



PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING A PERSONAL OUTCOMES APPROACH

**Emma Miller, Ailsa Cook, Winona Samet
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Philosophy and Principles Underpinning a Personal Outcomes Approach

Overview

There is currently much emphasis across the UK on the outcomes that are important to people who use services, and their unpaid carers. This focus on outcomes aims to ensure that individuals are supported to live the best lives possible, whilst ensuring effective use of resources. This shift has been welcomed by people using, providing and planning services and fits with initiatives seeking to:

- personalise public services
- maximise individual independence
- support rehabilitation, recovery, wellbeing and quality of life

Within the Scottish policy context there are a number of initiatives intended to drive this shift in focus. This means that organisations adopting a personal outcomes approach will be in a better position to address a range of performance management and scrutiny requirements, which all increasingly emphasise outcomes. Collated information about outcomes can also be used to inform local service improvements.

This short document seeks to inform the development and implementation of relevant approaches by outlining the philosophy and principles underpinning a personal outcomes approach.

Philosophy

An approach to working with people that focuses on outcomes involves everyone working together to achieve the best possible impact on an individual's life. This means understanding individuals and their carers in the context of their whole lives, and working with them to identify their priorities. The philosophy of this approach is one that emphasises the strengths, capacity and resilience of individuals and builds upon natural support systems such as family and local community. The starting point is to get a clear understanding of the outcomes that matter to the person. This understanding is then used to inform key decision making processes, namely assessment, support planning and review. Involving the individual in identifying and working towards their outcomes is critical to the approach and will support their independence and wellbeing. When illness or limitations prohibit the person's ability to directly inform, family members, carers or relevant others should be involved.

Although in some ways building on good practice, a move to focus on outcomes also requires a significant 'culture shift'. Practitioners tell us that an outcomes approach supports practice that has been undermined by the current dominance of service driven assessment and support planning. As a result, adopting an outcomes approach requires a process of 'unlearning', as much for organisations as for practitioners. Ownership and responsibility need to be taken at every level of the system. Making this culture shift requires sustained effort, and the involvement of all partner agencies. Partners need to be creative, flexible and solution-focussed in developing supports and services that maximise outcomes. This may also prove more

cost effective than traditional service provision. The following principles can inform and guide successful implementation of an outcomes approach in practice.

Principles underpinning practice

- Practitioners have identified that a focus on outcomes goes back to the basics of their training and professional skills.
- Adopting a conversational approach to assessment, support planning and review allows for more meaningful engagement with individuals and families, as compared to more prescriptive, tick box, question and answer approaches. The value of a relationship centred approach is evidenced in the literature.
- Having a conversation with people with specific communication difficulties may be challenging, but flexibility and developments in person centred care can inform this process.
- Early engagement and good listening skills with individuals should result in a support plan based on their outcomes, providing clarity and direction for everybody involved.
- The continuing relevance of services and supports and the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved can be revisited at review.
- An outcomes approach should support practitioners and organisations to be honest with people using services about what can and cannot be achieved with existing supports and resources, and promote creative alternative pathways as required
- The approach relies on and restores the importance of the analytical skills of professionals in bringing together information from diverse sources, most importantly the individual, who should retain ownership of the outcome.

Principles underpinning organisational change

- An outcomes approach needs to be taken forward across the whole organisation. Communication between practitioners and strategic planning needs to be two way. Staff need to know not just that they have permission to practice in a different way, but that the information they gather will influence planning and service developments.
- Adopting an outcomes approach requires significant organisational change. There will be a need to review financial, planning and reporting systems as well as how services are prioritised.
- A successful outcomes approach requires that systems for collecting and analysing data are developed around practice and should not dictate practice.
- Individual organisations and partnerships need to ensure that aggregated information is available both as a means of measuring outcomes and in order to shape service development and commissioning
- Qualitative and quantitative information on individual outcomes should be used to support and evidence organisational change. Information can be used by partner organisations to identify whether and how they

are delivering good outcomes, and to understand and further improve performance.

- Joint planning and joint commissioning approaches underpinned by effective communication between all partner organisations is required to support development of shared vision and goals between agencies.

Comparing service led and outcomes focused approaches

The table below seeks to bring to life what focusing on outcomes means in practice by comparing the key features of outcomes focussed approaches with service led approaches. The table summarises some of the constraints that have developed in the community care system. It also identifies the potential for overcoming these barriers through focusing on outcomes. However it should be remembered that outcomes focused support planning is not in itself a magic bullet. When assessment and care management was introduced in the 1990s, the intention was to deliver ‘tailor-made’ packages based on ‘needs-led’ assessment. Many practitioners who became disillusioned with the reality therefore question why a focus on outcomes should be any different. Other aspects of the community care system, such as approaches to prioritisation, performance management and commissioning require to be aligned to support a focus on outcomes, and to avoid a return to service led approaches. The challenge is to move to management of demand based on best practice. Further, while there is a concern that asking people about the outcomes they want to achieve will create more demand, the evidence so far shows that it results in more creativity, greater involvement of the person and more relevant use of services.

| Service Led | Outcomes focused |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Current tools encourage information gathering through standardised question and answer approaches to assessment, support planning and review | Decision making informed by semi-structured conversations with individuals in assessment, support planning and review |
| Tick box approach to assessment | Analytical skills involved in assessment |
| The person’s views may be included in decision-making | The person’s views/preferences are central to decision-making |
| The person is viewed as a client, service user or patient | The person is a citizen with rights and responsibilities |
| Where needs link to strict eligibility criteria, the assessor is required to maximise individual difficulties to access services | Involves consideration of difficulties, limitations and aspirations or goals. The priority is to identify what to work towards |
| If the person is deemed eligible, identified needs are matched to a limited range of block provided services, resulting in service driven approaches | Identifying outcomes involve considering a range of solutions/strategies including the role of the person, family supports and community based resources |
| Where needs are tied to eligibility criteria, preventive work with people with low level needs may be excluded | Outcomes allow preventive work to take place while services and resources are prioritised for those most in need |

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| Focusing exclusively on deficits and difficulties, and how needs are to be met, results in a focus on tasks and in services which do things to people | By focusing on strengths, capacities and goals, while mindful of limitations, the role of the person is maximised. Services do things with people |
| Matching needs/deficits to services tends to result in static service delivery | Outcomes may change in the person's life journey and so should be revisited |
| Where outcomes are identified, these tend to be professional or organisational outcomes e.g. improved nutrition, or avoid delayed discharge | Outcomes are what matter to the person, though often consistent with professional and organisational outcomes e.g. being able to get out and about. |
| Starting from what services are currently available restricts communication and limits options | Starting from the person's priorities supports enabling relationships, creates clarity and identifies goals at an early stage. Being listened to, involved and respected results in better outcomes |

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Links to website resources to support implementation:

- [National Care Standards](#)
- [Care Commission Grading System](#)
- [SWIA Self-Evaluation Guide](#)
- [SWIA Taking a closer look guides](#)
- [NHS QIS Care Pathways](#)
- [Talking Points](#)
- [Principles and Standards of Citizen Leadership \(by the Changing Lives User and Carer Forum\)](#)

About this document

This document has been developed as part of ongoing work funded by the Joint Improvement Team of the Scottish Government, to develop and implement the Talking Points: Personal Outcomes Approach. The document has been produced in consultation with a range of individuals and organisations involved in implementing an outcomes approach to community care, as follows:

Lead for Community Care Outcomes Framework, Scottish Government
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