



TAKING AN OUTCOMES APPROACH

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF WHAT YOU PUT IN

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

Taking an outcomes approach to service delivery means more than simply adding another piece of paperwork to your systems. An outcomes approach is a continuous cycle of enquiry and service improvement based on factual information about what is being achieved. By learning about the effects of its different activities, an organisation can refine and develop its services¹. The approach complements and can easily be embedded into existing ways of working. The purpose of this paper is to identify the links between this ethos of outcomes and other key approaches within the homelessness sector such as the **Places of Change Programme, key working, motivational interviewing and cognitive-behavioural therapy**.

For detailed information on what an outcomes approach is visit the homeless outcomes website: http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/Outcomes_approach.aspx.

OUTCOMES AND PLACES OF CHANGE

Places of Change are services for homeless people that rebuild lives. The Places of Change Programme² is led by the Homes and Community Agency (HCA)³. The Programme aims to encourage homelessness agencies to focus on moving clients forward. This includes improving their access to meaningful occupation and training and employment opportunities. The four key elements to a Places of Change project are:

- client involvement
- welcoming buildings
- motivated staff
- empowering services.

Taking an outcomes approach can help you to become a Place of Change on a number of levels:

- **For the service:** the approach enables you to visualise your service once you are a Place of Change, determine what you need to do to become this, and to measure along the way what is working and what is not working.
- **For the team:** the approach motivates staff as it not only enables them to see how their individual work contributes to the overall aims of the service, but it also gives them a means to see the achievements being made by their clients, even when change is slow and difficult to observe. Identifying the changes you hope to bring about as a whole team can also help to develop a common or shared vision between management and workers.
- **For the clients:** the approach is empowering as it makes it possible for clients to identify their aspirations and how they are progressing towards these, and what they need to change in order to reach their goals. Using outcomes tools that measure distance travelled encourages more mutual discussion and can empower clients to make the changes they need to progress.

¹ For further information see <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=122>

² <http://www.homeless.org.uk/places-of-change>

³ <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/>

OUTCOMES AND KEY WORKING

Key working is one of the established ways of working with vulnerable people. It involves working with individuals on a one-to-one basis to identify, understand and overcome the cognitive, practical and emotional barriers that prevent them from making positive changes in their lives. In addition to the skills needed to be an effective key-worker, staff need to be clear, as do clients, about what success will look like and how they will know when they have achieved it.

An outcomes approach helps workers use their skills to enable clients to focus on the changes they want to make, what is preventing them from making those changes, and how these can be overcome. Soft outcomes measurement tools can be a valuable tool to assist with this, as they look at changes of attitude. They also cover a range of areas, which means they can give an agenda to key work sessions and support consistency across the organisation, while enabling individual clients to prioritise the areas they want to work on. A number of soft outcomes measurement tools have been developed, and you can view **A Review of Outcomes Tools for the Homelessness Sector**, which evaluates 18 of the most commonly used tools, and a **Guide to Choosing An Outcomes Tool** by visiting here:

http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/Measuring_Outcomes.aspx.

Outcomes tools such as the Outcomes Star have been designed specifically as key working tools to motivate clients to change. Research into the impact that using the Star had on 25 organisations who had been using the Star for a year or more found that 100% reported improved key work.

These improvements included:

- More focus
- Increased client engagement
- More systematic and consistent
- More in-depth
- Shared language about the journey of change

"The Star helps staff focus on the agreed support plans so they don't get too entrenched in the day-to-day issues brought in by their clients and lose sight of the bigger picture..."

Croftlands Trust

The research also found that most clients like the Star and it achieves these benefits because it:

- Focuses on the whole person, not the problem
- Is visual
- Makes progress visible
- Gives a sense of the journey
- Can open new areas of discussion

"The Star is helpful. It shows how far I have come. It is a very different shape now. It has helped to motivate me. It gives me a sense of direction – that I can do it. Seeing it visually helps, to see that I am changing, that things are happening, that there is a light at the end of the tunnel."

St. Mungo's hostel resident

Homeless Link runs a two-day training course on Effective Key Working and Outcomes Star⁴ to support staff to bring these two elements of practice together.

OUTCOMES, MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING AND COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

Motivational interviewing is a technique used by workers to help clients make effective decisions about their lives. It is a client-centred approach to changing behaviour by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence.

⁴ <http://www.homeless.org.uk/training-keyworking-outcomes-star>

Cognitive-behaviour therapy is based on the principle that certain ways of thinking can trigger certain health problems. Cognitive-behaviour therapy helps clients to understand their current thought patterns, with the aim then to change these into more positive ideas.

Both of these approaches use tools and resources to help people plan how to overcome certain challenges, incorporating support planning and SMART objectives that help the clients to visualise where they want to get to and the route to getting there, setting realistic goals, and changing behaviour and attitude in order to achieve these. As with an outcomes approach, they are models that look at people's potential rather than their deficit.

FURTHER SUPPORT

If you would like further support to take an outcomes approach, or advice on different tools available, please visit www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk or contact Joanne Crellen at e. joanne.crellen@homelesslink.org.uk
t. 0207 840 4414.

If you would like to know more about Places of Change, contact the Homeless Link regional manager for your area. You can find their contact details here: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/regions>