

Working in collaboration with disability service providers to improve the quality of life of group home residents: The impact of a longitudinal research study

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Why this is important

Over 17,000 people with intellectual disabilities live in group homes. Our early research uncovered the poor and variable quality of life for group home residents (Mansell et al., 2013). The quality of staff support practice known as Active Support is a key determinant of the quality of life for group home residents. Active Support is internationally recognised as best practice but organisations have found it difficult to embed in services. Practice wisdom suggests many things influence this - training, recruitment, position descriptions, procedures, management, but there is little evidence about which are most important to guide organisational actions to improve Active Support.

The overarching aim of this study was to identify the main factors associated with good Active Support in group homes.

What we did

Since 2009 we have been collecting data about the quality of the support in group homes, the staff, and the way organisations manage support. The number of organisations involved has increased from 4 to 14. Over this time we have:

- taken repeated measures in 51 group homes for between 2 to 7 years to identify what sustains good Active Support;
- compiled a large cross sectional data set of 913 residents, in 226 group homes, managed by 14 organisations to identify what factors are associated with good Active Support;
- conceptualised and measured key organisational characteristics and compared these across organisations, and;
- used hierarchical modelling to identify which factors predict good Active Support at the group home and organisational level.

We have prepared annual reports for our partner organisations on quality of life outcomes for residents, quality of support and leadership in their group homes, held regular meetings to share knowledge, and developed free on-line training resources.

What we found

The quality of practice leadership in a group home and across an organisation stands out as one of the key factors predicting good Active Support and sustaining it over time (Figure 1)¹

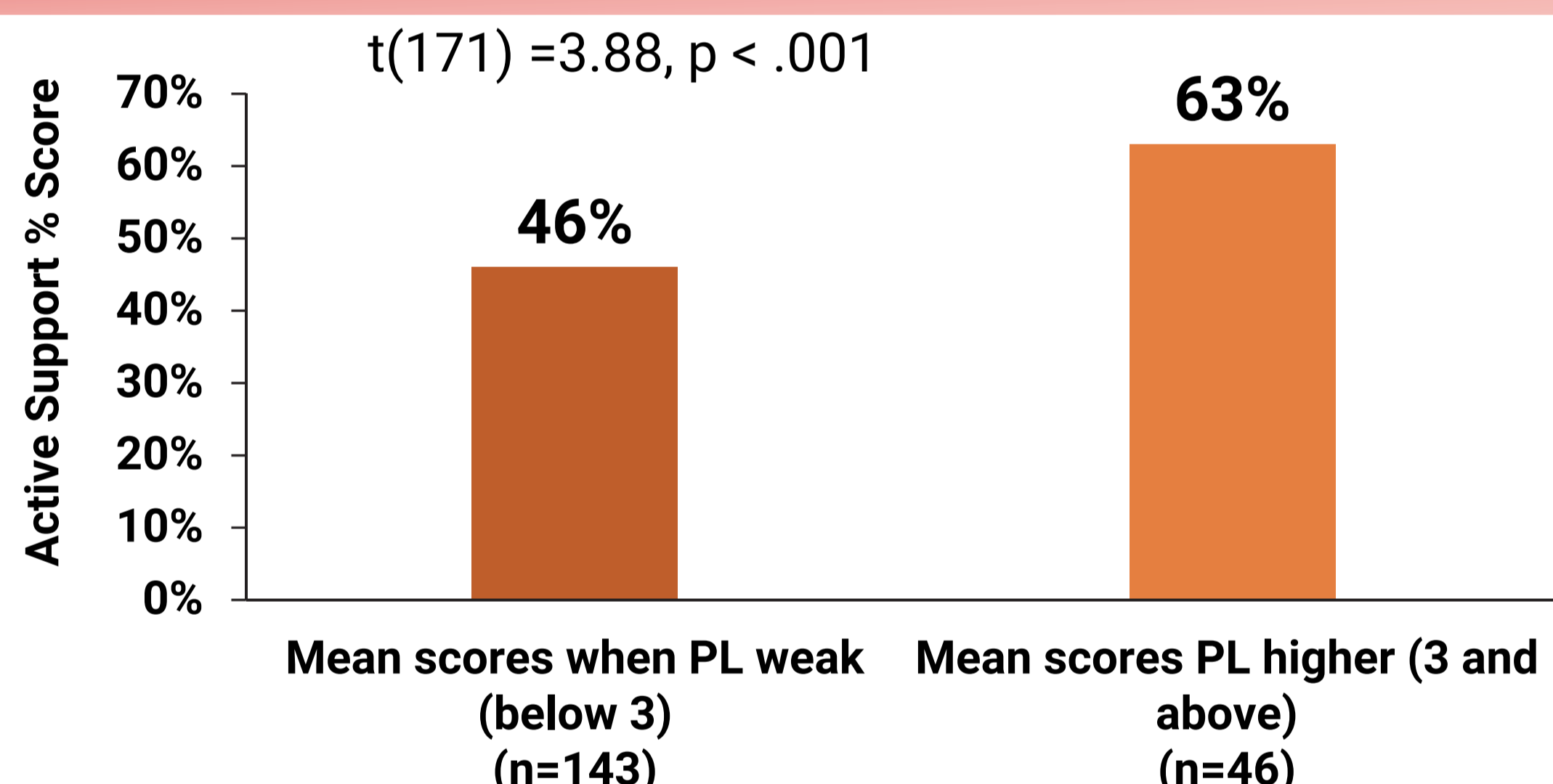


Figure 1 Comparing weak and strong practice leadership

Other factors that predicted good Active Support were:

- the number of staff trained in Active Support
- size of the group home - 6 or less residents
- positive staff perceptions of the quality of management
- the overarching strength of an organisations' focus on practice.

Impact of this research

Partner organisations have used the annual reports and our findings to rethink how they manage and organise staff support, in particular many have refocused and strengthened practice leadership.



Training in Active Support is more available to front line staff and many organisations across Australia and internationally are accessing our on-line resources.

10,000 VISITORS A MONTH

<http://www.activesupportresource.net.au/>

Community Visitors in Victoria are now trained to recognise good Active Support.

More organisations are delivering higher quality Active Support and people with intellectual disabilities are experiencing better outcomes (Figure 2).

| Organisation | 2009-2010 | 2011-2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Org 1 | 0% | 0% | 20% | 60% | 80% | 60% | 100% |
| Org 2 | 100% | 75% | 71% | 71% | 43% | 38% | 71% |
| Org 3 | 25% | 0% | 40% | 40% | 60% | 80% | 100% |
| Org 4 | 13% | 0% | 50% | 63% | 75% | 44% | 33% |
| Org 5 | | | 50% | 60% | 25% | 20% | 40% |
| Org 6 | | | 0% | 14% | 29% | 0% | 57% |
| Org 7 | | | 25% | 75% | 63% | 38% | 71% |
| Org 8 | | | 57% | 57% | 20% | 0% | 86% |
| Org 9 | | | | | 14% | 13% | 50% |
| Org 10 | | | | | 25% | 0% | 33% |
| Org 11 | | | | | 50% | 33% | 29% |
| Org 12 | | | | | | 29% | 57% |
| Org 13 | | | | | | 0% | 83% |
| Org 14 | | | | | | 25% | 50% |

Figure 2 Percentage of services Majority of ASM Good

Acknowledgements and Industry Partners

References

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- ¹ Beadle-Brown, J., Bigby, C., & Bould, E. (2015). Observing Practice Leadership in intellectual and developmental disability services. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 59(12), 1081 – 1093.
- Mansell, J., Beadle-Brown, J., & Bigby, C. (2013). Implementation of active support in Victoria, Australia: An exploratory study. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 38, 48–58.