

An Evaluation of the Personal Outcomes Network

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Context

A personal outcomes approach to assessment, planning and review aims to shift engagement away from service-led approaches and towards what matters most to the person. Fostered through collaboration, a personal outcomes approach involves everyone working together to achieve the best possible impact on the individual's life.

The Personal Outcomes Network (PON) was founded in 2015, initially hosted by the SSSC and funded by the Scottish Government. From the outset it was organised by diverse organisations and practitioners with an interest in embedding personal outcomes approaches in policy and practice in Scotland. In 2023, the PON stands as a national cross-sector network with more than 300 members from across health, social care, education, and housing. Members come from a range of professional backgrounds but share a common vision for developing and implementing personal outcomes approaches.

Members and stakeholders can engage with the PON through learning events which are hosted both online and in-person. Some members attend meetings regularly, others attend selectively on topics of interest and all members sign up to receive information and updates on network activities through the mailing list. Members can also engage with PON learning, resources, and reflections through the PON website¹.

The PON is funded by the Scottish Government, and last year received a grant of £18,500, which was allocated to:

- Running costs for 3 face-to face-events and 2 online meetings (each with 40-50 attendees)
- Dedicated staffing time for the PON co-ordinator, tasked with leading the co-ordinating group and the continued expansion of the network
- Knowledge exchange and project development opportunities
- Incidental running costs of the network

The Scottish Government agreed on additional £3000 for 2023/24 funding to commission this external evaluation.

The network's funding has been hosted by NHS Education Scotland (NES) for the past four years. Currently, NES manages the administration of the network, including database management and communications without allocated funding.

PON activities are organised and delivered by a co-ordinating group, which includes the following members:

- Emma Miller, University of Strathclyde
- Susan Kelso, The Care Inspectorate
- Ellen Daly, Iriss
- Margaret Reid Arbuckle, Health and Social Care Alliance
- Julie Gardner, Thistle Foundation
- Ashleigh Spalding, Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- Craig McGregor, Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

¹ <https://personaloutcomes.network/personal-outcomes/>

- Helen McFarlane, NHS Education Scotland (NES)

Previous evaluations of the PON are available from 2017² and 2020³, and include more in-depth history of the network's journey to date.

About this evaluation

In October 2023, The Personal Outcomes Network (PON) co-ordinating group commissioned Three Sisters Consultancy to undertake an independent evaluation of the PON. This evaluation aimed to understand the experiences of PON members, and the impact of the network on policy and practice across Scotland and beyond.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- obtain a broad-based picture of member experiences and learning
- obtain a broad-based picture of how membership is impacting on policy and practice
- gather stories of impact from PON members
- support the co-ordinating group in understanding what is working well and what else needs to happen to improve outcomes

Drawing on the principles of a personal outcomes approach, this evaluation gathered data on the strength, capacity, and resilience of the network, as well as collaborating with network members and organisers to find out more about how the network could be improved.

Methods

This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, drawing mainly on the stories and experiences of PON members. Data was gathered from:

- An online survey circulated across the network, completed by 42 network members
- 10 semi-structured qualitative online interviews with PON members representing a range of professional backgrounds and different lengths of membership
- A reflective discussion with the PON's co-ordinating group
- Publicly available resources, including the PON's values and principles documentation, previous evaluation and feedback from PON events.

Findings from this evaluation were shared at a PON event in December 2023 and members had the opportunity to pose questions and add additional information, which are integrated into this report.

² <https://personaloutcomes.network/pon-initial-evaluation-2017/>

³ <https://personaloutcomes.network/pon-review-and-impact-2020/>

Representation

The PON co-ordinating group supported the evaluation by promoting the survey, offering anonymised membership data and suggesting members to interview. However, members were also offered the opportunity to self-select to share stories of impact, and suggestions for what should change. The result was an evaluation that was able to connect with a range of members from across sectors.

Sector	Survey responses
Third Sector	14
National Body	10
Local Authority	6
NHS	4
Private sector consultancy	1
Interface btw all main sectors	1
Government	1
Disability and Community Services in Australia	1
Academic	1
Grand Total	39

Understanding the context

Health and social care services in Scotland continue to face increasing and unprecedented pressures, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis and the lasting impact of COVID-19. PON members reported that despite ongoing efforts to embed personal outcomes approaches, health and social care partnerships still struggle to make the radical and systemic changes necessary to put people and their personal outcomes at the centre of support:

The problem we face currently is that we have a system which is built around service led imperatives... and primarily all of the data we collect is focused on activity and outputs. So that will cause the system to behave in a particular way and be designed and built in a particular way.

PON member, in interview

Other participants reported that continued pressure across health, social care and housing sectors make it hard to prioritise 'softer' agendas, including personal outcomes approaches. One PON member highlighted that increased recording, reporting and evaluation pressures on frontline staff created additional barriers and made them hesitant to start new initiatives.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the delivery of health and social care and has had a lasting impact on the standard working arrangements for PON members, many of whom now work from home or on a hybrid basis. One member reflected on the relief that came when the PON restarted its event programme after a brief COVID hiatus:

COVID you know kind of really knocked the stuffing out of everybody. So it's been a breath of fresh air to go, to go back to hear what people are doing to refocus. Yeah, so one of the direct outcomes of and to get an appetite I suppose for maybe tentatively starting to do some development

PON member, in interview

Despite these challenges, PON members consistently noted the pockets of exemplary, innovative practice in Scotland, and the ongoing commitment of frontline staff to delivering meaningful care.

This report will revisit these contextual challenges in its final recommendations section.

PON Member Experiences

How people access the network

Most members who responded to the evaluation survey engaged in more than one way with the network, including attendance at events, reading updates and engaging with materials and learning on the PON website.

How do you usually engage with the PON?	Survey respondents	
I attend PON events/meetings	29	26 survey respondents attended PON events (always, often, or sometimes). 10 respondents rarely attended meetings and 3 had never attended a meeting due to distance or length of membership.
I read updates and communications from the PON	26	
I access materials on the PON website	22	It is interesting to consider the experiences of these 13 respondents who had rarely or never attended events, but still self-identified as PON members. This suggests there is a cohort within the membership that does not see events as vital to participation. An important consideration of the network is how to connect with these members outside of events, including through the PON website.
I am involved in managing/organising the PON	6	
Other	2	

Members reported that they found out about the PON through the network co-ordinating group and colleagues. Members regularly signposted colleagues and stakeholders to the network to expand its reach.

The values of the network

Members connected strongly with the values of the network⁴, grounded in relational practice and what matters most to people.

Health and social care always appears to be going through [some] form of challenge or another but the PON helps me keep focused on the individuals and families we are there to support. PON member, survey response

Another member reflected that one of the reasons she engaged so closely with the PON was that she felt PON values aligned with her own organisation's values and by extension, that participation in the network would further her organisation's own aims.

⁴ <https://personaloutcomes.network/values-and-principles/>

The diversity of PON membership

Consistently, the diversity of membership and depth of experience across the network was highly praised by PON members. One member reflected that the key resource the PON draws on is its membership:

You know, networks thrive and survive by, you know, people attending and being involved and participating. - PON member, in interview

Members were positive about the PON's cross-sector membership and valued the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in health, social care, housing, academia, and policy. Some members reported that the diversity of membership sparked creativity and allowed them to draw on other perspectives to deal with 'bedded in' issues.

It's really beneficial to be part of a cross-sector, multi-disciplinary group to connect the dots across inspection, regulation, education, practice, policy and research" - PON member, survey response

Members also reflected on the importance of representation across hierarchies. The PON includes members who are working in the frontlines of health and social care, as well as members who have strategic leadership roles. Collaborating across hierarchies was seen as beneficial to all; it offered frontline staff the opportunity to share their real experiences and challenges and benefitted members in senior strategic roles, who felt more grounded in the realities of daily practice. Two PON members reflected that this cross-hierarchy structure is not available to them in any other forum outside of the PON.

Two international members of the network were interviewed as part of the evaluation, and both members reflected that cross-border participation enhanced the network's value.

While not an aim of this evaluation, some members did reflect on gaps in membership which included: representatives from the independent sector, representatives from more local authority areas and more diversity of lived experience, including disabled and neurodivergent people.

One PON member shared their view that lived experience is often separated from professional experience, but that everyone in Scotland will at some point in their life access health, social care and housing services. In this way, all members bring lived experience to the PON.

How it feels to be part of the PON

Many PON members described the network as a warm, welcoming, and non-judgemental space. The PON was seen by many as an opportunity to renew their commitment to the personal outcomes agenda and reconnect with the principles underpinning personal outcomes approaches.

Many PON members felt it was valuable to collaborate with peers in a shared challenge and felt energised by time spent with peers:

After PON events often feel like I have had a 'battery recharge'!
PON member, survey response

In addition, two members made specific mention of feeling listened to through the PON's continuous evaluation:

They genuinely constantly seek for what their membership is looking for
PON member, survey response

Across this evaluation, members reported high levels of trust and psychological safety⁵, particularly when sharing challenges in their practice. However, some members reflected that they felt frustrated when they returned to their daily work environment and were not met with the same enthusiasm and support.

The relevance of PON events to its membership

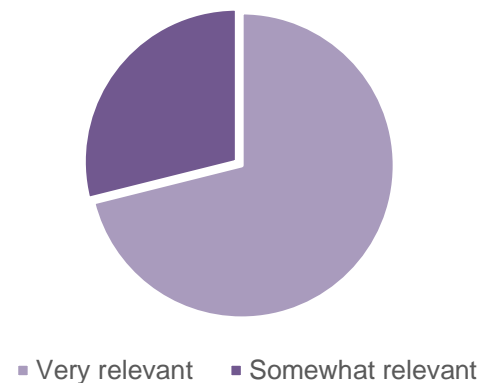
When asked about the relevance of PON meeting topics, all respondents to the survey said the content was either somewhat relevant (29%) or very relevant (71%) to their work. Members also self-selected to attend events which were of most relevant to them.

One member reflected that they often found attending meetings with a focus which may initially seem 'dry' can result in unexpected connections and opportunities:

...you can find little nuggets in there even if it seems like it's not directly for you, you can say, well, I can literally think about oh, we've been having this problem. Let's see if that helps.

PON network member, in interview

How relevant are PON event topics to your own work?



Members made suggestions for future areas of interest, including more regular mention of supporting carers. There is also appetite for the incorporation of more cross-disciplinary learning, including behaviour sciences and human systems learning, to understand more about how to support people who struggle to know what matters to them. One member felt that the topics could feel repetitive:

Can start to feel a bit samey sometimes with well-known contributors, are we missing what else there is? – PON member, survey response

Flexible engagement with the PON

PON members were generally positive about the way that the network was organised and delivered, with different events focusing on areas of practice (i.e. carers, realistic medicine). Members did not feel that they had to attend regularly to be part of the network, and felt that the ability to select relevant events to attend meant they could balance membership with professional pressures.

⁵ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/safety-culture-learning-from-best-practice/>

One member felt it was important that they were able to maintain their PON membership when moving across role, sector and organisation, which is often not possible in professional membership organisations or place-based groups.

Another member shared her relief that the network was not a taxing commitment for members:

I can dip in, and dip out based on what's being spoken about. Like it's not meeting for meeting's sake. There's usually a focus, a topic, a bit of news or whatever. So I can choose to dip in and out. And it's not onerous either, you know, and I don't feel there's anything asked of me apart from coming and listening and maybe, you know, taking that back to my community, you know, maybe I should be doing more. But it kind of feels like a safe helpful space to learn to be able to bring back good stuff

PON member, in interview

Hybrid delivery

The PON, like many networks operating in the context of pandemic recovery, must consider how best to engage with people who are now working remotely or in a hybrid role.

When asked about their preference for the future delivery of network events, PON members favoured hybrid delivery, with both in person and face to face meetings. Most members also recognised the benefit of moving between cities to host events, offering equitable opportunities for members to attend in person regardless of their geography. This model of delivery poses additional costs to network, who have been restricted in the use of venues by current funding.

What is your preference for the future delivery of PON events?	Survey responses
Blend of face to face and in person meetings moving between cities to host (hybrid)	17
Blend of face to face and in person meetings (hybrid)	14
Fully face to face	3
Fully online	3
Other	1

PON Members and organisers reflected that face-to-face meetings offered more opportunities to connect and network than online spaces. One member also shared that stepping out of their regular environment enabled them to gain perspective and spark ideas.

However, members also recognised that online meetings offered more opportunities for diversity in attendees, welcoming participation from a wider geographical area, and being more accessible for some members including disabled and neurodivergent members. The PON's co-ordinating group reflected that online events were more suited to disseminating information rather than engagement.

The value of the network to its members

Across survey responses and qualitative interviews, PON members were able to identify a range of impacts of the network on their daily practice and delivery, including the development of:

- Staff training
- Assessment and care planning tools
- Outcomes recording processes
- Support and supervision of staff
- National policy and guidance development
- Confidence building
- Approaches to inspection and improvement
- A 'reality check' for professionals at a distance from the frontline
- Renewed commitment to principles and values

A further reaching, more in-depth evaluation would be able to trace the path of impact of PON membership through to improved outcomes for people accessing Scotland's health and social care.

One PON member reflected that due to the pressures on health and social care, progress towards a personal outcomes approach was often slow, but that even small wins should be celebrated:

It's a bit like pushing a boulder up the hill, you know, it's you just got to keep asking, keep at it. And it's small gains. - PON member, in interview

The evaluation survey asked participants: What do you value most about your engagement with the Personal Outcomes Network? Members were able to select more than one option, and most did, with learning about best practice as the most common response.

Across this evaluation, members consistently emphasised the value of sharing practical, concrete examples of how organisations are embedding personal outcomes across the network. The practice of sharing processes, paperwork, stories and challenges was important for members, who felt more equipped to make changes in their own settings when armed with evidence of what was possible. The ability to do this also reflected a particular way in which the PON disassembles the silos between organisations:

What do you value most about your engagement with the Personal Outcomes Network?	Responses
Learning more about best practice in personal outcomes	30
Resources shared through the network	22
Space to reflect	18
Meeting new people	14
Practical support to embed personal outcomes (i.e. outcomes recording)	13
Links to policy	11
Support from people facing similar challenges to me	9
Other	2

Historically people are really guarded about their own paperwork and their own systems. Like, you know, there's that sort of, well, no, we do it our way and you can do it your way. So there's something sometimes nice about everyone actually sharing and saying this is literally the systems we use.... you know, that sort of thing where we kindly nick from each other all the time
PON member, in interview

The impact of the network on its members, policy and practice

Through this evaluation members reflected on several key change outcomes that were a result of their membership of and participation in the Personal Outcomes Network, that fell under the following thematic headings:

1. Improved understanding of personal outcomes
2. Change of language and approach
3. Direct impact on progressing the implementation of personal outcomes from personal to national level
4. Staying true to Personal Outcomes Values
5. Regulation

Five mini-impact case stories were developed for this evaluation, which are included as an appendix to this report.

Improved understanding of personal outcomes

For some PON members, a key outcome of participating in the PON was an improved understanding of what personal outcomes really are:

It has helped me be clearer in my role...the difference between a personal outcome approach and "being person centred" - PON member, survey response

Another member said the PON offered a good overview of the national and local progress of personal outcomes agendas, as well as the barriers and facilitators to change:

Have good intelligence about how people in different local areas are experiencing shared challenges, shared opportunity to influence policy.
PON member, survey response

Change of language/approach

A personal outcomes approach is grounded in good conversations⁶, and for many members the biggest change they experienced because of their engagement with the PON was in language, (and by extension, mindset):

As a frontline social worker being part of PON helped me to reflect on the way I engage with individuals and their families, the language I use and the role I play within the work I do. As a team leader I have used these skills to encourage other social workers to reflect on their own practice and how they too can use a personal outcomes approach.

⁶ <https://personaloutcomes.network/communication/>

PON member, survey response

For some members, the cross-sector relationships forged through the PON were an outcome itself. For example, one member discussed how the PON enabled them to develop their own professional network, vital for policy development:

As an individual working in a national policy context the PON forum has facilitated vital links across statutory, 3rd Sector, academic and other partners that otherwise would be difficult. - PON member, survey response

Another PON member directly attributed their ability to mobilise personal outcomes initiatives more quickly and efficiently to the PON's cross-sector learning.

Direct impact on progressing the implementation of personal outcomes from personal to national level

Some members reported that they were more aware of what was possible because of their participation in the PON. One person shared their experience of using personal outcomes in evaluation, inspired by a speaker at an event:

More recently input regarding evaluating lower level non funded supports has resulted in establishing some events in my HSCP to work with leaders of local clubs and groups for older people to design an evaluation form linked to outcomes." - PON member, survey response

Another member reflected on the role the network had in the development of Self-Directed Support guidance on assessment:

When we were looking around at good assessment techniques [that] would support planning everything, then obviously personal outcomes approach came into that. So literally we took those diagrams and put them in the toolkit because they're still relevant and they haven't been replaced. - PON member, in interview

Some members reflected on how they had embedded learning from the PON into broader organisational practice changes. One member reflected on how their participation in the PON had enabled them to develop tools for frontline staff having personal outcomes conversations:

As a result, in engaging with the PON I have been able to support our staff more with an updated version of our own personal outcomes toolkit. - PON member, survey response

Staying true to personal outcomes values

Renewed commitment to relevant values was a key outcome for many PON members:

The PON keeps my passion for outcome-focused care alive. - PON member, survey

One member reflected on how their experience with the PON enabled them to advocate for the inclusion of personal outcomes in the development of infection prevention and control (IPC) policies in care homes during COVID-19.

Strategic influence

Understanding and quantifying the impact of networks at a strategic national level is particularly challenging, as the network facilitates reflection and sparks connections, but does not have the resources to follow-up on how these sparks developed.

Two PON members reflected in interviews that they found it difficult to quantify the impact of the PON on their work in more strategic roles:

When I was a frontline practitioner would have been easier for me to say, yeah, I looked at, you know, the assessment paperwork they were doing at the Carer Centre in [local authority area] and thought, well, I'll- I'll just take that and adapt it and use it in my service. Whereas as you get up the ladder more strategically, it's harder to have those, like, you know, concrete impact stories.

PON member, in interview

Another PON member reflected that they used their role in the PON to make connections across geographies in their role, to bring learning from one region to another:

I constantly take learning from the PON into my work in local organisations e.g. hearing about a specific approach or tool in one area that turns out to be very useful somewhere else. I have also taken stories and examples from PON meetings into policy meetings.

PON member, survey response

Members also spoke positively about cross-nation pollination of the network, particularly the partnership work with Wales. The PON supported the development of outcomes-focussed recording and measuring guidance for Social Care Wales and latterly, the development of Developing Evidence Enriched Practice (DEEP). Another member, based in Australia, reported how helpful it was to have PON resources and expertise to draw on their own journey into outcomes-focussed practice.

Regulation

One PON member working with a scrutiny body found opportunities during inspection and other scrutiny activities to support partnerships to consider how they could better understand the personal outcomes of people accessing support in their area, shifting the conversation beyond systems measures like waiting lists:

to be able to say well you know your assessments are generating that sort of information... so your conversations and your assessments and the recording of them and the planning that arises from them taking place in an outcome focused fashion using outcomes focused tools, whether it be an adaptation of talking points or- or something else.

PON member, in interview

Challenges facing the PON

Some members of the PON and PON co-ordinating group saw the current resourcing of the PON as limiting its reach and impact. One co-ordinating group member described the PON as “*ideas rich, resource poor*” and members responding to the evaluation survey

consistently cited the importance of increasing funding for the PON to embed personal outcomes approaches in Scotland.

In addition to the challenges of resourcing, some members noted the cyclical nature of policy development in Scotland, and the challenge of continuing to return back to core values and resist the urge to ‘reinvent the wheel’ through additional paperwork, assessment tools or policy initiatives, which one member described as a ‘repackaging’ of personal outcomes approaches.

PON co-ordinating group members also reflected on the challenges of responding to the priorities of such a diverse network, some of whom are exploring personal outcomes approaches for the first time, others who are ready to forge new paths and initiatives.

What could the network do differently?

Across this evaluation, PON members and coordinators all offered valuable insights into the strengths, capacities and resilience of the PON. They also made suggestions for how the PON could be improved to be more relevant, accessible, and impactful to its members. These are outlined below, organised into practical recommendations and strategic considerations.

Practical recommendations for improvement

1. Record presentations to post online for those who cannot attend in-person PON events.
2. Offer hybrid options for attendance that welcome in diverse groups (diverse in terms of geography and support needs).
3. Develop the PON website, with specific focus on improved navigation, refreshed resources, and more regular updates.
4. Recognise that some members may be attending for the first time and may benefit from increased structure and direction at events.
5. Increased diversity of speakers at PON events with representation from other areas of practice (i.e. human learning systems, behaviour science).

Strategic considerations for improvement

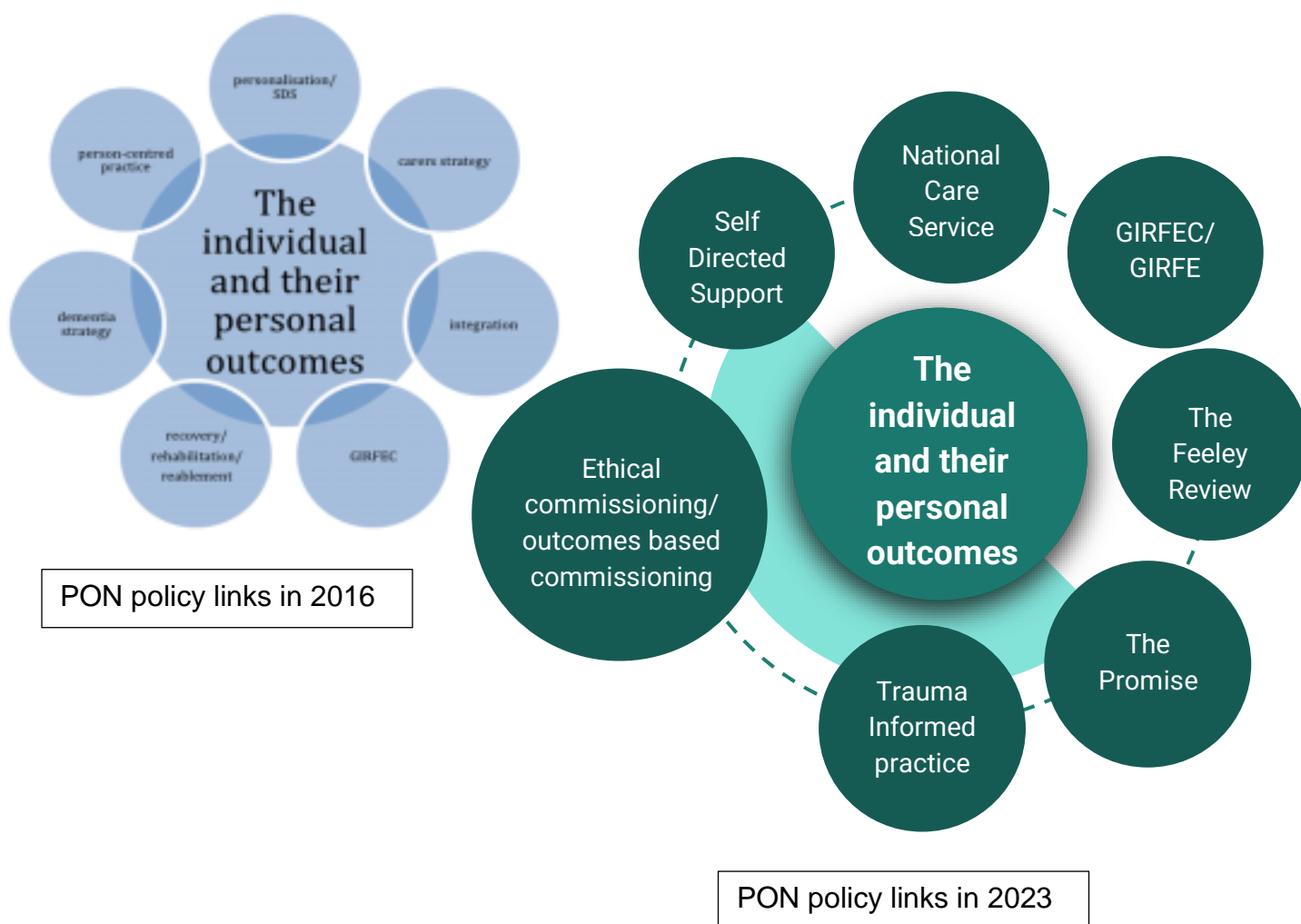
Links to policy

As noted at the outset of this evaluation, members recognised the challenges associated with working in the ‘juggernaut’ systems of health and social care, and the tension between personal outcomes approaches and the current system-first approach to commissioning, reporting and regulatory processes. Across the evaluation, there was an appetite amongst some members to progress workstreams in this area with pilots and tests of change.

The PON was established with an understanding that personal outcomes approaches were central to policy development, as visualised in the PON’s values and principles paper in May 2016 (below), which cited key policy agendas of the time including

personalisation/SDS, dementia strategy, carers strategy, GIRFEC, recovery/rehabilitation/reablement, integration, and person centred practice.

Many PON members felt that in the future, the PON should seek more strategic alignment with policy, citing key areas such as GIRFEC/GIRFE, Self-Directed Support, the National Care Service, ethical commissioning and outcomes-based commissioning agendas, The Promise and trauma informed practice. Despite the continued evolution of policy priorities in Scotland, members still saw the individual and their personal outcomes at the centre, as visualised below.



However, these ambitions for more policy influence were coupled with an anxiety that the PON should not lose its core values:

We over policy, we over medicalise, we overprocess and I think the network keeps pulling you back to what is it what we are trying to do
 PON member, in interview

In addition to this focus on policy, members made the following strategic recommendations:

1. Increased diversity of membership (including non-allied community services,

- independent sector representatives, neurodiversity).
- 2. Development of additional resources to host on the PON website including 'bitesize' personal outcomes resources and storytelling tools.
- 3. Links to other networks (NHS What matters to you, HIS person-centred network) to leverage a collective voice in Scotland.
- 4. Increased funding to enhance the profile, reach and impact of the network.

Next steps in response to recommendations – PON co-ordinating group

The central focus remains working to ensure that the voices of and outcomes important to people using services remains central in decision-making, both in practice and in policy, and that staff are supported to do the work that they value.

- Submit bid in February for 2024-25 funding based on report findings
- Move from all day workshops to shorter more regular meetings.
- Alternate between face to face (half day) and online (2-3 hour) meetings
- Move to a mix of outcome focused policy round tables in 2024-5 and a series of practical webinars addressing key issues identified by staff and managers.
- Our events will continue to model an outcomes approach in acknowledging the expertise of all contributors and in demonstrating a collaborative and dialogical approach to practice.
- Provide specific discussion space for people new to the network to provide orientation and basic understanding of the principles involved (as offered successfully at our December 2024 workshop)
- Expand the range of external speakers (to include colleagues from Wales who are keen to collaborate further in 2024-5)
- Update website in Spring 2024 to include case studies/stories from the evaluation and outcome focused tools and training materials from members and develop bitesize content for the website
- Continue to grow the membership of the Personal Outcomes Network and, through carefully selected topics for practical webinars, seek to target currently under-represented sectors (especially independent sector)
- Continue to develop existing links to relevant networks we collaborated with in 2023/4 including GIRFE, Values Based Health and Care, Self-Directed Support National Collaboration, New Models of Care, Person Centred Care and National Improvement Model of Adult Social Care
- Themes for next year to be finalised with members and to include at least one event focused on the place of personal outcomes in commissioning

APPENDIX – Impact case studies

Nick Andrews, Research and Practice Development Officer, Swansea University.

Nick has been involved in the PON and personal outcomes development work in Scotland since 2007. Nick reflects on his experience of cross-border collaboration with the PON as part of the DEEP (Developing Evidence Enriched Practice) programme.

[DEEP \(Developing Evidence Enriched Practice\)](#) is a Welsh government funded programme which fosters a co-production approach to gathering, exploring, and using diverse types of evidence in learning and development using story and dialogue methods. The programme works primarily with social care and health services.

DEEP has been working in collaboration with the PON for several years, as initial DEEP research was a joint Welsh/Scottish project with a focus on [the outcomes that matter most to older people with high support](#) needs. Since then, Nick has supported and received support from the PON, exchanging theoretical ideas and practical ways in which to foster a personal outcomes approach across social care and health services. A particular example of this is a collaboration with Emma Miller from the PON in developing national guidance on personal outcomes recording for social workers and social care practitioners in Wales, ['Friend not Foe'](#). This guidance drew from the learning that has come out of PON meeting discussions and has been well-received by the sector.

Nick reflects that members from the PON have also attended DEEP online workshops and opportunities for collaboration have come out of this.

John Skouse, Strategic Inspector, Care Inspectorate

The Care Inspectorate strategic scrutiny team carries out a range of inspections and inspection activities across adult, children's and justice services. John reflects on the value of the PON in offering a safe space to share experiences, both positive and negative, and how he embeds learning from the PON in his own approach to strategic inspection. Strategic inspectors evaluate partnerships against legislative and policy requirements, including integration, self-directed support, and support for carers. Many of these policies align with personal outcomes agendas, and offer opportunities to approach inspection with a personal outcome 'lens' at key touch points, including:

- The development of inspection methodology, including the 'inspection question' from which all further activity flows
- The scope of evidence gathering, including taking the time to connect meaningfully with people through individual conversations, focus groups and surveys and ask them about what matters to them, and the impact that services have on their lives.
- What is measured and reported, seeking to look beyond outputs, asking challenging questions about what matters most (efficiency or empathy?)
- Reporting on the inspection process, drawing on learning from work such as Meaningful and Measurable and Talking Points to make sure that reports describe how the team engaged, how recording was done and how this learning helped inform findings and recommendations. The language of these reports is important, and evolving, but should be accessible to people who access care and support.

John also describes 'softer', more relational opportunities to embed personal outcomes in inspection and scrutiny, including relationship building with partnerships. He describes the importance of meeting partnerships without pre-judgement, asking open questions and supporting them to take agency in future changes. By using the language of personal outcomes, and rights-based leadership, John can model how this can be embedded in organisational processes. As a PON member, John reflects that his role is part of a much wider commitment to change and improvement in personal outcomes across Scotland.

Lindsay Campbell, Carers Services Assistant Manager, Lanarkshire Carers

Lanarkshire Carers works with and for *carers* to develop and deliver services that make a positive difference to their lives. Lindsay reflects on the PON's role in her own personal development and the development of services at Lanarkshire Carers Centre.

Before joining the Personal Outcomes Network (PON), Lindsay had no background in personal outcomes approaches and struggled to connect with the abstract concept and language of personal outcomes. During her time with the PON, Lindsay came to understand that outcomes in her setting were about how carers felt when they accessed support. Lindsay also realised that the Carers Centre can only support carers to achieve their outcomes as one piece of a wider 'jigsaw' of formal and informal support.

Learning from other services through the PON, Lindsay made the decision to update Lanarkshire Carers Centres' Personal Outcomes Toolkit to reflect their refreshed outcomes approach. Drawing on PON tools and using her teams' expertise in carer support, the new Lanarkshire Carers Outcomes Toolkit aims to take someone with no knowledge of personal outcomes and support them to develop skills to lead an outcome focused conversation with carers. The new Personal Outcomes Toolkit includes individual training, group training and conversation guides for carer support workers.

As a carer positive organisation, Lanarkshire Carers also feel able to influence the health and social care partnership with their own understanding of personal outcomes. The PON has expanded her networks and abilities to influence and share learning about personal outcomes, particularly for carers.

Following a promotion, Lindsay is now handing over the Lanarkshire Carers' Centre to another colleague, who she hopes will find the same opportunities for growth and development as she did.

Shaun Maher, Strategic Advisor, Scottish Government

A primary policy ambitions of the Scottish Government is that health and care services should be person-centred in the way they operate and deliver services. Taking a personal outcomes focused approach to health and care policy and services is essential to achieving this ambition. Shaun reflects on the key role personal outcomes play in his work.

Shaun is a strategic advisor for the Scottish Government supporting the development, implementation/translation of person-centred policy primarily in the healthcare system. His work is primarily supporting policy teams in government but also involves working with

healthcare providers to support them in the implementation of policy. The Scottish Government also functions as the commissioning body for healthcare services in Scotland but not for social care services where the commissioning role falls to local government.

The PON has been an extremely useful forum that has connected Shaun to a wide range of people and organisations working to improve/increase focus on the personal outcomes approach. The Network has linked him to other policymakers, leaders, practitioners in health and social care, academics and third sector organisations – all in one room sharing and learning together. The practical focus of many of the discussions is also helpful to hear as a policymaker. For Shaun this includes learning about barriers and facilitators in the existing system. A number of these barriers are in the policy domain so that has been a particularly useful element of the benefit of the PON for him. Examples include commissioning processes or data and measurement and the power these have to hinder or enable organisations and practitioners to take a personal outcomes approach on the ground. Shaun has also found the PON website a useful resource and thinks this could be developed and promoted more to good effect.

The connections into social work and adult social care (especially the practitioners working at the point of care) enabled by the PON have also been particularly useful. Shaun reflects that there are relatively few opportunities to for social work policy and healthcare policy colleagues to connect, and the PON has provided useful space for this.

My Personal Outcome Learning over the Pandemic – Grace MacDonald

I am a Learning and Development Adviser within the SSSC Workforce Policy team. The SSSC is the regulator and workforce development lead for the social service workforce in Scotland. Embedding personal outcome approaches and collaborative working has been at the heart of much of my work over many years and have been a member of the PON since it was established.

In this short reflection, I will highlight some of my personal outcomes learning and the impact the PON had on my practice in a new area of work during the pandemic. From the start of the pandemic, my work focus changed to supporting national partners and the workforce with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance. This involved being a member of national pandemic response groups and supporting the workforce at a time of unprecedented pressure.

This was a steep and pressurised learning curve working around a challenging subject; with colleagues in social care, health, government and specialist clinicians working together at pace for the first time. Guidance was constantly changing, language and clinical terms often complex and timescales understandably tight. There was also the need to listen to and reflect the 'voice' of individuals, unpaid carers and staff.

Whilst initially the work was very clinically focussed and felt different to my previous personal outcomes work, it soon emerged for me that my learning and experience of PO

approaches, supported by PON resources and the network over the years, were particularly important and useful. The tension between the need for robust infection control practice had to be considered and valued alongside personal outcomes for those being cared for and staff.

Key learning for me included:

- The importance of good conversations, developing positive relationships and role modelling the principles of a personal outcome approach at all levels were key to successful collaborative working and shared understanding at this time of crisis.
- Appreciating language around promoting and embedding personal outcomes principles in practice needs to flex and be understood by the stakeholders you are working with in the context of their work. 'What matters to me' and person-centred working terms for example were more familiar for colleagues in health.
- Identifying common ground and opportunities to continually 'drip feed' the principles and narrative of personal outcomes in a meaningful way to the context of your work. During the pandemic, more than ever, many shared the wish to do the best for people around what mattered to them.
- Previous learning, particularly around recording personal outcomes, was useful in sharing with other partners the voice of what matters to people and staff to help personal outcomes be considered alongside other types of outcomes e.g. clinical. In the latter stages of the pandemic, there was a stronger focus on listening and responding to the voice of individuals, carers, relatives and social care staff in the IPC collaborative groups.
- We needed to build personal outcomes principles into guidance and learning materials from the outset rather than as an 'add-on.' This was not always possible as outputs were produced, updated and refined constantly at very short notice to reflect emerging evidence during the pandemic.
- It was important to celebrate small wins. In developing an IPC practice support app for social care staff, a section on person centred working and personal outcomes was included (linking to other resources including PON materials) to acknowledge staff feedback around the importance of not losing sight of what matters to people when following IPC guidance.

Throughout the many pressures of the pandemic, I found the contacts, the pandemic stories collated and resources of the PON helpful and supportive in my work to navigate challenges, grasp positive opportunities and retain enthusiasm. I remember at the first in-person PON meeting following the pandemic, I felt inspired, reassured and re-energised through conversations, listening and reconnecting with others. Perhaps influenced by being immersed in IPC language for over 3 years, I remember telling a colleague the meeting had felt like a 'shot in the arm!'

My hope now is that through the PON we can continue to champion and embed personal outcome principles and approaches building on learning, evidence and experiences from the pandemic.