

Learning Outcome:

2. Understand key concepts of individualised care to meet service users need

2.1 Explain the ways in which service users are supported with regards to:

- a) Empowerment b) Positive risk taking c) Advocacy

Person-centred care: transcript

As you've heard from many other sources on this course, an absolutely fundamental principle of modern health and social care is putting the person at the centre of the support offered. This is enshrined in the Care Act of 2014, which emphasises "the assumption that the individual is best-placed to judge the individual's well-being." Three important concepts of this person-centred approach are empowerment, positive risk-taking, and advocacy, and you will need to know about each of them in order to complete the assessment on this course. Let's have a quick look now at what they mean.

Empowerment

First, let's consider what empowerment means for service users in health and social care. When a person receiving care is empowered, it means that they are at the centre of decision-making regarding their care and support plan. The individual must be given all information regarding their care, enabling them to make their own decisions about what happens to them. Carers and care-workers usually need the consent of the service-user before making any changes to their service plan, although exceptions are made in the event of diminished capacity, in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act of 2005.

The benefits of empowerment are that it increases quality, individuality and compassion in care-provision. Furthermore, it aims to gradually reduce an individual's dependency on care services, which benefits the service user, and also lessens demand on service providers.

Advocacy

Sometimes, however, a service user might have too much difficulty understanding the process or implications of important decisions regarding their care, or may not be able to communicate their wishes, feelings or consent. In this case, the service-user can be represented by an advocate. An advocate is another person who acts in the service user's best interests and on their behalf, and is independent from their care providers. For example, this could be to remind a service user of their rights in decision-making, and to stand up for them, if they are being treated unfairly. The advocate might also help the service user to access care facilities, and represent them in discussions with care providers.

Each local authority is legally obliged to provide an advocate when requested, although a service user could also ask a friend or family-member to do this for them. A paid carer cannot also be a service-user's advocate.

Positive Risk-Taking

The third element we want to look at today is positive risk-taking. Now, traditionally, health and social care was about providing services in order to minimise risk. However, with a shift towards a person-centred approach comes a need to provide users with more choices about their care, and not just services. Inevitably, this brings with it more exposure to personal risk. For example, an elderly service-user may be encouraged to be as active as they want to be, and provisions could be made for this, such as double-bannisters on stairs, but all parties must accept that risk of falls or accidents will still exist. For care-providers, a positive approach to risk-taking means finding a balance between promoting empowerment and individual wellbeing and a duty of care and safeguarding.

In order to illustrate what positive risk-taking might look like, let's consider some examples that might exist within a care home for elderly service-users. Residents can be encouraged to get involved in activities such as helping to cook or serve meals, and to make their own hot drinks. Garden areas can be provided, and residents can be encouraged to spend time outside walking, relaxing or gardening, but those areas may need to be walled or fenced off to mitigate the risk of residents wandering off during times of confusion.

Conclusion

To summarise, positive risk-taking recognises that as well as potentially negative outcomes, risk taking can have positive benefits for individuals, enabling them to do things which most people take for granted. If managed well, risk can be beneficial, balancing necessary levels of self-protection with preserving reasonable levels of choice and control. A balance has to be achieved between the wishes of adults at risk of abuse or neglect, and the common law duty of care.

References:

- <http://www.enope.eu/patient-empowerment.aspx>
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