

Embedding outcomes in reablement in North Lanarkshire: Summary report Emma Miller, University of Strathclyde February 2014 update

This is a summary of a one year knowledge exchange project, funded by the ESRC and North Lanarkshire Council, conducted in partnership with the University of Strathclyde, and supported by IRISS. The aim was to bring together two key recent service developments, by embedding personal outcomes into homecare reablement.

Homecare reablement has been defined as an input that aims to: maximise [service] users' long term independence, choice and quality of life; to appropriately minimise on-going support required and to consequently minimise the whole-life cost of care (CSED, 2007).

Personal outcomes are a significant policy theme in human services in the UK. Outcomes can be understood as the impact of support and/or services on individuals, but it has been shown that in order to maximise the benefits, the person should be involved in defining their outcome(s). In Scotland an organisational and evidence based approach to embedding outcomes called Talking Points has emerged, largely with reference to health, social work and housing support. Talking Points informed this project, based on an understanding that within this project, defining personal outcomes requires consideration not just of 'what' is done, but also 'why,' thereby tapping into individual priorities and motivation. The approach includes consideration of longer-term quality of life outcomes such as social contact and meaningful activity as well as change outcomes, such as improved confidence and skills. It was identified by project partners at the outset that maintaining quality of life was important for its preventative potential and a necessary development for reablement. As well as increased involvement, benefits of this approach therefore include clarity of purpose and a focus on maximising independence (Cook and Miller 2012).

The project comprised a literature review, nine qualitative interviews, three focus groups (one with people using services and carers and two with reablement teams) and a residential retreat. A full report provides a more detailed account of the project. This brief report sets out the following:

- The key findings from the literature review, which was undertaken with a specific focus on the potential role of personal outcomes in reablement
- The local context, notably details of initiatives which interacted with the project, highlighting the challenges and opportunities presented by the need to adapt to constant change in services
- The third section reviews the main project findings
- A plan for embedding outcomes in North Lanarkshire.

[NB: abbreviations in this report include members of reablement teams: home support worker (HSW) home support manager (HSM) and occupational therapist (OT)]

Literature review

In reviewing the literature on reablement, a range of issues were identified which paralleled the findings of previous literature reviews on the topic. While some of

those wider findings are referred to in section 3, most attention was paid to stakeholder perspectives, and their implications for embedding outcomes in reablement. It was notable that the literature discusses goals/outcomes in two distinct ways, separating the identification of goals at the outset of reablement, and outcomes as a way of measuring the success of reablement post-intervention. There is little reference to the potential to use personal outcomes as a framework for *both* engaging individuals and their families in identifying the focus of the intervention *and* as a means of assessing outcomes post intervention. However, a review of the literature presents a strong case for inclusive, personal outcomes focused planning, as follows.

The case for personal outcomes in reablement, from different perspectives in the literature

For people using the service:

- Individuals should be involved in decision-making to maximise motivation
- The person's own goals (and outcomes) should be considered to avoid undermining morale
- Individual strengths and hopes should be incorporated rather than just deficits
- Wider quality of life needs to be considered as well as functional ability, particularly social contact
- Individuals need to understand reablement's purpose and what's expected of them
- A focus on personal outcomes can recognise modest achievements, with benefits for morale
- For people with dementia, it is important to see past the diagnosis to understand the person, and what is important to them

For family carers:

- Involving family can support consideration of risks and benefits of reablement
- Clarity is required about the role family and friends wish to play

For both individuals and families:

- Discussing priorities can help clarify understandings of 'independence'

For staff:

- Considering quality of life could reduce staff concerns about isolated individuals

For services:

- Services should be commissioned on the basis of personal outcomes
- The views of individuals and families should be systematically recorded
- A focus on a more functional state rather than independence is encouraged
- Personal outcomes could rebalance the current focus on reduced service hours as a measure of success in reablement

Local Context: Embedding outcomes in a culture of constant change

A key challenge for embedding research in practice is the culture of constant change in services. Various initiatives in North Lanarkshire were taking place alongside the ESRC project, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Four initiatives in particular had direct impact on this project

1) Psychology capacity building project: This project was set up to develop screening for psychological problems, behavior change training, a consultancy service for staff and outcomes guidelines/tools for use in assessment and review. Starting just after the ESRC project, it was to last two years. A challenge was a risk of duplication, as both projects had objectives of developing outcomes focused tools and guidance. It was decided to shift the focus of the ESRC project away from tool development, given wider knowledge about the need to support practice change to embed outcomes. There was then scope for the two projects to build capacity in tandem, with the ESRC project focusing broadly on an outcomes approach, while the psychology project was to drill down into motivational engagement.

2) Assessment and care management: North Lanarkshire implemented outcomes focused assessment several years ago. The outcomes focused review was nearing completion during this project. A meeting with the lead for assessment and care management established that any other tools would need to fit with the new review, confirming that the objective of tool development was not feasible for this project. However, this allowed further space to focus on broader implementation of outcomes.

3) Restructuring of home support: Among various structural changes to home support in North Lanarkshire, a commitment had been made to employ temporary HSMs and OTs to undertake reviews, to increase the numbers of people referred to reablement from within the service. While there were therefore many moving parts, the focus on two established teams provided stability for the project.

4) Community capacity building: Significant investment was being made in building the capacity of informal resources to support the quality of life of older people, and in mapping relevant resources. Knowledge of low-level community based supports can be very helpful in considering quality of life outcomes. Staff were enthusiastic about the mapping and keen to get further information as it emerged.

Key themes emerging from the literature review and project

Expectations/motivation/resistance to reablement

At each stage of the ESRC project, stakeholders expressed support for reablement as a concept, albeit with reservations. For people using services and carers, there was support for maximising independence, which was associated with dignity and having a sense of achievement. However, it was also identified that a flexible approach is required by home support, to allow for variations in individuals' day to day ability to manage, and that this takes time, which is limited in mainstream home support.

The importance of motivation was highlighted in the literature, with emphasis on the need for clear explanations and opportunities to be involved in goal-setting. There were limited references to the potential for resistance to reablement from individuals and families. Although reablement teams told inspiring stories about the progress of people they had worked with, the issue of resistance also emerged as a concern during this project. One of the teams discussed 'backlash' they had experienced from families, usually where people had previously experienced mainstream home support. Expectation management requires significant attention in the context of reablement, particularly for people who have previous experience of mainstream home support.

This also reinforces the potential value of an outcomes approach, in engaging with people's priorities and clarifying the purpose of involvement.

Outcomes focused engagement/assessment

Considering messages from the literature and this project, engagement with individuals emerges as a critical factor to successful reablement. People using home support services and their families reported that they wanted to be more involved in decision-making, and that they wanted a flexible approach, recognising that many health conditions might vary day to day. There was a high degree of correspondence between this group and the staff focus groups on this theme. Both reablement teams made connections between the approach adopted in engaging with individuals, and the success or otherwise of reablement. The role of the manager was identified as critical by staff, in ensuring that expectations were managed and clear understanding reached of the purpose of the service.

Supporting Home Support Staff

The importance of investment in staff training and support was a key theme. In addition to identifying the importance of extra time, this group valued being able to build working relationships and trust, through regular contact with each other at team meetings, which improved communication and knowledge across the team. There was a general sense of significant challenge in working out ways to expand the reablement ethos within the very different structure of the mainstream service. However, recognition of spin-off benefits both for staff and for people using the service had resulted in continuing attempts to replicate some of the working conditions within the mainstream service.

Creating more time and space for HSMs in particular, but also to some extent, for all home support staff was identified as a key consideration for the service redesign. Time for HSMs was linked to the quality of home visits at the start of reablement, with implications for managing expectations, reaching a shared understanding of independence, and motivating individuals to participate. The second issue with time concerned staff having enough time to spend with individuals to support reablement goals. There was shared recognition that without more time in the mainstream service, maintaining reablement goals would remain elusive.

A reablement culture

The literature urges caution on establishing distinct reablement services, and the findings of this project support this. Although effort has been invested in North Lanarkshire in providing reablement training to all staff, and in trying to build an ethos across the service, the mainstream service still largely runs on a task and time model. The contradictions of running two models of home support side by side were evident. Reablement staff in North Lanarkshire are brought in to fill gaps in mainstream schedules and they described seeing individuals they had worked with in reablement, whose skills had been lost on return to mainstream. The reversal of reablement skills is thrown into sharp relief for staff working between two models, with consequences for staff morale as well as for people using the service.

Recognition of this contradiction is driving efforts to bring down barriers between the mainstream and reablement service. Strategies include the extension of patch meetings across localities. The capacity offered by additional HSMs and OTs is partly motivated by recognition that mainstream staff need access to support from frontline managers who have been tied up with desk based work. This capacity is also intended to support more effective engagement with people using the service at an early stage. The need for a wider reablement ethos rather than separate services is supported by the findings.

Performance

The reablement literature identifies a national tendency to measure performance in terms of service outcomes, principally home care hours saved. However, an overemphasis on hours saved can encourage a tendency to select only those most likely to be deemed successful against this measure. The focus on hours at the start and end of reablement is being handled with caution in North Lanarkshire, where efforts are being invested in using other measures to really understand the costs and benefits of the service. A further concern about the focus on reduced hours is that it potentially limits the growing of a reablement culture, which has been identified as necessary in North Lanarkshire to avoid achievements being reversed when people move on to mainstream.

In North Lanarkshire it is recognised that an outcomes focus could both improve longer term quality of life, through increased links to community based supports, whilst also providing a richer picture of the impact of reablement, as recommended by SCIE. There was a widespread view, particularly evident at the retreat, that it was also important for reablement to support the public and other agencies to understand what reablement does (and doesn't) do through measuring personal outcomes. A further concern of operational managers in particular was that the skilled and complex work undertaken by home support staff should be sufficiently recorded and recognised.

A plan for embedding outcomes in reablement in North Lanarkshire

In the later stages of the project, a plan was produced in consultation with managers in North Lanarkshire to further embed personal outcomes. Four months after the retreat, a further meeting was held and the plan was reviewed, updating existing activity and further action required to achieve the intended outcomes, as follows.

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Intended outcome</i>	<i>Action underway</i>	<i>Further action</i>
Reduce gap between reablement and mainstream services	Ensure staff skills and confidence are maintained across the service, which in turn will impact on maintaining service user skills and confidence	Revisiting training for mainstream staff Staff regraded as equals 2013 Roadshows used to promote outcomes and share best practice	Rebrand the service in the longer term, in line with integration of home support services with NHS
Expand capacity within	All staff feel valued HSMs able to work	Employing 22 OTs and 35 HSMs (some temporary) to relieve	Consider potential to expand shadowing/mentoring to home

mainstream service	directly with users and staff, rather than restricted to desk based work	pressure Patch meetings increasing Shadowing/mentoring for HSMs through pilot	support staff
Increase outcomes focus	Ensure quality of life of people using service Improve confidence & independence of individuals Improve evidence and therefore wider understanding and potential of reablement	Design of support planning tool to fit with wider care management work Psychology project building capacity of staff teams in engaging families	Training on outcomes to be delivered Further development of the psychology capacity building project in year two Share info on community capacity with all staff
Optimise team involvement in care planning/ review	Improve understanding and involvement of the person and family to maximise quality of life and independence	Piloting underway in Locality B involving 6 individuals initially, and deploying team members differently to ensure outcomes and goals identified	Pilot results will inform wider roll out of new approach to initial engagement, identification of outcomes and ongoing reablement assessment

Following the ESRC project and particularly informed by the residential retreat, an outcomes focused pilot was being planned in a reablement team. This pilot was picking up on the themes above, with a strong focus on the initial visits and the identification of outcomes, involving all reablement team members.

End note

The commitment to embedding outcomes within North Lanarkshire would suggest that, although the resourcing challenges within the mainstream service are significant, further progress is likely, and will be reported in due course.

References

CSED (2007) Homecare Reablement Discussion Document, London: CSED

Cook, A. and Miller, E. (2012) Talking Points personal outcomes approach: an organisational guide, Edinburgh, Joint Improvement Team

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