

Planning and Aspects of Life

Thinking about whole of life planning can often seem overwhelming. Where do we start? Whether we are planning our own lives, assisting others to plan, or planning for those who are unable to plan for themselves, such as young children, it can be helpful to look at the different aspects of life and break the planning process into manageable segments. It's like the joke about how to eat an elephant – one bite at a time.

Once everyone is clear about the vision for the future of the individual, a simple step-by-step planning process, taking each aspect of life one by one, makes the whole process much easier. It is essential that the vision drives the planning – what the individual wants in life and, where relevant, what the family wants for them – rather than the other way round. The list in **Table 1** is only a starting point:

Table 1
Aspects of Life

Home	Education
Work/contributions	Spirituality
Relationships/friends	Health/healthcare
Holidays/recreation	Financial security
Passion/interests	Choice and decision-making
Safety and security	

If there are other aspects of a particular individual's life that are important, then add them to the list.

Notice that nothing on this list refers to disability. If planning focuses on disability related concepts, such as 'accommodation support', or 'therapy', goals and actions will be drawn into disability services. The role of services is to assist individuals to achieve their goals, not determine the limits of those goals.

Ideally the planning process will involve family and friends coming together with the individual in a structured planning process. The first thing to do is to set priorities. It is not possible to do everything at once, so work out what is most important. Next, goals are set under those priorities and, finally, actions under each goal. In a typical planning process of two to three hours, it is likely that only two or three areas of the individual's life will be addressed. Other goals and actions can be addressed later.

Table 2 offers an example of how this process can work. The example is of a young man, John, and the goals that have been set by a planning group of John, his family and friends. The columns to the right of each aspect of life record priorities, with three asterisks indicating the highest priority. Goals are written under those priorities.

Table 2

Goals	Priority	Goal	Priority
Home		Education	
Work/contributions <i>John will have a part-time job of at least 10 hours a week within the next twelve months</i>	**	Spirituality	
Relationships/friends		Health/healthcare	
Holidays/recreation		Financial security	
Passion/interests <i>John will attend all home games of the Townsville Cowboys each season</i>	***	Choice and decision-making <i>John will have a supported decision-making agreement in place within the next six months</i>	*
Safety and security			

Table 3 takes the goal with the highest priority and shows actions developed by the planning group, when the action will be carried out, who will do it, and who will check, or review, whether it has been carried out.

Table 3

Goal	Action	When	Who	Review
Passion/interests <i>John will attend all home games of the Townsville Cowboys each season</i>	<i>(a) Research costs of membership and any access issues for someone in John's situation</i>	<i>(a) Next 14 days</i>	<i>(a) John's sister</i>	<i>(a) 28 days - aunt</i>
	<i>(b) Brainstorm and develop plan to support John to attend all games</i>	<i>(b) Next 28 days</i>	<i>(b) Parents, sister and close friend</i>	<i>(b) 28 days - aunt</i>
	<i>(c) Ask family and friends to contribute to John's annual membership through Christmas and birthday presents</i>	<i>(b) Next 28 days</i>	<i>(b) John's mother</i>	<i>(b) 28 days - aunt</i>

By breaking down the planning task to different aspects of an individual's life, and including others in the planning process, what might at first appear overwhelming can become quite manageable.