Module 5: Using pictures to explore hopes and dreams

Learning outcomes:

At the end of this module, you should have an understanding of the following:

1. How using pictures can help people with disability to explore goals
2. Key things to consider when using Picture My Future
3. Limitations and challenges associated with using Picture My Future
4. How a picture library can be used

How using pictures can help people with disability to explore goals

Picture My Future offers people with disability a different way of exploring and recording their likes and dislikes, and their hopes and dreams for the future.

Information to guide the planning process for people with disability is generated from many sources including:
- the person themselves,
- family and friends,
- support staff,
- case files, and
- professional reports.

While it is important to hear from a variety of people, the person themselves, knows best about their needs and wants.

Many people with intellectual disability have cognitive and communication difficulties which make it difficult to remember things that are important to them, organise their thoughts, and talk about their goals, aspirations, hopes and dreams for the future. Picture My Future can assist the person to think about and express these complex concepts.

Choosing pictures of people and things that are important to them, or that they would like in their future, assists people to communicate more effectively, and assists them to be more engaged and empowered by the planning process.

The pictures that people use might include:
- photos they take themselves
- photos that other people to take for them, ideally with some direction from the person themself
- photos that have been taken in the past

- pictures they cut out of magazines
- pictures they download from the internet, or
- tickets, brochures or pamphlets they have collected

Picture My Future provides an opportunity for a person to organise their thoughts about the things that are important to them and express them in a format that appeals to them, e.g. a photo album, a power point presentation, an online album (e.g. Facebook).

This record can also provide the person with a pictorial representation of important things in their life at that time. This picture-based record can be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

Key things to consider when using Picture My Future

How the pictures are stored is important. It is important that the pictures can be accessed and used in conversation with those people who are involved in supporting the person to develop their plan.

It is important to record with the photos the 'conversation' and 'the story' that goes with the photos, e.g., by inserting captions. This is especially important where the person themselves needs a high level of support to 'tell their story', and where the meaning of the picture for the person is not clear from the photo alone.

When writing down what is important about the picture it is necessary to remember that what is important to a person may include both *what* they want to do, as well as *how* and *with whom* they wish to do it.

Short term and long term goals should be recorded, as well as the priority of goals if this is evident in the discussion.

Not all important information is future-oriented. It is also necessary to capture what is important to a person to maintain about their current life (things or people or elements they want to stay the same in the future, what things make life happy now).

Not all important information will be provided by the person themselves. Some information may also be provided by family, carers, or friends, or through insights of the facilitator during the process.

Limitations and challenges associated with using Picture My Future

Not all people with intellectual disability will have the ability to benefit from the Picture My Future approach. Some will not have the cognitive ability to recognise pictures, or understand the concept of future.

People with cognitive impairment (and commonly for those with mental health issues) can vary considerably in their concentration and level of engagement from one day to the next. It is important to take this into account when introducing the task and ascertaining their interest and capacity to undertake the task. In practice, a person might be interested one day, but not the next; they might be able to engage in the process one day, but not the next

Some people with intellectual disability will have little or no experience of using a camera or the internet, so will require significant support in collecting pictures.

The support required to collect relevant and meaningful pictures can be very time consuming. Some people may not have access to the support required to collect pictures. Others, who do have access to support, may not have sufficient hours of support to complete the process thoroughly.

Some people may want to collect their pictures over a timeframe that is longer than expected e.g. a person may divide the task into sections (work life, home life, family, friends etc.). It is important that there is a balance between completing the task in a way that works for the person, and a way which ensures it is completed as thoroughly as possible in the time frame available.

The final document, developed after completing the Picture My Future approach, may only be relevant to the time it is completed. Life circumstances can change at any moment in time, which can then influence a person's priorities, goals and dreams.

Some people may present photos solely or largely documenting their lives over the past week. Try to use these as a springboard to discuss what activities /things they like most and why, and which they like least or would like to change. This may lead to identification of both what is important to maintain about life now, as well as what may be important in the future.

There may be some goals for which there is no pictorial representation. Some things are difficult to photograph, and while pictures can provide an insight into the things that are important to the person, it is important to record information supplied during the Picture My Future process, even where no picture has been supplied. For example, while looking at pictures, people might also want to talk about other things, for which they don't have a picture. Sometimes writing down what they say, or asking them to draw a picture of

what they want to talk about, can help them to focus on and think about what is important to them. Sometimes recording the key words or a hand drawn picture can help the person remember what they said when it comes time to talk about it again at their planning meeting.

It is also important to remember that goals for the future may include maintaining access to people and things that the person already has, even if they don't appear in the photos.

The photos and other pictures the person gathers and uses are only part of the broader process of 'picturing my future'.

How a picture library can be used

A picture library is an important resource when using the Picture My Future approach. It can be used for a variety of purposes including:

- prompting discussions supported by pictures when the person has collected few or no pictures themselves.
- prompting the person to think of other hopes and dreams they may have forgotten during the picture collection period.
- Prompting the person to consider goals in each of the quality of life domains.

It is not essential that a person has goals aligned with each of the quality of life domains. However, using a picture library can help ensure that they have at least considered whether they want to include goals from each domain.

It is recommended that a picture library is used with all people participating in the Picture My Future approach regardless of the number of pictures they bring to report on. Typically, a picture library will stimulate some new discussion and some new goals will emerge from this discussion.

Ethical considerations

Remember that the pictures collected belong to the person and are private. It is up to them to decide who should see them.

Consider where and how the pictures should be stored and who can have access to them