

Circles of Support: GETTING STARTED



What is a circle of support?

- A group of people who come together regularly to help promote and support the goals of a person with disability
- A gathering and a space for dreaming, thinking and planning

Who could I ask to join a circle of support?



Think about people who have taken an interest - past or present - and people who were/or are in a paid role but would like to be involved in a personal way (being part of the circle is voluntary, not paid).



There may be people who cannot physically come to meetings but who would still like to be involved, for example by receiving the notes from meetings via email, or joining meetings via Skype.

Inviting people to join the circle

You can invite someone to join a circle over the phone, via email or with a written invitation. Whatever way you choose to invite people, you might like to include:



Some information about circles of support

Why you have decided to form a circle

This might include what you are hoping the circle will bring to the person's life.

What you are asking from people you invite

You can say that you are asking them to attend a meeting or gathering a number of times a year to share ideas.

Let people know how regularly meetings will be held and how long they will go for.

Hosting an introductory gathering

One way to invite people to join the circle is to host an introductory gathering where they can hear more about **what a circle of support is, why you would like to get one started and how they can be involved.**

People can ask questions on the day and can let you know after the event if they would like to be part of the circle.

You can make the day fun by sharing a meal or playing some games after the meeting.



Example Invitations

Dear Friend,

We are celebrating Lawrence's end of school life and his new journey.

Would you like to share Lawrence's vision?

*We would like to invite you to afternoon tea at our place on
Sunday 6th November, 2011 at 2 pm.*

*This afternoon is about planning and creating opportunities for
Lawrence's good life.*

Here we will share his vision. Please join us for this momentous occasion.

Love

Lawrence and his family

ADDRESS

29 My Address

My Home

Phone



RSVP

Nelke: Phone numbers

Julia: Phone numbers

You're invited to a gathering at Kate and John's house at:

123 ABC Avenue, Turramurra

on Saturday 30th December between 3.30 and 5.30 p.m.

We want to gather some friends and family to talk about Scott's future and explore what can be done now to help ensure that he's safe and happy in the coming years.

On that afternoon we would like to tap into the wisdom of a larger group of people who care about Scott and we would welcome your ideas and energy at this discussion.

We hope you can join us for this gathering and then stay on for a BBQ and a friendly footy game afterwards.

Ideas for circle meetings

Circle meetings can be as casual or formal as you want. Some people use agendas and action plans. Others talk through ideas and take meeting notes. Having some form of written record can help you remember what was discussed.



- **Using a meeting agenda**

An agenda is simply a list of topics that you would like to discuss at the meeting. You can put the topics that are most important to discuss at the top of your agenda.

Example Agenda

Scott's Circle of Support Agenda - 3 Jan 2014

1. Update on what's been happening in Scott's life
2. Review what we talked about last meeting and any action items
3. Making new community connections – brainstorm opportunities for Scott
4. Brainstorm work opportunities for Scott
5. Planning Scott's upcoming birthday party!
6. Dates for the next meeting

Pizza and Drinks!

Ideas for circle meetings

- **Having someone to lead meetings**

This person can help keep your discussions on track and on time

- **Taking notes**

You can ask someone to take notes of the important discussions or decisions at the meeting. These notes can be given to people who did and didn't attend the meeting.

- **Celebrate achievements!**

Circle meetings are a great place to share the good things happening in a persons' life!



Setting goals

A circle can play an active role in helping a person to reach their goals. This may be by providing ideas and also by taking action that will help lead to the goal.

Some examples of short and long term goals:

- To organise a 21st birthday party
- To meet more people who have shared interests by joining a local community club or class (such as a sports club or an art class)
- To get a job that the person enjoys and where they can use their gifts and skills

Action plans

An action plan can be used to identify steps that can be taken to reach a goal, who will undertake an action and by when. Goals and actions can be followed up at the next circle meeting.

Example 1

Goal	Actions	When	Who	Follow up
To meet more people by getting involved in the local football club	(a) Investigate and get contact details for football club leaders	(a) Next 2 weeks	(a) Jack's mum	(a) 4 weeks by Jack's Dad
	(b) Organise a meeting with football club leaders	(b) Next 6 weeks	(b) Jack's Uncle	(b) 8 weeks by Jack's Dad

Example 2

Action/task	Who	When
Find out costs of Matthew attending swimming lessons	Terry	By next circle meeting
Speak with local environmental groups about volunteering opportunities	Louise	By next circle meeting
Take Matthew to choose invitations for his birthday	Peter	By 16 March



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