



What is person-centred care and why is it important?



What is person-centred care?

Person-centred care is a way of thinking and doing things that sees the people using health and social services as equal partners in planning, developing and monitoring care to make sure it meets their needs.

This means putting people and their families at the centre of decisions and seeing them as experts, working alongside professionals to get the best outcome.

**There is no one agreed definition of
'person-centred care.'**

The terms person-centred, individualised, personalised, patient-centred, family-centred and patient-centric have been used to signal a change in how health services engage with people.

It is about a mindset and philosophy, not just services or activities.

“Person-centred care is about a collaborative and respectful partnership between the service provider and user. The service provider respects the contribution the service user can make to their own health, such as their values, goals, past experience, and knowledge of their own health needs, and the service user respects the contribution the service provider can make, including their professional expertise and knowledge, information about the options available to the service user, and their values and experience.”

Dow B, Haralambous B, Bremner F, Fearn M. *What is person-centred health care? A literature review*. Melbourne: Victorian Government Department of Human Services and National Ageing Research Institute, 2006.

Components of person-centred care

- putting people at the centre of care
- taking into account people's preferences and needs
- coordinating and integrating care
- good communication, information and education
- making sure people are physically comfortable and safe
- emotional support
- involving family and friends
- continuity between and within services
- making sure people have access to appropriate care when they need it



Why is person-centred care important?

Person-centred care is a high priority

- Seen as a key component of high quality healthcare
- May help motivate people to look after themselves
- May be essential to help health services cope with increasing demands
- A priority in UK health policy and legislation

The NHS constitution has person-centred care as one of its seven core principles:

“The NHS aspires to put patients at the heart of everything it does. It should support individuals to promote and manage their own health. NHS services must reflect, and should be coordinated around and tailored to, the needs and preferences of patients, their families and their carers. Patients, with their families and carers, where appropriate, will be involved in and consulted on all decisions about their care and treatment. The NHS will actively encourage feedback from the public, patients and staff, welcome it and use it to improve its services.”

Person-centred care may improve quality

Research has found:

- improved patient experience and satisfaction
- more healthy behaviours
- more involvement in decisions
- some improved health outcomes
(less evidence about this)
- some reduction in how often people use services
(less evidence about this)
- improved satisfaction among professionals



Creating person-centred measures of quality

To be more person-centred, health services need to know what is most important to people.

Person-centred care can focus on people's individual health needs, but it is also about **involving people in planning and evaluating services.**

Words such as 'co-production' and 'co-design' are used to describe involving people in developing services and assessing their quality.

Although person-centred care puts patients at the heart of their care, **few approaches to measurement have been driven by patients** or build on aspects that patients and carers identify as most crucial.

The Health Innovation Network is doing something about this by finding out what is most important to people with dementia and their carers.

A **Delphi technique** is being used to get opinions from people with dementia, carers and other stakeholders.

People will be invited to rate the importance of aspects of the quality of dementia care. Their responses will be summarised and circulated for discussion in repeated rounds until consensus is reached. This will help to make sure that the things being measured are important to the people using services.

Quality statements from research evidence

1. What care is provided

- learning about dementia
- using services

2. How care is provided

- dignity and empathy
- involvement
- ongoing support

3. How people feel due to the care provided

- support to maintain some independence

The next step is to find out what people with dementia and their carers think makes good quality care.

This means that **a person-centred approach is the goal**, and metrics can then be developed to measure how well services in South London are doing and what needs to improve.