Outcomes based approaches to public service reform
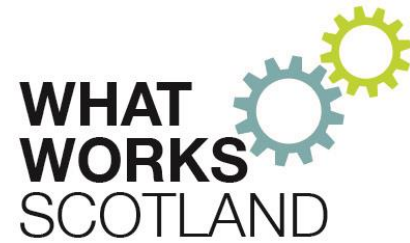
Dr Ailsa Cook, Outcome Focus

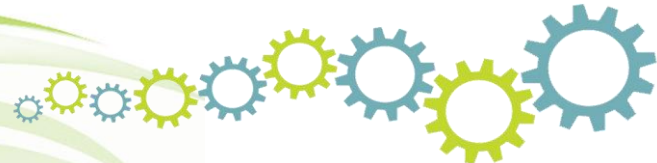ailsa.cook@outcomefocus.org

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Overview

- Why this paper?

- Aims and approach

- Insights

  – Conceptualising outcomes

  – Application in Scottish context

  – Learning from implementation and research

- Recommendations

Why outcomes?

- Scotland is at forefront of developing outcomes based approaches across public services

- Outcomes at centre of drive to reform public services:
  - efficiency, accountability, partnership, personalisation and co-production.

- Concept that permeates every level of public service life
  - practice, planning and commissioning, service improvement, evaluation, performance management

- Research highlights challenges and negative unintended consequences of poorly conceived outcomes based approaches
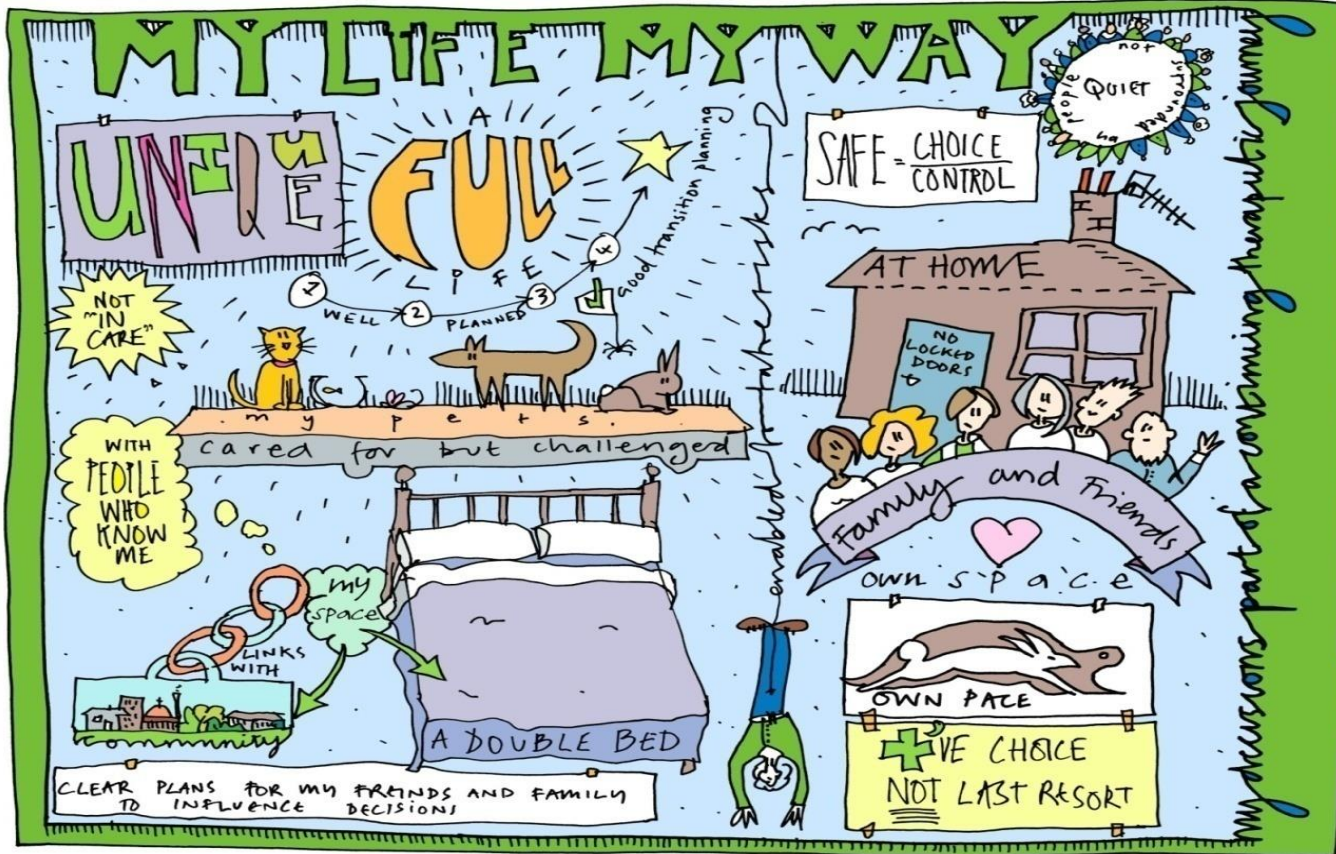
What would success look like?

- When people refer to 'outcomes' they know and we know what they mean.

- We have a National outcomes approach that values partnership, prevention, participation and co-production as well as providing meaningful information for performance

My Life My Way
Transforming Social Care in East Renfrewshire

Approach to the paper

- Review research and policy internationally to consider:
  - What is an outcome and where did the concept come from?
  - How are outcomes used within the Scottish Approach?
  - What is the learning from implementation?
  - What are the implications for learning?
- Draft paper reviewed by academic and user reviewers

Conceptualising outcomes

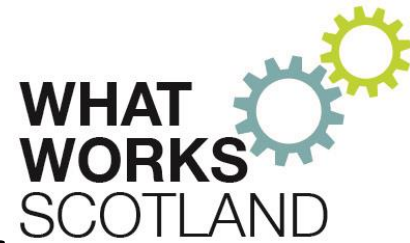| Programme	• Changes resulting from services and interventions
Population	• How things are for people
Personal	• What matters to me

Programme outcomes

- Changes resulting from a specific service or intervention

  - Use evaluatively and aspirationally

- Widely promoted 1960's onwards for programme evaluation

- Outcomes often conceptualised as occurring at end of a chain of results

  - Input, process, output, outcome

- Used across spectrum of research from RCT's to exploratory work into outcomes important to people

Population outcomes
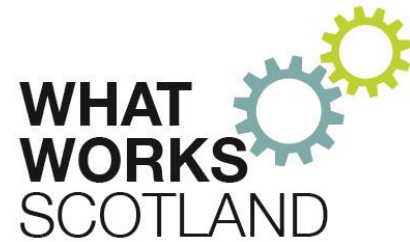
- The state or situation that people, communities, the population are in **and** the changes we want for people

- Influenced by management approaches advocating a focus on productivity over process

- Population outcomes inherently co-created
  - Describe complex relationship between citizen and state
  - No direct link between intervention and outcome
  - Public services contribute to outcomes

Personal outcomes

- What matters to me (and why)

- Grew out of person centred care and research and evaluation

- Distinct from outcomes of a programme for an individual – which may or may not matter

- Approach to organising services and supports to maximise meaningful benefits to person

- Outcomes co-created, multiple contributions

Understanding cause and effect

The relationship between the intervention and outcome is linear and direct	Intervention interacts with multiple other factors to influence the outcomes
+	**+**
System is closed. External influences are predictable	System is complex and adaptive, influenced in unpredictable ways by internal and external factors
↓	↓
Outcomes can be attributed to the intervention	Intervention contributes to outcomes

Relationship between activity and outcome
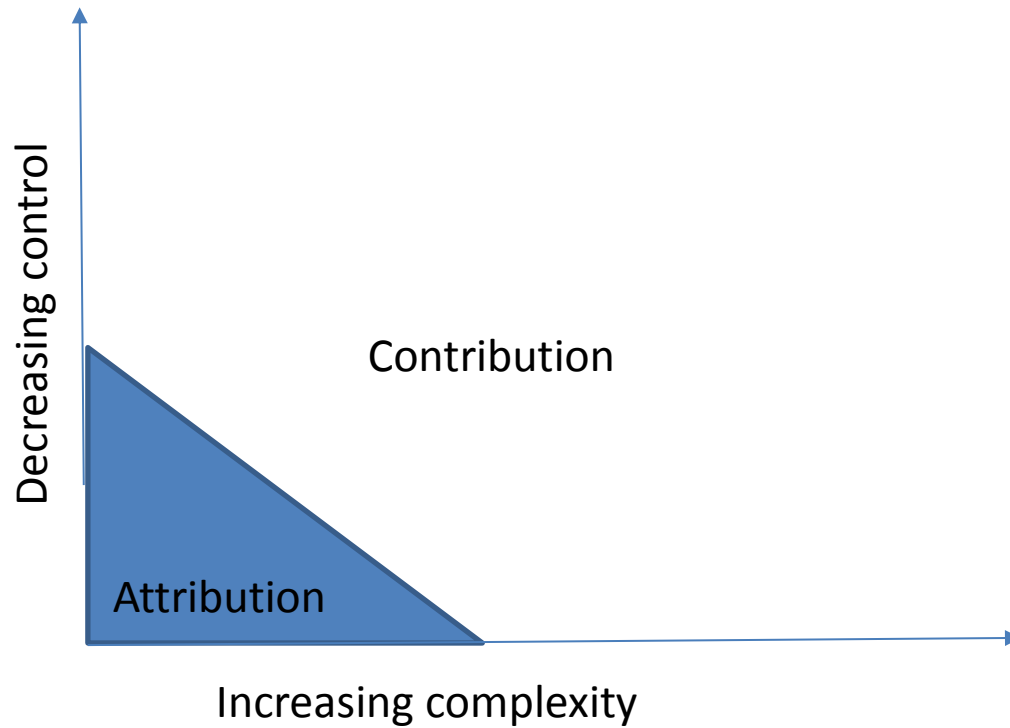
Outcomes based approaches in Scotland

Focus	Activity	Level
Performance	National Performance Framework, Local Outcome Improvement Targets and topic specific outcome frameworks	Population
Partnership	Change Funds Self Directed Support National Health and Wellbeing outcomes	Programme Personal Population
Prevention	Change Funds Health Improvement Outcomes Frameworks	Programme Population
Workforce	Collaborating for Outcomes	All
Commissioning	Joint Strategic Commissioning Self Directed Support Specify and monitor outcomes through contract	Population Personal Programme

Contribution of outcomes based approaches
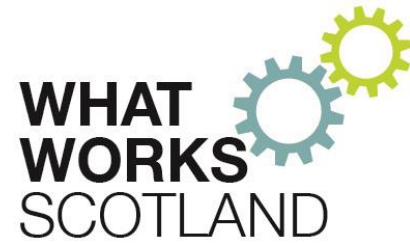
- In this context a focus on outcomes is used to fulfil a range of purposes including:
  - Signal what is important
  - Learn and improve
  - Judge and be accountable for effectiveness

Evidence: Benefits

- Widespread benefits reported including:
  - Focusses activity of organisations, reducing wasted effort
  - Promotes learning culture, what is working as well as opportunities for improvement
  - Encourages long term and joined up thinking, promoting partnership working
  - Talking about outcomes therapeutic for people and rewarding for staff
- No evidence that national outcomes approaches improve performance

Evidence: Challenges

- Making the shift to outcomes based approaches
  - Takes time and requires investment throughout the organisation
  - Involves a shift in thinking as well as systems and processes
- Measuring and attributing outcomes
  - Some outcomes 'harder to measure' than others
  - Diverse response to challenges including:
    - Standardised measures
    - Theory based approaches
    - Indicators and proxies

Evidence: unintended consequences

- Undue focus on measures and targets leads to 'deviant behaviour'
- Widely reported in context of outcomes based approaches
  - 'Creaming and parking' (locality and individual level)
  - Transform service to fit measures
- Use of reductionist indicators and targets exacerbates inequalities and undermines core purpose of approaches
- Payment by results leads to the appropriation of value brought by individuals and communities, undermining their contribution to improving outcomes
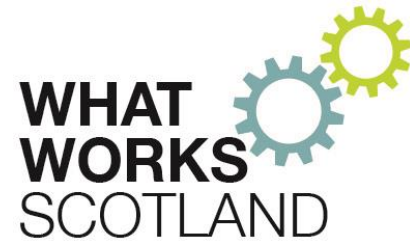
Recommendations

- Navigate a path through complexity with a robust theory of change

- Promote partnership working and co-production by focussing on contribution to outcomes

- Maximise learning, understand journey and outcome

- Ensure data is meaningful and measurable using multiple forms of evidence

Recommendations

- Maximise impact and efficiency by tailoring approach to the purpose

- Celebrate success and share learning by telling the whole story

- Improve policy implementation using outcomes approaches to understand and evaluate progress

Conclusions

- Scotland is ahead of the curve
  - Coherent approach to public service reform that reflects and works with the complexity of people's lives
  - Widespread application of outcomes based approaches
  - Suite of national outcomes that reflect what is important to people

- Need to mainstream approaches that:
  - Join the population to the personal
  - Are meaningful and practicable to all involved
  - Help us work with complexity – instead of adding to it