

Student Name: Sandra Gomes

Student ID: 2335184

Programme: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Principles of Health and Social Care Practice

Module Code: BMHP5016

Submission Date: 28 November 2025

1. Reflection on the Importance of Key Principles in Health and Social Care

Health and social care services in the UK are built upon several core principles that aim to protect individuals and deliver high-quality, safe and compassionate support. Among these principles, the most essential are person-centred practice, partnership working, and ethical decision-making. Legislation such as the Care Act (2014) and the Health and Care Act (2022) reinforces the importance of these principles by outlining the responsibilities of professionals and organisations.

Person-centred care requires recognising every individual as unique, with their own life experiences, values and preferences. According to the Care Act (2014), local authorities must promote a person's overall wellbeing, which includes their physical, emotional, and social needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) supports this principle by explaining that individuals must feel safe, respected and valued in order to achieve a higher level of wellbeing. This highlights why care must be delivered with dignity, respect and genuine empathy.

Partnership working is also crucial. It brings together professionals, carers, families, and the individuals themselves to support shared decision-making. The Health and Care Act (2022) emphasises collaboration as a way to improve quality and reduce inequalities in health and social care. NICE (2021) also highlights that involving people in decisions increases their confidence and satisfaction with the care they receive.

Ethical practice is the foundation for safe and fair care. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) outline four ethical principles—autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice—which guide professionals to balance respect for a person's wishes with the responsibility to promote safety and wellbeing. The Skills for Care Code of Conduct (2013) reminds practitioners to uphold people's rights, dignity and privacy at all times.

Together, these principles ensure that care is not only safe but also meaningful and compassionate. When applied well, they help create environments where people feel heard, respected, and genuinely supported.

2. Practical Application of the Principles in Practice

During my placement in a residential home for older adults, I observed how these principles influence everyday care and improve outcomes for residents.

One example involved Mrs M, an 83-year-old woman experiencing early signs of dementia. She valued independence and routine, but the home initially followed a standard care timetable that did not reflect her personal habits. As a result, she became anxious and resisted her medication.

The care team reviewed her care plan using a person-centred approach. By meeting with her family and understanding her preferences, we learned that she had always taken her medication after breakfast and before going to bed. Adjusting her care plan to match her former routine helped her feel calmer and more willing to cooperate. This reflected the Care Act (2014), which requires services to promote wellbeing and autonomy.

Partnership working was essential. Nurses, care workers, social workers, and Mrs M's family all contributed different insights. Together, they created a care plan that reflected her personality, habits and values. This collaborative approach reflects the Health and Care Act (2022), which promotes integrated, joined-up working.

An ethical dilemma arose when Mrs M refused medication one morning. The team had to balance respecting her autonomy with the need to keep her safe. With support from a psychologist, she explained that she feared the medication would make her feel drowsy. After listening to her concerns, the team adjusted the routine and provided reassurance. This respected her choices while still promoting safety, demonstrating how ethical principles can come together in real situations.

This experience showed me how empathy, flexibility and communication can transform care and support people more effectively.

3. Self-Reflection on My Development as a Health and Social Care Professional

Reflecting on my learning journey, I can clearly see how person-centred practice, partnership working, and ethical decision-making influence my approach and growth as a professional.

Person-Centred Practice

This is the principle I value most. I believe that every person deserves to be heard and understood. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) highlights that personalised care improves satisfaction and outcomes, and I have seen this in practice many times.

For example, an older resident regularly refused personal care when male staff were present. Instead of pressuring her, we arranged for a female carer and adjusted the timing. Her

behaviour changed immediately— she accepted care calmly because she felt respected and understood. This demonstrated how important it is to listen to people’s preferences and respond with empathy.

Partnership Working

At the beginning of my career, I underestimated the importance of teamwork. I now understand how essential it is to collaborate with different professionals in order to provide safe and consistent care. Effective communication prevents mistakes and ensures that everyone involved is working toward the same goal.

I remember working with a multidisciplinary team to support a teenager with emotional needs. Nurses, social workers, mental health staff and family members all contributed different perspectives. This shared approach resulted in a care plan that was more balanced and effective. NICE (2021) emphasises that shared decision-making leads to better engagement and outcomes, and this experience reinforced that point for me.

Ethical Practice and Professional Conduct

Ethical issues frequently arise in health and social care. One powerful example for me was when a young adult disclosed domestic abuse but begged me not to tell anyone. Although confidentiality is important, safeguarding responsibilities meant that I had to share the information with the appropriate professionals.

I handled the situation with care and honesty, explaining gently why I needed to report it. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) highlight that ethical action requires empathy, truthfulness, and responsibility. This experience taught me that even difficult decisions can—and must—be made with compassion.

My Strengths and Areas for Growth

Through reflection, I have identified several strengths that contribute to my practice:

- Empathy and active listening
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Strong teamwork skills
- Cultural sensitivity and awareness

I have also identified areas I would like to improve:

- Confidence in managing conflict and setting boundaries
- Increasing speed and accuracy in documentation
- Deepening knowledge of safeguarding laws

Future Development Plans

To continue developing my professional practice, I aim to:

1. Complete advanced safeguarding courses
2. Strengthen my understanding of legislation such as the Equality Act (2010) and Care Act (2014)
3. Improve assertive communication
4. Gain experience across different care settings
5. Continue academic development in leadership and psychology

I believe that professional growth is continuous. Every person I support teaches me something new about compassion, respect and resilience. As the Skills for Care Code of Conduct (2013) notes, care is not just about performing tasks— it is about building relationships that make a positive difference.

References

- Beauchamp, T.L. and Childress, J.F. (2001) *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Care Act (2014) c.23. London: The Stationery Office.
- Equality Act (2010) c.15. London: The Stationery Office.
- Health and Care Act (2022) c.31. London: The Stationery Office.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943) 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp. 370–396.
- NHS England (2019) *The NHS Long Term Plan*. London: NHS.
- NHS England (2020) *Personalised Care: Operating Model*. London: NHS.
- NICE (2021) *Shared Decision Making*. London: NICE.
- Skills for Care (2013) *Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England*. Leeds: Skills for Care.
- World Health Organization (2021) *Global Report on Ageism*. Geneva: WHO.