What enables positive relationships, between Support Workers and Families, to flourish?

- Honesty – when things go wrong as well as when they go right.

- Support Workers sharing photos and videos are really valuable – photos better than words – the good stories!

- Families need to tell support workers when things are good (as well as bad),

- Two way street – families need to be confident that the support team trust them

- A key contact which all individuals receiving support and their families know they can contact.

- A well-written care and support plan, consistency in support, and following guidelines also effective at ensuring relationships remain strong and ensuring accountability is in place.

- Being able to have 'difficult' conversations early on to prevent tensions rising. Involving all who want to input into ensuring the individual's best interests are reflected.

What are the barriers to these things happening more?

- Promotion of routine over choice

- Family experience is that, while the relationships often start out well, once problems begin then the relationship between families and managers/staff break downs very rapidly.

- Support workers are often prohibited from contacting a person after they have left the service, as this would be a 'breach of policy' despite that the individual and support staff have become friends. This loss of a good relationship – due to 'professional boundaries' – undermines organic emotions and the essence of caregiving.

- There often seems to be an underlying 'fear' about reaching out or engaging with family members – especially outside of the professional context.

- Limited flexibility (i.e. "That's not the way we do things") is also very difficult for families, as it shuts off the route through which families can be involved in delivery of support

Ideas for ensuring positive relationships between families and support workers

- Hard to write down what it is that works!

- Job descriptions for the person supported! Standard job descriptions don't work Individual adverts and applications to work with the individual are needed.

- Relationships - Everything comes down to relationships. Value the Naturalness of two - way relationships – think about how to grow relationships

- Understanding families are observing but not spying!

- Understanding family's culture very important

- Ensure anyone who works with the individual can call family members at any time

- Organisations should set out clearly what their commitments to families actually are, with clear guidelines on how and why they work with families.

Ideas for ensuring positive relationships between families and support workers

- When person begins at a new service, videos would be helpful. Videos of individuals and their families talking about what support works well and what hasn't worked for them in the past would be more effective induction than files or e-learning.

- Support workers should not defer to management. It isn't reasonable to expect someone to know all of the answers all of the time, but support practices should be in place which allow families and support workers to work through this together.