

# Participation House

SUPPORT SERVICES

## **PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

### ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*** ***APRIL 2016***

 **FOCUS**  
accreditation  
FOCUS-Accredited Organization  
2013-2017

## INTRODUCTION

Established in 1988, Participation House Support Services (“PHSS”) is a non-profit, community-based corporation providing a broad range of services with a focus on supporting adults with complex physical and/or developmental disabilities to reach their full potential at home and in the community. PHSS provides services in London/Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Huron Perth, and Grey Bruce, and is committed to providing life-time care while encouraging and creating an inclusive community where individuals with complex disabilities have access to all the community has to offer and are included in a valued and meaningful way.

For 28 years PHSS has provided visionary leadership and acclaimed support services of the highest quality. As an organization, it continues to grow as it responds to the needs of people and families in our community with flexibility and innovation.

PHSS is funded by the Ministries of Community & Social Services and Health and Long Term Care through the SW LHIN, to provide the following residential supports or assisted living services to:

- over 125 people with complex medical and physical needs, in over 40 homes;
- day and overnight respite services at 6 locations to another 50 adults who are medically fragile, including those who are ventilator dependent;
- through our community involvement program at least 40 adults are supported to pursue individual and or group activities as well as volunteer and educational pursuits; and
- assists approximately 25 families with adult children living at home to manage their individualized funding in a wide variety of ways
- provides respite services

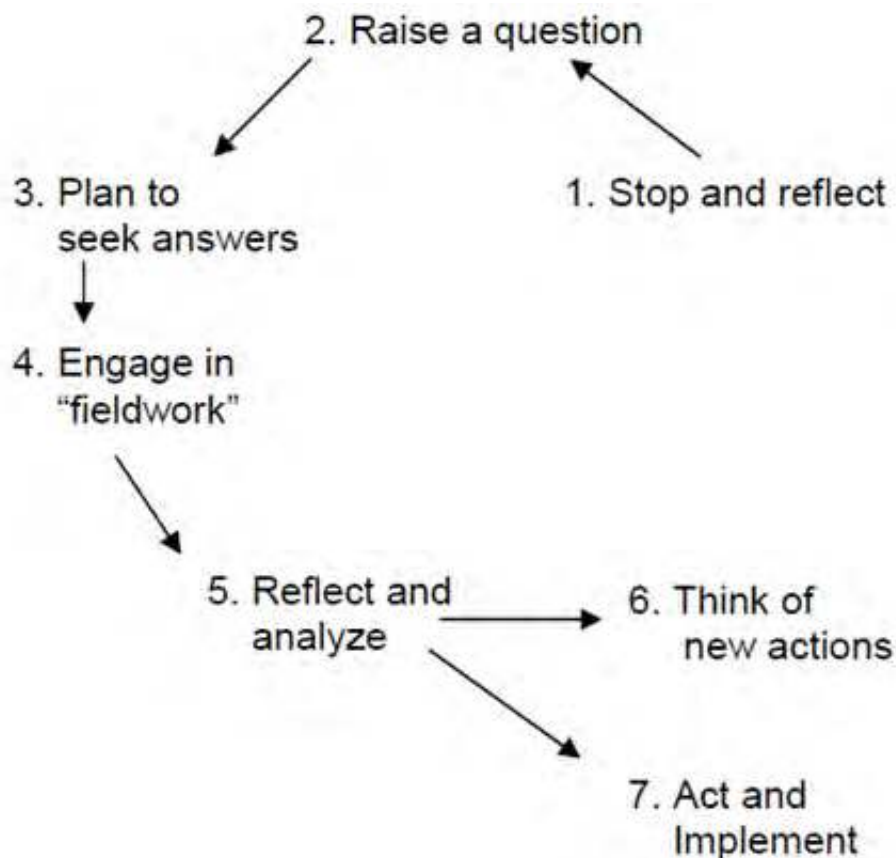


## PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

In 2000 the PHSS Board of Directors embarked on an initiative to enhance its governance focus on quality of care and supports with the creation of the Quality Assurance Committee in order to better evaluate the impact of PHSS' mission and the quality of its services and its obligations to the individuals supported by the organization. After considering a number of approaches the Board of Directors adopted Participatory Action Research ("PAR") as a practical, credible approach which was then incorporated into PHSS' quality evaluation, improvement practices, and strategic plan.

PAR is a pragmatic evaluation approach that emphasizes reflection and study; focuses on improvement and action; and involves people as participants in the study and change processes. PAR is a research method that is qualitative, quantitative and participative that incorporates a focus on action for improvement in the same evaluation method. The major steps of PAR are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Steps in Participatory Action Research**



adapted from Yoland Wadsworth

The PAR approach involves a range of participants including individuals receiving service and family members, employees, board members, and community representatives. All participants are involved in collecting and interpreting data.

The data includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. This combination strengthens the qualitative data, provides a deeper understanding of the quantitative data and leads to action more directly.

Participatory Action Research has a number of characteristics:

- Participative:** Individuals receiving service, staff, board and other stakeholders are involved as partners in the research process;
- Qualitative:** It focuses more on the experiences of individuals PHSS supports, family members and employees than on numbers;
- Reflective:** Critical reflection on the process and outcomes are important features of the process;
- Responsive:** It is able to respond to the emerging issues of a situation which can lead to action;
- Emergent & cyclical:** The process takes place gradually over a number of cycles so that interpretations of data can be tested, challenged and refined.

## EVOLUTION OF PAR

In 2000, PHSS initiated Participatory Action Research as a bi-annual review process. It began as an instrument to measure satisfaction, compliance, quality, and accountability.

Over the last 15 years it has evolved into a tool which motivates and grows a culture of improvement and reflection, allowing for meaningful and responsive change. PAR builds on the experience of stakeholders to create a resilient support system based on what is important and meaningful as defined by the individual and their family. Experience Based Design (“EBD”) in action.

The incorporation of the concepts and learning from the PAR process have led us to integrate the ongoing interactions, quest for knowledge and reflection, resulting in the creation of options and/or solutions. From being an evaluation of a “snap shot” in time, this process has evolved into an ongoing integrated observation. It encourages reflection on the day to day relationships, response and experience of those we serve, those who provide the service, their families and our community. It has changed from a picture of services into a way of supporting people to enjoy a meaningful life, as defined by them.

We have moved to encouraging and supporting a culture of shared understanding in order to create solutions by...

- Beginning with evidence and experience of stakeholders
- Valuing the feedback of all stakeholders
- Listening without defensive posturing
- Encouraging constructive, critical reflections
- Creating a response/action that considers all stake holders
- Committing to move forward to ensure continuous improvement

## IMPACT ON PHSS

- Because of the high complexity of the care needs and communication challenges of many of the individuals supported, PAR provides PHSS with evaluative methods that are effective in our care environment and reflect the inclusive nature of our culture.
- PAR has proved effective in enhancing organizational understanding of our quality performance and in identifying areas for improvement. PAR directly supports the organization carrying out short and medium-term actions that are responsive to the situations uncovered and the people involved. The findings of PAR help drive operational and quality improvements, as well as strategic planning.
- PAR's foundation in social and human research disciplines, combined with experiences gained by PAR participants and facilitators has allowed the PAR process to evolve and provide PHSS with continually better understanding of elusive matters that impact the quality of care, the experiences and quality of life of individuals supported by the organization.
- The cyclic process of including planning, review and learning allows the collected data to be used critically for understanding and action.
- The quality of the evidence can be continually improved by using many sources of data collection.

## PHSS' CURRENT QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

PHSS' current focus on quality is reflected in the organization's culture that reflects experience-based design, and the commitment of the Board and organization's leadership to innovation, excellence and continual improvement.



## Board of Directors

In addition to the overall governance focus of the Board, specific quality focused roles are carried out by two Board Committees.

### Quality Assurance Committee

- This committee has representatives from the Board, people receiving support, families, and community members.
- Oversees changes in PHSS services and any developments that may impact quality of services. Reviews significant events and situations impacting people receiving support.
- Performs bi-monthly mini-PAR visits with individuals and their families at their homes where support is provided to review/discuss service; and to establish relationships.
- Oversees the bi-annual PAR process.

### Policy and Oversight Committee

- Reviews quality, compliance, occupational health and safety, significant incident, and corporate risk management reports.
- Leads the PHSS strategic planning process, integrating the outcomes of PAR, and monitors the implementation of the strategic plan.

## Management and Board of Directors

PHSS management provides visionary and operational leadership that provides a culture focused on the delivery of innovative quality support to every person supported by the organization. Quality improvement initiatives are carried out by teams of staff, people supported, and family representatives in the following areas:

- enhancing meaningful supports, person-centered planning involving families,
- enhancing existing services and introduce new services,
- improving medical support, health and wellness of individuals supported by PHSS,
- supporting individuals supported by PHSS with their own self-advocacy,
- enhancing communications with families and the ability of people supported by PHSS to communicate with family and friends,
- improving ways to respond to and address complex developmental and medical needs, and
- prepare for FOCUS accreditation.

## Individuals and Families

- Individuals supported by PHSS and family representatives are provided opportunities to participate in:
  - hiring interviews for new employees,
  - performance evaluations,
  - organized family gatherings,
  - the Advocacy Committee,
  - inclusion on Board Committee and Board membership,
  - focus groups, annual surveys, PAR and strategic planning, and
  - staff and consumer training and orientation focus on quality.



## PAR IMPROVEMENT THEMES: ENHANCING, MEANINGFUL, PERSON-FOCUSED SUPPORTS

PHSS' focus on meaningful, person-focused supports is part of the transition to a culture of providing supports to people in a manner that encourages full self-actualization, inclusion and participation at home, with their family and in the community. The 2015 PAR findings identify that awareness of meaningful supports is increasing and embedded in the organization's culture. There are strong components within the organization that have built and spread the concepts and commitment to meaningful supports, such as:

- Person-Centered Planning
- Creation of Areas of Excellence
- Implementation of "Possibilities in Paint" Collaborative Art Studio
- Ongoing face-to-face, in-home interviews and visits with individuals and families by members of our Quality Assurance Committee ("mini-PARs")
- Training and teaching events

The Board of Directors has accepted the following conclusions and recommendations arising from the 2015 PAR process for inclusion in PHSS' Strategic and Operational plans to ensure continuing improvement of PHSS' meaningful, person-focused supports.

### 1. Preserving What Is Sacred

PHSS has historically provided quality supports, accessible housing and support services that effectively address health and safety, personal care, shelter and security needs. These are met and addressed with a high degree of satisfaction. PHSS is exceptional in this area.

- Continue the excellent work being done to maintain quality supports, homes, accessibility and the ongoing efforts in adapting to individual changing needs.
- Continue the creation of different living and funding options and opportunities for those we support and those with complex needs.
- Review and adjust the 8 existing Areas of Excellence (Leadership; Medical; Health and Wellness; FOCUS; Families/Self-Advocacy; Challenging Behaviour; Communication; and Meaningful Supports) to reflect feedback from 2015 PAR report and incorporate provincial and regional priorities for improving health and support care.

### 2. Community Engagement

PHSS needs to continue to cultivate meaningful community connections and engagement both individually and collectively. On an individual basis it includes the belief in full citizenship for everyone and works towards true community inclusion and valued social roles, one person at a time, as per their person-directed plan. We need to continue to move beyond community presence to valued community participation and contribution. At an organizational level it involves collaborative, multi-layered work across sectors with our community partners to create options for full inclusion.

### 3. Relationships

We need to continue to develop and nurture relationships for the individuals we support with their families, friends and community members.

When individuals we support do not have family, we need to continue to work with intention and creativity to think about support circles and the inclusion of volunteers in their lives.

At an organizational level, we will continue to build relationships, collaborations and partnerships in the community. (Right Time, Right Place – medically complex, CMV, hospital)

#### **4. Technology**

There is a need to expand and promote the targeted use of technology for a variety of purposes, both for individuals and the organization. This includes the increased use of various new technologies and social media for communication, promotion, outreach, education, information-sharing and other purposes.

#### **5. Advocacy**

PHSS needs to increase its efforts to support various kinds of advocacy; this will include self, individual and systemic. These efforts influence and promote positive change that's congruent with our vision and mission and also have meaning for the individual and their family.

Stakeholders have indicated that it is important for the advocacy efforts to be directed at areas and issues that are important to them and result in meaningful change. This includes advocacy efforts for those who currently receive service from PHSS and their families; as well as those in the community waiting for service and their families.

#### **6. Accessibility**

PHSS will continue to call for and work towards accessibility for all people within our organization and in the broader community. This includes access to physical buildings and public spaces as well as to generic and specialized supports services and community life.

#### **7. Family Engagement**

PHSS needs to expand efforts in family engagement with those who receive residential, respite, and rec and leisure services (internal) and those who do not (external) for a variety of purposes such as social/fun, information-sharing, educational, support/mentoring.

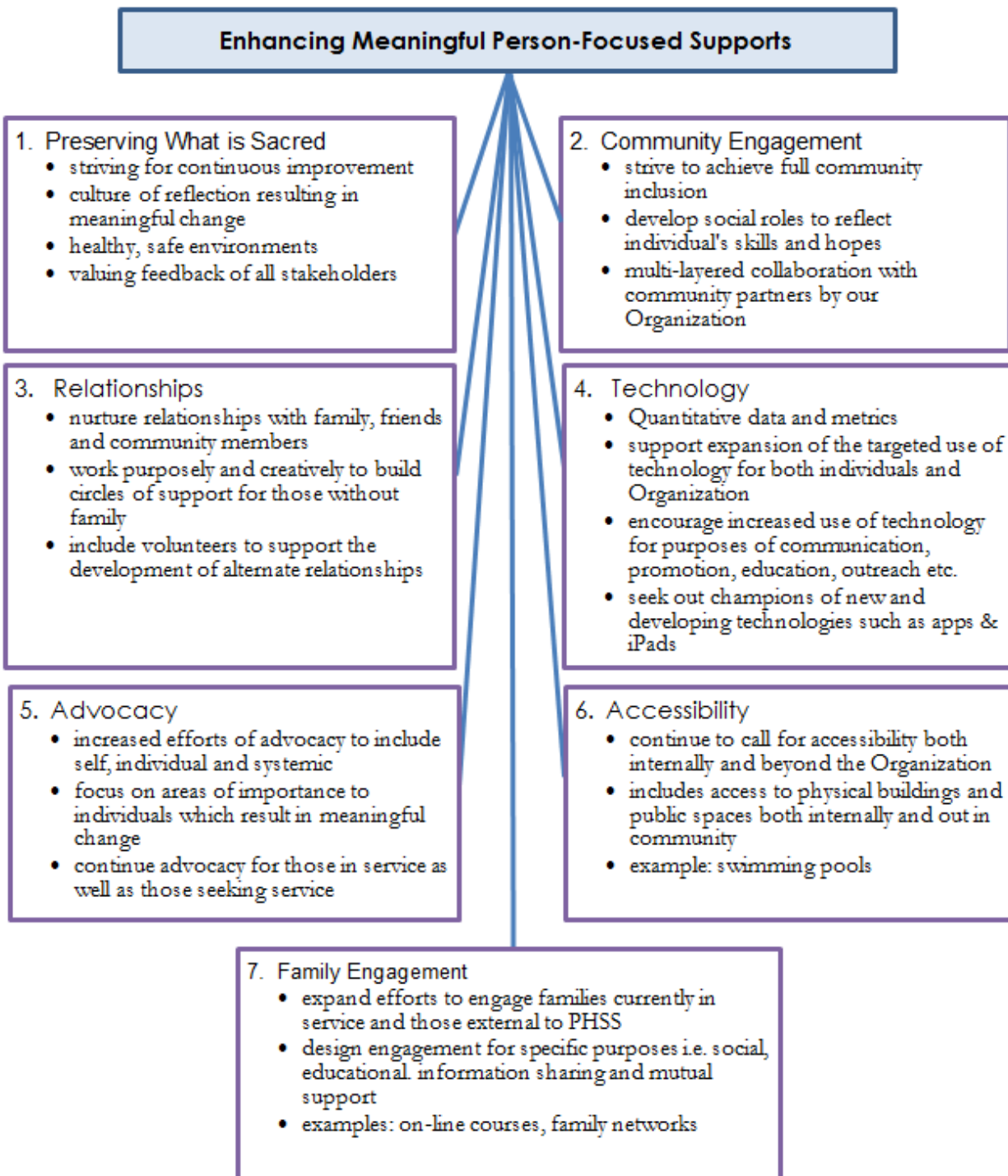
#### **Additional Recommendations:**

- Create new Areas of Excellence as per identified themes
- Use the Kotter model of change management, which is a widely recognized approach used by non-profit and for-profit corporations. It includes seven steps: 1) Understand the need for change, 2) Enlist a core change team, 3) Envisage and develop vision and strategy, 4) Motivate and create a sense of urgency, 5) Communicate the vision, 6) Act, and 7) Consolidate gains.
- Establish and enlist stakeholders and champions for each core team; develop a vision and strategy for each Area; create action plans; communicate to all stakeholders; implement, evaluate, review and adjust



- We will create a work culture based on controlled efforts to ensure sustainability through actions, efforts and resources which stem from these guiding principles:
  - We will value, support and encourage creativity
  - We will leave our comfort zone and take risks when warranted
  - We will build on passions where and when we find them
  - We will disassemble barriers, one at a time, as we encounter them
  - We will be solution-focused, problem-solvers
  - We will be driven by an individualized and person-directed stance in all we do

**Figure 2: Summary of PAR Recommendations**





# Creating



## AREAS OF EXCELLENCE

Safe, Enriching (Preserving what is sacred)

Community and Family Engagement

Relationship Building

Accessibility and Advocacy

Person-Focused Supports

Communication/Technology



## OUR CHAMPIONS

Supported Individuals

Community Members

Family

Friends

Staff



## THE 7-STEP KOTTER MODEL OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

### UNDERSTAND

Understand the need for change

Deepen and examine PAR results through focus groups and strategic direction work

### ENLIST

Enlist a core change team

Communicate in various ways:

- Meetings
- Core groups
- Individuals, staff, family
- Focus groups
- Spring social
- Social media
- Mail out to politicians and funders

### ENVISION

Develop vision and strategy

Create goals for each group  
Create action and implementation plan for identified goal  
June/July 2016

### MOTIVATE

Create a sense of urgency

# Community FOR QUALITY



## STAYING TRUE TO THESE PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE



Actions will be determined based on each individual group's action and implementation plans



# CONTINUING TO BUILD FOR THE **FUTURE**

Grand Opening April 29th, 2016!



**2016**  
**1796 Adelaide Street North**  
*New Community Place*



**2013**  
**Southdale Road East**  
*Residential living with 4 separate units*

**Participation House**  
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