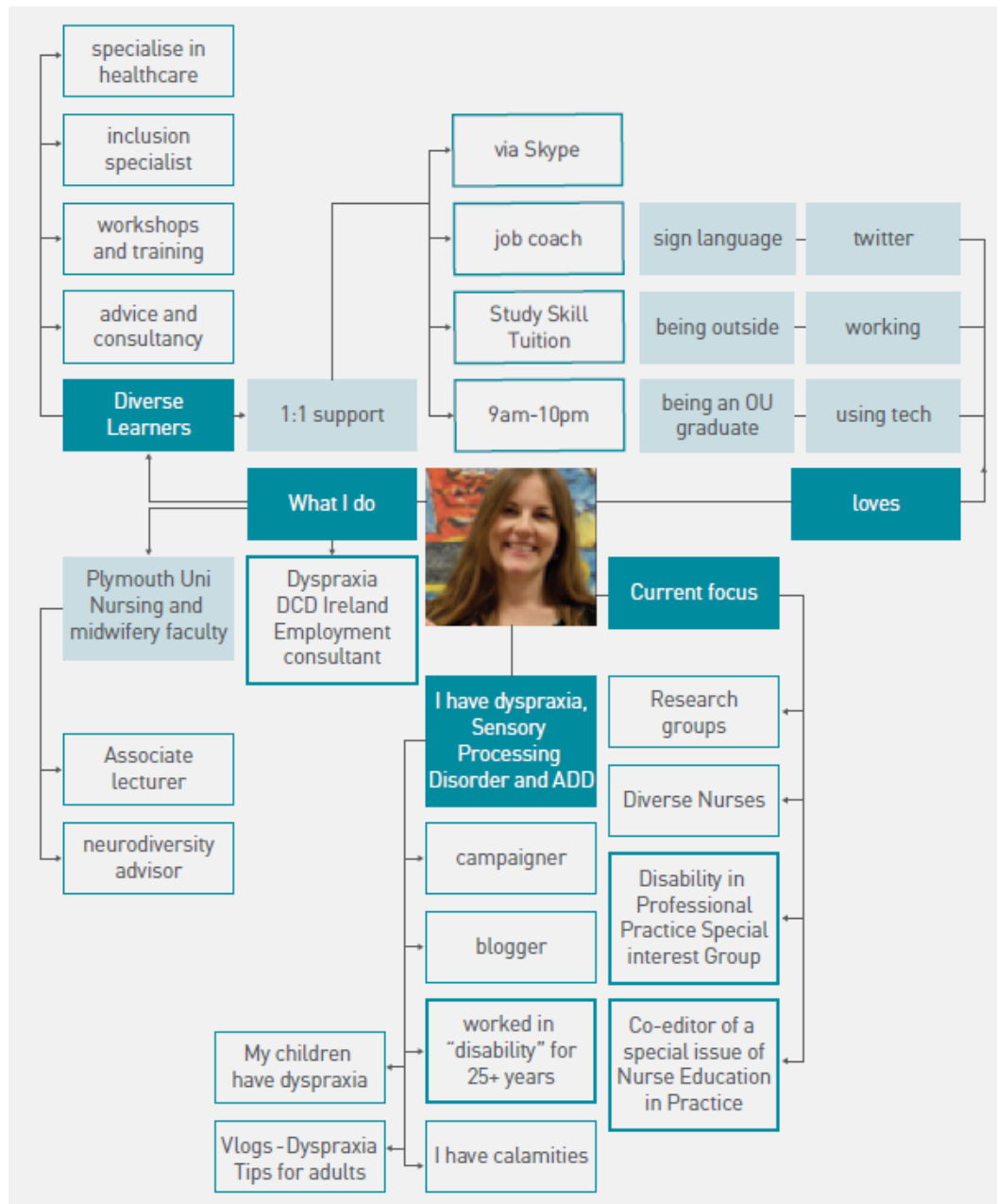


Agile working - exploring the potential of your bed as a working space for those who have a disability



This article was finally captured today on my iPad mini using the notes function whilst in bed. It has been bubbling away for a while and almost been captured a couple of times but fear of repercussions / scorn / ridicule had been the barrier that has prevented me from expressing these thoughts in the written form. Somehow once written down, for me they have a scary permanency that conversation, presentations, speaking events, vlogs don't have. It's like the written word can be used against me whereas the spoken can't. I think it is also to do with the effort I have to use to write something down and the lack of confidence in my ability to write in the 'right way'. It is also to do with the content. It's personal yet something I talk about with students and clients and promote on social media every day.

This is my reflection on conversations and learning events that have taken place over the last 3 months about learning, use of devices and working environments with lots of different people via many different mediums in many different locations. It is a personal account exploring a term that is relatively new to me - agile working - though the practice is very familiar. My message and aim of this article is to embrace the real idea of agile working and so destigmatise, celebrate, and promote the importance of your bed as part of the agile working concept, exploring the potential of bed as a working space for those who have a disability.

Agile working in my head means being able to work where I need to, in all different sorts of spaces, when I want and how I need to, often using mind mapping and dictation software in my trusty iPad mini in order to produce my best work in the time available.

The location is secondary - after all my whole business concept uses Skype - but the service delivery and quality content is key.

The NHS Employers definition

Agile working is a way of working in which an organisation empowers its people to work where, when and how they choose – with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints – to optimise their performance and deliver ‘best in class’ value and customer service. It uses communications and information technology to enable.

I love the words ‘empowers’ and ‘flexibility’ and the concept of choice in that definition and the recognition technology may play a part. Flexibility is the essence of inclusion / inclusive practice; maximising potential and minimising constraints or barriers.

I’m an agile worker in every sense of the NHS definition above.

People Skype me from their beds a lot. It happened yesterday. It’s all very decent. Their bed is being used as a glorified chair but which is more supportive for them, is more comfortable, using less energy. Saving this energy contributes to being able to continue on their course or maintain their job. Sometimes they Skype me from bed as they are feeling unwell due to a cold or a disability- related illness, unwell enough to be in bed and not to travel but not too ill to have a 1:1 study skills, mentoring, job coaching session, or discuss the next steps in a project. For some students living in one room it is their only place to study undisturbed in a shared house or parental home. For others their bed it is their safe space when feeling overwhelmed. Accessing their specialist support from their bed in this instance can make the difference between continuing on a course. Not accessing support from their bed limits access to the support they need often at a crucial time.

Being enabled to access support aids their motivation, reduces their anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed,

and improves learning working on an assignment.

The bed is used by many as a working space but not talked about openly.

I am an agile worker, often having project meetings on the beach, I've planned and written many a paper with others eating a picnic on the beach whilst kids play in the sea. It is always done quickly and effectively, often using tech but sometimes paper, whilst sitting in the open air, boosting our well-being, saving costs on childcare. Even contributing to our 10,000 steps a day.

Anyone who has come to visit me at my place of work will be whisked to the beach or occasionally a park or coffee shop. Most end up on the beach fossil hunting with me whilst we walk the dog, stopping for chips or an ice cream on the prom at some point. The ideas often come all at once as we talk about ideas and solutions and changing the world. Ideas that are often drawn in the sand on those days are then incorporated into projects, papers, blogs, conferences and tweetchats.

I am agile worker, it helps me manage the impact of my disability. I am productive and at my best when I am empowered to work flexibly manage where, when and how I work.

My agile workspace this morning and most mornings is my bed. A new different concept of the word agile.

From my bed this morning I have:

1. Checked Twitter, encouraged, sent some DMs about my availability for a tweetchat.
2. Had breakfast.
3. Had a cuddle with my youngest before they went to school - checking they had everything.
4. Booked a student a study skills session.
5. Chat with my husband about his Masters - with my critical friend hat on - advising on aspects of Skype for his proposed project on loneliness.
6. Phoned a job coaching client to give them a boost before going into a meeting they are worried about.
7. Replied to a text from a client requesting an urgent session today giving times I am available.
8. Accepted an invite from someone on LinkedIn and started an interested conversation - then adds them to my peer support network
9. Set up a Skype group call for a future Peer Supervision group
10. Set up a Doodle Poll for the team meeting.
11. Replied to a comment left on Researchgate about a paper on there. We're meeting up for a chat via Skype later in the month.
12. Contributed via email to a project based in Ireland but with contributors from all over Europe regarding accessibility of the project website and Twitter account.
13. Replied to a video message left for me in the early hours of today on Skype by a student feeling overwhelmed. (Crisis averted, confidence boosted).
14. Read a paper contributed for the special issue for Nurse Education in Practice on Learning Diversity
15. Edited a mind map

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16. Spoken this audio blog to my iPad mini which simultaneously
 17. reflected on Twitter conversations prior to and discussions during the Royal College of Occupational Therapy learning party I took part in last week where the theme of the importance of being outside when learning was identified by many Occupational therapists as a key or magic ingredient to learning. (That can be searched using the #RCOTlearning18 hashtag on Twitter or using the same hashtag on Periscope to view the recording).
 18. Tweeted to those I added to my personal learning network during this year's Bring Your Own Device for Learning (@byod4l) event in January to let them know I have finally done that piece on agile learning that was sparked by conversation on the BYOD4L Google forum and by the positive feedback to my first audio blog recorded during that week with their encouragement.

There you are I work in bed most mornings. A lot. By working from bed I can be 'at work' when not physically at work. I am less likely to get ill as I save my energy rather than spend it on the physical exertion of getting ready for work and travelling to work and other constraints of that can be removed. I can spend my energy in generating income, networking, planning, answering calls, preparing meetings, contributing to giving best value to customers and 'maximising my potential'.

As a person who has multiple disabilities my bed is an ideal agile working space. My wheeled tilted table props up my devices in line with ergonomic guidelines and my orthopaedic pillow and daylight adjustable swivel light adjust the environment to my needs as well as meet health and safety guidelines.

Working from my bed meets the agile working definition in every way. As it becomes more common for people to work from home and with remote working and flexible working on the rise, and in some industries seeping into the mainstream, I hope more employers will embrace / explore the concept of agile working, seeing it as valid, legitimate and valuable in maximising the potential of employees. I hope those in positions to make such decisions see the potential benefits for all and I hope I've made a case for the bed to be seen as an element of agile working for those who need it and as a way to support employees who have a disability to remain productive.

I am productive and at my best when I am empowered to work flexibly manage where, when and how I work. That space is often my bed.



Kerry Pace

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Kerry Pace is trainer and practitioner supporting people who have dyspraxia, dyslexia; is a person who has dyspraxia and has 2 children who have dyspraxia. Kerry Pace has had a long and varied career in supporting people who have disabilities. After working in Disability Services at Hull University, where she worked on a number of projects with the Faculty of Health and Social Care, co-teaching study skills support to nursing cohorts, Kerry started her own company, inspired by the findings from her last Skype project, and now offers support via Skype 7 days a week from 9 am to 10 pm to healthcare students and practitioners who have dyslexia, dyspraxia or mental health needs; the company is called Diverse Learners.

www.Diverse-Learners.co.uk

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