



# Strength Based Practice in Darlington

**"Knowing our  
Adults, Families and  
Communities  
in Darlington"**

Darlington Adults  
Social Care Services

**Strength Based  
Practice Framework**



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

**Our vision,  
our journey,  
our culture**

**Welcome to...**

**T**

Together and Inclusive

**H**

Healthy and Safe

**R**

Resilient and Strong

**I**

Independent and Innovative

**V**

Valued and Respected

**E**

Educated and Aspirational

We aim to create a warm and welcoming town where Adults and Families stay as independent as possible, for as long as possible

**THRIVE**

**THRIVE**

is our Directorate Vision for Children and Adults in Darlington

## Our vision and culture is underpinned by strong values that are:

- Strength based and committed to the people and communities in Darlington
- Reflective of our legal duties and underpinned by the Care Act 2014

## Our commitment is that:

- We will always try to empower individuals and families to find their own solutions
- We will always try to promote independence
- We will always try to work closely with partner organisations so that adults, families and communities get the most appropriate support available

## Our approach is:

- About listening to the individual, the family and the communities to ensure our approach is Strength Based and Person Centred

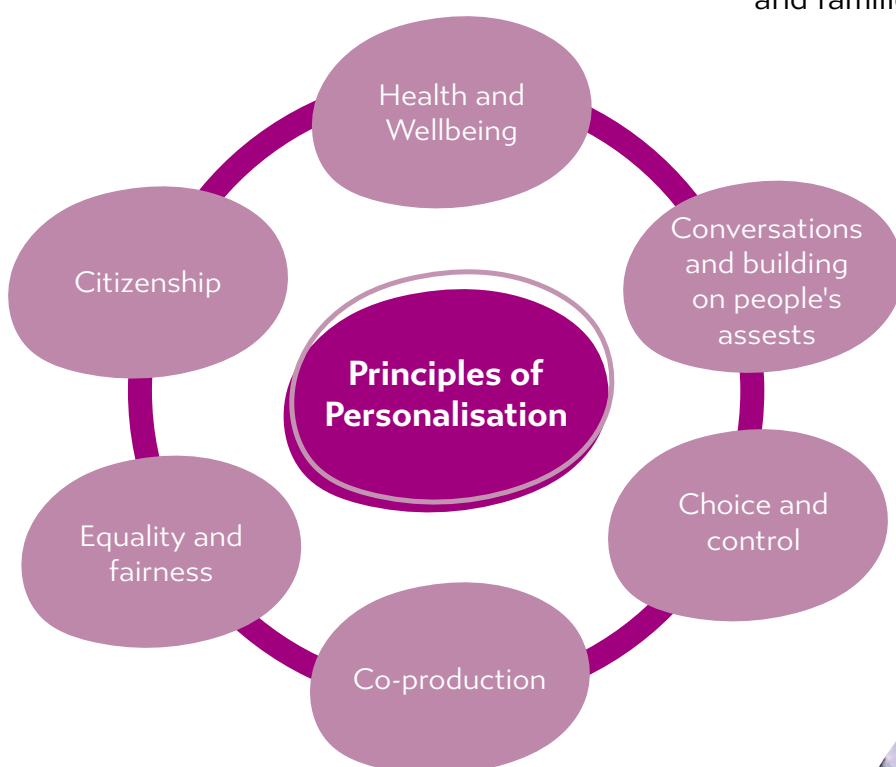
- To be needs led. We will support appropriate identified needs and help to ensure a proportionate response
- About supporting the development of shared local solutions through partnership and community asset-based working

## What we need to do:

- Create the conditions for good practice by supporting the development of a borough wide culture and ethos of Strength Based working
- Support the Council to safely and appropriately empower people to make their own decisions
- Protect and support those in greatest need. We will strive to keep people safe, without stopping them doing things that are important to them
- Improve the effectiveness of Local Authority Adult Social Care

## Our intention is:

- To "Know ourselves and know our adults and families".



# Strength Based Practice in Darlington

## Our key aims for Adult Social Care in Darlington are to ensure that:

- People are supported to feel safe within their community
- People are at the centre of planning their own care and support
- That community, services and organisations work together to support people with their care, support and well-being
- That support is delivered that encourages the person to have goals, expectations, outcomes and achievements.

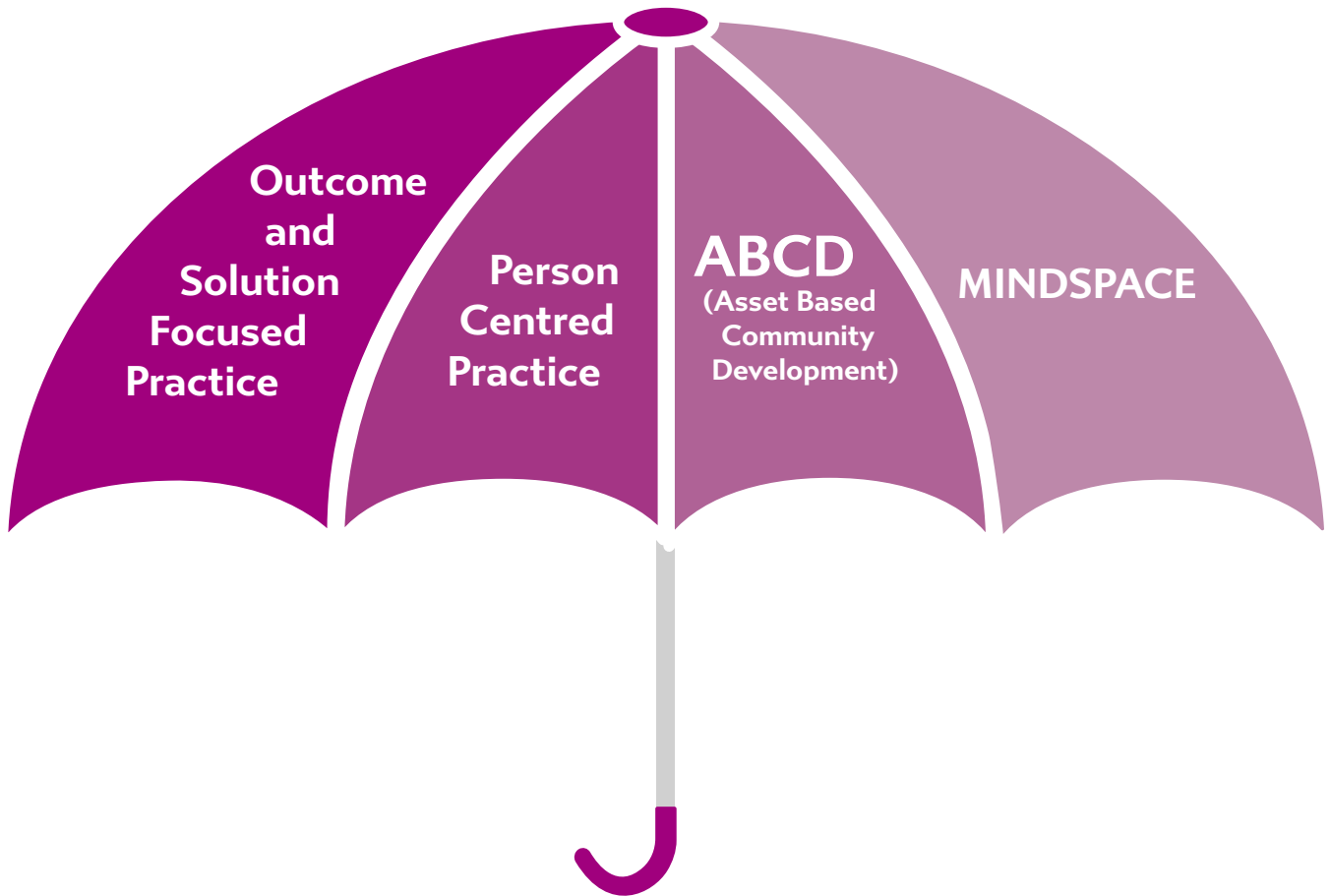
In Darlington Adults Social Care we understand that everyone is unique and different, and we truly value this. We believe that respecting each other and working together will bring the best results for individuals and families. We want to achieve the best strength-based solutions and we are determined to work together with Darlington communities where and when they need us. We want to celebrate the good, while helping and supporting when situations may not go to plan. We are committed to work together with adults and families in Darlington to deliver our vision. This document sets out how we do so.

We see our Strength Based Practice Model as an umbrella that supports our staff to deliver the best possible service. We recognise that one size doesn't fit all when working with individuals and families in Darlington. This is why our Strength Based Practice Umbrella Model outlines different skills and techniques that our teams can utilise to most suit the needs of the individuals and families they are working alongside.

We truly believe that our Strength Based approach will bring positive outcomes. To achieve this we will support individuals and families to recognise and build on their strengths, as well as co-produce and own their decisions and actions. This will help achieve results that are important to all of us. Our approach is about working together as a collective to recognise and help develop Strength Based Practice.



# Strength Based Practice Umbrella



Outcome and Solution Focused Practice	Person Centred Practice	ABCD (Asset Based Community Development)	MINDSPACE
<p>Outcome and Solution Focused Practice supports individuals and families to articulate, understand and achieve realistic goals based around wellbeing and aspirations.</p> <p>This approach supports a positive, creative, respectful and effective way of helping people to make changes or adaptations that are important to their lives.</p>	<p>Person Centred Practice supports personalisation, empowerment and shared decision making. It is an approach that recognises that people want to be treated as a whole person by professionals they trust, involving them in decision making and supporting them to actively manage their own health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Person Centred Practice puts the person at the centre of everything we do, respecting individual needs and preferences.</p>	<p>ABCD is an approach that supports individuals and families to stay as independent as possible for as long as possible by identifying and supporting the use of existing and often unrecognised assets.</p> <p>ABCD is about building on and enhancing assets found in the community, promoting proportionate and appropriate support and strength based work. It isn't about services abdicating responsibility, but ensuring the right support is available.</p>	<p><b>M - Messenger.</b> We are influenced by who communicates information</p> <p><b>I - Incentives.</b> Think of positive gains rather than losses</p> <p><b>N - Norms.</b> Understanding what our peers are achieving</p> <p><b>D - Defaults.</b> Consider how we present options available</p> <p><b>S - Salience.</b> Simple, accessible, relevant and fun</p> <p><b>P - Priming.</b> Positive outlook/ language encourages positive thinking</p> <p><b>A - Affect.</b> Knowing likes and dislikes, understanding emotions</p> <p><b>C - Commitment.</b> Active SMART/committing to actions</p> <p><b>E - Ego.</b> Sincerity in supporting people to feel better about themselves. Build on positives.</p>

# What is Strength Based Practice?

Our approach is rooted in:

- 1) **What theory and government guidelines tell us**
- 2) **The views of our staff and partners**
- 3) **The views of individuals and families**

We focus on the individuals' strengths (including personal strengths and social and community networks) and not on their deficits. Strengths Based practice is holistic and multidisciplinary and works with the individual to promote their wellbeing. It is outcomes led, not services led and works with a variety of interventions and settings. It follows a relational and restorative approach, and is about doing with others, rather than doing to them or for them.

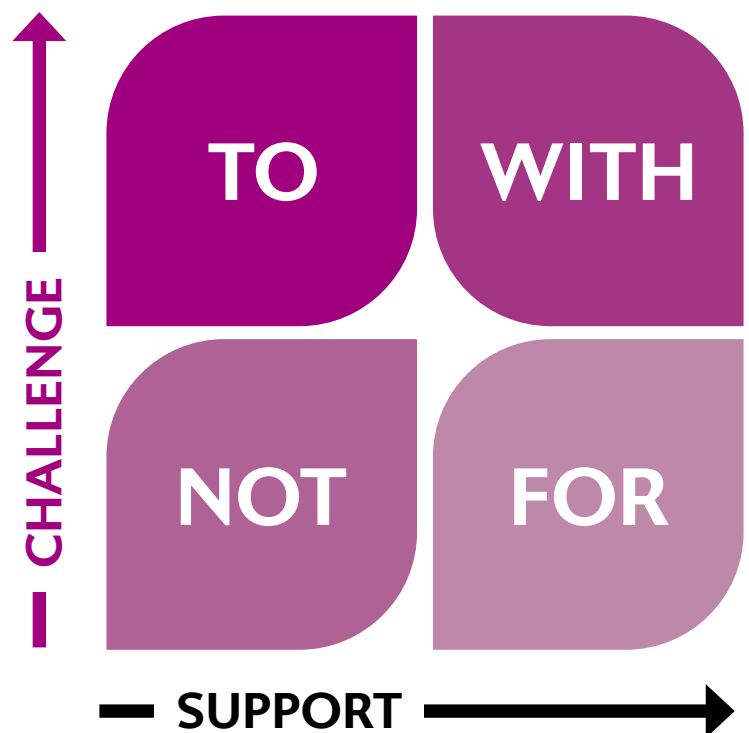
Strength Based Practice brings together the people involved and gives them the opportunity to make situations better.



# The Social Discipline Window

We believe that by working WITH adults and families we can help and support them to make positive change where and when needed.

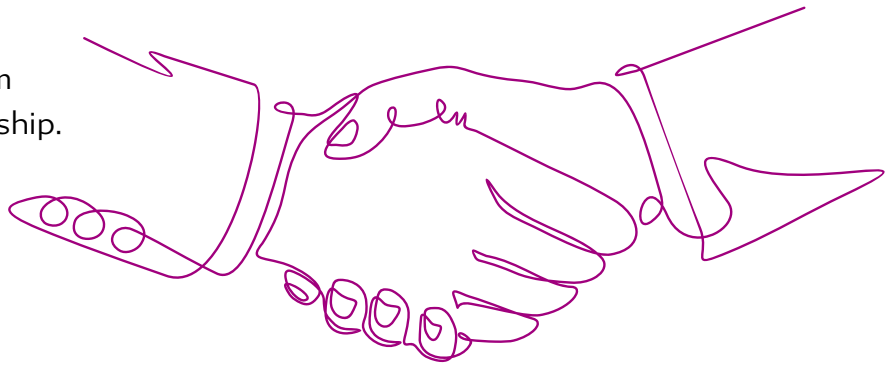
We will give high support (listening, encouraging and helping) and high challenge (setting limits and boundaries)



High Challenge and Low Support = Punitive/authoritarian = Doing things TO people  
 Low Challenge and Low Support = Neglectful/not interpreted = NOT doing much of anything  
 High Support and Low Challenge = Permissive/rescue/makes excuses = Doing things FOR people  
 High Support and High Challenge = Restorative/Authoritative/Relational = Doing things WITH people

# High Support, High Challenge

Our approach will be about working "WITH" – Maximum growth, support and ownership. We will work together to support individuals, families, relatives and friends to find solutions to problems.



## We asked, teams said!

### What do our teams say about Strength Based Practice?

**A Strength Based Practice approach focuses on what a person or a group can do, rather than what they may not be able to do. It is about supporting the individual or family to stay as independent as possible, for as long as possible.**

- A Strength Based approach focuses on the strengths and positive qualities of a person or a group, rather than the deficits or negatives.
- Everyone has unique potential, strengths and capabilities that can help them on their own journey.
- Be careful with your words and language. Our language creates our reality.
- Life and our world are always changing. Try to adapt and own that change.
- Support others as wholeheartedly as you can. This will truly strengthen your relationship.
- Listen and value the story that people tell.
- Use and learn from experiences to help support people and make improvements
- Working together helps us achieve more. Be open to other ideas and value different opinions.



# Our commitment to working with adults and families means...

We recognise that everyone has a strength, something they are interested in or an aspiration. We will focus on this and reflect it back to the person.



The network around people (family, community and multi-agency partners) can help to support their needs and draw out their strengths - maximise the use of community assets.



We use relational, evidence based and positive 'can do' approaches that help to promote independence and manage expectations.



We support the development of independence so that people can "live their best life."



We will be curious, interested and compassionate in our approach.



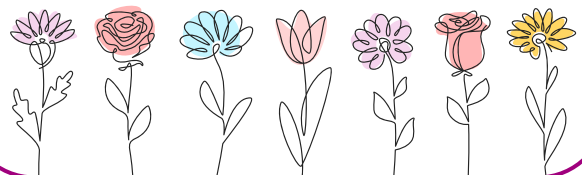
**We will focus on positives and help turn perceived weaknesses into strengths.**



The language we use and the approach we have can help to empower the people we work with.



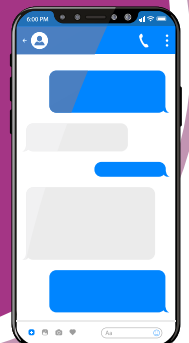
**We recognise our own strength as a team/service - we will be creative and think outside of the box.**



**The people we work with are experts in their own life - listen and don't make assumptions.**



**We recognise that change can be frightening - we need to be relational and person centred in how we support people, making use of digital technology.**





**What do people who use our services say about Strength Based Practice - the real voice of some of our Adult Social Care communities in Darlington**

### **What I want to see from care workers, health workers, social workers when supporting me or working with me?**

- Respect, listening ears and support according to my needs. Make sure our voice is heard
- Give time and be patient. Listen, and don't judge. Record things as we say them, not as you interpret them
- Be friendly and polite. Show compassion, empathy and understanding
- Respond quickly. Don't leave us waiting for ages because it creates anxiety
- The way you interact and respond to us is important. Don't look down on us or speak down to us
- Behave like you care and you want to make a difference for me. Show that you are interested in finding out what works for me.

### **What kind of behaviour makes you not want to work with care workers, health workers, social workers?**

- If you give us false hope. When you say you will do something and then don't follow it through. If you pass us from pillar to post, are inconsistent, inconsiderate, rude, dismissive, and don't record things accurately
- When the professional talks down to you. Superiority, not listening, talking over me, using abbreviations and jargon
- When it seems that you are in too much of a rush and are dismissive, on your phone or device when you are with us... or even if you are late!
- If you don't listen, or just think your opinion or resolution is more important than what we need
- If you show no empathy. Be genuine.
- If you are dismissive, see me as "a customer" rather than someone who needs your support, then I feel disrespected.



**Think Local, Act Personal**

## Why is it important that care workers, health workers, social workers listen to you?

- They need to listen so they can understand my point of view and whatever problems I might be having. It's about my needs, not theirs. They won't know anything about me if they don't listen
- We know what we are talking about. It's our lives and situations and we know them best. We are the experts in our own lives and that needs to be recognised
- Because I am of value and I'm worth listening to
- If you listen to us, the full story will be heard and recorded. Then the right help and support can be given
- So we can feel validated. Listening shows that you care and want to help and support us

## What happens when we own decisions?

Nobody likes it when they feel decisions are made for them. That is why Strength Based Practice promotes discussion and ideas so that everyone involved can be part of decision making. When this happens, we find that the decisions made form strong plans and promote independence for adults and families.



- Sometimes we just need to talk and get things off our chest, and we need someone to listen to us
- To find out what we actually need and want, rather than just what they think we need or want...or what is easiest for them to provide.

## How can we use this document?

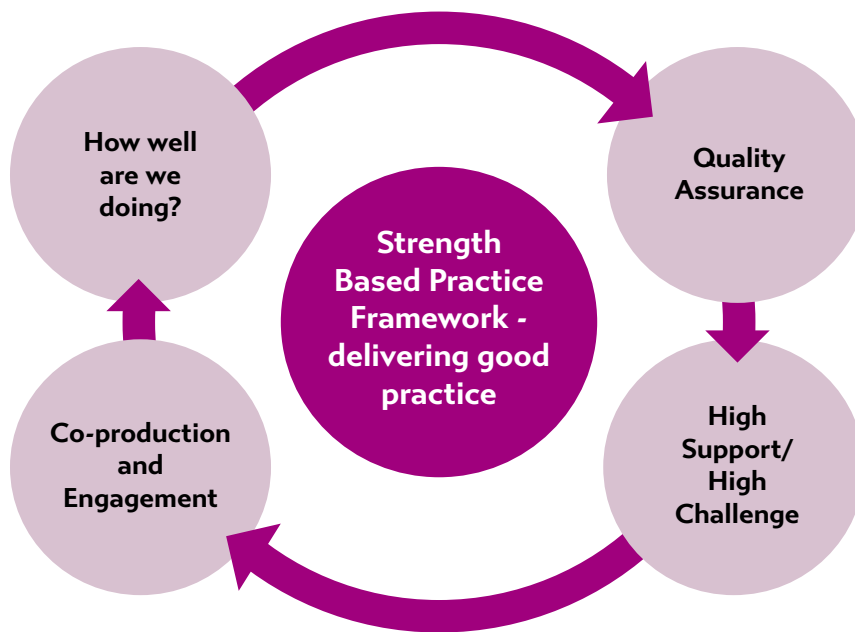
Essentially this document should be used as a simple, easy read guidance and reference tool for our internal Adults Services teams as part of staff induction, team meetings, supervision and training. It is based around how we deliver Strength Based methodologies through our Strength Based Practice Umbrella. We support adults and families, as well as each other, by delivering our work in a high support and high challenge way, with a focus on the importance of relationships.

# How will we know if we are on the right track?

Implementing the Strength Based Practice Framework in the best possible way is important to us. We will do this by engaging with our staff, our multi-agency partners, as well as individuals, families and communities, working together to support the best

possible practice delivery across Adult Social Care Services in Darlington.

We will work with local and national organisations to stay on the right track and develop our Strength Based Practice:



## Strength Based Practice Framework - delivering good practice in Darlington

- **Quality Assurance** (checking and auditing our work) Seeking feedback on our delivery of Strength Based Practice.
- **High Support/High Challenge** - implementation of a 'Critical Friend' process, where sector leading professionals challenge and measure our progress on the Strength Based Practice journey .
- **Co-production and Engagement** - listening to and acting on the voice of our local partners and people.
- **How well are we doing?** - Measuring our performance locally and nationally, working alongside local partners and organisations. Ensuring we are inspection ready.

For more information on Adult Social Care in Darlington, visit the **Darlington Borough Council** website.

Special thanks to Darlington Association On Disability Learning Impairment Network and Darlington Carers Support for their amazing input to this document.