



Person-centred approach

SOCIAL ISOLATION

This evidence theme on person-centred approach is a summary of one of the key topics identified by a scoping review of the social isolation research.

Key points

- Adoption of a person-centred approach is crucial in long-term care for older adults. It emphasises on values such as mutual respect, trust, understanding the client's priorities, and preserving personal identity.
- Implementing a person-centred approach allows older adults to feel 'in control', which is beneficial for both mental and physical wellbeing.
- It promotes older adult's engagement to prescribed interventions, decreasing social isolation and loneliness.

What is a person-centred approach?

The key to effective long-term care for older adults is embracing a person-centred approach, grounded in foundational values like mutual respect, trust, understanding the client's priorities, and preserving personal identity. [1-4]

Care professionals and providers can implement this approach by recognising and honouring the autonomy of older adults. [1, 2] For instance, facilitating active participation in decision-making processes regarding treatments and interventions is a tangible expression of this approach. [2, 5]

The significance of a person-centred approach becomes particularly pronounced for older adults, who, due to the gradual decline in physical and cognitive abilities, are more vulnerable to neglect. [2]

A person-centred approach was identified as potential solution for addressing the challenges of social isolation and loneliness among older adults. [6, 7] Implementing a person-centred approach can be beneficial as it increases an older adult's motivation, self-empowerment, and confidence to take control of their experiences of social isolation and loneliness. [8, 9] In turn, it facilitates active and healthy aging and promotes independence among older adults. [7]

What do we know about person-centred approaches in aged care?

We found five reviews that described examples of person-centred approach among older adults. [8-12] Knowing and understanding the personal needs and preferences of older adults are essential in designing and tailoring interventions that may help reduce social isolation.

One review reported that older adults were allowed to choose and participate in interventions that aligned with their needs and preferences. [8] This approach allowed them to cope with being socially isolated, which reciprocated to improved mental and physical wellbeing. It made them feel in control of the decision-making process. [8] Another review provided information about positive outcomes including decreased boredom, loneliness, and isolation among older adults in support of a person-centred approach – no specific details on the use of person-centred approach were provided. [12]

Fostering a person-centred approach also increased engagement with the prescribed intervention by considering health-related factors. [9, 10] Being able to manage health issues such as incontinence promotes confidence and engagement in social activities, which reduces social isolation. [9, 10]

Limitations

This evidence theme has been informed by the results of a scoping review intended to map the published research in this area. Our findings reflect the current state of the evidence which we note is limited in breadth and quality.

What can an individual do?

- Get to know the needs and preferences of older people and suggest interventions that suit their interest and preferences.
- Assess the older adult's engagement with prescribed interventions and provide alternative interventions where needed.

What can an organisation do?

- Train staff members, including healthcare professionals and caregivers on the importance and application of person-centred approach.
- Integrate a feedback system to allow continuous assessment of the older adult's engagement with prescribed interventions.

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