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Understanding older people's decision-making processes about the use of health and social care services

Conference or Workshop Item

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Title of presentation: **Understanding older people's decision-making processes about the use of health and social care services.**

Conference theme: **Long Term Health and Social Care**

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Preferred type of presentation: **oral**

Summary:

Older people often under-use, or refuse to use, services designed to support them in their own homes. This has contributed to increased pressure on acute services as older people are admitted to hospital in circumstances that could be avoided. The main aim of this study was therefore to improve understandings of the factors that affect older peoples use and uptake of health and social care services

A constructivist and participatory methodology was used to guide the study. Data was gathered using participant observation, interviews and personal narratives.

The findings demonstrated that older people want to remain independent and described their strategies of adapting, coping and seeking to self-manage difficult situations. It was only when personal and internal resources were exhausted that people sought professional help. Individual narratives, however, illustrated that wider life experiences, as well as direct experiences of services, also affected decision-making processes.

The UK government recently published a case for reforming health and social care services. In this they recognise the need for radical change if services are to meet needs and promote independence, choice and control. In order to understand how this challenge can be met this presentation will focus on study findings to illustrate:
the experiences that led to refusal of, or exiting from, health and social care services;
the aspects service design and individual circumstances that led to positive and continued use of health and social care services;
how services that promote self-management can enable older people to remain independent in their own homes.