

Understanding, measuring, and communicating the outcomes that customers of an in-home support service value.

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Aims/Objectives: What was the purpose what you did? Why is your topic important? What did you want to change? What difference did you want to make?

Disability service providers and service users are increasingly required to demonstrate evidence of outcomes to secure support and services. Outcomes measurement can support service evaluation and improvement activities, drive innovation, and increase accountability (Miller, 2012; Scotland, 2010; Social Ventures Australia, 2018). Outcomes measurement can also support understanding how people with disabilities are faring to promote equality of outcomes and support advocacy (Ayling, 2018). This paper explores the development of the outcomes framework and measurement approach of an in-home and community support service and the outcomes of value described by customers.

Methods/Process: Who was involved? What did you do? (100 words)

In this project, we worked with a large disability service organisation that provides in-home and community support to people with disabilities to develop an outcomes framework and measurement approach. We undertook a desktop review of policy and procedural documents, including funding and service plans, interviews with customers, and workshops with staff to identify the outcomes that the customers value from the service and to inform an appropriate measurement approach. Customers completed a short online survey, guided by the Community Services Outcomes Tree framework, that included multiple-choice and short-answer questions (Wilson et al., 2021a).

Results: What did you find? What changed? What difference did you make? What did you learn?

This study found that the customers valued change and maintenance outcomes in eight life area domains, including choice and empowerment, daily life, family, housing, employment, services, government benefits, health and social inclusion. When describing outcomes, customers and staff interchangeably discussed concepts related to activities, processes, inputs, outputs and outcomes. Valued outcomes in life area domains are interrelated and emerge as nested concepts; for example, a ‘no-change’ outcome supporting customers with activities of daily living can affect positive ‘change’ outcomes in people’s experience of choice and control whilst simultaneously preventing ‘negative change’ outcomes in health and housing domains.

Conclusion: How could other people use what you found out? What would you recommend other people do based on what you did and what you found out?

Findings from this study align with previous research highlighting the limited practice of outcomes measurement in disability services (Koritsas & Hagiliassis, 2018) and the variety of outcomes experienced by customers of consumer-directed models (Carey et al., 2018; Williams & Dickinson, 2016). The findings add to the literature by demonstrating the complexities of identifying and measuring outcomes resulting from disability services. (Jenkin et al., 2020; Wilson, 2006; Wilson et al., 2021b) and the interrelationship between outcomes in life domains (Wiesel et al., 2015). Desired ‘no-change’ outcomes in life domains contradict findings that outcome measurement approaches must consider only desired ‘change’ outcomes.

Alignment with the Conference Theme: How does your proposal address the conference theme of ‘New Frontiers’? How does your proposal showcase something new we can do to make the world a better place for people with disability? (50 words)

This study highlights emerging practices in outcomes measurement in disability services and considers the tensions and expectations of various stakeholders. It also includes the perspectives of people with disabilities and frontline staff in developing a bespoke outcomes measurement approach that uses the local language.