

## should paid staff be included?

It is widely acknowledged that people with a disability often have more paid staff than informal networks or friends. Circles of Support function as a mechanism to acquire and strengthen unpaid relationships. However, there may be instances where the person will want to invite a paid staff member into the Circle. As a family carer, friend or advocate, you need to assess if a paid staff member is going to benefit the person and their Circle.

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instant and accessible knowledge about the person.</li> <li>• Expertise about the person's support needs.</li> <li>• Actions are easier to follow up within the Circle member's workplace or residence.</li> <li>• May be the most significant friend or advocate in the person's life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have a vested interest in the organisation they work for.</li> <li>• May only view the person according to the framework of their work place, and may struggle to creatively address hurdles.</li> <li>• The person may limit their opinion and not express their feelings about the service where the member works.</li> <li>• A fundamental element of Circles is to build relationships and trust with informal and unpaid networks.</li> <li>• May leave the Circle if they change jobs.</li> </ul>

## circles of support and isolation

People who are isolated or at the foundation stage (refer to page 19 of guide) have few networks and unpaid support. The reliance on paid staff to support and provide information about the person may be necessary in these circumstances. Their expertise can be used to acquire in-depth knowledge about the person and help to build informal networks. They can give insight into the person's past interests, community connections and life events.

If you are contemplating whether to invite a paid staff member to the Circle on a long term basis, ask the staff member:

### question:

Do you want to foster a stronger relationship with this person and become their friend?

#### answer = yes

Welcome to the Circle!

What next?

Talk about how to manage the workplace / circle relationships.

#### answer = no

Staff member needs to reaffirm their role as a paid staff member and clarify their relationship with the person.

What next?

If you want the paid staff's input, invite them to one meeting to consult and acquire the necessary information.