

SP Outcomes - SPSG Key Recommendations

At the Supporting People Support Group on 18/09/08 Housing Association representatives were asked to feedback on their perspective on outcomes management in the context of supported housing. The following notes summarise some key recommendations and feedback. However implicit in the SWOT analysis below are a number of additional priorities for providers.

1. **Compatibility**

NIHE framework needs to be compatible with providers own in-house systems.

Approach needs to be simple and system simple to use, but at same time needs to be flexible / adaptable. System must be flexible enough to meet the needs not just of a range of client groups, but also those of vulnerable people of differing ages.

2. **Soft Outcomes**

System should take account of providers work in achieving 'soft' outcomes. Soft outcomes are an integral part of the work of many supported housing projects. It is essential for Associations that any evaluation of performance against outcomes needs to take account of this work. For some projects and / or service users this may form the mainstay of the support work undertaken.

3. **Added Value**

System should add value to / improve existing monitoring arrangements

4. **Realistic**

SP must have realistic expectations about what outcomes management can achieve in some cases. Sub-optimal outcomes / maintenance of same can be the best performance likely in some cases. Some vulnerable people may be unable or unwilling to make progress against measures.

5. **Resources**

ICT compatibility / set-up costs / administration – SP should make adequate resources available to cover these costs

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SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Needs-led, client focus
- More structured approach to monitoring and assessment
- Clarity of service / organisational vision
- Improve organisational capacity to drive quality improvement. Offers valuable information on the effectiveness of key policy and practice.
- Move away from a focus on measuring the number of support hours delivered
- Focus on quality rather than volume
- Move away from focus on processes
- An objective measurement tool which makes it suitable for use with 'hard to reach' clients e.g. s/u with severe learning disabilities / cognitive impairment, hard to reach young people.
- Can be validated externally by following narrative from case files

Weaknesses

- Validation that positive outcome is attributable to the support service and not something else
- Risk of subjective measurement if monitoring is based on qualitative data.
- May not measure hard to reach clients e.g. some service users may take part in and enjoy project activities but refuse to engage in formal monitoring of outcomes
- SP needs specialist knowledge of client groups
- Will record regression / negative changes evident in service users with more chaotic lifestyles
- Negative outcomes' impact on funding?
- Overlooks soft outcomes

Opportunities

- Opportunity to share best / good practice with other providers
- Help identify weak areas in your service
- Help identify client needs
- Help to identify client / service / organisation priorities
- Manage risk better
- Stronger negotiating position. Measurable data to inform the contract monitoring and procurement processes;

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- Be able to prove the impact your service is having. Robust evidence of the benefits of service intervention to individual service users;
- Learn from platform already existing from work done by English providers
- Demonstrate strategic relevance of your service. Be able to prove links between the outcomes for service users and other policy agendas. Assist in proving the long term benefits of Supporting People to the wider community.
- Be able to analyse own services and organisation better

Threats

- Threat to funding if performance against outcomes measures slips.
 - Risk that longitudinal evaluation of services is overlooked. Long term tracking of service users and evidence on long term positive outcomes is the only true test of outcomes measurement. Service users move around provision, and therefore the model should enable longer term monitoring by changing providers, requiring effective information transfer.
 - Greater risk of data protection / client confidentiality breach
 - Threat that outcomes are not properly validated
 - SP needs to take account of the fact that sub-optimal outcome might be the optimum outcome for particular clients given clients needs
 - Threat that SP imposes a standard framework which is not compatible with providers existing own systems
 - Providers' work on soft outcomes is not taken into account.
 - ICT compatibility / costs
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