

Why outcome-based care matters



Executive Summary

We all know that quality counts when it comes to care – and that is why an outcome-based approach to care matters. Recording information about the care delivered and setting goals that can be reviewed throughout the care plan is vital. Today those that are responsible for delivering social care are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the impact of services in terms of service user outcomes. This is particularly important when they are subjected to checks from regulatory boards. Recent documentaries such as Channel 4 ‘Dispatches: Britain’s Pensioner Care Scandal’, has also further put the spotlight on a sector and highlighted the importance of reviewing and monitoring stages of care.

Using technology to capture this information can transform processes to drive growth, increase operational efficiency and deliver the best quality care.

Introduction

This whitepaper will explore what an outcome is, why it’s important, the Recovery Star method and finally, what to do with the information gathered. Implementing simple processes with the help of technology can have a positive impact on the day-to-day running of your organisation. For organisations that are thinking about adopting an outcomes based approach they need to truly understand the impact it can have for the service user and the operational running of their care business. This results in better care and gives management a true overview of their business and they can identify where to set goals and continue to drive changes this is extremely important as the care industry continues to be under much scrutiny.



What is an outcome?

‘Outcomes’ are defined as the impact, or end-results, of services on a person’s life’

An outcome is the result and progress of care delivery. It’s about the real improvements clients see in their quality of life. It’s important to establish a framework in order to be able to identify and measure outcomes on the provision of care. This calls for a team-based approach to care that uses the most current evidence to support decision-making about individual circumstances. It also means you can enable person-centred care with the involvement of the service user and diligently managing the whole process to ensure progress is being made every step of the way.

Why they are important for quality assurance

This outcome-based approach is important for a number of reasons but mainly because the person receiving care is happier and their wellbeing is being placed centre stage. Being able to view care delivery in real time means that those looking after the service user, along with family and the service user themselves can see the progress that is being made.

Alongside this is the documentation of the outcome at the different stages meaning everything is there in writing and information can be fed into the care plans for individuals so it’s always up-to-date.

For management it means they can more easily identify strengths and weaknesses when taking on new service users. Knowing where to invest as a business and taking control of issues before they arise can ensure that everything is being handled in the most effective manner.

Whilst it creates a foundation for future growth, it also leaves the core of the business to do what it does best. Working as one team, service users and their families can make more informed care decisions together. Then plans for each service user can be developed based on their specific needs with their input setting goals and reviewing treatment outcomes.

The Recover Star Method

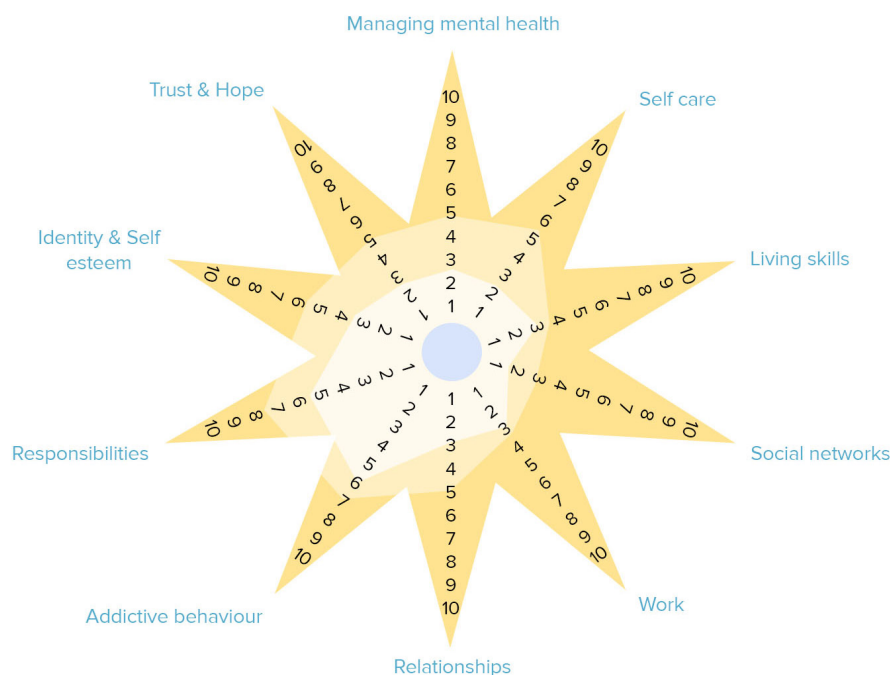
One method which has seen much success in the industry is the Recovery Star method. A 10-point questionnaire is provided to both the care giver and also the service user. Then an analysis is done to match and gap on feedback.

There are three important steps in outcome-based care:

1. **Goal:** what the service user wants to do, for example, walk to the shops
2. **Observation:** what happened, for example, the service user walked but only made it halfway
3. **Intervention:** maybe the nurse or carer has to assist from halfway and get a wheelchair

Documenting and monitoring outcomes is important as you can identify changes in care. If a keyworker sees a service user on a daily basis and there is no improvement or if the feedback from the service user and their family is negative then the provider may want to reallocate the service user to a different carer or identify a gap in training skills.

There are many other methods that can be effective in recording outcomes. It's good to pick an approach that is suitable for your organisation and the needs of your services users. One fundamental connecting element is how technology can be leveraged within in each approach to open lines of communication and digitise documents and processes that are typically paper based and not scalable.



Capturing and tracking outcomes

Delivering outcomes focused care requires providers to actively monitor each service user's level of attainment towards outcomes defined in their care plan.

To do this, providers have to take render outcomes in a format which can be analysed or reported on. In doing so providers can track attainment over time and spot where and what kind of intervention is necessary.

One method is to capture outcomes scores on paper, collect them together and manually input all the data into spreadsheets, from where it can be sorted, analysed and reported on.

Obvious flaws with this method include the logistics of gathering all the outcomes scores together, the admin overheads involved in entering them into spreadsheets and the potential for errors arising from manual data entry.

Additionally, the delay in outcome scores being captured and outcomes scores being analysed means a delay in response, compromising the quality of service being provided and certainly undermining the potential for outcomes to be achieved sooner than later.

Alternatively, outcomes scores can be captured, recorded and monitored digitally. This removes the administrative burden because new outcome scores are immediately factored into any reports to track outcomes. Additionally, alerts, tasks and reminders are triggered automatically when any aspect of a service user's care requires intervention.

What do you do with the information?

Of course, once you've gone through all this process, the question then becomes what do you do with the outcome information? Here there are five key areas:

1. Plan and implement improvements based on the evidence provided, remembering to note the actions being taken and the outcome expected.
2. Use the feedback - both positive and negative – to communicate with the carer and to help them to improve and develop their skillset (which can also form part of their training plan)
3. The analysis, outcomes, results can then all be fed back to the regulatory boards
4. Provide regular updates to the family about the progress of loved ones
5. Respond to trends and industry issues: health and social care is an ever-changing environment, so having access to information – historical and current – helps provider's to stay agile and continue to grow

The value of outcome orientated care is immense. It provides the toolset to help create a better future for care users and moves us closer to the people-centred care that we so often talk about. It's a catalyst for change from improving confidence and the feeling of security to better health and social connectedness. It's about the individual as a whole – and that's what counts when it comes to more personalised care.



Conclusion

Whatever the approach to outcome based care it's important to be able to record and review forms so that key milestones can be documented throughout the care plan. When a care plan is initially decided we shouldn't view it as a static end-to-end plan. It's important to be able to have a flexible approach depending on the progress of the service user. Outcomes allow us to do this as we assist in person centred planning and use measurements and indicators to track improvements. It is only via an outcome-based approach that we can support individuals and families to reach their goals. This collaborative approach to care only heightens the experience for the carer and the service user meaning that care quality is assured. This mutually benefits the care providers as they can sustain reputation and have satisfaction in knowing that they can help to make a difference to an individual's experience in receiving care. This end goal is achievable with the right systems in place to allow outcomes to become a standard of the day to day. Putting outcomes at the forefront of care is a small change that can have huge benefits that will be evident in the short term but also help secure the future success of your organisation.



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