

INCLUSIVE RESEARCHERS COLUMN

No Research About Us Without Us

Safeguarding our rights to a good life

Since the last time we wrote for IDA we have been busy as a group of inclusive researchers learning how to be Quality Checkers. We think that Quality Checking is a way to support people with intellectual disability to have better lives. We would like to share with you what is a Quality Checker; what we learned at the training and how we are going to practice Quality Checking with other people with intellectual disability that we have met through Achieve Australia. CDS and Achieve Australia are working together to pilot Quality Checking as a safeguard for people getting the lives that they say that they want to live.

A Quality Checker is a person who visits people with intellectual disability in their homes or at work or a place where people feel comfortable. The Quality Checker has a list of questions that they ask the person they are visiting about how satisfied they are with their living or work place. These questions are based upon the National Disability Standards of Australia and cover things like:

1. I choose who I live with
2. I choose where I live
3. I have my own home
4. I choose how I am supported
5. I choose who supports me
6. I get good support
7. I choose my friends and relationships
8. I choose how to be healthy and safe
9. I choose how I am part of the community
10. I have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens
11. I get help to make changes in my life

As a Quality Checker we are matched with another person who can be a peer, a support staff member or a family member who we meet before we make the visit to work out our Quality Checker Plan. It is important for us to listen to the person and allow them to say a person's reply with another questions to find out more about what the person has said . These questions are called probes.

At the time of our writing this article we are only starting to make our first visits following two days of training with Dr. Thomas Doukas who is a researcher from Choice Support which is a big organisation for people with intellectual disability in London. Thomas is fun to be with and made us laugh a lot. At the beginning of each day he asked us all what we have seen on the way to the training. This helped us all to get to know one another better. At the training we learned alongside other people who want to be

Quality Checkers from Achieve Australia which is funding this pilot. CDS with Achieve Australia are also researching what happens in the pilot.

When we visit the person who would like to have a Quality Check about how satisfied they are with their life we always go in pairs. We soon will be going for another training day with Thomas Doukas on how to write up a report that will be discussed with the person having the Quality Check at a later date. These reports will support the person and Achieve Australia to check that people with intellectual disability are leading the lives they want to .

In the United Kingdom the government has funded Choice Support to set up a system of Quality Checkers where Quality Checker pairs visit people throughout the UK. Thomas told us that people with disability have said that they feel very comfortable talking with someone like us who has the lived experience of disability.

You will see some photos below of us mixing with one another at the training. We have been told that this IDA is about safeguarding and we think that Quality Checking is one way in which we can safeguard that people with intellectual disability can be heard. Sometimes checking is only done by people asking questions that are ticked like a survey. Checking without real listening is not safe. What we like about Quality Checking that we have learned is that people are visited where they live or work and talk about what they think is going well and what could be better.

We look forward to telling you more about our experience in the next IDA but if you would like to become a Quality Checker you can contact us.

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