



PON Good (outcome focused) Conversations Project **Report by the PON co-ordinating group: April 2022**

Background to the PON

The [Personal Outcomes Network](#) (PON) aims to influence, inform, promote and embed personal outcomes approaches. It exists to promote a focus on what matters to people in health and social care provision in Scotland. This includes a strong focus on promoting good outcomes and wellbeing for staff. The PON does this at both a practice level and via contribution to national and local health and social care strategy and policy direction.

During the two years from March 2020 the PON focused first of all on our COVID stories project – [A Shared Experience](#) - which gathered stories about outcomes from practitioners in diverse settings. We also hosted three [webinars](#) about the project during 2020-21. Following a further webinar on storytelling in Summer 2021 – we switched focus to conversations, in response to member requests.

What we did for the conversation project:

Good (outcome focused) conversation project: activities



Define the principles of a good outcome focused conversation & how we support them in practice/policy?



Review of literature on outcome focused conversations with carers (now under peer review)



Survey of members (45 responses)



Review of existing resources / identification of gaps



Members workshop in Oct 2021 (50 participants) and two smaller focused workshops in January 2022



Gathering these threads together to support practice and influence policy

What we found:

What are the benefits of good (outcome focused) conversations?

This section is informed by our literature review (Miller et al forthcoming). This is at the time of writing under peer review in an academic journal. The review focused specifically on literature about outcome focused practice with carers in five countries over a period of twenty years. See also the appendix for what the systemic changes look like. The benefits are defined as follows:

Benefits of working this way with carers

Changes in practice

(identified by carers, staff, managers)

- Clarity of purpose
- Strengths focus
- Partnership, collaboration and active engagement
- Holistic focus
- Relevance and effectiveness

Therapeutic benefits for carers

(identified by carers and staff)

- Opportunity for reflection
- Discuss challenges and hopes
- Consider carer quality of life
- Valued and recognized
- Listened to and respected
- Increased sense of security and hope

What we found: What gets in the way?

This section is informed primarily by the literature review (which focused on carers) and is consistent with key messages from the events (which related to people supported by services more broadly). We will be happy to share more information about this literature review in due course. One key message was that practitioners are currently often required to be person-centred, outcome-focused and strengths-based whilst also required to respond to contradictory system priorities and measure:



Barriers and gaps

➤ **Practice barriers include**

Navigating competing priorities and models
Transition from service led to outcome focus
Fear of raising expectations
Fear of stirring up carer emotions

➤ **Systems barriers include**

Service led resource prioritisation
Measurement priorities
Commissioning
Eligibility criteria

What we found: Defining principles of a good conversation

The following principles are based on the results of a survey of members from Autumn 2021, our workshops as well as the literature review. 45 members returned the survey which asked about the key elements of the conversation. We shared the elements at our October 2021 member event and then worked with a smaller group twice in January 2022 to review the elements as follows:

Key elements of the conversation: survey results refined following workshops

- Starts where the person/family is
- Focus on what matters to the person, including what they are hoping for
- Strengths based – avoids fixing people and builds on what is already working
- Based on an exchange, blending different perspectives together
- Collaborative and based on partnership
- Listening – time to listen, actively and with genuine curiosity
- Consider wider resources, not just formal services, and links to communities
- Action oriented – considering what needs to happen



What we found: What supports the conversation?

Our survey asked what supports this type of conversation. Again, we shared these factors in our October workshop and then with our small group. The themes were as follows:

What supports the conversation?

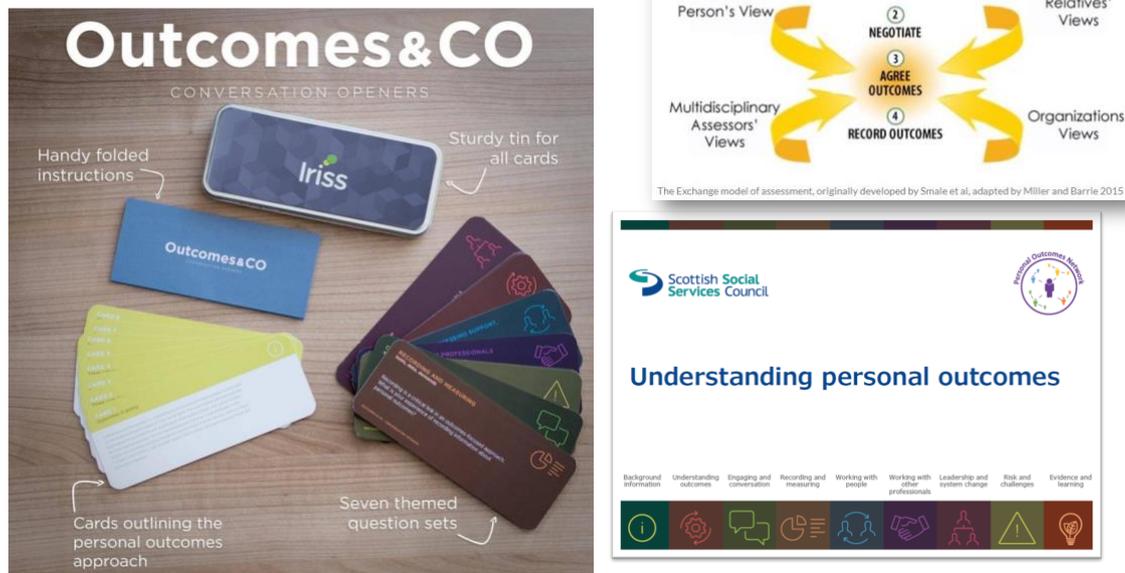
- Time to talk and build relationships
- Practice development and reflective practice
- Peer support – feeling connected to allies, honest discussions with managers and peers
- Understanding and belief that it works
- Systems and processes – including supervision, paperwork
- Courage and determination
- Whole system approach – from values to practice to systems
- **Changing the conversation in the organisation as a whole**



What we found: What resources help with good conversations?

Practitioners at our smaller January workshops identified the benefits of accessible resources that appeal to staff new to this way of working. The exchange model of assessment, SSSC booklet, Iriss outcomes conversation cards and solution focused tools were examples of valued resources.

Key resources mentioned....



Although practitioners express concern about raising expectations in face of limited resources, they also identify that for many people the challenge is being able to identify what a better life might look like. A solution focused approach can help people to build hope and a sense of possibilities.

In addition, the importance of stories and storytelling to support culture change was highlighted by practitioners in the small workshops:

"I did some Quality improvement training with SSSC. The thing that stays with me still is the stories. I would not have remembered any of the tools they introduced us to without the stories. The stories helped me see the reason for the tools – that they actually improved outcomes for people."

What we found: Need for changing the conversation in the organisation(s)

Multi-agency practitioners in our January workshops emphasised that the focus on good (outcome focused) conversations must be modelled and supported within and between organisations. It is not possible for practitioners to be able to embed an outcomes approach if staff are not supported this way through supervision, professional development discussions, team meetings etc. The following comments were exchanged in the chat box during our October 2021 workshop.

- *Agree - I think good conversations approach needs to be shared across the board - not just focusing on supported people - but on health and social care staff too to achieve the cultural shift*
- *Workers often feel they don't have agency*
- *Practice makes perfect and sessions like today help*

- *Role modelling is soooo important, we need to see and feel personal outcomes approaches and conversations in our daily work*
- *Whole system approach is key - workers need to know they are supported in using the approach including support from regulators and other bodies.*
- *Very interested in how we put the practical steps in place to support staff, not just the training and awareness of good conversations and how to have them, but the steps to do this within the messiness of real lives and the reflective time to learn and grow as professionals. [We need] to protect that genuinely honest, open learning space*

There were additional comments in the October workshop on the role of the new NCS:

- *[We need] reflective/ information sessions where...they are all working consistently... Resources need to be shared and more widely available including paperwork and formats that have been proven to work well. I think sharing resources between LA's is very important in achieving this and...looking at how this links with NCS recommendations*
- *...The National Care Service... is an opportunity to get the message out about what a good conversation looks like, what supports it to happen*

In the March 2022 workshop, practitioners also identified ways of having outcomes conversations in one off interactions, through being interested in the person as a person, not just a condition; in being curious about the person's story and in looking for their strengths as well as challenges faced.

Additional reflections on lessons from the pandemic (small workshops)

"There was no conversation with people with learning disabilities and autism and their families. By not having those conversations we risk creating bigger problems than the ones we already have. My elderly parents found themselves caring full-time for my autistic brother. They struggled with the care but I think what made it more difficult was they felt ignored."

"I was still working in a learning disability team during the pandemic but I left last year. I have to feel I am making a difference to thrive in my work. But I felt I was letting people down and was apologising all the time. I couldn't leave my work at the front door and I couldn't carry on..."

"We have the ideal opportunity to keep building on learning from the pandemic. There is that focus now on self-care and investing in mental health and wellbeing for everyone. And there is also a shift for many people who never before experienced being restricted or facing barriers in their lives. People are also more sensitised to inequalities. There is an opportunity to do things differently."

Conclusion/Call to action

Over the past two years our work has explored, supported and confirmed the importance of good, outcome focused and strengths-based conversations. The PON continues to facilitate exchange between research, policy and practice to promote a focus on what matters to supported people, carers and staff. [Good \(outcome focused\) conversations](#) remain central, as well as storytelling, and recording and using information about outcomes, including qualitative data. This project identified a clear need and ask from members for continued support to practice in this way. The response needs to come from other agencies too including the NCS. Please join the conversation, share this resource with your colleagues and ask them to join the network by emailing PON@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Resources shared by members during our October 21 workshop

- A personal outcomes video resource co-designed a few years back with members of the PON and the Glasgow story telling centre <https://lms.learn.sssc.uk.com/mod/page/view.php?id=20>
- Empathy = being alongside where that person is; rather than sympathy trying to control and fix [RSA Shorts: Dr Brené Brown, "The Power of Empathy" - YouTube](#)
- The TaCAS study (Take charge after stroke). Really good resources in the workbook <https://services.nhslothian.scot/TheHeartManual/Programmes/Pages/Stroke-Workbook.aspx>
- Friend not Foe document on Social Care Wales website is excellent for considering recording Outcome focussed conversations. [Friend not foe \(socialcare.wales\)](#)
- The Kinections work is also useful (funded by LCT) <http://myhomelife.uws.ac.uk/scotland/kinections-resources/>
- #Caringconversations resources are so useful too. check out <http://myhomelife.uws.ac.uk/scotland/resources/>

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Appendix: Shifting from Outputs (service led) to Outcomes

The shift required can be illustrated by the following table from earlier work on outcomes:

	Service led	Outcomes focused
Endpoint	Delivery of service	Impact of plan
Format	Pre-determined question and answer formats	Semi-structured conversation = open questions
Approach	Obtaining information required for form filling = 'filtering' information	Skilled interaction including active listening and reflecting back
Person	Client, service user or patient who receives services	Person in their own right with skills, ability and a role to play in achieving their outcomes
Practitioner	Expert	Enabler and partner
Focus	Identify problems and deficits and match to a limited set of services	Build on capacities and strengths towards creative solution
Recording	Tick Box	Building a picture towards a clear plan for achieving outcomes

Summary of version in Cook and Miller (2012) [Talking Points: Personal outcomes approach](#)

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