

OUTCOMES AND DAY CENTRES

SHOWING YOUR WORTH



Day centres do some of the most challenging work with the most vulnerable people in our society. Evidencing this work can often be challenging, however it is essential that as day centres you are able to show the difference you make in helping clients progress towards independence. An outcomes approach enables you to measure the changes that you are supporting people to make; this can be anything from someone's personal hygiene, to increasing confidence, maintaining a flat or gaining employment.

In this resource we outline what day centres need to consider when implementing an outcomes approach and give some examples of what day centres around the country are currently doing.

DAY CENTRES AND OUTCOMES

Day centres support people to move towards independence using a variety of approaches, skills and techniques. In a day centre setting this can often be through informal contact not always thought of as key-working, which means introducing a key-working tool can pose challenges. Day centres often deal with immediate need and crisis as well as slowly encouraging and enabling people to engage in a more structured way with key services and practitioners. This work can play a crucial role in an individual's pathway, but is very difficult to capture and measure. It should also be recognised that day centres also provide services that help people to maintain a level of coping, without which they may become homeless or unwell and that this type of work is specifically difficult to measure. Day centres vary in the work they carry out with individuals; however a key objective should be to support people to move towards independence as much as possible. These factors however don't mean that appropriate tools can not be introduced and developed. It may mean extra specialist staff are allocated or brought in from external agencies to carry out this work. It may also mean a change of emphasis to working towards independence and moving forward.

AN OUTCOMES APPROACH

Taking an outcomes approach to service delivery isn't about adding another piece of paperwork to your systems, but a continuous cycle of enquiry and service improvement based on factual information about what is being achieved. Taking an outcomes approach is the same in many ways for a day centre as for any other homelessness service, however the way the outcomes will be measured and the changes that individuals make may differ depending on the service you offer.

For more detailed information on taking an outcomes approach in homelessness organisations, visit http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/Outcomes_approach.aspx

What are outcomes?

Outcomes are the effects of your activities; the changes, benefits or learning that occur as a result of the work you carry out. They are changes over time: something that is noticeably different for a person or target group, e.g. after a week or six months.

Take care not to confuse outcomes with outputs or user satisfaction feedback:

- Outputs are all the detailed activities, services and products of your organisation. Outputs might include number of meals provided, number of one to one advice sessions held, number of activity groups run.
- User satisfaction usually involves asking clients what they think about different aspects of your service, for example, does the support provided meet their needs? How helpful are the workers? Are the opening times, location, communication leaflets appropriate and fit for purpose?

Outputs and user satisfaction are important. They may also be assessed and the information used to help improve services. However, they are not outcomes.

MEASURING YOUR OUTCOMES

Things to consider

Day centres may have different issues from accommodation-based services to consider when thinking about how to measure outcomes. Some potential barriers may include:

- Regularity of client contact – there may be more one-off interventions rather than long-term clients, so measuring progress over time isn't always possible
- Limited time
- A focus on one or two aspects of a clients life, rather than a holistic approach
- Crisis management
- No formal key working in place
- Lack of suitable space or time for support workers to spend confidentially with clients
- Inadequate I.T. facilities
- Limited access to staff training
- Operating largely with volunteers
- Working with clients who are hard to engage
- Expectations of what the day centre is for
- Culture change - with more focus on meaningful activity and less on practical support, staff and clients may find it difficult to adjust.

Overcoming the barriers

Many day centres have overcome these barriers, by trialling new ways of working and testing innovative solutions. For example, one day centre offers one-to-one key work sessions outside the regular opening hours; that way there is less distraction from the dining room and focused one-to-one interventions can occur. Another option may be to offer volunteers the opportunity to take on more responsibility. This could be in the kitchen or reception duties freeing up workers to offer key working or more structured one-to-one work. Volunteers often want training and are prepared to dedicate time to becoming skilled up in focused work with clients. Training is sometimes available through local training consortiums. On-line training is often available, or local organisations can skill share if they work together.

Within the mental health sector many day services have adopted an outcomes approach using a pilot day centre version of *The Recovery Star*, which offers a holistic outcomes approach across aspects of a client's life. They have found that where they have been able to introduce specialist workers and extra resources the tool has worked well at helping clients progress. It has enabled staff to highlight issues within a particular area of a client's life that may have previously blocked progress within other areas of their life and meant practical positive actions have happened as a result.

Choosing a tool

There are four main things to consider when looking for an outcomes tool that fits the needs of your organisation or project:

1. What your primary purpose is in using an outcomes tool
2. Which outcome areas you need the tool to cover
3. Whether to use a generalist tool that is applicable to a wide variety of client groups or a specialist tool that is specifically tailored to the needs of one client group
4. Whether to use an off-the-shelf tool or develop your own bespoke tool

An outcomes tool provides a practical way of measuring and comparing outcomes achieved by individual clients while receiving support services. For detailed guidance on why you should use a tool, and how to choose one, visit: http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/Measuring_Outcomes.aspx

Think about what support you offer

Day centres often do very hands on work dealing with immediate crisis as well as long-term to support people with some of the most complex needs. Day centre staff help people with practical and emotional support across all aspects of a person's life and often work with specific needs for example:

- housing
- drug and /or alcohol support

- employment and training advice
- life skills and pre tenancy training
- activities and confidence building
- mental health support
- young people
- migrants and refugees
- A8 and A2 nationals, often with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).



What options are available?

On the homeless outcomes website you can find a *Review of Outcomes Tools for the Homelessness Sector*, to help you compare the tools currently available and decide which will work best for you. The review focuses on those tools that are most commonly used in homelessness services and can be found here: <http://www.homelessoutcomes.org.uk/centralserviceoutcomes.aspx>. It is not a comprehensive review of all tools available, and you may also wish to look at Toynbee Hall’s review of outcomes tools¹, which covers a wider range of options.

In addition, a range of outcomes stars has been developed by Triangle Consulting that may be appropriate to support the work that you do, including a **homelessness star, teen star, learning employment star and an alcohol star**. Find out more at the outcomes star website: <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>.

It is recognised that the tools available at present, may have some limitations for day centres as they take up too much time or demand a different level of intervention. These issues are currently being explored and a new day centres tool may be developed in the future that is designed specifically for day services.

Table to support day centres choose an appropriate tool:

How does your day centre work?	What can we do about capturing outcomes?	Comments
Mainly we support people move towards independence using a keywork approach	Use an outcomes tool, such as the Outcomes Star	
Mainly we support people into independence using a ‘light touch’ key work approach. Quite informal	An outcomes tool may work, but you may need to spend more time with people or get extra support	In the mental health field there are pilot projects involving using employment scheme workers to do this
Mainly we address immediate needs and move people from being at a ‘pre-engagement’ stage to ‘engagement’.	Perhaps develop your own tool that is fit for purpose or look at the Toynbee Hall outcomes tool review	Look at the Connection St Martins case study below for ideas.
Mainly help maintain people at their current level of coping – particularly people who have their own accommodation but would struggle to keep it without outside help	Are any of the tools above appropriate? What areas are you specifically helping people with, would a mental health star, a work star be useful? Remember, outcomes tools can measure maintenance as well as improvement.	Is there a well being tool that could be used to look at how people could enhance their quality of life?

CASE STUDIES FROM DAY CENTRES AROUND THE COUNTRY

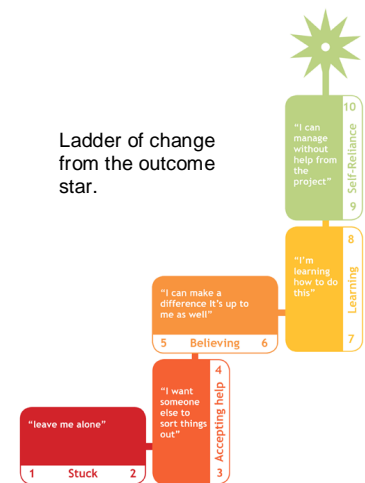
Day centres using the Outcomes Star

Brighter Futures in Stoke on Trent runs a club house model that moves away from a traditional homelessness day centre and focuses on social and learning opportunities that support vulnerable people within the community. They currently use the Outcomes Star with great success; their chief executive Gill Brown states: **“The Outcomes Star is easy and accessible for everyone, our customers absolutely love the way the outcomes star puts them in control”**. Brighter futures has

¹ <http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/page.asp?section=000100010001000800060002>

gone on to develop its use of the Outcomes Star across the organisation and now also uses the teen star with young people at risk of sexual exploitation and the work and employment star with those who are ready to start taking the steps towards finding employment. They have also used the model to develop their own outcomes tools that are suitable for their particular organisational needs; currently they are developing a customer engagement star and staff appraisal star.
<http://www.brighter-futures.org.uk/clubhouse.aspx>

Julian House in Bath uses the Outcomes Star across all its services, which includes accommodation-based services, floating support and a *day centre* with great success. John Isserlis who manages the day centre finds the visual aspect of the Star really useful, he explains; ***“the tool is really quick and easy to use with clients and we find that clients respond well.”*** They have integrated the Outcomes Star into their assessment and support planning process, so as not to duplicate work. Staff find it a brilliant way to celebrate personal achievements and client successes along the way. Julian House overcomes the common problem of lack of space and key work time, by offering one-to-one appointments outside their main opening hours. This frees space for more focused key work sessions and helps with staff development as well. For more information about their services: <http://www.julianhouse.org.uk/index.html>



A day centre using another outcomes tool

Winter comfort for the homeless, a day centre in Cambridge decided that the Outcomes Star didn't quite fit its needs and therefore adopted a different outcomes tool called Soft Outcomes Universal Learning project (SOUL) developed by the Research Centre at City College Norwich. This was specifically developed to demonstrate progression in soft skills for homeless clients. They also have a bespoke database developed by Cambridge City Council Homelessness Information Officer, which they use to capture hard outcomes. Cathy Hembry, the director of the day centre, explains that SOUL works extremely well and is entirely fit for purpose with regards to the one-to-one work they do around supporting clients into independence. For more information about the research centre and SOUL: <http://www.theresearchcentre.co.uk/content/soul-soft-outcomes-universal-learning-project>

A day centre developing its own tool

Connection at St Martins in London currently runs specially devised workshops aimed to support the most entrenched rough sleepers that access the day centre. These workshops include an art group, an over 50s group, a women's group, a young persons group, a substance misuse group, a rough sleepers group, linked group (black & minority ethnic) as well as singing, chess and football. The workshop staff witnessed that individuals who had no previous experience of any formal engagement were making a lot of personal and inspiring progress within these groups. They also noted that this progress was extremely difficult to capture within any current monitoring systems they had in place. So despite the project having limited funding an enthusiastic team has set about developing its own tool to measure individuals' progress who are currently attending the art group. This pilot project, which they hope to develop further if they manage to secure funding, adopts a similar 'journey of change model' used in the Outcomes Star. The idea looks more specifically at outcomes relevant to entrenched rough sleepers accessing the day centre groups. The staff who are currently developing this idea have described the pilot work as a pre-key working tool, for people who aren't ready or able to engage in formal one-to-one sessions with a keyworker and for whom action planning is quite a long way off. The pilot is being used primarily by workers with clients in a group setting, obviously seeking consent from the client to monitor their progress. Staff so far have found it extremely useful to allow them to monitor and evaluate clients' progress through observation and then share these measured observations with the client. This approach allows the workers to give positive, structured feedback to clients attending the group when they notice and record significant changes; it also allows them to bring up topics that they had previously found challenging to discuss. They hope to develop this tool further to capture outcomes in other aspects of their work. The outcomes gathered may be able to provide an evidence base of the key role that activity groups have in engaging those people most vulnerable to exclusion.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about implementing outcomes and monitoring systems within day centres please refer to the day centre handbook:

<http://handbooks.homeless.org.uk/daycentres/positiveenvironment/quality>