EMPOWERCARE

Strategy and Competency Framework

Interreg
2 Seas Mers Zeeën
EUROPEAN UNION
EMPOWERCARE
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Contents

EMPOWERCARE Strategy

Introduction

After the start of the Empowercare project, PP9, WZC Wieltjesgracht vzw, was chosen to be the Work Package Lead. Together with all other partners implied in the realisation of WP 1, a working plan was put together for the development of the Empowercare Strategy.

The working plan for the strategy which was drafted consisted of the following steps:

1. Collection of data on various care models by all partners concerned.

2. Site visits to four current care models to gain first-hand information on the models in order to evaluate them.
The models concerned were Esther (PP3, Kent County Council), Conférence Familiale (PP5, Département du Nord), Zorgzame Dorpen (PP6, Provincie Antwerpen and Zeeuwse Huiskamer (PP12, Samenwerkingsverband Welzijnszorg Oosterschelderegio (SWVO)).

3. Review of all documentation collected.

4. Filtering the key components from each care model which was visited. It appeared that even if the models are not identical, they all are built around the same basic idea, namely a person-centred approach.

5. After a proper discussion of all information and an evaluation in the light of ,the specific situations of all partners, a number of guiding principles were identified. These guiding principles led to the co-creation of a limited number of 'building blocks'. This 'building blocks' approach was chosen to make our strategy more versatile, reproduceable and implementable in often similar, but not quite equal very specific situations.

6. These building blocks were used to formulate a draft strategy which was reviewed in the course of the project at the level of the local pilot projects.

7. The procedure allowed us to formulate a 'final strategy' which follows hereunder.

Some observations

Stating that this whole process ran completely smoothly, would be an overstatement, as we were almost immediately confronted with a serious problem, which was not of our making, nor was it foreseeable. Barely two months after the start of the project, the Covid-pandemic struck. This had serious consequences for our planned work. Due to governmental health restrictions and successive lockdowns, we were faced with a number of barriers prohibiting working as a group in person.

Some of the limitations we faced were:

1. **No in person meetings, which was not good for the creation of the healthy personal relations which are a fundamental element in any real working relationships. We also discovered that on-line meetings were not the complete answer to all problems, as these meetings tend to be far less productive and creative than in person contact allows.**

2. **There were no real site visits possible. This hampered in part our perception of the methods or care models which were to be studied. However, the partners concerned managed to do the second best thing by turning the site visits into virtual trips.**

3. **There was only a limited possibility to collect 'personal' experience data in the field because of strict lockdowns, meaning that the elderly and vulnerable part of the population had become a no-go zone.**

4. **The lockdowns limited our options and chances to test strategy elements in the field, as our main target public was out of bounds because of its vulnerability during the longest part of the project.**

In the end, under difficult circumstances, we managed to formulate a number of coherent strategy elements, and rather than putting them in a long and complicated text, we formulated them in a table.

A stunning revelation

Although we identified a number of key elements in our search for a strategy, it all boils down to one simple general principle: **the individual should be at the heart of all actions, care and care methods.**

The strategy building blocks

Collaboration and Interaction

The EMPOWERCARE project aims at empowering individuals and communities to manage their own care and support, utilising technological and innovative solutions. Empowerment is a key strategy for responding to the unprecedented challenges for health and care services, increasing demand, particularly for growing older populations and pressure to find new approaches. EMPOWERCARE supports older individuals to be more closely integrated with their communities, as part of supporting individuals to remain in their own homes safely for longer. It is a major challenge for all EMPOWERCARE partner countries to change the way their citizens are involved in their own care, support and wellbeing.

Empowerment is about connection. It can only be achieved through genuine and collaborative interaction with others. While individual responsibility in acting to empower individuals cannot be underestimated, all professionals work within organisations and organisations work within a welfare system. To achieve true empowerment of individuals, the principles and ethos of empowerment need to be understood and actioned at all levels: individual, organisation and system to make a true and sustainable change. This is the purpose of a strategy.

Empowerment is about connection

About the EMPOWERCARE Strategy

Our strategy is based on examples of empowering practice and approaches taken from 4 existing models of care.

- **ESTHER**
- **Conférence Familiale (Family Group Conferencing)**
- **Zorgzame Dorpen (Caring Villages)**
- **De Zeeuwse Huiskamer (Zeeland Living Room)**

By care, we mean the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone. This encompasses a broad spectrum of environments and situations.

These models have one common basic principle: they are person-centred and focus on the wishes, ideas aspirations, possibilities, and goals of the individual.

However, they use different, distinct approaches and methods to implement the goal of empowering individuals.

As part of the Empowercare project, we have studied and compared the key common features of these models. We have selected the most person-centred, empowering elements from them and created several guiding principles, or building blocks, for our own Empowerment strategy.

As part of the strategy, we will identify tools and methods related to these building blocks that can help empower individuals.

We will use 'building blocks' rather than 'rules' to describe some common foundations for good person-centred practice whilst recognising the differences between individuals, their environments and the welfare systems that support them.

Specifically, the building blocks will recognise that:

- **Individuals' situations are not identical and will differ**
- **Individuals do not always have the same resources or support available to them.**
- **Individuals may receive paid (or funded) care, informal care (provided by friends or family members) or a combination of both.**
- **In both instances, there is diversity in the skills, knowledge and experience of carers.**
- **Cultural differences, as well as differences in welfare systems, may lead to different approaches.**

> **ESTHER cafes are informal meetings between ESTHER's, their family or friend, care providers and other professionals**

Building Block 1: The Individual is at the centre of their care (a person centred approach)

What this means

This is the principle at the heart of the strategy.

It means that individuals can plan, manage and receive their own care in the way they want.

Those supporting the person are responsible for enabling that to happen and respecting the individuals' opinions, preferences and wishes.

An example to illustrate

In the ESTHER approach, ESTHER is a fictitious person in need of care and support from more than one organisation.

In this approach, the key is to start with ESTHER and to build the care around their needs as well as their own resources.

ESTHER cafes are informal meetings between ESTHERs, their family or friend, care providers and other professionals.

ESTHERs have the opportunity to tell their story – once – for all to hear and the people providing support can give updates on what they are doing to support ESTHER and how it is working.

The ESTHER café puts ESTHER at the centre of their care and ensures that their voice is heard by all those providing care and support.

Building Block 2:
A right to decide for yourself

What this means

This is the key principle in Empowering the individual.

We will work with individuals to understand their unique strengths, the resources and assets available to them and their individual goals and aspirations.

As professionals, we need to understand own role and that of other individuals supporting the individual. We need to be able to listen, reflect on their own opinions and ensure that individuals are empowered to make decisions about their own care.

Indeed, all our actions should be aimed at enabling individuals to have ownership of their own care and welfare, including the power to make decisions about their care for themselves.

An example to illustrate

Empowercare has developed a Workforce Competency Framework to detail the skills and knowledge that an empowering workforce requires.

Empowering the individual

Building Block 3:
Everyone is part of a community and should have a place in it

What this means

All individuals need support regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or need for care and support.

Communities and community resources are essential in providing support for individuals.

Involvement and inclusion within a community has positive impacts at an individual level by creating connectivity to others, reducing isolation and creating a sense of belonging and purpose.

Supporting individuals to integrate and connect to communities, increases awareness, motivation and cohesion. Creating supportive and accepting communities for one group of individuals, often benefits others in the same community.

Within the strategy, we focus on understanding the natural networks and connections within communities that individuals have to support then, and on creating and developing networks where they do not exist or are not resilient or broad enough to meet the needs of the individual.

In this instance, 'communities' can include family members, friends, professionals, organisations, neighbourhoods, the environment – basically any element that creates a circle or community of support for the individual.

An example to illustrate

The province of Antwerp supports local authorities to become resilient communities by creating caring villages.

Communities that sign-up as a 'caring village' receive a support package to help them implement their goals.

The package includes coaching, workshops tools, instruments, and a methodology for a thorough participatory analysis of neighbourhoods and villages.

The approach uses detailed local research to understand geographical, social and environmental factors, as well as engaging with residents to identify the best tools to tackle loneliness within that community e.g. mapping local service centres and identifying the best location for a new centre.

The caring village package provides resources to undertake quantitative, environmental and qualitative impact analysis. As well as tools for formulating an action plan and policy recommendations based on the results of the analysis.

All of this is undertaken with the aim of creating a 'caring village' that is sustainable over the longer term.

Building Block 4: Technology is my friend

What this means

In this principle, we recognise the role and value of technology in enabling and empowering individuals.

Technology can widen the choices available to individuals, increasing their independence and broadening their options.

Technology can help with:

- **Mobility issues.**
- **Communication issues.**
- **Housekeeping.**
- **Managing medical conditions.**

The focus on new technology recognises the speed at which technology develops, making things possible which were impossible just a few years ago.

Studies show us that older individuals are statistically more likely to be digitally illiterate or experience barriers to digital inclusion, such as lack of access to the internet, lack of money to pay for technology, lack of understanding of what is available to them.

As a result, in Empowercare we focus on the following:

- **Increasing digital literacy.**
- **Reducing fear of technology.**
- **Demonstrating technologies to explaining what it can do and how is can help.**
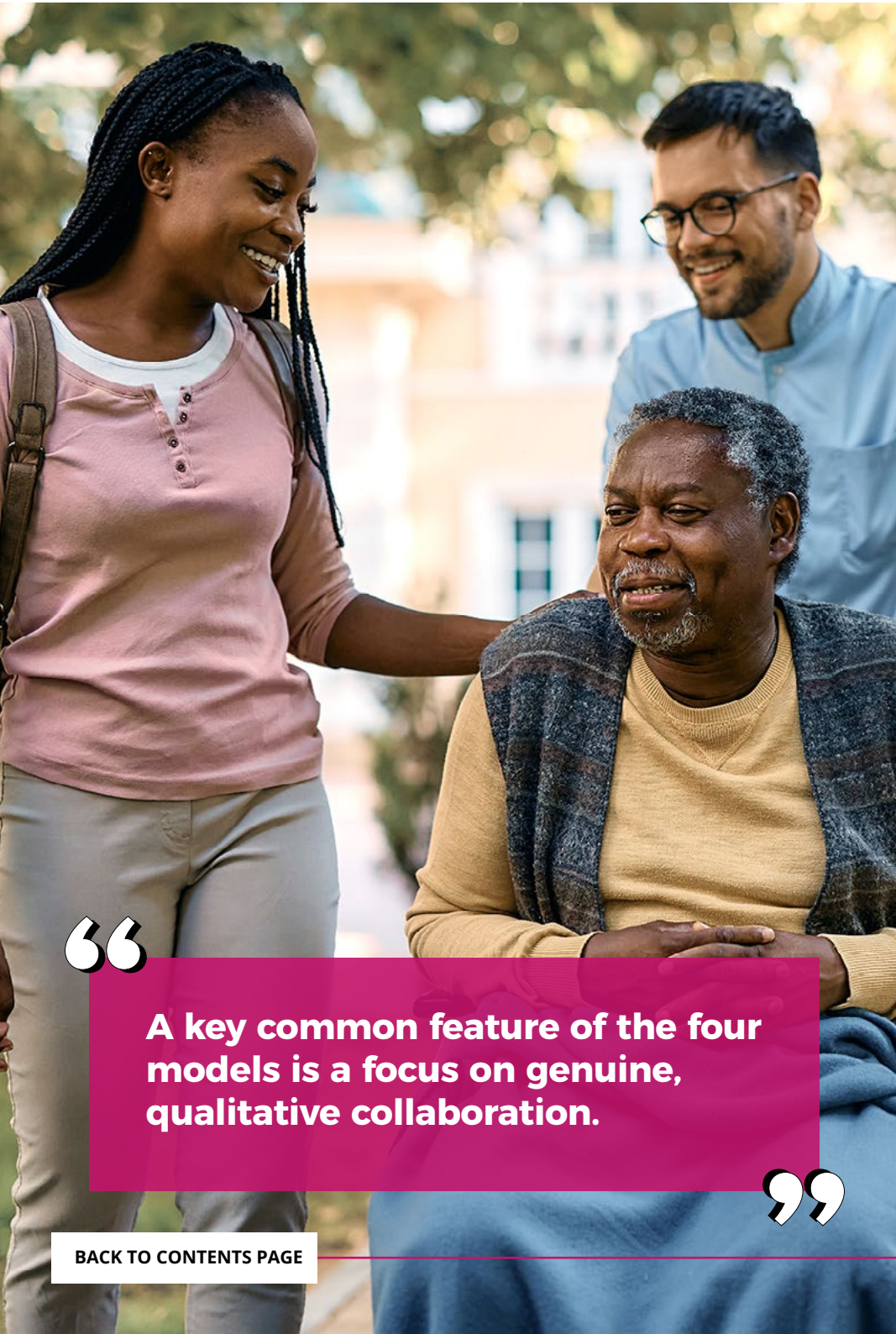
An example to illustrate

The Zeeuwse Huiskamer has set-up technology centres known as 'Living Rooms' which provide older people, as well as their family, with the opportunity to trial products that can support them with their frailty and isolation.

As well as trialling and testing the technology, they bring together residents and experts to develop innovative solutions e.g. improvements for wheelchair accessibility. Care professionals and students are involved in the evaluation.

New and better ways of providing care and support are continuously sought, based on the views and feedback of individuals receiving care and support.

Building Block 5: Collaboration is key

What this means

A key common feature of the four models is a focus on genuine, qualitative collaboration between care providers and other professionals working with the individual.

This helps ensure that care is joined up, and the individual only has to tell their story once – improving the individuals experience of receiving care.

This relies on professionals being able to work within their organisational boundaries but without letting those boundaries create barriers to collaboration and cooperation.

This would for example, be through a central communication area, where observations and experiences can be shared between carers and individuals.

An example to illustrate

The Family Conferencing approach focuses on bringing together an individual's family, friends, community and professional supporters to provide a cohesive structure to aide independence.

The model was designed to support young people but is now being adapted for older people through the EMPOWERCARE project.

A key feature is the consistent involvement of the individuals receiving care in all aspects of the planning and delivery of that care and support from the outset.

> " A key common feature of the four models is a focus on genuine, qualitative collaboration. "

Building Block 6:
Services should be dynamic

What this means

This building block recognises that individuals needs vary and change over time.

Caring is an ongoing dynamic process which needs to be adapted as the person's needs change.

Services should be continually evolving and learning. Organisations and services must be willing to learn from experience.

In person-centred care, there is a focus on supporting individuals to access the support available to them in their communities. This can bring to light gaps that might exist in what is available. Finding solutions to fill those gaps is important.

This can be done by working differently with existing services, developing new services and using technology where possible.

An example to illustrate

Caring villages uses a participatory process to find gaps and solutions within community settings.

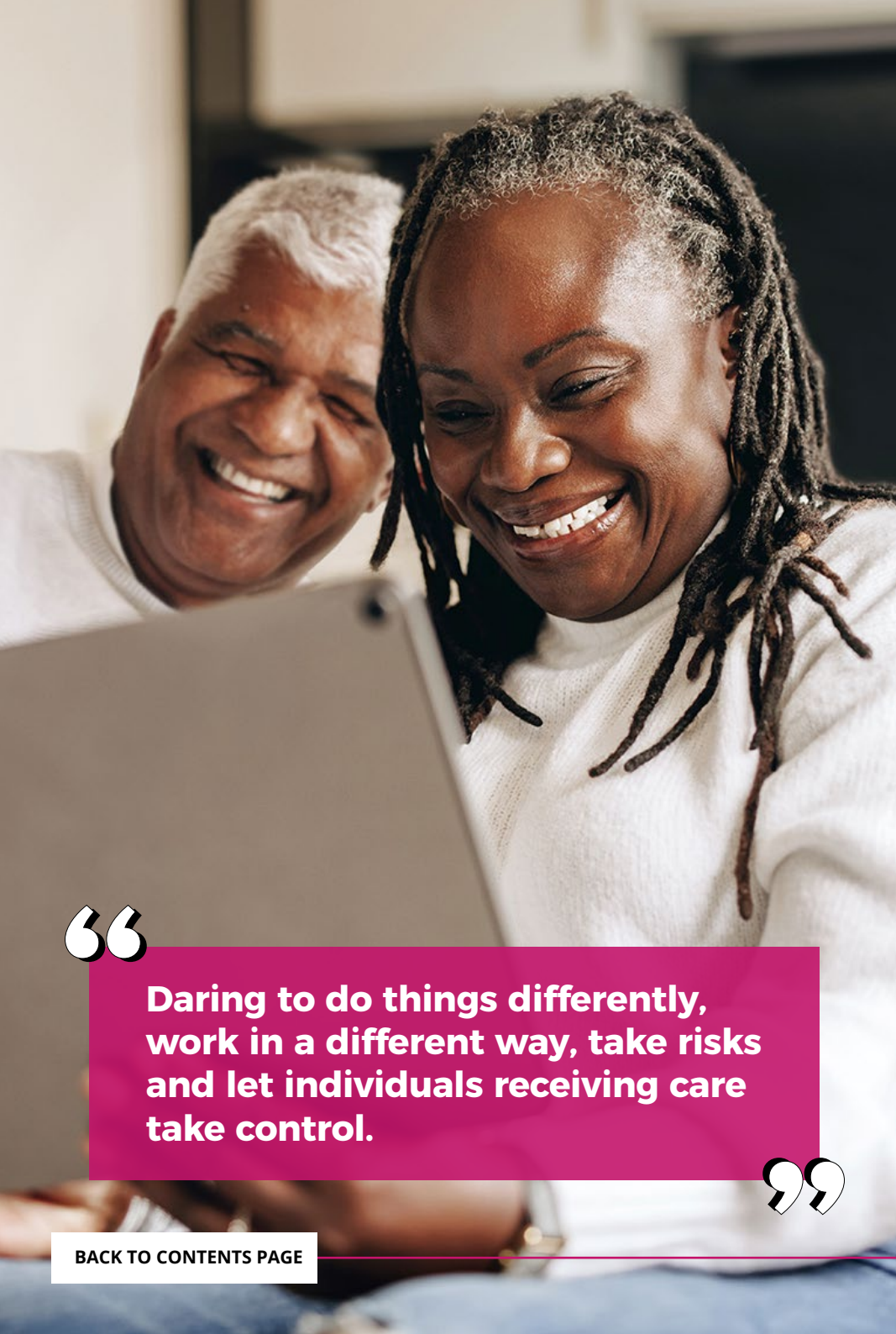It starts from visualising the resources, assets, good practices that are already in the community.

For example, in one of the pilots sites the lack of basic facilities is a gap and a key challenge. Specifically, there is no butcher or supermarket in the village anymore.

The solution which has been identified to fill the gap is to organise a weekly market on the village square.

During this market, the village will also open the café in their village house where a cup of coffee will be offered to people to encourage social interaction between individuals.

Care and welfare professionals will be available to answer questions and provide information about support needs.

In this way, the market not only enables individuals to buy food locally but helps reduce social isolation by providing a way for people to meet and talk to each other.

Building Block 7: Dare to innovate

What this means

The above building blocks describe a shift, not only in, how we think about the provision of care services, but also how we work differently and professionals to support and empower individuals.

Making these changes requires a commitment to change and challenge the status quo. Daring to do things differently, work in a different way, take risks and let individuals receiving care take control.

This may be especially relevant in the use of technology where professional and individual perceptions of how technology can be used to support individuals can vary.

An example to illustrate

All of the pilots are new, innovative ways of working. They have been based on existing good practice and either transferred to a new environment (for example, ESTHER) or have been adapted to support a different group of people (for example, the Family Conferencing Approach).

Developing and embedding pilots can be challenging as they often require culture change and a move away from the status quo, but the benefits often outweigh the risks.

> " Daring to do things differently, work in a different way, take risks and let individuals receiving care take control. "

Building Block 8:
Empowerment needs to be understood and actioned at all levels

What this means

Empowerment is about connection.

It can only be achieved through genuine and collaborative interaction with others.

While individual responsibility in acting to empower the individuals cannot be underestimated, all professionals work within organisations and organisations work within a welfare system.

To achieve true empowerment of individuals, the principles and ethos of empowerment need to be understood and actioned at all levels: individual, organisation and system to make a true and sustainable change.

An example to illustrate

This is the purpose of the strategy.

Empowerment is about connection

Acknowledgements

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EMPOWERCARE
Workforce Competency Framework

Introduction

After the start of the Empowercare project, PP9, WZC Wieltjesgracht vzw, was chosen to be the Work Package Lead. Together with all other partners implied in the realisation of WP 1, a working plan was put together for the development of the Empowercare Competency Framework.

The working plan for the strategy which was drafted consisted of the following steps:

1. Partner community asset mapping (local training possibilities listed)

2. Studying other existing competency frameworks

3. Gap analysis of existing support and training (review of all information in order to discover which subjects were not covered)

4. Develop 1st version of competency framework in co-creation with all partners concerned

5. Making available existing source material to fill gaps

6. Finalise the competency framework

Introduction (continued)

The EMPOWERCARE project empowers individuals and communities to manage their own care and support, utilising technological and innovative solutions. Empowerment is a key strategy for responding to the unprecedented challenges for health and care services, increasing demand, particularly for growing older populations and pressure to find new approaches. EMPOWERCARE supports older people to be more closely integrated with their communities, as part of supporting people to remain in their own homes safely for longer. It is a major challenge for all EMPOWERCARE partner countries to change the way their citizens are involved in their own care, support and wellbeing. The workforce needs to understand this and develop new ways of working in line with strengthening community assets and empowering older people to be more involved in decisions concerning their care, support and wellbeing.

A detailed search of existing workforce competency frameworks supporting empowerment within health and care delivery was carried out, before embarking on a competency framework to support workforce transformation for the EMPOWERCARE project. The starting point was the World Health Organisation's Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice. This informed the competency framework developed to support the Interreg ZORO project, which was the inspiration for the EMPOWERCARE competency framework, focussing on the six key areas of:

- **Teamwork**
- **Roles and Responsibilities**
- **Communication**
- **Learning and Reflecting**
- **Putting the person first**
- **Ethical aspects**

Further details of the competency framework developed to support the Interreg ZORO project can be found here.

Key Aims of the EMPOWERCARE Workforce Competency Framework

This competency framework has been developed to support the workforce transformation elements of the Interreg EMPOWERCARE project. The workforce needs to be appropriately skilled and competent to meet current and emerging needs and empower the people they work with. This includes the 'digital revolution' accelerated during 2020/21 and the increasing use of technology to support people to retain their independence, connect to their communities and live safely in their own homes.

Teamwork is identified as a key competence for delivering high quality care and support and empowering people. The type of teamwork being promoted by this competency framework is not just within internal teams, it also refers to interprofessional collaboration between care givers, professionals, volunteers and informal care givers across organisations.

Further details of how the competency framework supports the overall objectives of the EMPOWERCARE project can be seen summarised in the Workforce Transformation Logic Model attached as Appendix 1.

Overall EMPOWERCARE and workforce transformation will place the individual at the centre of every conversation and decision relating to their care and support. Furthermore, the individual will be an equal partner with professionals and care givers, who have responsibility to support and enable individuals to feel empowered, as an integral part of their professional role. The illustration below adapted from the ESTHER model, represents the shift in how individuals are included in conversations and decisions about them, so that true empowerment is evident and an expectation.

A change of perspective...

ESTHER in Focus   ESTHER a part of the team
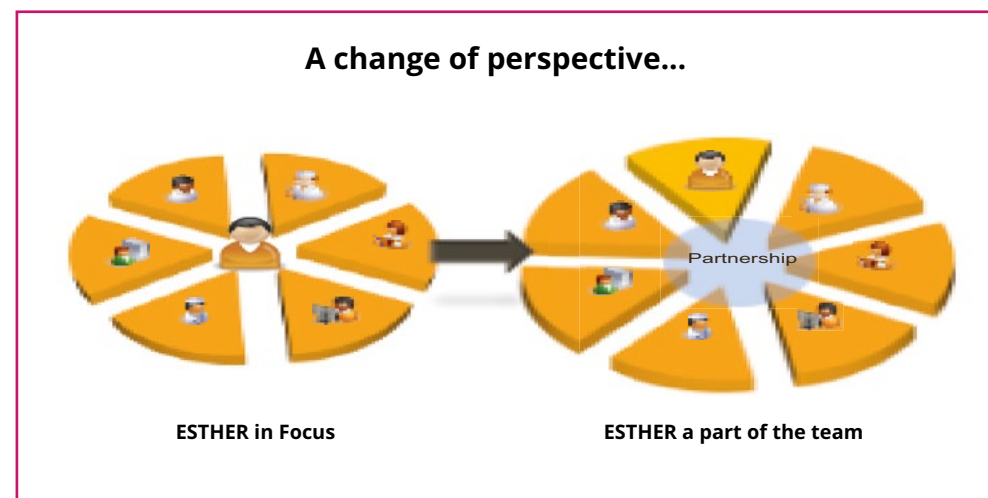
Teamwork

Cooperate inter-professionally and collaborate to deliver common goals, resulting in consistent, high-quality care and support, where feedback from people receiving care and support informs practice.

First column: Competencies Drawn From World Health Organisation Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education & Collaborative Practice.
Second column: Resulting Impact for Empowered People Receiving Care and Support

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Understand the principles of teamwork	Consistent, joined up service delivery which individuals are engaged in from the outset, with support to 'find their voice'.
Take on both the role of team member and team leader	Appropriately skilled and experienced care givers, where feedback on performance from people receiving care and support is sought, encouraged and acted upon.
Understand the potential and limitations of teamwork	Consistent, seamless service delivery, regardless of which member of the team is providing the service, where feedback will be sought, encouraged, shared and owned by the team.
Enter into a respectful relationship with team members	Professional care and support, espousing an ethos of dignity and respect where feedback to the team is sought, encouraged, shared and acted upon.
Active participation in team operation	Motivated, well informed and appropriately skilled care givers, active participation by people receiving care and support in decision making on their care and support.
Embrace team values and standards and set common goals	The standard and quality of care and support reflects expectations stated by the organisation providing care and support, with regular opportunities to provide feedback.
Deal with conflict within the team and negotiate appropriate solutions	Professional, united care and support, flexibility, solution focus and negotiation with people receiving care and support when agreeing outcomes.
Develop own competence and support team members in the development of their competencies.	Appropriately skilled and experienced care givers, consistent standard of service delivery, where feedback is encouraged to inform team and practice development

Roles and Responsibilities

Awareness of own and others' expertise, to work together efficiently, resulting in people being clear on who is responsible for each aspect of their care and support, without duplication or gaps in service.

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Understand own role and that of other team members.	Care and support is delivered by the most appropriate person in the team with the right skills and experience, feedback is sought and encouraged to inform future service delivery.
Recognise own expertise and that of other team members.	Confidence by the person receiving that care and support is provided by the most appropriately skilled and experienced care givers, feedback is sought and encouraged
Understand own strengths and limitations.	Care and support may be provided by a range of care givers depending on needs and requirements and this is discussed and agreed with the person receiving care and support.
Regularly review own skills and expertise and that of others in the team against care and support requirements.	Regular systematic feedback and involvement is sought from the person receiving care and support, to inform care givers' skills assessment and development, with feedback to confirm outcomes.
Allocate appropriately skilled and experienced care givers to meet care and support requirements.	Care and support provided by appropriately skilled and experienced care givers who will develop in line with requirements and be replaced or supported by others if required, as agreed with the person receiving care and support.
Consult other health and care providers when particular expertise is required.	The most appropriately skilled and experienced care giver available will provide care and support and this may change depending on care and support needs and requirements, as discussed and agreed with the person receiving care and support.
Be accountable for own responsibilities within the team.	Clearly named individuals provide care and support, the person receiving care and support has a good understanding of who to contact regarding different aspects of their care and support.
Manage risk appropriately, acknowledge and discuss the risks, care quality and patient safety relating to care and support and behaviour of team members.	Support for appropriate risk taking is in place with the person receiving care and support, care and support feels safe and of good quality with regular opportunities to discuss and provide feedback.

Communication

Active listening and appropriate sharing of information, to support the best care and support, tailored to the individual needs of people requiring care and support, resulting in people feeling listened to and that their views matter.

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Consult with health and care professionals and all involved in a person's care and support.	An inclusive approach is taken to ensure the best care and support outcomes are agreed and understood by all involved, with the person receiving care and support as an equal partner in the team.
Share relevant information and expertise with health and care professionals and others involved in a person's care and support.	Care and support records are accurate, up to date and accessible to all who need to see them, including the person receiving care and support.
Share relevant knowledge with health and care professionals and others involved in a person's care and support.	Care and support records are a reliable source of a person's wellbeing and whether care and support needs are being met, with the views of the person receiving care and support clearly recorded.
Use language and terminology that is clear and understood by all involved in an individuals care and support.	An inclusive approach is taken to ensure that no one involved in a person's care and support is excluded and communication support is provided to the person receiving care and support where required.
The purpose and potential of feedback is understood and applied in all aspects of providing care and support.	Every opportunity is available to provide feedback on all aspects of care and support and actively encouraged, follow up is provided to the person after feedback has been given.
Feedback is provided appropriately and in a respectful way.	An inclusive approach is taken and communication support is provided where required, with encouragement to the person receiving care and support to 'use their voice'.
Active listening is applied consistently with people receiving care and support, family and other health and care professionals.	Evidence of active listening is apparent to the person receiving care and support, follow up takes place to confirm outcomes.
Appropriate communication tools and technology are used to ensure effective communication.	An inclusive approach is taken, based on the persons understanding of the communication tools and technology available, support is provided where required, to maximise engagement.

Learning and Reflection

Use critical reflection to understand the strengths and limitations of individuals and the team and inform training plans, resulting in continuous improvement of care and support for individuals.

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Critical reflection on individual performance and as part of a team.	New and better ways of providing care and support are continuously sought, based on the views and feedback of people receiving care and support.
Be aware of and articulate own strengths and limitations.	New and better ways of individuals providing care and support are sought, based on the views and feedback of people receiving care and support, to improve individual performance and consolidate learning.
Identify strengths and limitations of the team and make improvements.	New and better ways for teams to provide care and support are continuously sought and feedback is provided on changes made and other outcomes.
Use evidence-based methods, based on professional experience and academic knowledge, to refine and apply knowledge.	There is confidence in the care and support provided, as people receiving it are aware that it is researched, proven, based on best practice and updated when new evidence comes to light.
Understand the concept of life-long learning and apply it with own practice.	Care and support givers consistently ask questions and use professional curiosity to understand if care and support needs are being met or can be improved.
Develop own competencies and support team members in the development of their competencies, including the use of technology.	Appropriately skilled and experienced care givers, consistent standard of service delivery, where feedback from people receiving care and support informs team and practice development.
Set up and utilise improvement cycles with the team.	Care and support givers consistently ask questions and use professional curiosity to understand what can be improved by the team and feedback to people receiving care and support.

Putting The Person First

The care recipient is a valuable partner in shaping person-centred care and support and feels empowered in all conversations and decisions about their care and support.

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Ensure the person receiving care and support is at the heart of the planning and delivery of care and support.	Consistent involvement of people receiving care and support in all aspects of their care and support planning and delivery from the outset.
See the person receiving care and support as a valuable partner within the team.	Empowerment, inclusion and involvement of people receiving care and support as equal team members on all matters relating to their care and support.
Actively engage the person receiving care and support and those close to them to identify what matters to the individual.	Support and encouragement for the person receiving care and support and those close to them to be actively engaged in care and support planning and understanding what matters to them.
Listen, empathise and sensitively advocate for what matters to the person receiving care and support.	Feeling listened to, what matters to the person receiving care and support is implemented, including when others do not always agree.
Promote safe and high quality care and support and what matters to the person receiving care and support.	Care and support feels safe and of high quality, meeting all identified care and support needs and what matters to the person, with feedback to those who provide care and support.
Work as a team to ensure safe and high quality care and support and what matters to the person receiving care and support.	Care and support feels safe and of high quality, meeting all identified care and support needs and what matters to the person, with feedback to the team that provides care and support.

Ethical Aspects

Respect for autonomy, transparency, honesty, trust, dignity and cultural differences, resulting in people feeling confident about their care and support.

What the workforce are expected to do	What empowered individuals can expect from their care and support
Team members are treated in a respectful way.	The culture of respect within the team extends to all aspects of care and support planning and delivery, feedback on this is sought and encouraged from people receiving care and support.
Services are managed with transparency and integrity.	The culture of respect within the team extends to all aspects of care and support planning and delivery, feedback on this is sought and encouraged from people receiving care and support.
Care and support provision is based on informed decision making and freedom of choice.	People receiving care and support are involved in decision making from the outset and are aware of the choices available to them, decisions are based on what matters to the person.
Team members feel valued and safe.	Care and support givers are confident, positive and reassuring when delivering services, communicate openly and are receptive to feedback, people receiving care and support feel valued and safe and have opportunities to express this.
Team members have confidence in the team.	Care and support meets the needs of those who require it, feedback from people receiving care and support informs the quality and future success of team performance.
Health and care services operate within an ethical code of conduct.	People receiving care and support are confident about the service they receive, have trust in it and are reassured that what matters to them informs their care and support.

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The following individuals were involved in the production of the EMPOWERCARE Workforce Competency Framework:

continued...

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