



Measuring the impact of implementing Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) training for local authority social work managers using the Benefits realisation model (BRM)

Case study and resources to illustrate the impact of continuing professional development in social work

The North West London Partnership includes eight London boroughs and two universities. The partnership initially came together because of a shared desire to support the social work profession within the separate organisations to meet the challenges of the Social Work Reform Board. Since its inception, the partnership has worked together to develop and embed the Assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) programme and have created a supervisor development pathway for the managers and assessors of NQSWs on the ASYE.

Skills for Care has shared best practice on quality assurance, and plans to share development of learning initiatives based on the predicted workforce needs arising from the Care Act.

Introduction

This project was developed through a shared desire by respective local authorities (LAs) to introduce the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) into its social work practice. The LAs are seeking to use the PCF at a local level in slightly different ways as they are currently at different stages in this journey. All of the partners are looking to develop the capability of social work managers to use the PCF within social work practice. To ensure an evidence-based approach of integrating the PCF into the organisations, the partnership wants to measure the impact of the jointly commissioned training, which is designed to train staff on how to effectively use the PCF. Within the partnership, three local authorities are already using the PCF in career progression schemes and job descriptions are being rewritten to incorporate the framework into role profiles. For this reason it is essential for the organisations involved, that managers are confident and competent when using the PCF.

The overarching objective is to link the PCF more closely to CPD activity by making it a model that managers can refer to during supervision and performance appraisals.

The initiative to incorporate the PCF into the day-to-day work for social work managers has been supported by senior managers within the respective local authorities as they want to ensure that supervisors have the knowledge and skills to implement new policies. The partnership has also referred to anecdotal evidence from previous work with the managers and supervisors on the ASYE programme, suggesting that there is a need for managers to better understand and utilise the PCF at an operational level. The project links in to the larger goal of implementing the PCF into the local authorities' current social work CPD activity.

Benefits

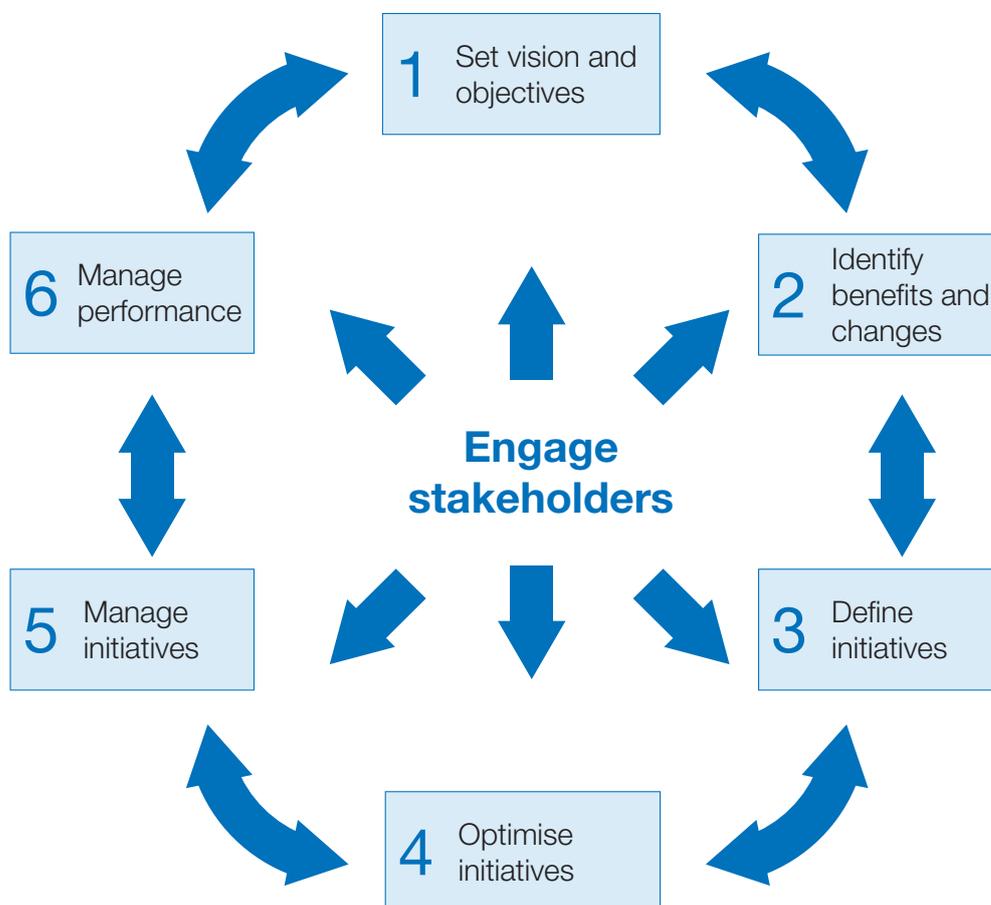
The desired operational and strategic benefits of the partnership include:

- managers effectively using the PCF to appraise social workers
- managers being able to use the PCF to effectively devise a professional development plan for themselves and staff
- to improve the ability of managers to performance manage using the PCF
- to increase the use of the PCF in reflective supervision
- to increase the understanding, potential implications and uses of the PCF at a local level.

Measuring impact model

The Benefits realisation model (BRM) is being used in this impact evaluation as it encourages wide stakeholder engagement. It links to business plans to ensure that the project is strategically aligned with wider organisational objectives.

The Benefits realisation model was used to help evaluate the desired benefits of the initiative. It serves as a logical tool that not only helps the user identify key stages of project development, but also places great emphasis on realising the benefits of the initiative by monitoring progress and evaluating the expected outcomes. Brief descriptions on how the partnership chose to populate each stage of the BRM have been included below to give the reader a clear understanding of the processes involved in the project. There is also a [populated example](#) and [benefits mapping exercise](#) which provide more information.



1. *Set vision and objectives*

The Partnership has a shared vision of integrating a clearly defined capability framework (the PCF) into its organisations to support current social work practice. As individual LAs have differing needs and approaches in regards to CPD strategy. Meetings were arranged with representatives from each organisation to produce objectives that would be mutually beneficial for all parties. The project benefited from having multiple inputs from various stakeholders; though, at times conflicting ideas on how the PCF was meant to be used made it difficult to construct shared objectives for this process.

2. *Identify benefits and changes*

The perceived benefits of integrating the PCF into social work practice mainly consist of clear expectations in regards to high standards of social worker practice. This is achieved by using a universal framework to facilitate CPD activity within the organisations. The model is meant to help managers evaluate their staff during appraisals and helps to identify key areas in professional development planning.

To be mutually rewarding for all organisations (regardless of how the PCF was intended to be used) the initiative sought to develop a PCF learning programme for managers and PCF champions to effectively educate them on the principles of the framework. The partnership met to agree the key objectives and measurable outcomes of the project, and created a specification document to outline the set objectives. After further discussions with stakeholders this specification was refined, reviewed, and handed back to suppliers to clarify some of their responses. The programme was developed as a learning programme to improve managers' knowledge, skills and confidence in using the PCF, helping staff to naturally relate to it in conversations relating to social work practice.

3. *Define initiatives*

As mentioned at the second stage of the BRM, the face-to-face training was designed to teach managers from respective boroughs the principles of the PCF. The purpose and objectives of the training directly link to the desired benefits as described in the first stage of the model, and were integrated into the training design and evaluation method.

The content of the training was generated through collaboration between the partnership and the chosen trainer for the programme. 40 managers across the organisations were trained (in addition to PCF champions) as a pilot to see how it could support them in their current roles and help facilitate the integration of the PCF into social work practice.

4. *Optimise initiatives*

The benefits of the training will be carefully monitored by evaluating the changes (i.e. impact) that result from this learning initiative. The evaluation has been designed to test both the appropriateness of using this type of training to educate staff on the PCF, and also to realise how similar training could potentially be improved to maximise learning during future initiatives (includes both summative and formative evaluation).

5. *Manage initiatives*

[Pre and post training questionnaire](#) was designed to assess how well the knowledge is being fed back into the organisations. The evaluation includes an interview with the managers, where data will be used to identify further support which might be needed from the organisation to help integrate the PCF into practice. The impact evaluation is designed primarily to ensure that transfer of knowledge becomes a seamless process in order to maximise the benefits (and ROI) of the training initiative.

6. *Manage performance*

Upon completion of the programme (and after completion of the formal assessment) CPD officers will use the data to facilitate the integration of acquired knowledge to promote CPD activity amongst staff. Since each local authority has slightly different plans for how the PCF will be utilised, it has been difficult to create a methodology for the evaluation, which can simultaneously account for specific benefits for all parties at a practical level. Therefore it has been decided that the focus should be on the information uptake of attendees and the transfer of learning to the organisational context, instead of emphasise being placed on strategically defined objectives that vary between organisations.

Methodology

The methodology that was designed for evaluating impact incorporates formal measurements to establish a baseline of current knowledge of the PCF, and to track changes resulting from the training. As the Benefits realisation model does not describe how to measure the benefits of training, bespoke tools had to be designed that allowed the partnership to track changes and measure impact. Refer to the [pre and post training questionnaires](#).

The Kirkpatrick model was used in the design of these tools as it specifically describes how to evaluate training. The key measurement consists of a self-report questionnaire that participants fill out before and after the training in order to track the desired benefits. It focuses on the specific outcomes of the project which were set out at the initial stage of the BRM (for example managers' knowledge of the PCF and how it can be used to benefit the organisation).

A baseline measurement will be taken before the training begins. Impact will be assessed by using this baseline measurement and comparing it to the measurements made after the training. The method is, however, likely to be biased by participants' inaccurate self-estimates before having been taught the concepts of the PCF. The post-training questionnaire has therefore been designed to allow participants to re-evaluate their pre-training knowledge in light of the information taught as part of the programme.

The questionnaire will be administered at three identified key stages of the learning process:

- a) before the training begins
- b) directly after the training
- c) a set time period (3 months) after the training has been attended.

The latter measurement is necessary to evaluate how well the changes are sustained over time and to help reduce the rate of decay of training benefits. A slight variation of the questionnaire will also be given to the member of staff that supervises the trainee, and to a person that the trainee him/herself supervises, to provide multiple perspectives of the benefits similar to that of a 360-evaluation tool.

The evaluation will be concluded with a focus group interview with the trainees. The purpose of this interview is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the person has benefited from the training (from a first-hand perspective), and also to identify how the trainee believes that the organisation as a whole has/will benefit from the training initiative and what impact this may have on people in need of care and support. The data gathered through interviews will be analysed to evaluate the success of the training. It focuses on how well the taught knowledge is being implemented into social work practice, and how it will be used to identify further support that can be given to facilitate the sought changes within the organisation (focusing on how organisational barriers might potentially have a negative impact on the sustainable outcomes of the project).

Summary

As it has taken the partnership longer than anticipated to arrange the practical aspects of the training (including the design of the training, sourcing a suitable trainer, recruiting staff, etc.) the lifecycle of the project has been prolonged. The first training champions session was run in March and the second wave of training has been scheduled to commence the 14 May, and the partnership is due to begin measuring the baseline for this group. The structure of the process has been planned using the BRM, but formal measurement using the impact measurement tools are yet to be utilised to begin the evaluation process. The partnership will keep Skills for Care and anyone interested in the findings from this case study informed of the progress made over the next few months.

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