



What matters to people who use health and social care services in West Dunbartonshire?

How do we know what matters to people using services?

A key part of any assessment is finding out what matters to the person being assessed. In recognition of this, when West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) redesigned the assessment it uses to better understand the strengths, needs, risks and aspirations of people who access many HSCP services, it ensured that 'what matters to you?' was a question which was woven throughout it.

The assessment, called the My Life Assessment (MLA), considers a person's life across six areas: their physical health; mental health and wellbeing; home environment; voice (influencing decisions); safety and security; included and active. Following a rapid review of over 200 assessments intended to identify key themes, below is a summary of what was found to matter to people across each of the six life areas within the MLA.

Physical Health:

A review of what matters to people about their physical health identified the following key themes:

- People want to be as independent as possible. Statements such as "being less dependent on family / carers matters to me" was evidence of this.
- People also wants to maintain or improve their current levels of physical activity
- Maintaining a healthy weight mattered to some people with mention to sustaining recent weight loss.
- People also highlighted being able to maintain their own personal care was important to them as was being able to stay in an area of their choice (whether this was a care home or their own home).

There were several comments not relating to physical health but mentioning the importance of being listened to, being treated with dignity and respect and about having choice and a say about their future care plans.

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

For this part of the assessment, a small number of people, due to low mental fitness, didn't want or were unable to answer what mattered to them. This in itself is an issue the HSCP must recognise: that low mental fitness levels prevents people from being able to identify things that matter to them. Of those who were able to respond (n = 196), some of the key themes include:



- Coping with and managing anxiety, often related to trauma or other life events (such as being affected by bereavement and suicide, relationship difficulties or estrangement)
- Maintaining independence and social connections with friends and family
- Remaining physically and, in turn, mentally active
- Power of attorney and preparing for death
- Being supported at home or somewhere they could call home and by services they thought added to their quality of life such as supported accommodation, day centres and other support services

Home Environment:

A review of what matters to people regarding their home environment identified the following themes:

- Being able to look after themselves and their home
- The home environment enabling independent living as much as possible
- Being connected to people through trusted relationships to reduce isolation and build feelings of trust
- Need for familiarity and continuity
- People were conscious of the pressure they felt they placed on family carers / supports to maintain their independence and the need for respite and support to ease this

Feeling safe and secure

When considering what matters to people about their safety and security, the following themes were identified:

- People often reported feeling more safe and secure in a protected environment, for example in a hospital or care home
- Presence of and relationships with family members support feelings of safety and added to feelings of familiarity, consistency and reduced isolation
- People's safety, security and living standards mattered to them in many instances because they linked this to their overall health and wellbeing
- The ability to choose and make decisions on own care need to be balanced against reduced ability to assess risk and keep safe
- Past experiences can impact on current feelings of safety and security both in the home and within the community



Feeling Included and Active:

A review of the responses to what matters to people about feeling included and active revealed the following themes:

- Changes in health (e.g. hospital admission or reduced mobility) or feelings of safety can often negatively affect people's ability to be active in their communities
- Relationships with staff who supported people within their homes helped them feel included
- Balancing participation and social activity alongside individual and personal pursuits mattered to people and their identity
- While some people reported being satisfied with low levels of social contact, others reported that it mattered to them that this increased
- Relationships with family, carers and friends mattered to people when considering feelings of being active and included

My Voice:

- It mattered to people that they saw evidence of their views being implemented, not just listened to. This was not always the case.
- Being respected and listened to mattered and was reported by family members and advocates as important to those who were unable to express their views directly.
- It mattered to people that they were able to hear, understand and /or participate in discussions about them and often became frustrated when this was not the case
- It mattered to people that they felt confident that their views were listened to and respected and had confidence in the workers who were enabling these conversations

Conclusions and next steps:

The above reflects the themes identified through a rapid review of over 200 My Life Assessments. That is to say that these themes are the aggregate of what matters to over 200 people across the 6 life areas of the MLA. Through the implementation of Self-Directed Support, each individual should have either directly received support or have been directed to the appropriate support to help achieve what matters to them as individuals.

The HSCP is responsible for considering what the findings mean as part of the bigger picture and how, as an organisation, it asks, listens and responds to what matters to people.



The key way it does this is through its Strategic Plan. The HSCP in March 2023 agreed its Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 with the themes above reflected in the strategic outcomes of Healthy, Caring, Equal and Safe and Thriving Communities and with the vision that “Everyone in West Dunbartonshire lives in a place they can call home, in communities that care, doing things that matter to them, leading healthy, happy and fulfilling lives, and, when they need it, they receive care and support that prioritises independence, control, choice and recovery.”

The strategic plan, called ‘Improving Lives Together’, is scheduled to be published at the end of June 2023 with an Easy Read version available at that time.

How the HSCP listened and responded to what mattered to people about the plan during its creation is available on the HSCP What Matters to You Page. Over the lifetime of the plan (2023-2026), the HSCP will arrange opportunities to engage with staff, people who use services, their carers and other stakeholders on how the plan is implemented in ways which matter to them.