

Doing more of the right thing with less – Building Family Capacity

Angela Regan
Children's Autism Team
Western Care Association



Can Autism Specific Supports Make a Difference?

The following is how one mum remembers the advice provided by a psychologist in 1984 when her son was aged 3

- 'uneducable'
- Will likely never speak
- Unsure as to whether he will be able to learn how to toilet independently
- Will not be able to read and write
- Don't bother with mainstream education, focus on special schools

Family Centred approach

- Led by family priorities
- Whole family approach
- Empowerment of the family



Challenge

- Increasing referrals
- 109 -in last three years
- 27 Left school in last three years
- i.e. 82 Additional families requiring support
- Decreasing resources as a result of cutbacks



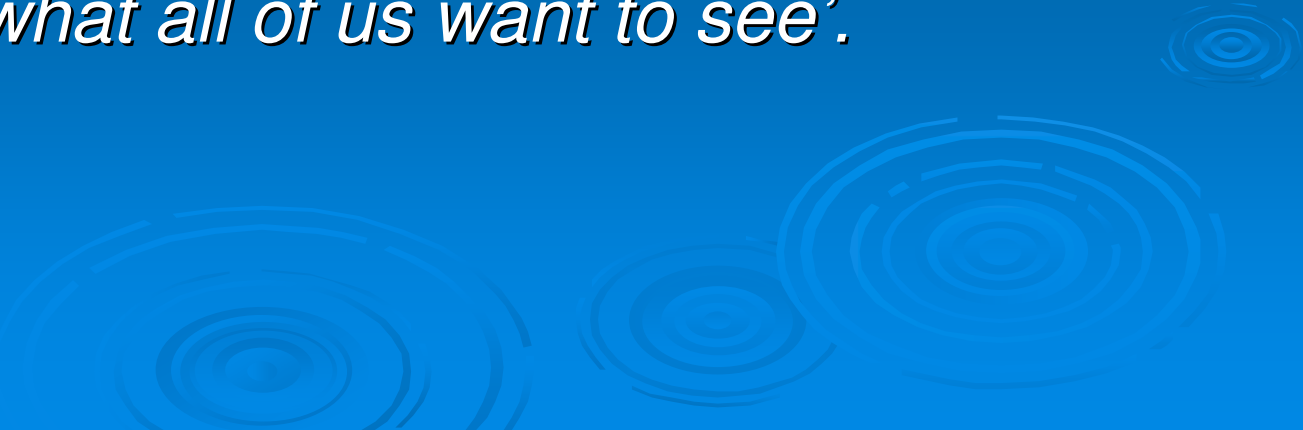
Family/Professional Collaboration

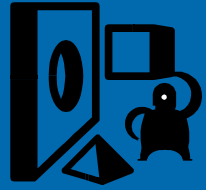
- **Shared goals:** promotes relationship in which family members and professionals work together to ensure quality services for child and family.
- **Mutual respect:** recognizes and respects knowledge, skills and experience that families and professionals bring to the relationship.
- **Trust:** development of trust is an integral part of a collaborative relationship.
- **Open communication:** facilitates open communication so families and professionals can feel free to express themselves.
- **Culturally sensitive:** creates an atmosphere in which cultural traditions, values and diversity of families are acknowledged and honored.
- **Negotiation:** essential in a collaborative relationship.
- **Mutual commitment:** brings mutual commitment of families, professionals, and communities to meet the needs of children.

Bishop, K. (1993). Family/professional collaboration for Children with special health needs and their families.

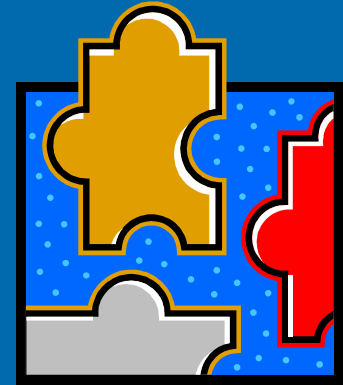
Family/Professional Collaboration

'If we are to be successful with families, we are going to need to re-orient as professionals. We are going to need to look to parents as leaders, parents as the experts, parents as the bosses. We are going to need to ask them to join us cooperatively as equals in this partnership so that we create a reality that matches what all of us want to see'.





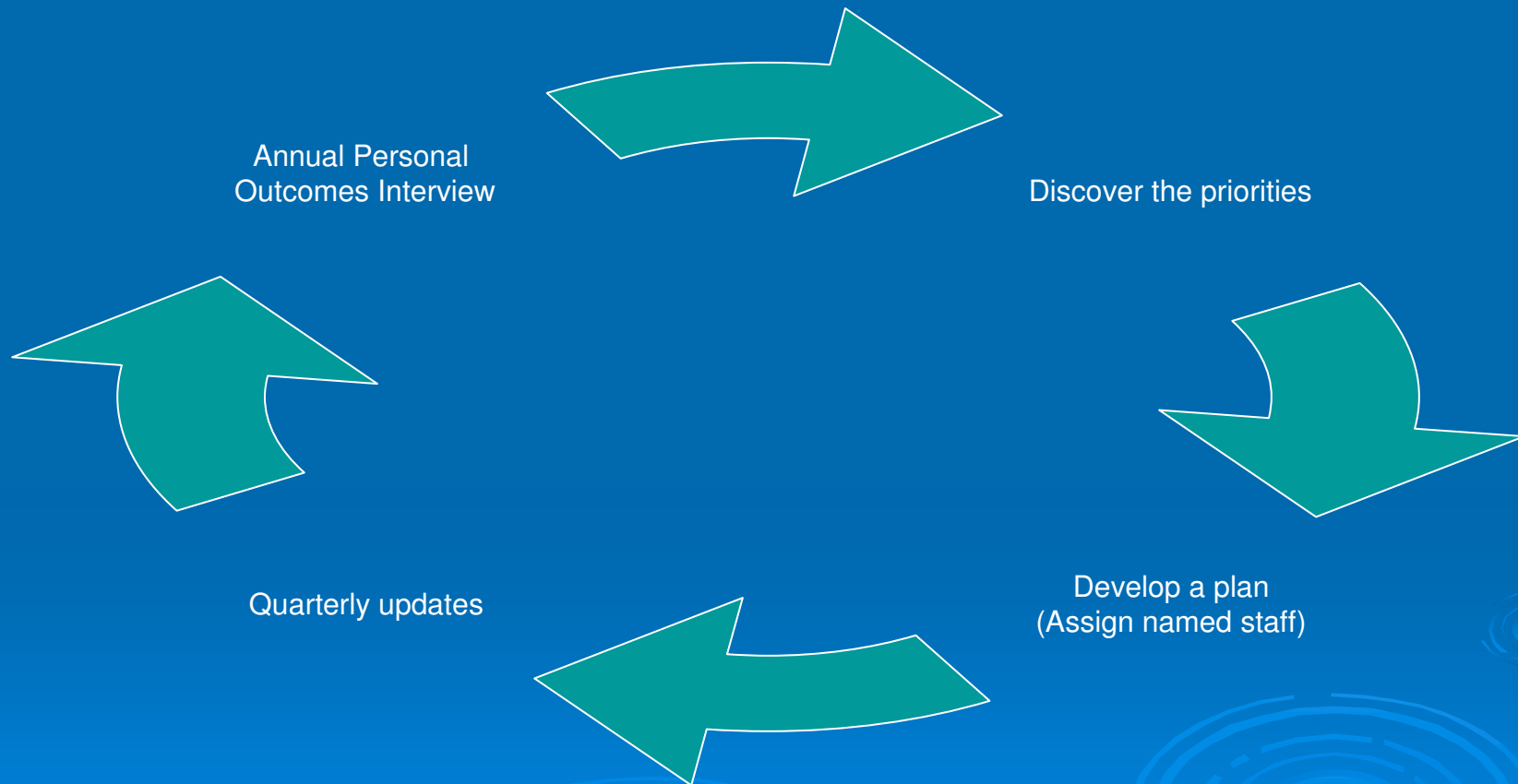
Implications



- Looking at wait list development
- Not really an option for a family centred service
- Had to look at what we were doing and how we were organised

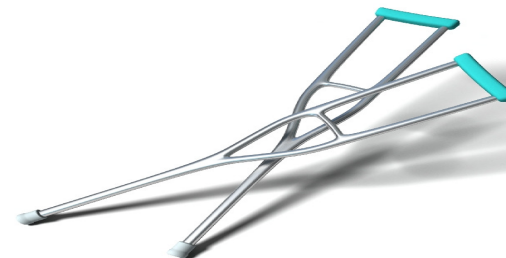


The Process



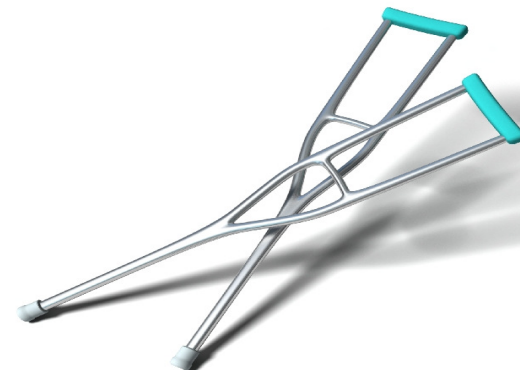
From dependency building supports...

- Problem identification led to referral to professional.
- Family under pressure – we intervened.
- Supports parachuted in and saved the day (sometimes!)



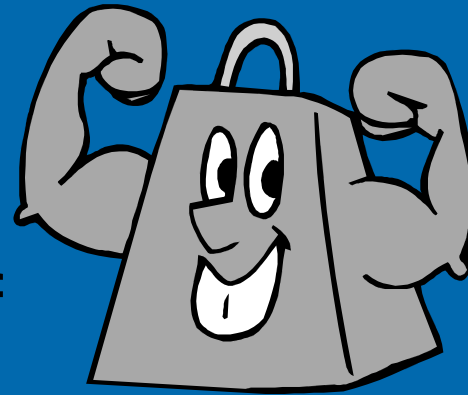
From dependency building supports..

- The respite trap – the ‘pew’ phenomenon. Followed by the panic of return to ‘normal’
- Then families left no better equipped for the next time



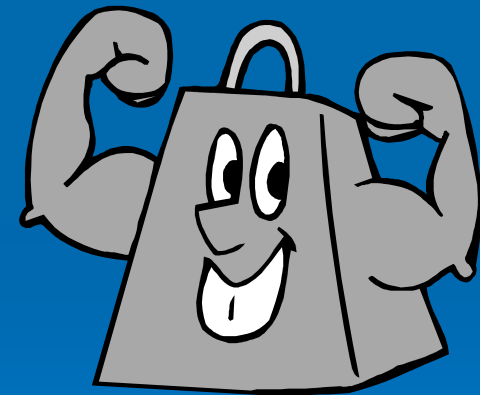
To Capacity Building Supports

- Parent training
- Upskilling of front line staff
- Short term focussed front line intervention
- Work shop on common themes presenting concerns



To Capacity Building Supports

- Support to pre schools
- Support to schools
- Support to community groups



Work In Progress

- Not getting it right nearly enough
- Need for continuous improvement
- Importantly: let families guide us in the right direction





Remember

- This young man completed his leaving cert in Mayo this year



Results

➤ 555 points!!!



Food for thought – isn't it?

