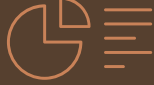


# Understanding personal outcomes

- Background information
- Understanding outcomes
- Engaging and conversation
- Recording and measuring
- Working with people
- Working with other professionals
- Leadership and system change
- Risk and challenges
- Evidence and learning







## Foreword

The Christie report on public service reform in Scotland in 2011 highlighted the need to work closely with individuals to understand their needs, maximise their talents and resources, support self-reliance and build resilience. Since then, focusing on what matters to people by adopting personal outcomes approaches has moved beyond the 'nice to do' category of service improvement to being understood as fundamental to transforming and sustaining public services in Scotland.

Many services across health, social care, housing and beyond have now developed good practice around personal outcomes. Evidence shows this approach leads to better outcomes for the individuals being supported and for organisations adopting this approach. Workers across all sectors have identified the need to raise awareness of personal outcomes approaches and to share experience and evidence.

The Personal Outcomes Network is delighted to share this collaboratively produced resource with you.



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## Who is this resource for?

If you work in any public service with a concern for supporting what matters to the people you work with, this resource is for you.

## What is this resource for?

To help you and your organisation:

- understand what a personal outcomes approach is
- develop and embed this approach in day-to-day practice based on evidence and experience
- access relevant links and resources.

# What are personal outcomes?



When we talk about personal outcomes we mean the things that are important to people in their lives.

“I want help with getting my confidence back in the kitchen. Home cooking makes a house into a home and the smell of soup on the stove makes me feel I am making a home for my husband and me.”

**Iris, 82**

Home from hospital after breaking her leg in a fall

Personal outcomes often relate to maintaining or improving wellbeing.

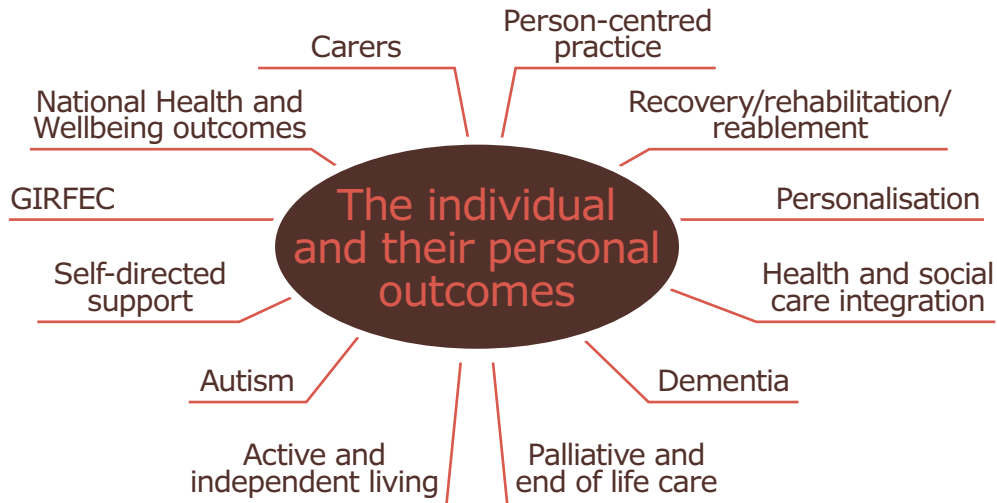


# Personal outcomes approaches in a nutshell



Personal outcomes approaches mean **acknowledging individual strengths** and working towards **establishing a shared sense of purpose** to which everyone can contribute, including the person, their family, carers and other community resources as well as services. This means **moving away from only identifying needs and problems** and matching those to service solutions. Many services in Scotland are already working in this way.

**A wide range of policy areas in Scotland are underpinned by personal outcome approaches.**



# Why focus on personal outcomes?



- By responding to the priorities which matter most to people, we can help to significantly improve their health and wellbeing.
- We can work together more effectively as workers and organisations if we have a shared understanding of the personal priorities of the people we support.
- While recognising it is not always possible to achieve everything that matters to people, we can all align our support to critical personal outcomes the person has identified.

“We worked with a young father returning home after having a colostomy. When we visited about post-operative care, what mattered to him, was the fact that despite being pro-active in sorting his benefits while on sick leave, he only had £22 a week for his wife, baby and himself. This was causing him significant anxiety which risked overriding any health outcomes. Due to our integrated structure, I was quickly able to do a subsequent visit with a social work colleague who helped to resolve the situation quickly. He was now able to focus on stoma care and getting well again.”

This example was shared by a District Nurse in Wales where parallel work on outcomes is underway.



# What does a personal outcomes approach mean for you?



For you as a worker, a personal outcomes approach involves active listening, good conversations and engagement; recording personal outcomes in a meaningful way; reviewing and monitoring progress towards achieving personal outcomes.

“What I like about this way of working is that we are engaging with people about what is important to them, instead of processing them through the system.”

**Eileen, 37**

Social worker

This way of working is driven by key values and principles which ensure that what matters to people underpins decision making. These values and principles are set out in a paper by the Personal Outcomes Network – see [personaloutcomescollaboration.org](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org)

The approach emphasises individual strengths, capacities and resilience, and makes sure that people can play the role they want to in working towards their outcomes.

# What does a personal outcomes approach mean for your organisation?



A personal outcomes approach means that organisations focus on what matters to people and their families. Although this sounds simple, to embed a personal outcomes approach requires linking holistic practice with a whole system approach so that personal outcomes are built into support, planning, performance and commissioning.

The values and principles underpinning personal outcomes should be routinely modelled by managers in for example supervision, team meetings and continuing professional development.

More guidance on outcomes focused supervision can be found at:

[www.stepintoleadership.info/supervision.html](http://www.stepintoleadership.info/supervision.html)

[www.iriss.org.uk/resources/reports/leading-change-supervision](http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/reports/leading-change-supervision)



Just as practitioners working in different care settings have distinct roles, the amount of time they might have to work with people will vary as well as the duration of their involvement.

Whether you are involved with people in the long or short term, and whether or not you contribute to personal plans for people, the meaning of a personal outcomes approach remains the same and the focus on outcomes provides a common language which everyone can share.

This involves building on good practice as described later but also requires leadership which supports person-centred and outcomes focused approaches.

For further information see: [www.stepintoleadership.info](http://www.stepintoleadership.info)

# Personal outcomes and risk



When working in a personal outcomes way, workers need to be trusted to make decisions, including those that involve resource decisions and risk.

There needs to be a balance, which involves considering the risks of taking away autonomy and reducing quality of life when the risks to immediate health and wellbeing are moderate and reasonable.

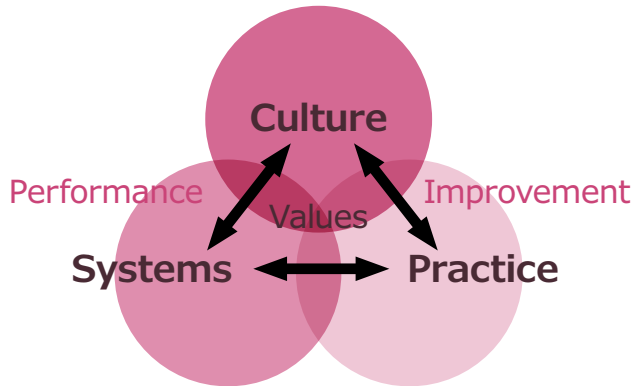
Organisations have a responsibility to support reasonable risks and to give permission to practitioners to work in this way.

To explore the issue of risk further see the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) resource **A risk worth taking** [learn.sssc.uk.com/risk/index.html](https://learn.sssc.uk.com/risk/index.html)

# Embedding personal outcomes as a whole system approach



Embedding outcomes in organisations involves more than just staff training. Systems including finance and IT need to support outcomes. The culture of the organisation, shaped by leadership, also has a big role to play.



It is important to make sure we know why we are gathering information. If data is mainly gathered to meet fixed performance indicators, this can limit the potential to feed back information to improve services.

# What difference does a personal outcomes approach make?



	Service led	Personal outcomes focused
Endpoint	Delivery of service	Collaborative working towards outcomes based on a shared sense of purpose
Format	Pre-determined questions and answers	Semi-structured conversation – open questions
Approach	Obtaining information required for form filling	Skilled interaction including active listening and reflecting back
Person	Client, service user or person who receives services	Person in their own right with skills, ability and a role to play in working towards their outcomes
Practitioner	Expert	Does have expertise but is an enabler and partner
Focus	Identify deficits and match to a limited range of services	Build on capacities and strengths towards creative solutions

# Identifying personal outcomes: from fixer to facilitator



Active listening is an under-rated skill which requires an open mind, concentration and resisting the natural tendency to always jump in and fix people. There are times when an instant response to a crisis is necessary. But more often, facilitating conversations which allow people to reflect on their situation and possible ways forward can build confidence, restore identity and improve wellbeing. Our system needs to recognise this more.

“When I met Simon I was in a dark place. He got the brunt of my frustration at first. I was fed up being passed from pillar to post. But then I realised he was actually listening. It’s not that he agrees with everything I say. He just seems to hear and understand more and has helped me to think about my life from a different angle.”

**Johanna, 58,**

Carer, recovering from depression following the death of her disabled son



The Exchange Model has been identified as particularly helpful in illustrating this approach, developed by Smale and Tucson (1993) recently adapted by Miller and Barrie (2016). The model shows that there is often a need to engage with different perspectives to achieve a shared sense of purpose (outcomes).



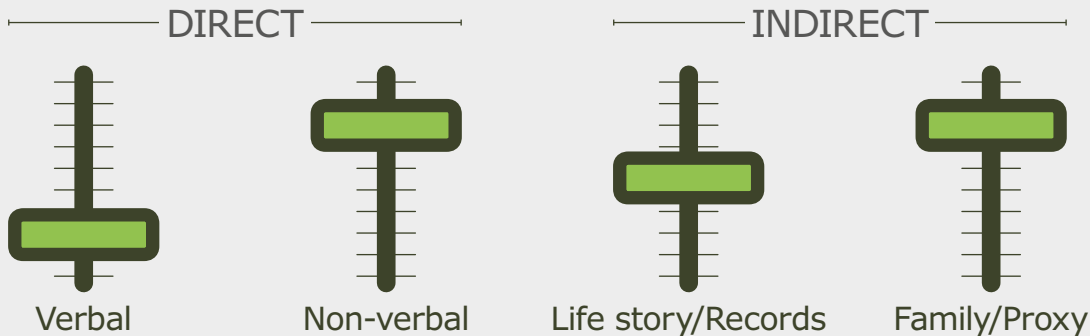




Engaging with people about their outcomes involves conversation in the broadest sense, to include non-verbal communication and other sources of information where the person is unable to verbalise. The diagram below was initially developed with care home staff but is relevant to most people to some extent.

## Meeting diverse communication support needs

Eliciting the person's view by adjusting the mix of information channels





As workers we very often need to record something about the work we do. This can vary from brief notes to support plans to case recording.

Recording personal outcomes throughout the support planning, delivery and review cycle can be brief but can inform how everyone involved interacts with the person even if they do not know the full picture.

**At a minimum this involves noting:**

- **what matters to the person in life and why these things are important (personal outcomes)**
- **how to work towards these outcomes**
- **who will be involved, when and where**
- **the extent to which personal outcomes are being achieved (including unintended outcomes), what helps and hinders and whether the plan needs to change.**



## **Recording is a critical link in a personal outcomes approach.**

Recording what matters to the person is the bridge between the conversations about what matters and the actions taken. The information can be recorded:

- **using measures or scales that track outcomes over time**
- **using narrative to tell the person's story.**

These are the core criteria for recording outcomes.

- **There should be outcomes (agreed purpose) not just outputs (services).**
- **The outcomes should be personalised.**
- **The person's/family's contribution should be noted.**
- **The person's voice included as appropriate.**



**Outcomes information can be used to inform decisions made at the individual level.**

It is important not to lose information on what matters to the person among the pressures of recording other tasks and performance data because:

- **recording what matters to the person/family in jargon free language supports a shared understanding of purpose**
- **this informs actions to be taken by the person and family members, as well as practitioners**
- **what is written down in support plans and care records is often read by others; it influences the way in which the person is understood by those working to support them and can also shape self-understandings.**



Outcomes information can be used for more collective forms of decision making and organisational learning including:

- supporting practice developments
- service delivery and improvement
- planning and commissioning
- enriching performance monitoring.

More information on recording personal outcomes is available at:  
[personaloutcomescollaboration.org/recording-outcomes](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org/recording-outcomes)



## Further information

Cook, A. and Miller, E. (2012) Talking Points Personal Outcomes Approach Practical Guide  
[personaloutcomescollaboration.org/evidence](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org/evidence)

Miller, E. and Barrie, K. (2015) Learning from the Meaningful and Measurable Project  
[personaloutcomescollaboration.org/meaningful-and-measurable](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org/meaningful-and-measurable)

Personal Outcomes Network (2016) Values and Principles Underpinning a Personal Outcomes Approach  
[personaloutcomescollaboration.org](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org)

Further information, advice and evidence on all aspects of personal outcomes approaches can be found at:  
[personaloutcomescollaboration.org](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org)

Further information on leadership resources can be found at: [www.stepintoleadership.info](http://www.stepintoleadership.info)

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Produced by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) with support from the Personal Outcomes Network and diverse partners.

The Personal Outcomes Network and its coordinating group is a national cross sector group with membership from across many services including health, social care and housing. Members work in a wide range of roles but share a common passion for developing and implementing personal outcomes approaches locally and nationally. It is an open group based on self-organisational principles, which aims to offer a safe place for reflection and sharing of practice through stories, learning, resources and evidence.

If you are interested in finding out more about the network, our meetings and becoming a member please see: [personaloutcomescollaboration.org/about-us](https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org/about-us)

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