



# **FAMILY EMPOWERMENT: WHERE TO START?**

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# ABILITY WEST COMMITMENT

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- To enable people with intellectual disabilities “to realise their dreams and ambitions”.
- To deliver its services in partnership with families and carers of service users.



# ORIGINS OF FAMILY NETWORKS

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- Annual Family Seminars
- Social Work Contact with Families
- Family Leadership Initiatives
- Genio Funding



# HOW WE ARE DOING IT

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- Monthly Meetings in three Areas
- Three way Facilitation arrangements
- Providing a Structure for Meetings
- Willingness to learn as we go
- Confidence Building
- Access to Learning and Training Opportunities



# OBJECTIVES OF FAMILY NETWORKS

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- To create opportunities for Family Members to meet together regularly for mutual support.
- Identification of common issues, problem solving and generation of new ideas.
- To build the capacity of families to advocate on their own and their family members behalf.
- Greater Family influence in Ability West.



# REFLECTION; QUESTIONS FOR OURSELVES

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- Whose Vision of what families want?
- What does partnership mean?
- What does empowerment mean?
- What does family advocacy mean?



# OUTCOMES FROM FAMILY NETWORKS

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- Families to feel supported through contact with each other.
- Family members identifying common issues of concern and solutions to those issues.
- Family members experience of influencing what happens in the organisation.
- Families feeling more informed about options and resources available.



# FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETINGS SO FAR

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- That family members enjoy meeting each other, “the craic”.
- They appreciate information on benefits, services, approaches.
- “its great to hear that others have similar concerns”.
- Families seeing evidence of their influence.





# ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

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- Improved family partnership and influence.
- Families being more knowledgeable “knowledge is power”.
- Families feeling more confident in engaging with the service and advocating for their family member.



# INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

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- Independent
- Observe the Process
- Ask Family members what they want
- Track Developments and Obstacles
- Track Outcomes



# CHALLENGES

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- Changing Financial Environments.
- Traditional service models under scrutiny.
- How to access community opportunities.
- Families and staff more stretched by decreasing resources.



# OUR LEARNING

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- The value of Fun
- Never assume shared vision
- Use every opportunity to support family members confidence.
- Need to consciously move from Professional to Family leadership role.