

Action Pact, Inc.

Ask Pact

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Starting Households

Dear Ask Pact,

I have read a lot about Culture Change and have watched the pictures and stories on your website grow. I have been inspired to create a new life for our Elders, one that has the elders at the center of all daily decisions in their daily lives. We have great staff and a supportive management group, but unfortunately we don't currently have the funds to renovate into the household model. I have been told that the funds to renovate our building could be more than 2 years away. Do you have any suggestions for what we could do to our physical environment between now and then? We still have 'day rooms' and nurses' stations! Help!

We are ready to get started, but not sure how?

- Carolyn from Ohio

Carolyn, we have asked our friend Sarah MacKenzie from Australia to share her experience of how her organization was able to begin physical changes before having the money to fully renovate their home. Hopefully her stories from Down Under will help you to get started. Here is Sarah's response :

G'day Carolyn,

The question you pose is one that I struggled with a few years ago. I worked with Action Pact for several months back in 2001 learning about the Household Model and Culture Change. I was so inspired after visiting places like Meadowlark Hills in Kansas and Northern Pines in Minnesota that I knew I had to come back to OZ and implement the household model. It really was a journey in creating a new life for our elders, a place they could call home.

My organization in Australia has several long-term care homes and one of them was opening a new extension in 2002. This home (Ashley Terrace) was undergoing major change with a building extension, a home for a further 20 Elders and of course new staff and families joining the existing team. Ashley Terrace was in a time of change, so I decided to start our Culture Change movement there. I worked intensely with the elders, staff and families, as well as our Board of Directors and Managers to help them to understand how the household model works and talk about a new way of life for all. After many discussions, workshops, education, talking and listening, the team of elders, staff and families were in support of the idea. Even the Directors and Managers were on board.

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"Ask Pact" is our own question-and-answer column where people can ask their Culture Change questions and have them answered by our seasoned team of trainers and educators. You may find some topics here that are relevant to you - if not, feel free to Ask Pact!

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Starting Households, *continued*

First, we began with introducing permanently assigned staff teams. Instead of having staff rotate through different parts of the building, they were assigned to just one area.

In 2002 when the Ashley Terrace extension opened, it was our first household of 20 Elders all living together with permanent staff team and high family involvement. We called this community Gumnut Grove and it was purposely built with a kitchen and dining room, as well as a family room that opened to a backyard with a BBQ in a small garden.

The older part of Ashley Terrace was also renovated while we had the tradesmen (we call them "Tradies" for short in OZ) on site, which made it financially more affordable.

The existing part of the home had new kitchens and dining rooms installed to make two other households; they were quickly named "Banksia Crescent" and "Waratah Way." In the first 12 months of Ashley Terrace trialing the household model, we witnessed amazing differences in elders, in staff and noticed more family and community involvement than ever before. It was working so well that even the company Directors could feel and smell the difference when popping in for a visit. One Elder commented, "This place feels bloody sensational!!" which translates to a very impressed (Australian) Elder!

My organization was expanding and had new long-term care homes being built, and suddenly the architect was brought in to visit Ashley Terrace and requested to change his designs for all new developments to create small Households. This was great for all our projects going forward, however we still had another home called "Eden Terrace" that was not operating in this Culture Change model. Due to the cost of the Ashley Terrace extension and with new developments happening, we were told there were no available funds for renovation of Eden Terrace for at least 18 months.

Eden Terrace is just over a mile down the road from Ashley Terrace, so staff and some of the Elders had visited Ashley Terrace and observed the changes. We were being asked, "When is it Eden Terrace's turn to get households?" Faced with this challenge, we formed a team of people to work out what we could do that didn't cost. First and foremost we began with introducing permanently assigned staff teams. Instead of having staff rotate through different parts of the building, they were assigned to just one area. This was of course done in consultation with staff and Elders. Staff had a say in which elders they wanted to work with and elders had a say in to which staff they had a special bond with..



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...elders and their families had "Refrigerator Rights" – the ability to get up and make a cup of tea at their leisure.



It is important to start to get the teams formed as a means to decisions being made by the elders or those closest to them. I encourage you to work a lot with the staff and elders to help them in the early days to have the confidence and support to make the decisions that were previously made by Management or Department heads. This a scary process to get used to for Staff and Elders and even more so for Managers and Department heads to learn to trust and empower, rather than do!

At this point in time, Eden Terrace still had a dining room for 60 elders and several very large lounge rooms. Staff and elders started to talk about moving furniture around to transform one dining room into small dining and small lounge room for 20 people, then to convert one of the large lounges into part dining as well. We did this for 3 areas of the facility. This was challenging for the kitchen staff (dietary) to now serve 3 areas instead of only one. We were able to find a small amount of money in the operating budget to purchase a food cart to transport the food and also, elders compromised and staggered their meal times to fit with the kitchen's capabilities. It is important to look at what space you have and what existing furniture you have - none of that costs.

After the dining was working reasonably well and teams were starting to display their own distinct personalities, we started to see photos of Elders appear on the walls. Staff had asked the elders in their area to donate a photo of themselves or their families to hang on the wall in the community. We wore the cost of the picture hook! A good majority of the elders were more than happy to bring a photo from their bedroom and share it with their Clayton (do you use that word in the US?) household team, and this provoked amazing storytelling and bonding between Elders. (ed note: 'Clayton' is an Australian term meaning 'pretend' or 'make-believe,' as in, "She has a Clayton boyfriend.")

In other words, while they weren't all the way there, staff began working together as a team, *as if they had a physical household.*

An elder sharing their life and personhood is all about the journey towards finding home and a connection with their environment and those around them.

We reached the point where the culture was changing even without the physical renovation. People had started to initiate fund raising events to buy small items for their Clayton House. Items such as a

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Starting Households, *continued*



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small bar fridge and electric kettles were purchased from these funds so elders and their families had "Refrigerator Rights", the ability to get up and make a cup of tea at their leisure. Family members and Elders had started to donate old bookshelves and televisions to help to create a home feel in the living room. Even animals that were living in the home became a part of one Clayton House, rather than being shared across the overall home.

Our maintenance man had been busy at work performing minor changes to storage cupboards to convert them into mini-medication rooms for each area with room for their documentation folders. This meant that staff didn't have to travel far and didn't have to leave their Elders waiting. Think about that nurses' station! I bet there is space to be found there. I have seen nursing homes pull out the nurse station and convert to a private sitting area for elders. A small cupboard or a roll-top desk is enough space for your record keeping. And how private is a nurses' station for a verbal handover?

We found by this point households were forming without the walls.

There were no Clayton teams, no Clayton companions. We had the real thing! What existed was actually home with loving little families and closely bonded teams. Culture Change had found legs and was starting to walk. In fact, we had so many Elders and Staff pestering the Chief Finance Officer for renovation funds, that Eden Terrace did get the funds after 18 months to build the walls and install the real kitchens and put front doors on the households. We had created a new culture and the final physical renovation to create the physical household was just a means to locking that culture in, adding the warmth and security to the family and team that lived inside that home.

Eden Terrace taught our organization about culture creation through Clayton households and the spirit of believing in change and believing in people.

I really hope this helps you and your team on your journey. Good luck from OZ!

- Sarah MacKenzie

