Person–Centred Care

A TOOLKIT FOR CARERS

10 principles
to adopt and embed Person–Centred Care

Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Older Persons

About

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland with Consortium partners, Skills Hubs and Skills Generation were contracted by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care to attract, train, and support the attraction and retention of Personal Care Workers (PCWs) across Queensland over 2 years, through the Home Care Workforce Support Program (HCWSP).

The HCWSP resulted in a significant number of learnings and opportunities for individuals and providers to understand, acknowledge, and implement PCC ways of working. These toolkits are designed to assist in the adoption of PCC by individuals and providers. For some, it will be about changing the way a provider operates, and ultimately adopting an important component of the Royal Commission into Aged Care recommendations. The dedicated HCWSP website includes stories, case studies, the evaluation report, and much more. References to these reports are included in this toolkit including QR codes for quick access.

Two toolkits have been developed as part of the outcomes from the Program:

1. Provider Toolkit: How to enable and empower Person-Centred Care in my workforce

2. Carer Toolkit: Key principles of Person-Centred Care and self-reflection.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Welcome to the Aged Care Support Workers Toolkit: Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Older Persons. This 'best practice' toolkit is designed to equip support workers with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to provide high-quality care to older individuals in aged care settings. By understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by older persons, support workers can deliver compassionate and person-centred care that promotes health, dignity, and wellbeing. Person-centred care focuses on the individual's unique needs, preferences, and values. It involves a shift from asking 'what's the matter with you' to 'what matters to you'. This approach ensures that every person has their whole world considered and is an active participant in the direction of their care and management plans.

Each of the principles of Person-Centred Care has a "self-reflection" module, to support you in how to consider and adopt Person-Centred Care in your daily workflow. This toolkit will guide you through the following principles:

1. The Conversations and Building Relationships
2. Shared Decision Making
3. Care Planning and Self-Management
4. Cultural Competence and Diversity Inclusion
5. Emotional Intelligence
6. Advocacy
7. Resilience and Self-Care
8. Ethical Practice
9. Technology and Digital Literacy
10. Reflective Practice, Continuous Learning & Improvement.

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What does person-centred mean?

Put simply, being person-centred is about focusing support on the needs of the person rather than the needs of the service. Older people requiring care aren't happy just to sit back and let service staff do what they think is best. They have their own views on what's best for them and their own priorities in life. So, as service providers and care professionals, we have to be flexible to meet their individual needs.

Person-centred care is about considering people's needs and goals, values, family situations, social circumstances, diverse identities, and lifestyles. Seeing the person as an individual can have a significant impact on their care and health outcomes. Person-centred care allows services to be provided in a way that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs, and values of people and those who care for them. Care delivered 'with' people rather than 'to' or 'for' them.

The key principles of person-centred care are:

- **Valuing people**: Treating people with dignity and respect. Being aware of their perspectives, values, beliefs, backgrounds, and preferences. Working in partnership to design and deliver services.

- **Autonomy**: Allowing and respecting choice. Balancing rights, risks, and responsibilities. Optimising a person's control, sharing power, and decision-making. Maximising independence by building on individual strengths, interests, and abilities.

- **Life experience**: Understanding the person's past, their present-day experience, and their hopes for the future. Supporting people to recognise and develop their own strengths and abilities to enable them to live an independent and fulfilling life.

- **Understanding relationships**: Collaborative relationships between the older person and their care professionals. Involvement of their friends and family in supporting their decisions. Social connection through the local community with opportunities to engage in meaningful activities.

Why is person-centred care so important?

Without Person-Centred Care, there are inherent safety and ethical risks in delivering care. When care is not tailored to the individual's needs, preferences, and circumstances, it can lead to:

- failure to offer people dignity, compassion or respect
- poorly coordinated care
- treating a person as a set of diagnoses or symptoms, without taking into account their wider emotional, social and practical needs, or those of their care professionals
- maintaining dependency, so that the older person fails to recognise and develop their strengths and abilities and live an independent and fulfilling life.

Many people want to play a more active role in their care, and there is growing evidence that approaches to person-centred care such as shared decision-making and self-management support can improve a range of factors, including patient experience, care quality, and health outcomes.

Specifically, when people play a more collaborative role in managing their care, they are less likely to use emergency hospital services, more likely to stick to their treatment plans and take their medicine correctly, and are more satisfied with their care.

One of the key shifts in person-centre care is moving from a reactive to a proactive model where preparation is key. Person-centred care can improve any aspect of care, from making an appointment to making decisions about transport. Person-centred care can improve communication, and support people living with chronic conditions (eg diabetes, depression and long-term pain), help people manage and adapt to changing circumstances, and improve overall quality of care.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider a time when you provided person-centred care.
2. How was the person involved in their care?
3. What difference did the person-centred approach make for the client?
4. What difference did the person-centred approach make for your experience as a carer?

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10 principles to adopt and embed Person-Centred Care

1. The Conversations and Building Relationships

Conversations about what matters to the person, what is working and not working, and what the future looks like

Effective communication is crucial in person-centred care. Find out what matters to the person, what is working and not working for them, and where they want to be in the future – therefore setting their agenda, and moving towards the outcomes that the person wants to achieve.

Being person-centred means we always have the person's safety, comfort, and wellbeing uppermost in our mind. Ensuring people are comfortable calls for us to be aware of the things that can cause discomfort – feeling cold or hot, being thirsty or hungry, being in pain or having an itch, needing to go to the toilet, or changing a sitting position – and taking steps to relieve the discomfort.

These foundational interactions also include gaining a greater understanding of how historical trauma can impact a client's ability to accept or deliver appropriate, respectful, and safe care. This involves understanding, recognising, and effectively responding to the impacts of all types of trauma.

Building a strong, trusting relationship with the person is crucial in person-centred care. It involves understanding the person's needs, preferences, and values, and working with them to meet these.

Instructions for self-reflection:

1. Consider how you might find out about a persons's experiences and expectations.
2. Discuss the importance of active listening and empathy.
3. Provide examples of questions that can help understand the person's needs, preferences, and values.
4. List strategies for building strong, trusting relationships, such as showing empathy, being reliable, and respecting the person's autonomy.
5. Provide examples of how strong, trusting relationships can improve the person's health outcomes and satisfaction with care.

A collaborative process to make decisions about care

Shared decision-making involves the person in all decisions about their care. Shared decision-making is a collaborative process between the person and their carer, with support and input from their family and the care team.

To make decisions, older people need knowledge, understanding, skills, and confidence to be more active partners in their care. Many people who need aged care have limited skills to:
*   manage their health conditions and medicines
*   provide information to doctors and other health carers
*   find their way through different parts of the health system to receive care.
*   understand risks and benefits of different care approaches
*   evaluate information for quality and credibility.

Good person-centred care will help people develop knowledge skills and confidence to be more active in their care. Here's why shared decision-making is important:

Client Autonomy: Shared decision-making respects and promotes individual autonomy. It acknowledges people have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, health, and lifestyles.

Personalised Care: By incorporating the person's preferences and values, shared decision-making ensures the care plan is tailored to the individual's goals and needs. This can lead to better satisfaction and health outcomes.

Improved Understanding: Shared decision-making can help people better understand their health state and care options.

Better participation: When people are involved in decision-making, they are more likely to actively engage in their care plan.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider how to involve a person in decisions about their care.
2. Provide examples of how shared decision-making can improve the person's health outcomes and satisfaction with care.
3. Consider how you would communicate the persons's needs and wishes with your supervisor.

Identifying the person's needs and outlining how these will be met

The care plan is an essential document defining the person's needs and how these will be met. Care planning is a proactive process with a focus on supporting the "strength" based approach giving people a greater sense of control over their lives and health by focusing on what is important to them and increasing their knowledge, skills, and confidence to self-care. The outcome is a single plan, no matter how many conditions or issues have been identified, which should be reviewed regularly. This reflects the fact that care planning is a continuous process, not a one-off event. Carrying out the care plan requires personalised attention and ongoing conversations to keep checking the persons's expectations and experiences.

Self-management involves providing the person with the skills and confidence to manage their own health and care. Every day, anyone receiving care will make decisions, take actions, and manage many aspects of their day-to-day of life. Self-management supports people to maintain knowledge, skills, and confidence, and keep doing the things they need to do. Self-management also involves knowing when and how to assist them to do the things they need help to do.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Explain the concept of self-management support and its importance in person-centred care.
2. Discuss how to provide self-management support, including teaching the person skills, providing them with resources, and supporting their confidence.
3. Provide examples of how self-management support can improve the person's health outcomes and satisfaction with care.
4. Explain the concept of care planning and its role in person-centred care.
5. Discuss how to follow a care plan that meets the person's needs, preferences, and values.

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Understanding, respecting and responding to the unique combination of variables in every interaction

Cultural competence is about understanding, respecting, and responding to the unique cultural background of a person and their community. Key considerations for the carer when adopting person-centred care include:

- understand that your work is occurring within the person's home. You need to respect their personal domain. In turn, the client respects your need for safety, appropriate language, and other duties.

- be aware your own predjudices, and seek to keep an open mind. Avoid ageism, sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

- if you experience or observe discrimination, discuss it with your supervisor.

- practice inclusive language. Think about how your words and actions might affect the person you are caring for.

- understand how past trauma can impact a client's acceptance and experience of care.

- focus on the care relationship, not just on getting the job done.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Think about some of the words or actions that might be uncomfortable for some of your clients.
2. Consider how you might find out more about the person's cultural background, beliefs, and values.

Understanding and managing emotions to improve care outcomes

It is important to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways when engaging with others. This can help with communication, relieve tensions in relationships, and help overcome challenges. Understanding your feelings involves:

1. **Self-Awareness:** the ability to recognise and understand your feelings.

2. **Self-Regulation:** the ability to stay calm and composed even when dealing with difficult or emotionally charged situations. This can help stop you from being overwhelmed by feelings, and prevent burnt out. Staying calm can also create a more supportive and calming environment for the person receiving the care.

3. **Motivation:** being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of obstacles.

4. **Empathy:** the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy can help to build a strong, trusting relationship.

5. **Social Skills:** ability to interact and communicate effectively with others. These skills can help ensure the person's needs are met.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider how to develop emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.
2. Consider some emotionally charged situations and how you have dealt with your own feelings.

Autonomy, empowerment, protection and coordination

Advocacy involves supporting the rights of the person you're caring for and ensuring they're treated fairly and respectfully. This can involve a range of activities, such as helping the person to understand and exercise their rights, voicing their needs and preferences, and assisting them in making decisions about their care. Advocacy is a crucial aspect of person-centred care for several reasons:

1. **Respect for Individual Autonomy:** Advocacy supports the principle of individual autonomy, which is a key aspect of person-centred care. It ensures the person's values, beliefs, and preferences are respected and considered in their care. Autonomy also involves consent, ie they want you to advocate for them.

2. **Empowerment:** Advocacy empowers the person to take an active role in their care. It helps them to understand their condition, treatment options, and potential outcomes, enabling them to make informed decisions about their care.

3. **Protection of Rights:** Advocacy helps to protect the person's rights, such as the right to privacy, the right to informed consent, and the right to refuse treatment. It ensures that these rights are respected by healthcare providers.

4. **Coordination of Care:** Advocacy can help to coordinate care, particularly in complex cases where the person is receiving care from multiple providers. The advocate can ensure all providers are working together effectively and the person's care is consistent and well-coordinated. In the case of a care worker, this may involve communicating information back to the supervisor or case manager.

5. **Improvement of Care Quality:** By voicing the person's needs and preferences, advocacy can help to improve the quality of care.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider how to advocate for the person, including understanding their rights, communicating effectively, and challenging decisions when necessary.
2. Reflect on a time when you have felt a person's rights have needed protecting, and what your role might have been.

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Building resilience and adapting to constant change

Resilience and self-care are crucial for care professionals to manage stress and avoid burnout.

Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. It's about bouncing back. For a carer, this could mean dealing with the physical and emotional demands of caring, balancing caregiving with other responsibilities, or coping with the emotional impact of a client's illness or decline. Resilience also includes dealing with unexpected and confronting events within the care environment.

Building resilience involves several strategies, including:

Maintaining a Positive Outlook: Focusing on the positive aspects of caregiving, such as the satisfaction of helping someone else, rather than just the challenges and difficulties.

Developing Strong Relationships: Having a strong support network can provide emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging.

Debriefing and problem-solving: Finding time to talk with colleagues and supervisors about difficult or challenging circumstances.

Taking Care of Physical Health: Boosting resilience by improving physical health and reducing stress by regular exercise, a healthy diet, and adequate sleep.

Practicing Mindfulness and Stress Management Techniques: Reducing stress and promoting a sense of calm and wellebing by practicing techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching.

Setting Boundaries: Setting limits on the amount of time and energy devoted to caregiving, to ensure that the carer also has time for their own needs and interests.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider strategies you could use to build resilience and practice self-care.
2. Provide examples of how resilience and self-care can improve the carer's wellbeing and effectiveness in their role.

Acting in the best interests of the person, respecting their rights and dignity, and maintaining professional boundaries

Ethical practice involves acting in the best interests of the person, respecting their rights and dignity, and maintaining professional boundaries. Key principles of ethical practice include:

Respect for Autonomy: respecting the person's right to make their own decisions about their care. It means providing the person with the information they need to make informed decisions, and supporting their choices even if the carer disagrees with them.

Beneficence: acting in the best interests of the person. It means providing care that promotes the person's health and wellbeing, and avoiding actions that could harm them.

Non-Maleficence: "do no harm" involves avoiding actions that could harm the person. This includes physical harm, such as injury or illness, as well as psychological harm, such as distress or loss of dignity.

Justice: treating the person fairly and equitably. It means providing care that is appropriate to the person's needs, and not discriminating based on factors such as age, race, gender, identity, disability, or socioeconomic status.

Confidentiality: respecting the person's privacy and keeping their personal information confidential. It means not sharing information about the person without their consent, except in situations where it is necessary to protect their health or safety.

Professional Boundaries: maintaining appropriate boundaries in the carer-patient relationship. It means avoiding relationships or activities that could compromise the carer's professional judgment or exploit the person they are caring for. Examples of when these boundaries become blurred includes:
- clients demanding too much time (time boundaries) or activities that are not approved in the care plan (role boundaries)
- divulging too much personal information to client, including address and personal phone number
- leading client to believe you are friends beyond the care role.
- offloading personal opinions and advice
- prying too much into the client's life, beyond the needs of person-centred care
- visiting outside of contracted hours
- knowing when to involve your supervisor.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Consider a time when you feel that ethical practice or boundaries may have been threatened.
2. Consider what you would do if a client asked you for personal information or for you to go beyond your role as outlined in the care plan.

Using Technology to enhance the quality of care

Technology can significantly enhance the quality of care provided by a carer through improved communication, planning, and reporting. Here's how:

Access to Care plan: Accessing the care plan online and when onsite, can help to keep the care on track.

Communication: Digital tools can improve coordination of care and ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the person's health and care plan. For example, phone, email, or web apps can be used to let the person know about changes in their schedule or if the carer is running late.

Health Monitoring: Various digital devices and apps can monitor vital signs, medication adherence, and other health-related factors. This can provide valuable data that can inform care decisions and potentially alert the carer to any health issues early on.

Telehealth: Telehealth services can allow the person being cared for to consult with healthcare professionals remotely. This can be particularly beneficial for those who have difficulty leaving their homes or live in remote areas.

Online Support Groups: Online support groups for care workers can help with learning and problem-solving. For example Communities of Practice.

Podcasts: Podcasts can be an efficient way to learn new skills. They can be listened to while driving between clients. See for example COTA (QLD) SNACK podcasts.

Learning and Development: There are numerous online courses, webinars, and resources available that care professionals can use to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Technology should be used to enhance care, not replace the personal connection and empathy that are at the heart of caregiving. Issues such as digital privacy and security, as well as ensuring equal access to technology, should also be considered.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Discuss how to use technology effectively in person-centred care, including using digital communication tools, accessing online information, and using health monitoring devices.
2. Identify what technology you use in your role as a carer.
3. Identify in what ways has the use of technolology improved person-centred care.

Thinking about your own work, regularly updating your knowledge and skills, and looking for ways to improve

Reflective practice involves thinking about your own work and how you can improve. It involves taking a step back and thinking about your actions, decisions, and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the situation and improve future practices.

Continuous learning and improvement are key to delivering high-quality person-centred care. Key points to consider include:

Understanding the Importance of Continuous Learning: As a carer, you need to stay updated to provide the best care possible. Continuous learning also helps you adapt to changes in policies, procedures, and best practices.

Pursuing Formal Education and Training: This could include attending workshops, seminars, webinars, or courses related to your field.

Peer Learning: Learning from your colleagues can be incredibly valuable. They may have experiences or knowledge you don't, and sharing this information can benefit everyone.

Developing Soft Skills: In addition to technical skills, care professionals also need to develop soft skills such as communication, empathy, and problem-solving. These skills are often developed through experience and reflection.

Self-Care: Continuous learning isn't just about professional development. It's also important to learn about self-care and stress management to prevent burnout.

Instructions for self-reflection:
1. Engage in reflective practice, including asking yourself questions about your work, seeking feedback, and considering being open to constructive feedback.
2. Identify opportunities for continuous learning and improvement that you might engage in.

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Summary

This toolkit provides a comprehensive guide to delivering person-centred care. It covers the key concepts, skills, and strategies care professionals need to understand and apply in their practice. By using this toolkit, care professionals can enhance their ability to provide care that is truly centred on the person's needs, preferences, and values, leading to improved health outcomes and satisfaction with care.

Remember, person-centred care is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires flexibility, adaptability, and a commitment to respecting each person's individuality. As a carer, your role is to empower the person to take an active role in their care and to support them in achieving their health and wellbeing goals.

Finally, it's important to note that person-centred care is a continuous learning process. As a carer, you should be open to feedback, willing to reflect on your practice, and committed to continuous professional development. This will ensure that you are always improving your ability to provide person-centred care and you are staying up-to-date with the latest research and best practices in the field.

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