

Supporting person-centred care in Scotland:

What enables effective self management?



Introduction

Self management is a way of living and working that means people living with long term conditions feel more in control of their own health and wellbeing. It puts people 'in the driving seat'¹ of their care.

Self Management Reflective Practice (SMRP) is an in-depth, CPD-accredited training session delivered by the Self Management team at the ALLIANCE. The Self Management Programme within the ALLIANCE is funded by Scottish Government. The session was designed with the voices of lived experience at heart and aims to enable staff working or studying in health and social care settings to look at what they are already doing in their role to support individuals with self management and how this can be strengthened through relevant tools and support.

This report summarises the findings of a thematic analysis of data from session discussion notes and feedback gathered via surveys from approximately 600 participants. A full report with a more detailed analysis is available.



Key barriers

The complex landscape within the healthcare system, as well as more widely, creates barriers to supporting self management. Analysis found 3 key areas where this happens:

Systemic challenges

These include funding limitations which restrict resources and staff time, as well as insecure funding affecting availability of services altogether, particularly third-sector services. Physical and environmental barriers, such as those created by socioeconomic disparities, worsened by cost of living pressures, also inhibit individuals' capacity to self manage. Finally, cultural barriers within health and social care settings can create and uphold barriers, through reinforcing power imbalances, or reluctance to adapt and change services for continuous improvement.

¹ [Gaun Yersel, the Self Management Strategy for Scotland](#)

Within the role of the professional

A lack of time and resources can hinder professionals' ability to fully understand the person and their support requirements, and to build a trusting relationship. Eventually this can lead to poorer health outcomes for individuals, with subsequent additional support requirements.

Professionals frequently identified lack of awareness around the principles of self management and available resources, in addition to lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities of other services, as a major barrier. This affected their confidence, as did the significant changes in mindset and practice required to shift to truly person-centred care.

At the level of the individual

All of these challenges ultimately affect individuals and make it more challenging for them to self manage. The 'fixer' culture and power imbalances prevalent within healthcare can disempower and reduce motivation to self manage. Wider factors impacting people's lives, such as poverty, digital literacy or unmet access needs impact on their ability to access self management support or resources, or to engage with them effectively.

Key enablers

While the challenges that were identified were categorised at systemic, individual or professional levels, the enablers and opportunities explored during sessions centred on things that are within the capacity of the professional to address. Some key enablers are listed below:

Enablers for professionals within their role and place of work

- Networks and collaboration
- Learning, reflection and personal development
- Role clarity and professional practice
- Promoting education on self management

Enablers for professionals when working with individuals

- Person centred care and relationships
- Open communication
- Empowering approach

Other system-wide enablers for self management support

- Organisational support
- Improved IT systems
- Promoting a culture of self management

Impact

How sessions have supported professionals' approach

The small group discussions within sessions encouraged participation while the mix of activities kept momentum and engagement, and facilitators were consistently described as knowledgeable, approachable, and skilled in guiding the discussions. Several consistent themes emerged that demonstrated the effectiveness of the approach taken, particularly in fostering engagement, reflection, and collaborative learning. Participants strongly valued the opportunity to connect with colleagues from different roles and services and the exposure to new ideas and approaches.

What support professionals still need

As outlined above, there are several enablers at different levels for health and social care professionals to support self management. The following specific measures were identified by participants as key areas that would support them in their roles:

- Information and communication
- Access to resources and signposting
- Training, learning and development
- Networking and peer support
- Ongoing practical support on self management
- Time and capacity to embed self management in practice
- Increased public understanding of self management
- Emotional support and staff wellbeing

Staff who participated in sessions already feel somewhat supported, but require this support to confidently embed self management into everyday practice.



Conclusion

The findings in this report demonstrate that while there is a clear commitment among healthcare professionals to adopt more person centred, empowering approaches, this is often constrained by systemic pressures including limited resources, workforce capacity and entrenched cultural norms.

Supported self management plays a crucial role in prevention and delivers benefits for both staff and individuals. By investing in the identified enablers, including training such as the Self Management Reflective Practice sessions, there is a strong opportunity to build a more person centred, collaborative and sustainable health and social care model in Scotland - one that enables individuals to take an active role in managing their own health and wellbeing.

Relationships are the bedrock of self management

Professor Lisa Kidd, 2023

About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector membership organisation for health and social care in Scotland, bringing together over 3,500 individuals and organisations committed to ensuring everyone has a strong voice and the right to live well with dignity and respect.

We work to enhance the wellbeing of people and communities by reshaping services to better meet their needs. We focus on empowering people with lived experience, supporting, embedding positive change, and championing the third sector.

At the ALLIANCE, we are committed to upholding human rights, ensuring that people are meaningfully involved at every level of decision making and implementation. We work closely with the Scottish Government, NHS Boards, universities, and other key partners to deliver impactful projects and create lasting change. Together, our voice is stronger.

 0141 404 0231  info@alliance-scotland.org.uk

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