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The Importance of Person-Centred Care, Partnership Working and Ethics in UK Health and Social Care Practice: A Reflective Report

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Introduction

Health and social care practice in the United Kingdom is guided by principles that aim to protect dignity, promote wellbeing and support safe, effective and responsive care. Key principles include person-centred care, partnership working and ethical practice. In practice, these principles influence communication, coordination of services and decision-making in situations involving vulnerability, risk and complex needs.

Task 1: Reflection on the Importance of Principles of Health and Social Care

Person-centred care is one of the most significant principles in health and social care because it places the individual, rather than the system, at the centre of practice. NICE describes shared decision making as a collaborative process based on both evidence and the person's preferences, beliefs and values (NICE, 2021). This means care should not be delivered in a standardised way without listening to the individual. Instead, professionals should recognise each person as having unique experiences, priorities and support needs. This is particularly important in the UK, where services support people from diverse backgrounds (NICE, 2021).

Person-centred care improves quality by promoting respect, dignity and active participation. When individuals are involved in decisions about their care, they are more likely to engage with treatment and feel valued. This can strengthen trust between professionals and service users and reduce the perception that care is being imposed rather than shared. The Health Foundation highlights that person-centred care supports individuals in developing the knowledge and confidence to manage their own health effectively (Health Foundation, n.d.).

This principle can be linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which recognises that wellbeing includes not only physical survival but also safety, belonging and self-esteem (Maslow, 1943). Person-centred care reflects this by addressing emotional needs, autonomy and personal control, rather than focusing only on symptoms.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is essential because individuals' needs are often too complex to be addressed by a single professional or service. It involves collaboration between nurses, doctors, social workers, therapists, carers and families to provide coordinated care. This approach is reflected in the Health and Care Act 2022, which promotes integrated care systems and coordinated service planning (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022; SCIE, n.d.).

Partnership working reduces the risks associated with fragmented care. Without effective communication, important information may be missed, leading to inconsistent support and poorer outcomes. In contrast, collaborative working improves coordination, continuity and responsiveness to individual needs (SCIE, n.d.). The Social Care Institute for Excellence highlights multidisciplinary working and co-production as key elements in improving outcomes (SCIE, n.d.).

Effective partnership working also requires clear communication, respect for professional roles and shared responsibility. High-quality care is achieved through cooperation and accountability rather than individual effort alone.

Ethics in Health and Social Care

Ethics are central to health and social care because professionals regularly make decisions affecting dignity, safety and independence. Ethical practice includes respect, confidentiality, fairness and accountability. The NMC Code requires professionals to prioritise people, practise safely and promote trust (NMC, 2018), ensuring that care is both effective and morally responsible.

Ethical considerations are particularly important when individuals are vulnerable or unable to express their wishes. Professionals may face conflicts between promoting independence and ensuring safety. In such situations, ethical principles provide a framework for fair and consistent decision-making (NMC, 2018).

Ethics are closely linked to trust, as service users rely on professionals to act in their best interests and maintain confidentiality. The Care Act 2014 reinforces this by placing wellbeing at the centre of decision-making in care provision (Care Act 2014, 2014). Therefore, ethics shape not only decisions but the overall standard of care.

Task 2: Practical Examples of Concepts in Practice

In UK health and social care settings, person-centred care, partnership working and ethics can be clearly seen when supporting individuals with long-term conditions or multiple needs. A relevant example is a GP surgery supporting a patient with asthma. In this setting, a doctor may review symptoms and prescribe medication, while a practice nurse provides education on inhaler use and self-management. Other professionals may also be involved if the patient requires mental health support, social care input or lifestyle advice. This demonstrates partnership working, as care is coordinated across multiple professionals to provide a comprehensive approach.

Person-centred care is demonstrated when the patient is actively involved in discussions rather than treated as a passive recipient of care. NICE states that shared decision making should be part of everyday practice and should include clear communication of risks, benefits and treatment options (NICE, 2021). In practice, this involves not only explaining treatment but also exploring the patient's understanding, concerns and personal circumstances. If a patient struggles with adherence due to anxiety or lifestyle factors, a person-centred approach recognises these challenges and adapts care accordingly rather than assuming non-compliance (NICE, 2021).

Partnership working becomes particularly important when the patient's condition is influenced by wider social factors such as housing conditions, financial stress or health literacy. In such cases, collaboration between healthcare professionals and external services, including community support and social care agencies, may be required to address the individual's overall wellbeing. This reflects the wider UK policy focus on integrated and coordinated care systems (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022; SCIE, n.d.).

Ethical principles are also central in this example. Professionals must maintain confidentiality, communicate honestly and treat patients with dignity and respect. The NMC Code highlights the importance of safe practice, respectful communication and professional trust (NMC, 2018). This is particularly important when working with vulnerable individuals, as creating a safe and supportive environment encourages openness and engagement.

Overall, this example demonstrates that effective care depends not only on clinical knowledge but also on communication, collaboration and ethical decision-making that respects the individual's needs and rights.

Task 3: Self-Reflection as a Health and Social Care Professional

Introduction: Role and Context

As a health and social care student and aspiring professional, I am developing my understanding of how person-centred care, partnership working and ethics influence professional practice. At this stage, my experience is primarily academic, but I am learning how these principles shape communication, decision-making and professional behaviour in real health and social care settings. These principles are important because they ensure that care is not only effective, but also respectful, safe and responsive to individual needs. Understanding their role is essential for becoming a competent and accountable practitioner.

Reflection on Person-Centred Care

I have learned that person-centred care involves recognising individuals as active participants in their care rather than passive recipients of services. This means taking into account personal values, preferences, cultural background and individual circumstances when making decisions. In my developing practice, I apply this principle by focusing on communication and listening. I understand that if a professional does not listen carefully, then important information about the individual's needs may be missed.

NICE guidance on shared decision making emphasises the importance of involving individuals in decisions about their care and supporting them to understand available options (NICE, 2021). This has influenced my understanding that communication is not only about giving information, but also about enabling participation and building trust. By listening and responding with empathy, I aim to support individuals in feeling respected and involved in their own care.

Reflection on Partnership Working

Partnership working is another key principle that influences my understanding of practice. I recognise that individuals' needs are often complex and require input from different professionals and services. Partnership working involves collaboration between healthcare professionals, social workers, families and service users in order to provide coordinated and effective care.

In my current stage of development, I engage with this principle by recognising the importance of teamwork, communication and shared responsibility. Effective partnership working requires understanding different professional roles and working collaboratively rather than independently. The Health and Care Act 2022 highlight the importance of integrated care systems and coordinated service delivery (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022), while SCIE emphasises the role of multidisciplinary working in improving outcomes (SCIE, n.d.). This has helped me understand that good care depends not only on individual competence, but also on effective collaboration.

Reflection on Ethics in Practice

Ethical practice plays a central role in health and social care. I understand that ethics involves principles such as dignity, respect, confidentiality, fairness and accountability. These principles guide professional behaviour and decision-making, particularly in situations where individuals may be vulnerable or unable to express their needs clearly.

In my reflection, ethics influences how I think about professional responsibility. I believe that individuals should always be treated with dignity and should not be defined by their condition or circumstances. The NMC Code reinforces this by requiring professionals to prioritise people, preserve safety and promote trust (NMC, 2018). This has shaped my understanding that ethical practice is not separate from everyday work, but is part of how professionals communicate, make decisions and build relationships with service users.

Use of Reflective Model

To structure my reflection, I have used Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988), which provides a systematic approach to learning from experience. This model includes stages such as description, evaluation, analysis and action planning. Applying this model has helped me reflect on my current understanding, identify strengths and recognise areas for development. It also supports continuous learning by encouraging me to think about how I can improve my future practice. Using a reflective model ensures that reflection is not only descriptive but also leads to meaningful professional development.

Evaluation of Strengths (Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes)

Reflecting on my development, I can identify strengths in my skills, knowledge and attitudes. In terms of skills, communication is one of my key strengths. I am able to listen carefully, understand what individuals are trying to express and respond in an empathetic and respectful way. This supports person-centred care and helps build trust between professionals and service users.

In terms of attitudes, I demonstrate respect, compassion and a commitment to treating individuals with dignity. These attitudes are essential in health and social care, as they support ethical practice and positive relationships. In terms of knowledge, I have developed a good understanding of the core principles of person-centred care, partnership working and ethics, which provides a strong foundation for further professional development.

Evaluation of Areas for Improvement (Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes)

At the same time, reflection highlights areas for improvement. In terms of knowledge, I need to strengthen my understanding of legislation, policy and professional frameworks. Although I am aware of the importance of the Care Act 2014 and the Health and Care Act 2022, I need to develop greater confidence in applying them in practice (Care Act 2014, 2014; Department of Health and Social Care, 2022).

In terms of skills, I need to improve my confidence in partnership working within multidisciplinary teams. Effective teamwork requires clear communication, understanding of professional roles and the ability to collaborate in complex situations. In terms of attitudes, I need to develop confidence in ethical decision-making, particularly in situations that require challenging conversations or raising concerns. Developing these areas is essential for becoming a safe and accountable practitioner.

Action Plan for Professional Development

To improve my knowledge, skills and attitudes, I have developed an action plan. First, I will continue to develop my knowledge of legislation, policy and ethical practice through further study and independent learning. Second, I will focus on improving my communication and teamwork skills by actively engaging in learning activities and seeking feedback from tutors and peers.

I will also use reflective practice regularly to evaluate my progress and identify areas for improvement. Applying models such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle will support structured reflection and continuous learning. In addition, progressing to Level 6 study will help me deepen my understanding of professional practice and increase my confidence in applying these principles. I will also aim to gain practical experience where possible, as this will support the development of real-world skills and professional confidence.

Conclusion

Person-centred care, partnership working and ethical practice are fundamental to high-quality health and social care in the United Kingdom. Together, these principles support respectful communication, coordinated services, safer decision-making and greater recognition of individual needs and rights. UK legislation and professional guidance reinforce their importance by placing wellbeing, shared decision-making, service integration and professional accountability at the centre of practice (Care Act 2014, 2014; Department of Health and Social Care, 2022; NICE, 2021; NMC, 2018).

Reflecting on these principles has shown me that effective care is not based only on knowledge of conditions or procedures. It also depends on how professionals treat people, how well they work with others, and how responsibly they make decisions. As I continue developing as a future health and social care practitioner, I want these principles to remain central to my practice so that the care I provide is compassionate, safe, respectful and responsive to the needs of individuals and communities.

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