

# Looking beyond goals to support people's choices

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# Aim

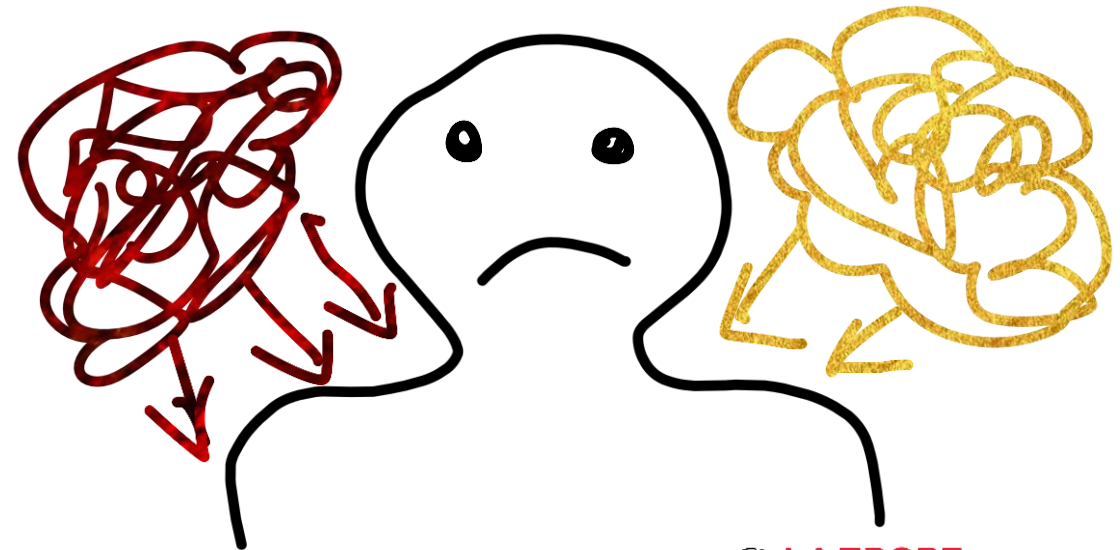
To explore why well-meaning staff in disability services for adults with intellectual disabilities either

- 1) support people well to make their own choices, or
- 2) limit their choices.

# People need to have choice and control

People need to have choice and control over their lives to have psychological wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2015)

People need to make choices that come from within themselves, not what other people have said to do.



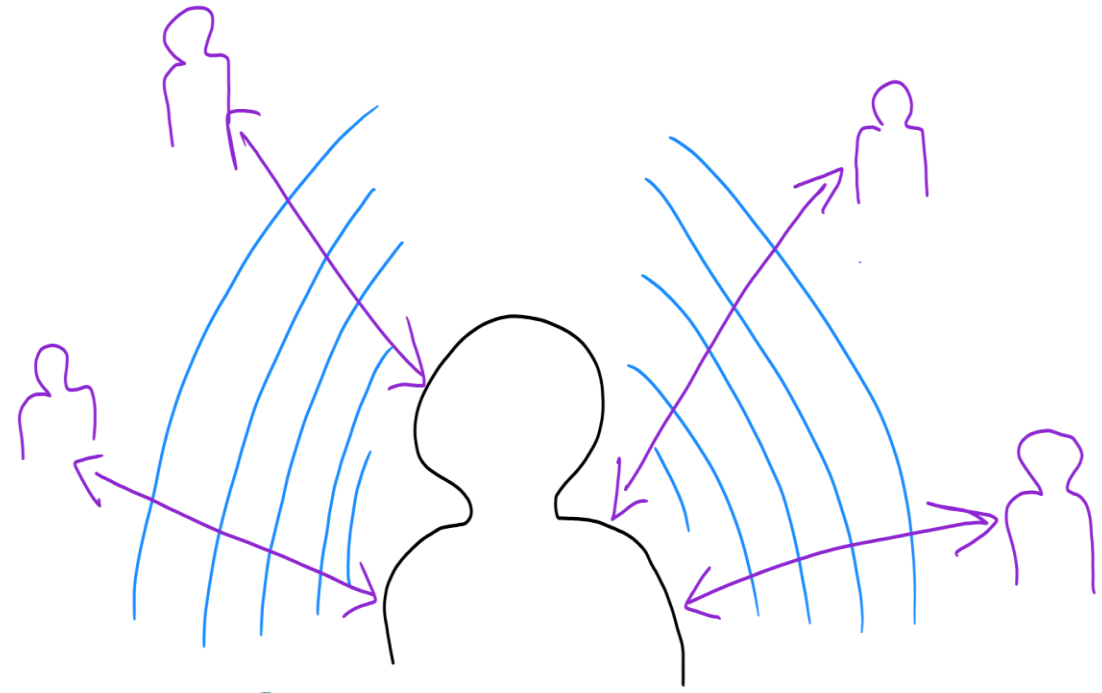
# Ecological process model

(Abery & Stancliffe, 1996)

Self-determination (having choice and control) happens when a person's choices are being acted on.

This model includes what supporters do. It doesn't require the person to reach out using their own ability.

For a person getting staff support:  
are staff enabling the person's choices to be acted on?



# Aim & proposition

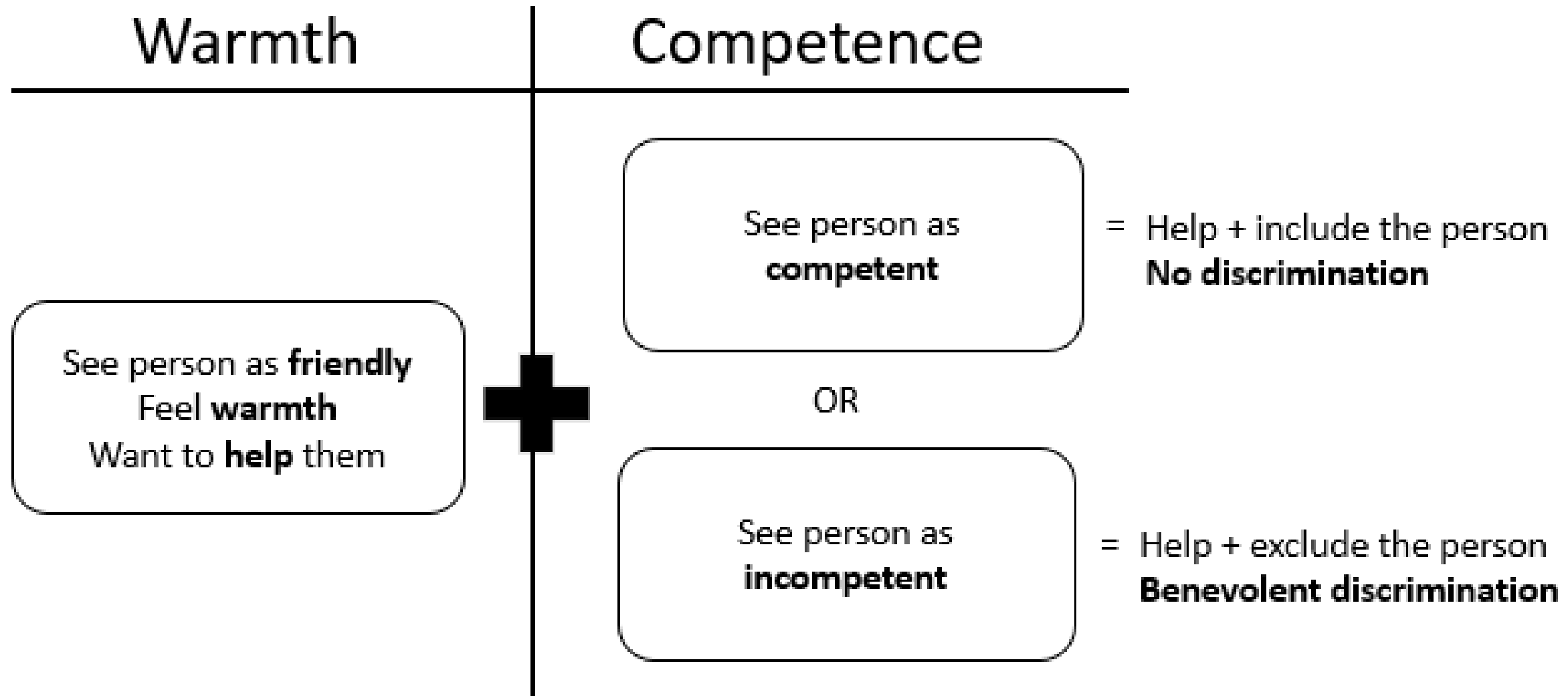
**Aim.** To explore why well-meaning staff in disability services for adults with intellectual disabilities either

- 1) support people well to make their own choices, or
- 2) limit their choices.

**Proposition.** The Stereotype Content Model (attitude theory) may explain why some staff limit choice and some support it well.

# The Stereotype Content Model

Fiske et al. (2002),  
Cuddy et al. (2007)



# Questions and Method

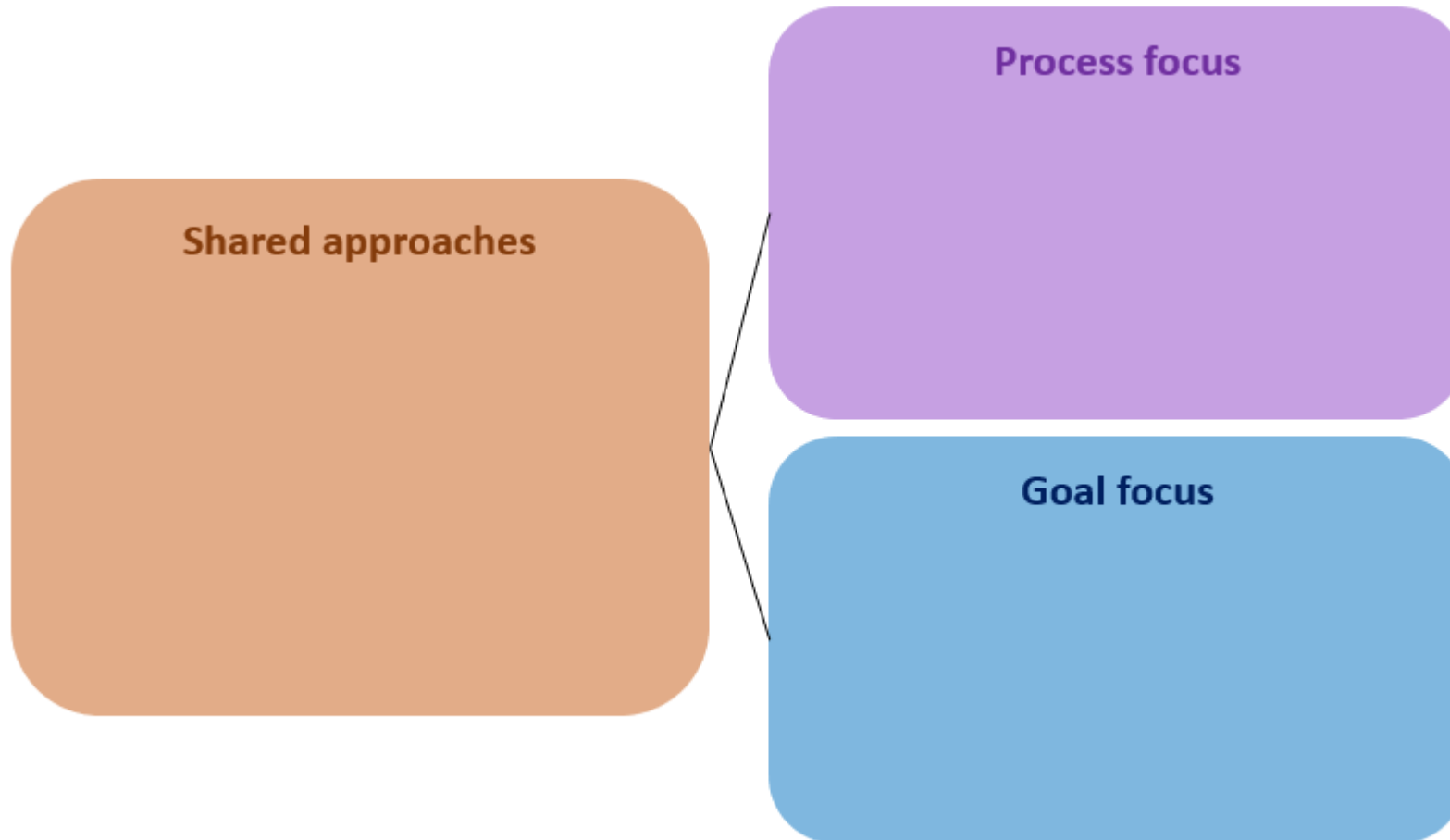
## Research Questions

1. How do staff think and feel about adults with intellectual disabilities having choice and control?
2. How do staff intend to support adults with intellectual disabilities to make their own choices?

## Method

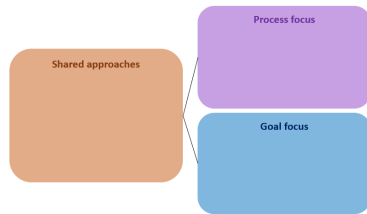
- Qualitative interviews with 21 staff (incl. direct support workers, support coordinators, supervisors, students) who went to a workshop about supporting people's choices.
- Staff were asked to respond to vignette situations.
- Analysed with grounded theory methods, interpreted using sensitising concepts: the stereotype content model and the ecological process model.

# Findings





# Shared approaches for supporting choice



## Shared approaches

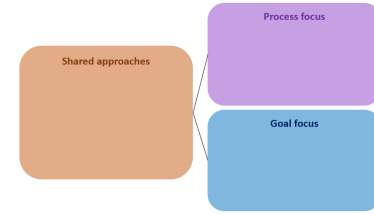
**Caring about the person** and wanting to support them with their goals.

Knowing the person well for **drawing out their choices**.

**Querying the person's abilities** for doing things independently and safely.

**Reviewing the context** to see if the goals are feasible for the person in their situation.

# Two distinct ways staff focus on choice



## Process focus

Looking mainly for the person's **choices about how they want support** in the process to their goal.

Bringing the context to the person for **collaborating about how to support them**.

**Involving the person as a choice-maker.** Supporting the person to choose the process to their goal.

## Goal focus

Looking mainly for the person's **choices about how to define their goal**.

Using the context for **limiting options in deciding how to support the person**.

**Involving the person as an action-taker.** Assigning actions to the person in the process to their goal.



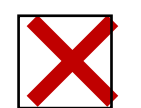
Choice over defining the goal



Choice over support in the process



Choice over defining the goal



Choice over support in the process

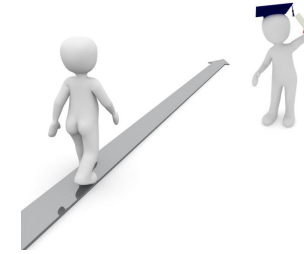
# Example - John & Trains

John goes to a day service.

He has a book with pictures of trains.

He has been telling support staff he wants to get a job as a train driver.

# Goal focus with John



## Look mainly for John's goal definition

- Does he want to drive Metro or V/Line?
- How many hours would he want to work?

## Review the context and John's abilities

- Is it feasible? Is it safe?
- Does it fit my role?

## Deciding how to support John using his goal and its feasibility

### Goal is not feasible

We'll adjust it to something achievable for John, close to his goal. He could drive the train ride for children.

### Goal does not fit staff role

I can't support John with this one. It's not funded. I will refer him to an employment agency.

### Goal is achievable

I will support John with this. He will do assessments, learn skills, and I will sit with him to apply for jobs.

"You'd have to assess whether he's going to be capable of doing it. So, you'd have to refer that on to an employment agency, and any other allied health professional who can help with the assessments and then with his choice." (Floyd)

# Process focus with John



**Look mainly for how John wants support**

- What does John want from his support?

**Look for John's goal definition**

- Does he want to drive Metro or V/Line?
- How many hours would he want to work?

**Review the context and John's abilities**

- Is it feasible? Is it safe?
- Does it fit my role?

“So, you'd start with John, having that sit down. Make sure he's cool for you to explore it more ... 'Who else do you think we should get on board to help you with this goal?'” (Mona)

## Deciding how to support John in collaboration

### Goal is not feasible

What does John want if the job is out of reach? How does he want me to respond?

### Goal does not fit staff role

If I can't support John with this, who does he want involved? Is he open to an employment agency?

### Goal is achievable

What options will John want to see to get started? What does he want me to do?

# Staying with or getting away

## Process focus

Staying with the person  
Work together toward the goal



## Goal focus

Getting away from the person  
Solve for them how to get the goal



# 'Knowing the person' is not clear enough

All staff were drawing out the person's choices based on knowing them well, but they did it differently.

It's not clear enough on its own to say 'knowing the person well to draw out their choices.' It depends how it's done – which choices are being looked for?

Knowing the person well to **draw out their choices**.

## Process focus

Knowing the person well to **draw out their choices** mainly for how they want to be supported in a process.

## Goal focus

Knowing the person well to **draw out their choices** mainly for goals.

# Querying abilities is not clear enough

All staff queried people's abilities. This querying became part of the context they reviewed. But they did it differently.

It's not clear enough to just say either querying the person's abilities or reviewing the context. It depends how it's done – is this being used for collaborating or limiting?

**Querying the person's abilities** for doing things independently and safely.

**Reviewing the context** to see if the goals are feasible for the person in their situation.

## Process focus

**Reviewing the context ... and bringing it to the person for collaborating about how to support them.**

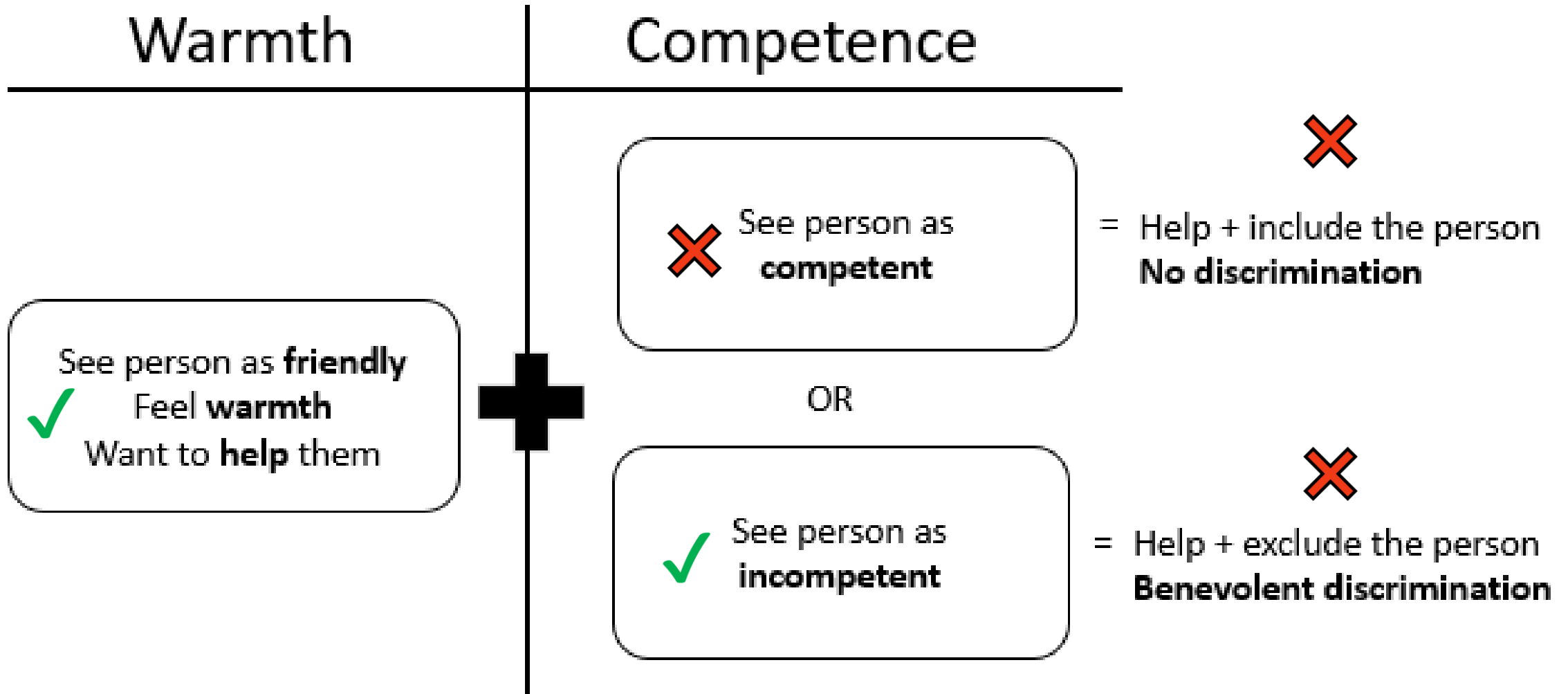
## Goal focus

**Reviewing the context ... and using it to limit options in deciding how to support the person.**



# Implications

# Did the Stereotype Content Model explain why staff support or limit choices?



# Staff support is not based on the person

Staff's support is not based on how competent people are.

Staff's support is not based on what they think of people.

Staff's support is based on how they think about supporting choice.

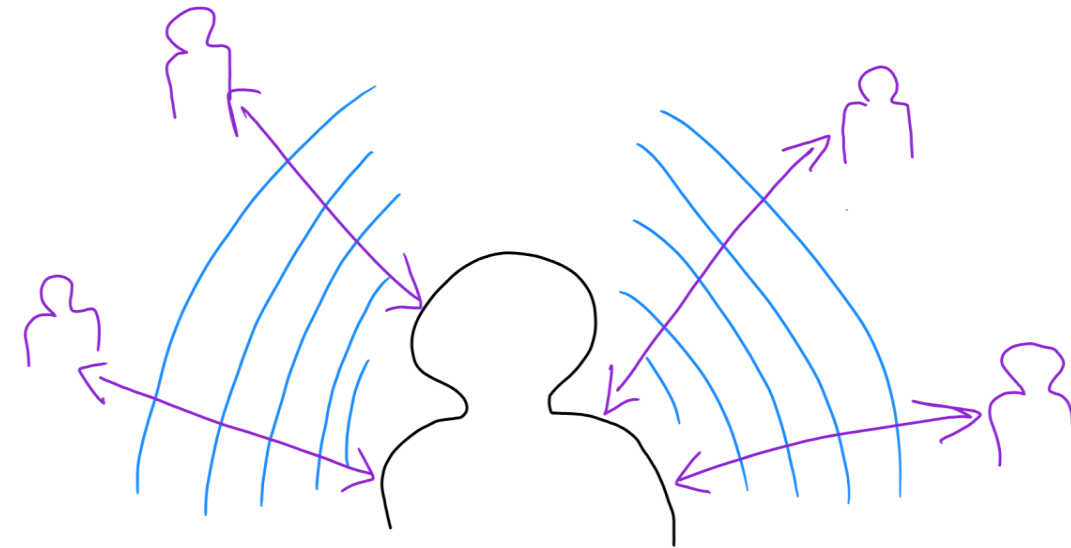
Do staff think supporting choice means:

- looking mainly for the person's choices about how they want to be supported, or
- looking mainly for the person's choices about defining their goal?

# Which focus gives better support for choice?

Both the process focus and the goal focus align in different amounts to Abery and Stancliffe's (1996) ecological process model, which shows people's can make choices by being supported, not just by relying on their own abilities.

Staff with a process focus draw out and support a broader range of people's choices over a whole process. Staff with a goal focus are drawing out people's choices to define goals, a limited range.



# Goal focus makes assumptions about choices

Staff using a goal focus prioritise the person being able to do things independently if they can – involving the person as an action-taker.

This is like assuming a choice for the person. It assumes the person will always choose more independence and will choose to build their abilities for future choices.

In contrast, using a process focus aligns with Abery and Stancliffe (2003), who show that people need choice over how much independence they have based on what is meaningful to them.

# Process focus is broader and better support

People being supported using a process focus get:

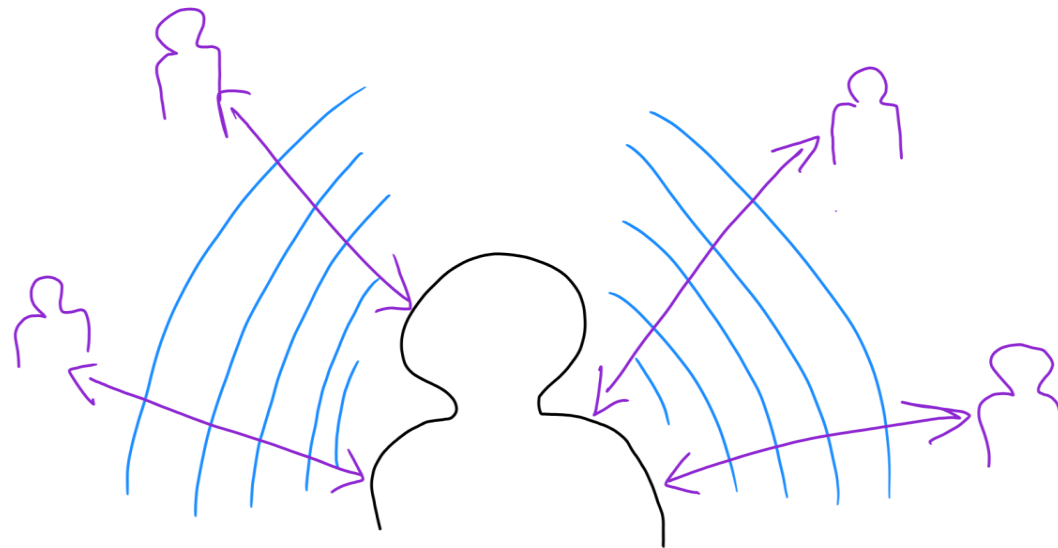
- choice over what happens in their life, not just over a future goal which may never happen.
- more contextual information for making choices, which people in studies say they **want** (Björnsdóttir et al., 2015; Pallisera et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2020).
- support for more types of choices: goal definition, how to be supported, the process toward their goal, who will do what.

People need all of these types of choices.

- Having choice over who will do what aligns with Abery and Stancliffe (2003) who show that people need choice over how much independence they have.
- Having choice over the process toward goals aligns with Deci and Ryan (2000) who show that people need choice over the processes on the way to goals as much as they need choice over goal definitions.

# People need staff to look broadly for choices

When people rely on staff for drawing out their choices, if those staff are only looking for a limited range of choices, this will limit how much the person's choices get acted on. People need staff need to look broadly for their choices over the whole process.



# Supporting choice as a process

## Model for supporting choice as a process

**Caring about the person** and wanting to support them with their goals.

Knowing the person well to **draw out their choices** mainly for how they want to be supported in a process.

**Querying the person's abilities** for doing things independently and safely in order to enable their choices.

**Reviewing the context** to see if the goals are feasible for the person in their situation. Bringing this context to the person for collaborating about how to support them.

**Involving the person as a choice-maker.**  
Supporting the person to choose the process to their goal.



# Conclusion

- Good staff support for choice is not based on what staff think or feel about the person. These findings show it is based on how staff think about supporting choice.
- Knowing the person, drawing out their choices and querying their abilities can be used in different ways. The findings show it depends what staff do with this and their focus for choices.
- This research gives new insights into staff's good support for people's choices: a model for supporting choice as a process.

Future work could explore more detail on how staff are supporting choice as a process, and people's experiences of being supported in this way.

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