Different conversations, better outcomes

Case studies and resources to illustrate the implementation of continuing professional development in social work

The Shropshire case study illustrates how the principles of the hybrid CPD approach have been used to create a generic framework for professional development planning into which can be slotted specific content tailored to each individual social worker. The programme addresses the workforce commissioning needs of the council and draws on the experience of a Social Work Pilot within the Authority. The hybrid approach has allowed the development of an in house structure and programme for CPD, which is linked to supervision and appraisal. The PCF provides the structure and standards for the identification of learning needs and assessment is holistic. Assessment and impact are measured in practice.

CPD approach

The Shropshire Council CPD pilot is a small scale in-house project shaped to meet organisational development needs. Shropshire is a large rural county and yet has no University within its boundaries which presents a number of challenges.

In order to consider what we wanted to achieve through the pilot bid we began by establishing a small steering group made up of staff from the professional development unit and the transformation lead within Adult Services. At the outset we ensured the senior management team were engaged from supporting the original application to approving the programme content. We recognised two important elements we wanted to develop:

- the framework illustrated in fig 1 shows how on-going CPD can be replicated with different subjects and content, making it easily responsive to changing agendas.

- the need to maximise the impact of any investment in order to stimulate cultural change.

To achieve the latter ideas evolved from the development of a workshop programme that would be available to reach and influence a wide audience, but running alongside a learning set for a smaller identified group of learners engaged on the learning pathway, who would be expected to attend both elements of the programme. The aim was to consolidate the learning from the workshops through the process of reflection and provide the opportunity to consider how that might be translated into the development of practice.

To formulate our ideas we took time to consider all the drivers shaping our thinking and how to maximise the outcomes for this project:

- the HCPC requirements for registration require a different approach to CPD and the demise of the PQ Framework enabled us to re-think our training programme

- how to best support Shropshire's agenda for organisational change in the delivery of adult services.

- an opportunity to incorporate the professional capability framework within

supervision and appraisal to the advantage of both the organisation and the individual

- the SWRB promotion of critical reflection shaped our thinking about the need to provide opportunities and time for staff to engage in critical reflection in order to consolidate learning and find creative solutions in the development of new ways of working.
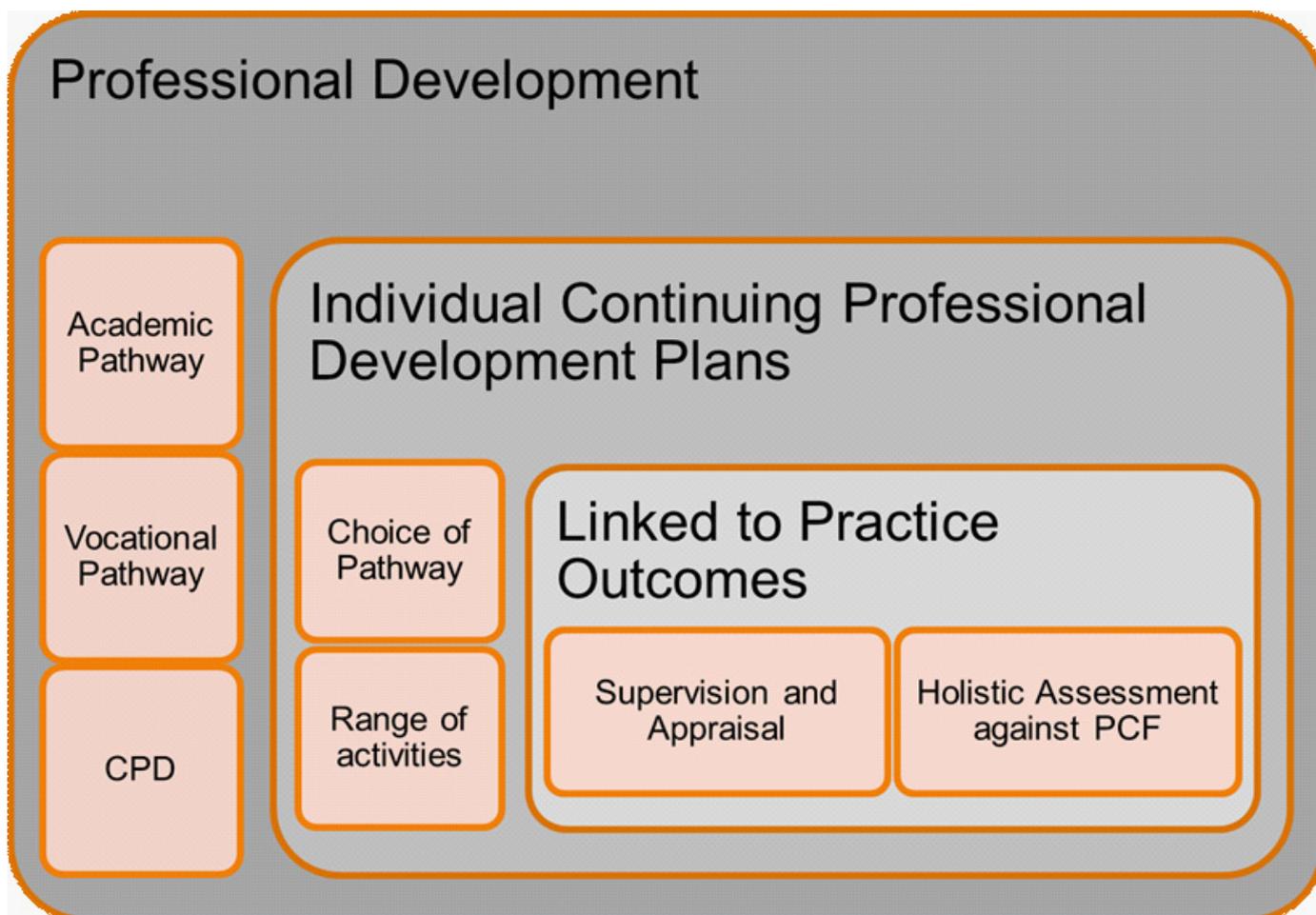
The hybrid approach to CPD allowed us to develop a generic professional development framework shown in fig 1 below.

The professional development framework represents how CPD development might be viewed as a layered process with an initial stage of undertaking a learning needs analysis will result in identifying a [professional development plan](#), including an agreement about how a SW will be expected to evidence standards against the PCF.

The pathway agreed between manager and individual worker will include a range of activities which might be accredited learning, in-house training or other learning activities. The final process is the compilation of a CPD Portfolio which if the SW is on a defined learning programme may have a more formal assessment element.

This professional development programme (see Fig 2) depicts the in-house learning programme we have developed using the layered effect to demonstrate how this fits within this structure, identifying individual learning needs, participation in in-house workshops and assessment through the portfolio.

Fig 1 - Professional development framework

Professional Development

Academic Pathway

Vocational Pathway

CPD

Individual Continuing Professional Development Plans

Choice of Pathway

Range of activities

Linked to Practice Outcomes

Supervision and Appraisal

Holistic Assessment against PCF

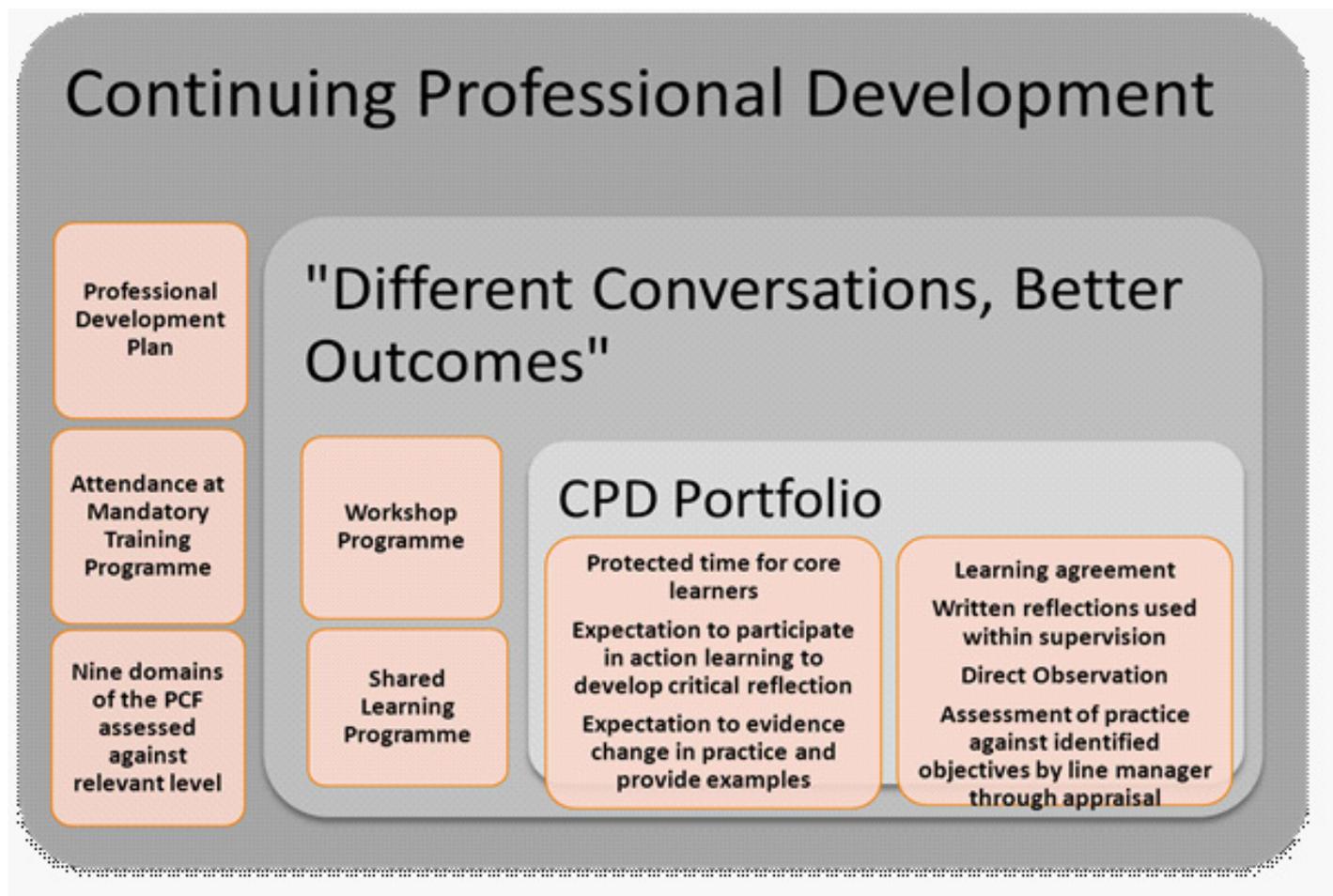## Using the Professional Capabilities Framework and work based assessment

The integration of the PCF has been crucial to this project for a number of reasons and has evolved as a result of implementing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). We recognised the development of holistic assessment through the application of standards incorporated in the PCF was important for all social workers not just NQSWs. That this should then be linked to the requirement on social workers to maintain a CPD Portfolio for registration purposes also became apparent.

The difference in incorporating assessment of standards within supervision and appraisal as opposed to completing an academic assignment is that it allows for on-going development and discourse between manager and worker. At the end of the programme learners do not pass or fail.

Their engagement with the programme and the outcomes they achieve in developing practice would generate "different conversations" within performance management. The diagram below illustrates how this might work in terms of a continuum.

The learners will develop individual learning plans within supervision shaped around the programme content and the expectations of them in relation to the level descriptors applicable to their role. Holistic assessment will include an observation of practice and involvement of service users and carers in providing feedback on new initiatives that evolve within the learning sets. It is hoped that in this way holistic assessment will not only be integral to the programme but become a feature of supervision and appraisal as a norm. The review and planning template will be used to review progress against the PCF and to assist the next stage of planning for CPD.

Fig 2 - Professional development programme

Continuing Professional Development

Professional Development Plan

Attendance at Mandatory Training Programme

Nine domains of the PCF assessed against relevant level

"Different Conversations, Better Outcomes"

Workshop Programme

Shared Learning Programme

CPD Portfolio

Protected time for core learners

Expectation to participate in action learning to develop critical reflection

Expectation to evidence change in practice and provide examples

Learning agreement

Written reflections used within supervision

Direct Observation

Assessment of practice against identified objectives by line manager through appraisal

Measuring impact

The identified learners will be asked to complete written reflections of their learning throughout the programme and will be involved in developing practice for themselves or others utilising community resources in place of more traditional solutions or services. The aim is to complete the programme with an event showcasing examples of innovative practice in order to quantify the outcome and impact on service users and carers of their learning. The projects will be peer reviewed, and assessed by service users and carers at the end of the programme.

Workforce commissioning

In thinking about how to support Shropshire's agenda for organisational change in the delivery of adult services, a key factor that influenced the content and structure of this programme was that Shropshire has been involved in a Department of Health initiative setting up a social work practice as a community interest company.

http://www.helensandersonassociates.
co.uk/whats-new/our-new-publication-on-
implementing-the-new-reablement-journey-
describes-the-work-of-people2people,-an-
independent-social-work-practice-in-shropshire.
aspx

This pilot has produced promising results in the way the team have worked differently by engaging community resources in support planning. To encourage a similar spirit of engagement the steering group invited a member of the local Community Action Team to join us in developing the programme content.

This has helped shape the elements of one of the workshops and the task learners will be asked to undertake.

In order to disseminate learning we decided senior social workers should be the target group of learners on the basis that they will then model practice for others. The added benefit is that by experiencing this process of holistic assessment they will in turn be able to apply this process to their management of others. In order to add depth and academic credence we have included a workshop that will focus on underpinning knowledge and invited a respected academic to facilitate the learning sets,
click here to view the learning programme. The first workshop will involve senior managers and senior social workers working together to gain an understanding of the PCF.

Further resources from the learning programme are listed below.

- Learning programme
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment