Self Management Briefing

June 2015

Background

Self management is central to Scottish Government's vision for health and social care and the policy framework for long term conditions. Given that more people than ever before are living with more than one long term condition and the experience of living with multiple long term conditions is linked to health inequalities, the Many Conditions One Life Action Plan establishes self management and integrated care and support for people living with multiple long term conditions as central to the work of health and social care partnerships, and a priority for concerted action, stating 'people living with multiple conditions should be supported to explore and understand what self management may mean for them.'

To date, much of the financial investment in self management activity has been through the Scottish Government's Self Management IMPACT Fund (managed by the ALLIANCE) and other central funding streams. This funding typically supports innovation and development rather than investing in the longer term delivery. Ensuring that the learning and capacity built by existing programmes and activities is effectively integrated into the new local planning and delivery arrangements will therefore be essential.

Key points about self management

Self management is not a particular tool or technique but an asset based approach which is focused on supporting a person to live well on their own terms with a long term condition(s) or being an unpaid carer.

Self management is about recognising that everyone has strengths, resources, skills and experience that supports their health and wellbeing and enables them to manage their long term condition(s) or caring role. Self management supports are designed to enhance these strengths and to support people to feel in control and able to manage well in their everyday life.

Factors people say are important to help their self management:
- Being the leading partner in decisions that affect them
- Being seen as a whole person with strengths, resources, skills and experience as well as physical, emotional, social and spiritual health
- Being supported to enhance their skills, social networks and confidence in order to help them manage the experience of living with long term condition(s) or being a carer
- Supporting people to find acceptance of the impact their caring role or health condition is having/will have
- Having choice and sense of control in the context of their health and life circumstances, and
- Having access to the right information in an accessible format, including personal health information

Self management must also be understood as part of a philosophy of care and support that is fundamental to the role of health and social care, based on an equal relationship between practitioners and the people they support. These relationships require practitioners to utilise their core skills such as those used in coaching and facilitation as much as their specialist skills and knowledge. This change in practice will need to be supported and resourced, and there is good practice within the third sector that can be drawn upon here.

There must also be investment in raising awareness and informing people and practitioners from all sectors about self management, as many people still don't fully understand the term or its relevance.

What is a typical self management project or programme?

There is no such thing as a typical project or programme however self management support often involves aspects of peer support by people with shared lived experience and supporting people to make links to communities (this may be communities of shared geography as well as communities of shared experience). Support also includes community led developments and person-centred innovations delivered in communities by national and local third sector organisations. For example, local or national third sector organisations already support a wide range of condition-specific peer support groups in communities across Scotland.

Investing in self management means developing approaches and projects that work with support in communities to strengthen and enhance people's skills and assets. It also means addressing the structural, material, social and relational barriers to individuals and communities being able to self manage such as stigma and financial exclusion.

How to ensure self management is planned for and enabled locally

The Self Management IMPACT Fund has so far supported over 200 innovative self management projects across Scotland. It has clearly demonstrated that people and communities hold the key to developing successful self management approaches.

An understanding of self management as an asset based approach will help you understand how to design, develop and deliver self management approaches and projects. It will mean involving people who use support and services and unpaid carers from the beginning in designing, delivering and evaluating solutions and in setting the agenda. Many people want to be involved and have significant knowledge and experience to contribute. It will also mean including third sector organisations and communities themselves.

Self management must be seen as a central theme when designing any support or services. In doing this, it is essential that people's experience of self management as well as current provision is mapped and understood so that we capitalise on the existing activity.

Here are some of the key questions you could ask to make this happen:-
- What is currently working well in the area to support people to self manage, where are there gaps?
- Are people who are self managing contributing to your understanding of this? Are people who are seldom heard also involved?

- Does the approach being developed seek to build upon the existing capacity of communities through the third sector to support self management?
- Does it recognise and capitalise on existing partnerships between statutory partners and the third sector which are founded on person-centred and self management principles?
- Does it enable self management approaches to be further developed and embedded – taking into account the core components we know are important to people?
- Are you planning for activities that help to raise awareness of self management in your area?

How will we know if we are getting it right?

Self management is not merely about reducing pressure on the system; it is a vital aspect of the prevention agenda – both in terms of tackling health inequalities and in the field of public health. Investing in support for self management initiatives will not mean that people no longer need support and services. What is more likely to change is the types of support people need; who is best placed to deliver this support; and when people feel they need to access these supports.

Research already shows[1] that people who are active in their own recovery have an improved prognosis and that they and their families experience improved quality of life. The current evidence also suggests that people may need to use services less, or less intensively, and that some of the secondary problems associated with living with long term conditions such as depression will be prevented as people feel more in control of and able to manage their symptoms themselves.

From a workforce perspective, services who work alongside people also report[2] higher levels of staff morale and increased motivation, creativity, productivity and effectiveness across the staff team.

Measuring Impact

Investing in support for self management and innovative approaches based on self management principles is integral to achieving the national outcomes for health and wellbeing, in particular:-
- People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer

- People, including those with disabilities or long term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community;
- Health and social care services are centred on helping to maintain or improve the quality of life of people who use those services;
- Health and social care services contribute to reducing health inequalities.

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[1] http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/files/briefing31.pdf

[2] http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/files/guide51.pdf

The local measures that are being developed to capture progress towards these outcomes will therefore provide a useful starting point for measuring the impact of specific investments in self management activity.

At an individual level, personal outcomes that have been successfully used to measure impact include:-

- I feel better able to manage my long term condition(s)/my caring role in the context of my life
- I have the support I need around me to help me manage my long term condition(s)/my caring role and don't feel so alone
- I feel greater hope for the future
- I know what I can do to help myself and who else can help me
- I am involved in decisions about my/the health and care of the person I care for
- By feeling more in charge of my long term condition, I feel more able to articulate my specific needs to others to inform and inspire

Useful Resources and Sources of Advice and Assistance

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland can support health and social care partnerships to connect with and find out about local activity in self management in your area. In conjunction with our members we can assist you in planning to ensure self management is embedded within strategic planning. For more information contact Sara Redmond, Self Management Partnership and Practice Programme Manager at: smns@alliance-scotland.org.uk.

You can connect to a range of resources and contacts through the Self Management Network Scotland.

The national My Condition, My Terms, My Life campaign aims to help improve public understanding of self management and encourages people living with long term conditions, their carers and those who support them to adopt a self management approach.

Self management supports Asset Based Community Development which is being explored as part of the Thriving Places Initiative through What Works Scotland.