

Personal outcomes

Learning from the Meaningful and Measurable project:
Strengthening links between identity, action and decision-making

Key messages

Emma Miller and Karen Barrie
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Key Messages from the Meaningful and Measurable project

A key concern of Meaningful and Measurable¹ was to ensure that personal outcomes data gathered through practice encounters in diverse services should be of sufficient quality to be useable for decision-making, at individual and collective levels. The project was a further stage in the journey of embedding personal outcomes, which improved understanding on several themes:

1. To varying extents, outcomes focused and enabling conversations are taking place across diverse services. These conversations contribute to restoring a sense of identity, to clarifying purpose and as therapeutic interventions in their own right. The quality and reach of dialogue within organisations also needs to be sufficient for practitioners to feel valued and listened to, and for different parts of the organisation to understand each other's contribution to achieving outcomes.
2. Even where good conversations are taking place, this does not necessarily translate into records. Recording practice needs attention in its own right. Project partners agreed five simple criteria, providing a useful basis for improving recording of personal outcomes.
3. Audit of records alone is not enough. Understanding data quality requires exploring the barriers faced by practitioners. Where this happened, practice improved, along with the quality of recorded data. Distinguishing between 'improving' and 'proving,' project partners focused primarily on using data for internal improvements linked to practice, based on the outcomes important to people using the service.
4. Quantitative data alone do not present a true picture, and should be used 'with caveats, and not in isolation' [from other sources, including qualitative data]. It also emerged that understanding of qualitative data analysis is limited in services, and there is a need to establish the middle ground between story and statistics to improve understanding of what is working well and less well.
5. Regarding use of information, improved understanding obtained through audit and staff engagement was linked to service adaptations. These included staff involvement in decision-making, approaches to appraisal, supervision and audit; processes which could be described as performance management, although more linked to frontline practice than predominant forms which tend to be centrally and statistically driven. While progress was also made with use of data for performance reporting and commissioning, this was preliminary, with ideas emerging about a more collaborative approach, consistent with, rather than diverting attention away from the improvements taking place.

For the full report go to ihub.scot, and for more information about the project go to <https://personaloutcomescollaboration.org/meaningful-and-measurable>

¹ Meaningful and Measurable was a knowledge exchange project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, involving three universities and eight services (seven Scottish, one Welsh) covering health, social care and children. The project ran from late 2012 to early 2014.