

Meaningful and Measurable:

Developing approaches to the analysis and use of information on personal outcomes within health and social care

Authors: The Meaningful and Measurable team, July 2014

Background

Over the past 5-10 years there has been a growing commitment to shifting health and social care systems away from an exclusive focus on their own inputs, processes and outputs towards *personal outcomes* for people using services and unpaid carers. As a result, practitioners are now expected to engage with individuals about their personal outcomes during assessment and review processes.

There is a further expectation that recorded personal outcomes data will be used to inform individual planning, service improvement, service planning and commissioning, and performance management. Developing approaches to the analysis of personal outcomes data poses challenges at all levels of organisations. Within this project, we are exploring the tension between:

Meaning: the need for detailed and contextualised information on individual experience to inform individual planning and service improvement.

Measure: the need to aggregate information on personal outcomes to be used for decision making at organisational and national levels.

We want to develop an approach to personal outcomes that is *Meaningful and Measurable*.

The Wider Context

This work is part of an ongoing process of development of a personal outcomes approach within health and social care and is underpinned by three core elements in understanding personal outcomes:

- **Engagement** with individuals using services and carers about:
 - What they want to achieve in life
 - Assets/strengths they and others bring to achieve this
 - Extent to which outcomes achieved, what helps and hinders
- **Recording** of information on outcomes,

- Recorded qualitatively in language meaningful to the person
- May be summarised in tick boxes
- **Use of information** for decision making
 - Individual care and support
 - Service delivery and improvement
 - Planning and commissioning

Cook and Miller (2012:13)

About the project

The *Meaningful and Measurable* project aims:

1. To develop and test out in practice approaches to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of personal outcomes data and use of this information for decision making within organisations.
2. To capture emergent good practice in the analysis and use of personal outcomes information and disseminate this widely to practice, policy and academic audiences.
3. To explore the practical, epistemological and political tensions inherent in this work and capture evidence as to the benefits and limitations of different approaches.

Project Partners

There are three stakeholder groups involved:

- **The academic team** from Universities of Edinburgh, Strathclyde, and Swansea, which includes Ailsa Cook and Emma Miller, whose previous work around Personal Outcomes includes development of “Talking Points” (Cook and Miller 2012). The academic team are responsible for the overall process, including supporting the project partners in the Action Research Projects and the Collaborative Inquiry aspect of the work.
- **The eight project partners:** Angus Council, Bridgend County Borough Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Edinburgh City Council, Moray Council, Penumbra, Stirling Council and Vocal, all of whom have committed organisational support (including releasing staff time) to engage in facilitated action research projects.
- **Wider stakeholders:** the Joint Improvement Team (JIT Scotland), the Scottish Community Care Benchmarking Network (SCCBN), and the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA). Wider stakeholder engagement is embedded in on-going relationships between the project team and related activity, but is being specifically facilitated through three Knowledge Exchange Events.

Project activity

The project has been designed around two overlapping processes: facilitated action research and collaborative inquiry.

Facilitated Action Research Projects

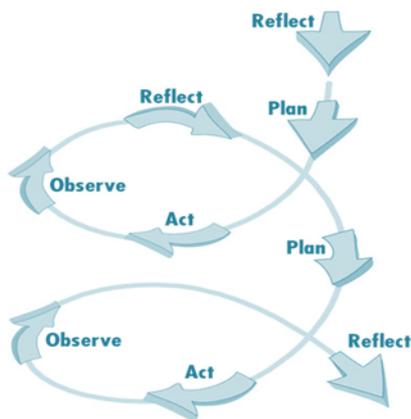


Figure one: action research cycles

Each of the 8 partner organisations is undertaking a local action research project in which they are exploring specific issues within their organisations. The work is structured round two action research cycles, with three two-day intensive residential workshops (data retreats) at which academic and project partners are reflecting, planning and observing before developing a plan for the next phase of the work.

At the data retreat in January 2014, the project partners and academic team identified specific areas they wanted to explore through the action research projects, for example:

- The nature of personal outcomes information currently being recorded within interactions between practitioners and service users:
 - What personal outcomes information and data is being recorded?
 - How is personal outcomes information and data being recorded?
 - Why is personal outcomes information and data being recorded?
- The conversations that are taking place alongside recording of personal outcomes information and data.
- Staff experiences around what their current recording practice.
- Development of a common understanding around recording practice within and between organisations.
- Challenges around systems for recording personal outcomes data and information that is meaningful AND measurable.

Collaborative Inquiry

Led by the academic team, this is a research process which spans all of the aspects of the project. It aims to capture robust evidence around use of personal outcomes information and data from a practical, political and theoretical perspective. This is being done through:

- Collecting and analysing data across all of the action research projects, for example through capturing discussion at the data retreats and establishing project partners' views and experiences through discussion.
- Gathering and analysing evidence from wider discussions taking place at the Knowledge Exchange Events in February, May and September.
- Relating learning within this project to theoretical perspectives.

Timeline

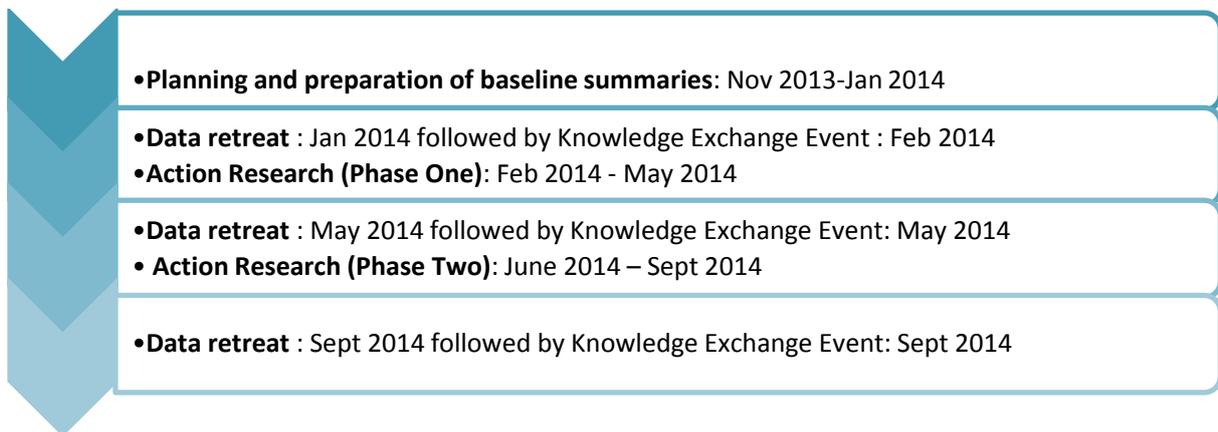


Figure two: Timeline of key project activity

Project contacts

Academic team: all contactable through the project e-mail address:
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Dr Ailsa Cook (University of Edinburgh) - Investigator
Dr Emma Miller (University of Strathclyde) - Investigator
Dr Sarah Keyes (University of Edinburgh) - Investigator
Jenni Benyon (University of Edinburgh) - Project Administrator
Karen Barrie (University of Edinburgh) - Mentor
Nick Andrews (University of Swansea) - Mentor