

Easier to Read Summary

Valuing People – What Now?

10



Valuing People is now 10 years old.

Most people and families still think it is a good policy – so it must be saying some things right!



The Coalition Government have said that the Valuing People policy will continue – but what do they mean by this?

The Minister (Paul Burstow) didn't say whether things like the Valuing People team will continue when he was asked this at Learning Disability Today.

Valuing People faced two big problems from the start in 2001.

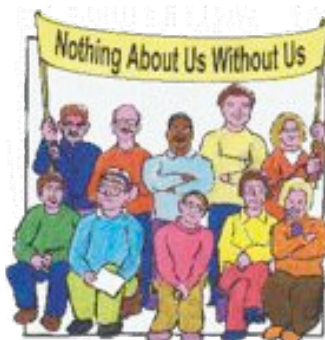


First, Government never made it a big priority. This meant that parts of government did not do very much to make it happen – like Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council. They did not see people with learning disabilities as being important.



Second, there has been discrimination against people with learning disabilities for hundreds of years. You cannot change that in just a few years.

Even with these problems, by 2007 some good things were in place.



- *People with learning disabilities were being listened to.* More money was being spent on advocacy. People with learning disabilities were being involved in decisions about them - 'nothing about us without us'



- *The law helped.* The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) said public services had to do more to stop discrimination against people with learning disabilities.



- *Government was doing more.* For example, there were new actions to help people get paid work and a home of their own (called the PSA indicators)

- *Other policies were helping.* The new 'personalisation' policy was very like Valuing People. The Healthcare Commission was doing good work after people were abused in Cornwall.



- *Lots of good things were happening in local places.* For example, accessible public toilets or better healthcare from GPs. Services were starting to get better.

Three things were helping make things better:



1. Self-advocates and families were using Valuing People to argue that things should change. They were telling services to do what Valuing People said.

For example, it was the National Forum of People with Learning Disabilities campaign that got the Home Office to promise to do something about hate crime.

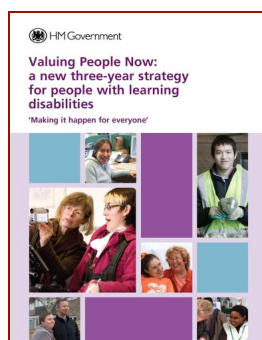


2. Some staff and managers who had been doing things like Valuing People used it to help them do things in new ways.



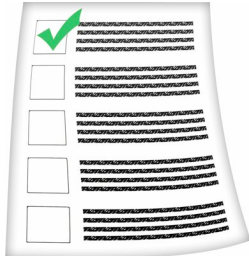
3. The Valuing People Support Team wrote advice on how to do things. They ran meetings where people could learn from each other.

They tried to stop people ignoring the policy.



In 2008 Valuing People Now was written and it promised more things. Other parts of Government said they would get involved. The Valuing People Team became bigger.

Some people in government thought there had not been enough progress. For example, why did more people not have a job or their own person centred plan.



So Valuing People Now said it would do more about counting how much things had changed.



To help, a lot of new documents have been written giving advice on how to do things. For example, the transition to adulthood, getting a job and support planning.

With this information, people should know how to do things better.



The question now is how to make change happen



We do not know how the government is going to do this. They have said the Valuing People policy will continue. Other policies, like the 'Big Society' might help.

Some services (like the NHS) have said they will keep asking about people with learning disabilities.

But some other things will not help.



For example, the checking of how many people have got a paid job or their own home has stopped.



The Coalition Government says that local people, rather than Government, should decide things. But some things still need government to get involved.



The government spending cuts will not help. Maybe we could use some cuts to help good things happen. For example, wasting less money on waking night staff in care homes where people do not need them.

NDTi is worried because we hear about three things happening across England:



1. Self-advocates and families tell us that their budgets are being cut. They also say that the way they are being involved is not as good as it was. Sometimes they are in meetings but not really being involved in decisions.



2. Managers in services are worried about cuts and losing their jobs.

Some people say that they are spending more time 'ticking boxes' than actually making good change happen.



3. The Valuing People Team, in the regions and the National Team, have been told that the Team is likely to stop in April.

A few people are saying that it is time Valuing People had less priority – that it has had 10 years and now the Government should spend time on other things.



Some local services are joining up learning disability teams with other teams because they think that will work better.

We are worried that this means staff will not know how to do the extra things that people with learning disabilities often need to get a fair deal.



So, if self-advocates and families are weaker, managers feeling down and the Valuing People Team probably not there – what will happen to Valuing People Now?

Remember there are good things that we can use to help keep going:



- People still support the Valuing People Now policy
- Strong self-advocacy and family groups
- Lots of good examples across England about how to make services better

Many staff and managers want to carry on the good work.

So, when asking what should happen to Valuing People – we think there are 5 things that are really important:



1. *Keep a Focus on People's Rights.* The two most important questions to ask about services are (i) are people getting their human and legal rights, and (ii) are services helping people live better lives. Other box ticking and checking is less important than these two questions. For example, having a personal budget is only really useful if it means people use it to get a better life.



2. *Remember 'Nothing About Us Without Us'.* How can we make sure that self-advocacy and family carer groups continue to get the money they need and are listened to when difficult decisions are being made?



3. *Big Society.* The Government's Big Society policy is about people and their local community. We do not really understand yet how it will work, but it could be a lot like Valuing People – so we should use it.

The policy will need to have bits that will say how it will work for people with learning disabilities.



4. *Organise ourselves.* A big reason why people with learning disabilities have not always had what they needed is because they have not been listened to.

We need to make sure that all people who want positive change speak together with a loud voice and not argue amongst ourselves.

How do we do that if the Valuing People programme either stops or is much smaller?



5. *Remember what has happened in the past.* Good things have happened since Valuing People came out – like more advocacy, better links with families, person centred planning and the old long stay hospitals closing.



We should keep on telling people about the progress we have made and how we can make more progress if people keep on supporting the Valuing People policy – even if some bits of it have to change.

What do you think about all this?



Have your say on the NDTi's Facebook page between now and the middle of February:



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