# Person-Centred-Planning in Vocational Education and Training

## What is Person-Centred-Planning?

Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) means different things to different people. This makes it even more important to think about how to measure and to put Person-Centred Approach in Vocational Education and Training (VET) into practice, so that VET service providers can better understand the benefits of this approach. In order to be more person-centred, VET services need to know what is most important to students. PCP focuses on student's individual educational needs, but PCP is also about involving students in planning and evaluating of education and training services. Words such as 'co-production' and 'co-design' have been used to describe involving students in developing education and training services and assessing the quality of these services.

PCP is a way of thinking and doing things that sees students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) receiving education and training as equal partners in planning, developing and monitoring student's learning process to make sure that this process meets student's needs. This means putting students with SEN (including their families) at the centre of all decisions and seeing them as experts, working alongside professionals to get the best possible outcome and learning results.

PCP is not just about giving students with SEN whatever they want or providing information. It is about considering students' desires, values, objectives, family situations, educational needs, social circumstances and lifestyles. In other words, seeing the student with SEN as an individual, and working together to develop appropriate solutions to optimise the learning process and learning outcomes. Being compassionate, thinking about things from the student's point of view and being respectful are all important aspects of PCP. This might be demonstrated through sharing decisions with students and supporting them to manage their learning process and to achieve the learning outcomes. But PCP in VET is not just about activities. It is also about the way educators (teachers / coaches and supporting professionals) and students with SEN think about learning and how VET activities could support this learning process. PCP is also about a relationship between teacher and students with SEN and the availability of the appropriate education and training activities and supportive services.

In the past, students with SEN were expected to fit in the routines and practices of the mainstream VET programs. But in order to be Person-Centred, VET programs need to change to be more flexible to meet student's needs in a manner that is most effective for them. This involves working with students with SEN (and their families) to find the best way to support the individual learning process in order to achieve the most desirable outcomes. This way of working can occur on a one-to-one basis, where an individual student with SEN takes part in decisions about their educational and learning program, or on a collective group basis whereby a group of students are involved in decisions about the design and delivery of VET. The underlying philosophy is the same: It is all about doing things with students with SEN, rather than 'to' them.

There is no one definition of Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) in VET. People might also use terms such as 'students-centred', 'user-centred', 'individualised' or 'personalised'. Regardless of the terms used, some research looked into what matters to students and how PCP in VET ensures that student's needs are met so students have a good and successful experiences in mainstream VET. Therefore, there are many different aspects of PCP in VET including:

- Respecting students' values
- Putting the learning process of the students at the centre of all education and training activities.
- Taking into account students' preferences and expressed needs
- Coordinating and integrating services of support in the education and training activities
- Working together to ensure that there is good communication, information, education and training
- Ensuring that students are physically, emotionally and mentally comfortable and safe
- Providing emotional support
- Involving family, friends and peers
- Ensuring a continuum between and within support services and education and training activities
- Ensuring that students have access to appropriate support when they need it

**Why Person-Centred-Planning?**

There is evidence on the beneficial effects of Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) for people with disabilities. For example: PCP alert people to choices available to them and it supports them in moving towards their preferred options. In Ireland there is growing evidence that PCP has a very beneficial impact on services to people with disabilities. It should be understood that PCP is no panacea, however: It is no guarantee of a better life, in and of itself… and many positive changes for people will be achieved without using PCP at all. Much of the effectiveness of PCP would seem to rest in the way it is conducted[1] and the more general person centredness of the overall context in which it is pursued[2].

It is important to note that a Person-Centred-Plan may not be needed or wanted by everyone.

A student with SEN may, however, find PCP particularly useful in providing him or her with:

- A chance to take stock of his/her overall life – and quality of life;
- An occasion to explore his/her:
- strengths, capacities and achievements so far in life;
- current needs and wishes for the future;
- range of possibilities open to him/her at present;
- A forum within which to make choices as to what is most important;
- An opportunity to set out a number of important things to be achieved in the near future (sometimes referred to as 'goals' or 'objectives') and to come up with strategies and action-plans around these goals which specify what steps need to be taken to achieve them, how, when and by whom;
- A source of encouragement to pursue the education, training and support services and choices which would greatly meet their needs and improve their life.

PCP may be viewed and used as a life-long process and support. It can also be used as an occasional or one-time-only undertaking, if that is what a person wants. It has, for example, been found to be particularly useful in times of change or transition in a person's life[3].

**Why is Person-Centred-Planning in Vocational Education and Training important?**

Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) for students with SEN in VET is a high priority. Ensuring that students with SEN are involved in decisions about their learning process and learning outcomes is now recognised as a key component of developing high quality vocational education and training.

There is much work to be done to support VET-providers in becoming more Person-Centred and this has become more of a priority in many EU member states over the past decade. This is because it is expected that putting students with SEN at the centre of their education and training services will:

- improve the quality of the available education and training services
- help students with SEN to receive the education and training they need
- help students to be more active in making decision which are important for them
- supports the National and European policy of creating an more inclusive Vocational Education and Training System

In the al European member states there are increasing demands for Vocational Education and Training services and at the same time all member states face limited resources. Life-Long-Learning policies may have impact on the education and training conditions for all learners. Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) in VET can help to improve student's knowledge, skills and competences and reduce the burden on the education and training services. So, national government policies are emphasising strengthening the voice of students (as consumers of education and training services) and moving away from a one-fits-all model where educators (teachers and coaches) decides for students what to learn, to a more 'Personalised Approach of Learning', where educators, coaches

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[1] Connolly, 2001, Radcliffe & Hegarty, 2001 and The Circles Network, 2004
[2] Sanderson, 2000 and Ritchie et al, 2003.
[3] Miner and Bates, 1997

and students (with and without SEN) decides on tailor-mode meaningful education and training activities that meet the desired and needs of the students

## Person-Centred-Planning: improving quality of VET

Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) in VET can have a big impact on the quality of education and training. It improves the experience students have on education and training activities and help them feel more satisfied about the education and training programs. It encourages students with SEN to have more meaningful learning outcomes, such as appealing to their choices or to be more involved in decisions about their education and training activities so they receive the services and support that are appropriate for their needs.

Reviews of research about this topic found that offering education and training to students with SEN in a more person-centred way usually improves learning outcomes, increase learning satisfaction and inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream systems. Some ways that have been researched to improve PCP include training educators (teachers and coaches) to facilitate education and training services care that empowers students. Offering education in a more person-centred way can even improve outcomes for teachers and coaches.

The following underlying principles of PCP are important for affecting the learning outcomes:
- getting to know the student with SEN as a person and recognising their individuality
- seeing the student with SEN as an expert about their own special Educational Needs
- sharing power and responsibility
- taking a holistic approach to assessing student's needs, to providing educational and training activities and to evaluating student's learning outcomes
- including families and peers where appropriate
- making sure that education, training and support services are accessible, flexible and easy to receive
- looking at student's whole experience
- promote coordination and continuity
- making sure that the physical, cultural and psychosocial environment supports the PCP
- making sure that staff are supportive, well trained and put students at the centre of their actions.

## A Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) framework

In considering of high-quality Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) in VET, it is crucial to reflect and to include 4 component elements (4 P's):
1. Philosophy: Believing that students with SEN have the fundamental right to maximum self-determination and community inclusion no matter what their disability.
2. Process: Interacting with students with SEN before, during, and after PCP meetings in a manner that communicates respect and a hopeful vision for the future.
3. Plan: Translating person-cantered philosophy and process into a high-quality written planning document.
4. Product: Having high expectations for learning outcomes across a broad range of educational and training areas.

Frameworks provide a structure for organising measures, identifying gaps and prioritising future development. The Person-Centred-Planning (PCP) Framework comprises domains and subdomains, including ideas within a (sub)domain to be taken into account. The PCP framework is a framework for developing an Person-Centred-Plan for each student based on the concept of Person-Centred-Planning. The PCP-framework has three domains:
1. The Person-Centred-Plan (Individual Plan)
2. Facilitator
3. System-Level

Each domain is broken down by three subdomains. Each subdomain describes relevant measures which should be focused on the outcomes of the student with SEN. The figure below illustrates the Person-Centred Planning framework.
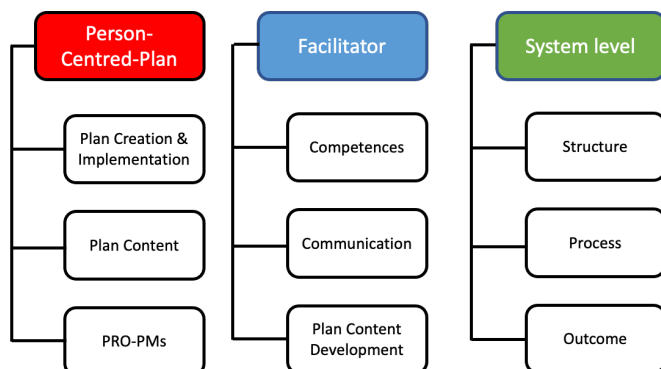


Figure 2. Person-Centred-Planning Measures Framework

### Domain 1: Person-Centred-Plan

This domain captures what processes and outcomes need to be performed to ensure that the plan is done right. Within this domain, there are subdomains:

1.1  Plan Creation & Implementation,

1.2  Plan Content,

1.3  Person-Reported Outcome Performance Measures (PRO-PMs).

### Subdomain 1.1: Plan Creation and Implementation

The key measures for Plan Creation and Implementation are:

**Preplanning.**

To prepare for the planning phase, this specifically identifies what processes need to be identified and implemented prior to development to ensure students are prepared to plan. This should include the student's preference for timing, location, and participants in the planning sessions.

**Documentation of a Person-Centred-Plan**

The Person-Centred-Plan (Individual Plan) is written down, a copy of the plan is provided to the student, and a copy is retained within the student's record. It is important to recognise that forms are viewed as tools to support effective Person-Centred-Processes but do not drive it.

**Updating the Person-Centred-Plan.**

Most students will have Individual Plans that change over time. Therefore, the Person-Centred-Plan must evolve with the student. It is crucial to remember that the Person-Centred-Plan itself is not the goal, but rather its implementation.

### Subdomain 1.2: Content of the Plan

The core elements of the Person-Centred-Plan include

A.    Goal-statement

B.    Strengths and barriers of the student

C.    Short-term objectives for the student

D.    Action steps / interventions

#### 1.    Goal statement

The Person-Centred-Plan meets the student's expressed needs and desired outcomes. Therefore, the Person-Centred-Plan must reflect the educational and training services and supports that are important for the individual to meet the needs identified through an assessment of functional need, as well as what is important to the

individual with regard to preferences for the delivery of such services and supports. The Person-Centred-Plan is written in the student's own words, using first-person language when it is appropriate to do so and the student's preferred name. The Person-Centred-Plan should identify goals to support and address the student's needs and desired outcomes ("goals" refer to a variety of different attainment measures including maintenance). Ideally, goals are based on the student's unique interests, preferences, and strengths. Goals should be expressed as desired by the student, and must not be dictated by the facilitator (Teacher – Coach), VET-providers, or others involved in the PCP-process. Goals should be defined by the students with SEN with a focus on attaining successful participation in the school, having successful outcomes of learning and envisioning future participation in the community. In addition to goal documentation, strengths & barriers to the student's goals must be identified and mitigated.

### 2. Strengths and barriers of the student

The Person-Centred-Plan should identify and highlight the strengths of the student. It is considered a key practice within PCP to consider the potential strengths and resources of the student with SEN. PCP facilitator has the role is to support the student with SEN in identifying a diverse range of strengths, interests, and talents while also considering how to actively use these strengths to pursue goals and objectives in the Person-Centred-Plan. It is not uncommon, for example, for individuals to have difficulty identifying their "strengths" as this has not historically been the focus of education and training services and assessments and individuals may have also lost sight of their gifts and talents through years of struggles with their disability and recovery. Barriers should be acknowledged alongside strengths as this is essential not only for the purpose of justifying care and professional supports, but also because a clear understanding of what is getting in the way informs the various professional interventions and natural supports which might then be offered to the individual in the service of his/her recovery. In a Person-Centred Plan is that the barrier does not become the exclusive and dominant focus of the plan and it only takes on meaning to the extent that it is interfering with the attainment of larger life goals.

### 3. Short-term objectives for the student

When writing and implementing the PCP, it is also necessary to identify specific, shorter- term action steps that can help the focus person to move toward his/her ambitions. These steps are usually referred to as "objectives". Objectives can be considered as interim goals which break down longer-term aspirations into meaningful and positive short-term changes. They should reflect a concrete change in functioning, change in behaviour, or change in status. Achieved objectives can be considered as are "proof" that the person is making progress. The writing of objectives is the most technical part of the entire PCP documentation process. These Person-Centred-Plan elements are often closely monitored by funders and accrediting bodies. It is therefore important that objectives be accurate and consistent with each of the characteristics described below:

- Behavioural, i.e., observable actions on the part of the students, specific enough so that the team will know when the objective has been achieved
- Achievable
- Measurable
- Time framed with a target date for expected completion
- Meaningful and understandable for the student

### 4. Action steps / interventions

The Person-Centred plan, i.e., the interventions section which may also be referred to as the "methods" or "services" section. Traditional plans often limit this section of the planning document to reflect only those intervention delivered to students by professionals (teachers and coaches). This method of documenting the interventions section can lead to PCPs which read as a laundry list of all interventions which are going to be done to (or for) the person while missing out on a key opportunity to capitalise on the resources in the Circle of Support. While professional services (education, training and support) are an essential part of the plan, a high-

quality, comprehensive Person-Centred-Plan also includes interventions by unpaid natural supporters or the student him/herself

Other important measure for the content of the plan is:
- The Individual Plan has community inclusion components reflecting natural community relationships.

### Subdomain 1.3: Student-Reported Outcome Performance Measures (SRO-PMs)
The key measures for Student-Reported Outcome Performance are:
- The student expresses knowledge of his/her rights.
- The student is able to access his/her own Individual Plan.
- The student assesses his/her planning experience focusing on the following:
- Perception of leadership role, empowerment
- Perception of informed decision making
- Strengths
- Addressed goals and preferences, things important to the student
- Correct people were in the room
- Overall satisfaction with the facilitator

### Domain 2: Facilitators
Facilitators of Person-Centred-Planning may not always be professionals (teachers and coaches). It may also be individuals who are close to the student—or may be the student. Because of this, many measures included in this domain may not be applicable to every facilitator; many of the measures for facilitation are especially practical in accountability applications for paid professionals.
An anchoring principle for the measures within this domain should be the facilitator as advocate for the student. Measures should be designed such that an improvement in performance results in a deeper ability for the facilitator to be an advocate for the person. Within the domain of the measures for the facilitator three subdomains:
2.1  Facilitator competency,
2.2  Communication,
2.3  Plan Content Development.

### Subdomain 2.1: Facilitator competency
The key measures for competency are:
- Knowledge of Person-Centred-Approach principles and policy.
- Skills of facilitating the creation / development of an Individual Plan.
- Knowledge about the student, resources available to the student, policies, and regulations that impact the student, and health conditions and/or disabilities of the student with whom they are working.
- Appropriate cultural competences.
- Advocating competences

### Subdomain 2.2: Communication
The key measures for communication are:
- The facilitator documents the student's preferred spoken language, and ensures that the student has language services available.
- The facilitator makes other communication tools available

**Subdomain 2.3: Plan Content Development**

The key measures for Plan Content Development are:

- The facilitator engages in timely assessments, review, and updates of the Person-Centred-Plan (Individual Plan)
- The Person-Centred-Plan (Individual Plan) is produced within the required time frame.
- The facilitator tracks what happens after an Individual Plan is operational.

**Domain 3: System-Level**

At system level, measures for those who are accountable and responsible for the implementation and maintenance of a Person-Centred-Plan are identified and described.

System-level measures are grouped into 3 subdomains:

3.1 Structural,
3.2 Process,
3.3 Outcomes

**Subdomain 3.1: Structural measures**

The key structural measures are:

- There are training programs in place to ensure plans are created, implemented, and updated. These trainings should have a ratio of facilitators to participants that supports an environment conducive to learning.
- There are resources allocated that those who work within the system are able to effectively provide Person-Centred-Planning, practices, and services.
- There is professional latitude for the facilitator to exercise the necessary flexibility to carry out effective planning.
- There are processes in place to ensure that the Person-Centred-Plan continues without unnecessary interruption in cases of staff turnover and/or other losses.
- Students have access to experts in Person-Centred-Planning
- There are structures in place for stakeholder engagement. (e.g formalised input in policies; comment periods for policy; program changes; ongoing stakeholder committees etc)

**Subdomain 3.2: Process measures**

The key process measures are:

- Entities should assess PCP completeness, staff training competences, and quality improvement participation rates.
- Access to resources to ensure Person-Centred-Plans are created, implemented, and updated.
- Data of and feedback on services is collected on regular basis
- There are mechanisms to gather input from family, involved others, and community partners on organisational performance.
- Stakeholder engagement policies are defined, implemented and improved based on feedback.

**Subdomain 3.3: Outcomes**

The key outcome measures are:

- Student-reported outcomes in education and training, quality of life and satisfaction with education and training services and supports.
- Satisfaction of students with organisational performance and service delivery components of Person-Centred-Planning aspects: support quality, access, and delivery.