

Typical errors when developing outcomes



Not being specific enough or measurable

Why is this a problem?

If an outcome is not specific enough it becomes really hard to measure whether it has been achieved and has made a difference in the person's life. It can also become subject to interpretation.

The outcome may state how it can be measured, e.g. 'To go swimming with my friends at least once a week'. Or we may have ways to measure the outcome, e.g. 'Brenda feels confident walking to the local shop'. Here we might count how many times she goes to the shop and use confidence scaling with her to measure progress.

Poor example

"To improve my fitness and stamina."

Better example

"I am using my manual wheelchair 12-14 hrs per day and I am not too tired and having to go to bed in the afternoon. I am going out 2-3 evenings each week with my friends."



Not being achievable

Why is this a problem?

It's important that we understand what is within the sphere of influence of the person and those around them. There are some things that we have no control over, making friends or falling in love, for example. What we can do is create conditions where some things are more likely to happen. If we write an outcome and then check whether it's within the gift of the person, or those around the person (including any professional support) and realise that it's not achievable, we don't ignore it, instead, we go back and rewrite it.

Poor example

"Lucy will join a walking group and make 2 new friends."

Better example

"Lucy will spend time with other people who share her interests (such as walking) at least twice each week."



Not linking the outcome to what matters to the person

Why is this a problem?

Developing outcomes has to start with the person. This should always be our very first port of call. We cannot support people to develop person-centred outcomes if we don't first understand two key things at least. We must know what matters to them and what their future aspirations might be. This ensures our starting point is rooted in the things that are important to them, not to others and sets the direction of travel.

Not having this understanding puts us in danger of imposing our own ideas and often developing service driven outcomes.

To gain this understanding we need to have a person centred conversation. The outcome of this conversation can be recorded in lots of different ways; it is the quality of the conversation that matters.

Poor example

"Rory's team to organise regular activities in the community."

Better example

"Rory goes out to live music venues at least twice a month. He especially enjoys country music and 80's cover bands."



Using jargon or service speak

Why is this a problem?

Although using jargon can be an efficient way of communicating with fellow professionals, it can have several negative consequences when we use it with people who are using services and when it shows up in a person's outcome.

- The person may not feel ownership of the outcome if it's not written in a way that feels personal to them.
- Can appear vague and generic, which in turn can mean it's hard to measure progress.
- Can feel like it is a professional prescription, rather than a co produced outcome based on what the person wants to change or achieve.
- Can feel confusing to the person.
- Can perpetuate a power-over relationship.

Poor example

"To mobilise independently."

Better example

"To be able to walk from the lounge to the downstairs toilet when I need to, without losing my breath."



Embedding the solution or resource in the outcome

Why is this a problem?

Coming up with solutions is really important, however, we need to understand what it is that the person wants to change or achieve first. When a solution is embedded in the outcome it prevents us from further exploring a range of ideas or making the most of a person's strengths and resources. This can result in quick fixes that don't last and missed opportunities.

Poor example

"Pat to have four homecare visits a day."

Better example

"Pat to stay living safely in her own home, surrounded by friends, family and neighbours."