photovoice' as a tool for self-advocacy, with one study reporting that the approach increased participants' communication, expressive language and socialisation (Walton, et al., 2012). Picture My Future empowers people with disability as it gives them control over the pictures they choose and the stories they tell. The resource they create from the Picture My Future approach is a powerful tool that allows them to engage in the planning process to the fullest extent.

Motivation to explore new avenues and options

Picture My Future uses pictures that people with disability choose from a variety of sources, including photos that they take themselves. The process offers a number of potential opportunities for people with disability to learn new skills including photography and using new technologies. The Picture My Future process encourages a person with disability to thoroughly explore new options in his or her life as it allows the person time and space to do so.

A way to document important things now and in the future

The Picture My Future resource produced at the end of the process is a living document. It reflects a snapshot of a person's life and goals at a point in time, but it is important to remember that those things will change over time. Picture My Future is an approach that can be implemented at regular intervals during the planning cycle and the resource can be updated accordingly. Many people with disability find the process of exploring their goals through pictures to be an enjoyable one, and the production of a pictorial record of their lives to be a valuable experience.

References

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