

Using the Benefits realisation model (BRM) to focus on reflective supervision

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

North Somerset Council's adult social care training team became involved in the Skills for Care measuring impact project because of a growing awareness that there was a gap in monitoring training provision. This was highlighted in the feedback the department received from The College of Social Work when they applied for endorsement as a learning organisation. North Somerset Council already had systems in place for social workers to plan and evaluate their learning and they were assigned the BRM model to test those systems.

Introduction

North Somerset Council chose to focus on the three day reflective supervision course designed for social work and other professional supervisors, ASYE supervisors, mentors and practice educators. Candidates had been undertaking this course since spring 2012 so it was felt that there would be supervisory practice on which the impact of the CPD could be measured.

The course was mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency to assist attendees evidence their level of capability which had been endorsed by The College of Social Work.

Attendees were also offered the opportunity to gather evidence to accredit their learning through the University of the West of England to achieve academic credits towards professional qualifications.

To measure the impact of CPD activity, North Somerset Council trialed the Benefits realisation model and a [four stage version](#) of the same model.

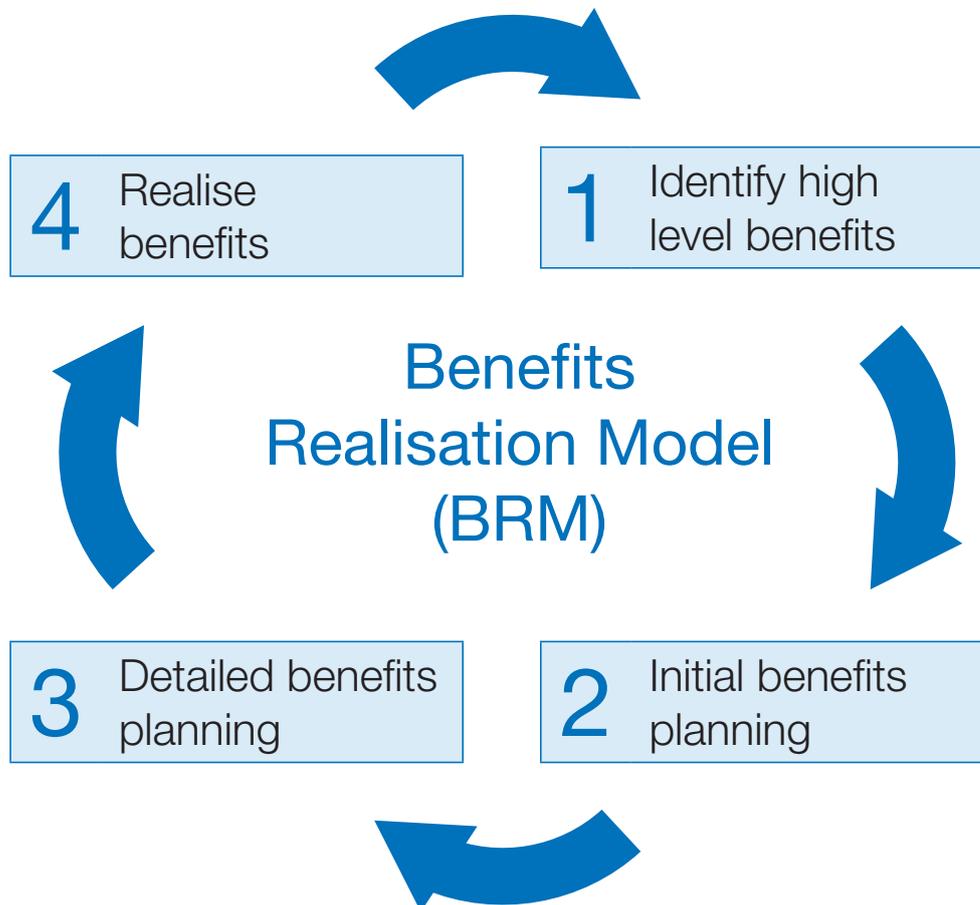
Benefits

The Benefits realisation model provides:

- recognition of existing available resources to support impact evaluation, including the CPD online evaluation process which recognises flaws and identifies potential solutions
- closer scrutiny of CPD planning processes to ensure that objectives are identified before new CPD activity is commissioned rather than assumed which can support effective impact measurement
- a reflective supervision programme which is well-planned and effective but needs more explicit learning objectives identified at the start of the course to encourage more legitimate assessment of the outcomes of the course.

Measuring impact model

The Benefits realisation model was chosen for this study as it is designed to encourage the identification of organisational objectives at the start of the project. It also helps to engage with stakeholders to implement change and measures the benefits achieved by the organisation against the planned outcomes of the project.



We provided North Somerset Council with two versions of the BRM to trial in the project, a four and a six stage model. Having trailed both versions they felt that the [four stage model](#) was clearer and enabled them to look in more detail at the process they were following. This was captured in a [populated example](#) of the 4 stage model.

Methodology

North Somerset Council sent out a questionnaire, which referenced the Ripfa training transfer model, to the 22 supervisors that completed the reflective supervision course from January 2012 to November 2013.

Of these, four supervisors returned questionnaires (18% response rate). We asked the supervisors whether they agreed to their supervisees being contacted with a similar questionnaire about their practice as supervisors. Only two of the four supervisors agreed and responses were received from three supervisees.

With such a low response rate it is very difficult to draw meaningful conclusions beyond the general support for the value and content of the course that was recorded in the questionnaires received.

As a result of this limited response, they used the data available from their course evaluation process that is hosted on the [CPD online website](#). The website asks course participants who are booking onto the short training courses to complete:

- a pre-course questionnaire that asks them to set their learning objectives for the course and agree whether the course enables them to meet individual and team learning objectives
- a course evaluation immediately after having completed the learning activity where they should identify what they have learned, whether it will enable them to meet the individual and team learning objectives and what they plan to do to put this learning into practice
- an online impact evaluation three months after the course where they should explain what they did to put their learning into practice and the impact.

The pre-course evaluations were available for all three of the courses that had run in the time specified. Immediate after-course evaluations were available for two of the three courses and no-one had completed an impact evaluation for this course.

The data from the evaluations for the reflective supervision course showed:

- That all who booked on the course had done so as it was an appraisal objective for them and all bar one because it was a team objective
- All who had attended believed the course had met its objectives, had increased their confidence in the subject and enabled them to meet their appraisal and team objectives.

Comments about the course included:

- the request for follow-up training or refresher to maintain skills
- praise for the knowledge and skills of the trainer
- positive recommendations of the course to their colleagues
- the need for it to be a mandatory course (it is already)
- no data was available from the impact evaluations for this course – in fact, further analysis showed that no impact evaluations had been completed on the website for the whole of the year to January 2014.

To help teams to identify baseline knowledge, plan new CPD and monitor the impact of CPD, the Ripfa training transfer [planning](#) and [evaluation](#) tools were developed from the Ripfa training transfer model. This helps teams or individuals to create learning objectives and measure these at the end of the CPD activity. As the training course had already started before the piloting of the BRM it was difficult to revisit the aims and objectives of the programme so this model was not used on this occasion.

Summary

Wider organisational support for measuring the outcomes of CPD activity, such as from the Safeguarding Adults Board and learning and development across the Council who aim to prove the effectiveness and value for money of the CPD activity they support. This is evidenced through impact evaluation being embedded already in our CPD planning processes and previous efforts made to evaluate and audit the impact of safeguarding adults training.

Operational support was achieved by gathering information from the training manager and practitioners who completed the course on the impact they were able to identify.

Evaluation of the BRM

There are a number of positives for North Somerset Council of using the BRM to measure the impact of CPD:

- It highlights the essential elements of project planning process e.g. identifying SMART objectives at the start to enable effective measurement at the end.
- It focuses on identifying, engaging and gathering information from key stakeholders.
- It is designed for organisational planning and can inform the development of, existing business review and planning processes.
- It supports an outcomes driven model of planning and measuring CPD activity.
- It is a good fit with planning and assessing learning models.
- It is flexible enough to be used if developing the whole organisation's learning and development activity or planning and evaluating a particular CPD programme.
- Using the model as a cycle, helps to identify gaps to focus on in future work.

There are also negatives for North Somerset Council of using the BRM to measure the impact of CPD:

- There is little guidance on how to measure impact at the end of the process so other tools had to be identified to do this e.g. Ripfa training transfer model and questionnaire.
- The BRM is linear so no learning from the impact evaluation can be carried forward to future projects.
- It doesn't recognise the difference between organisational and individual objectives such as, what motivates social workers to engage in CPD, might not be what the organisation sets out to achieve.
- It doesn't differentiate between public and private sources of information that might evidence the impact of CPD activity e.g. personal reflections on CPD activity (private between the social worker and their supervisor) and team plans and appraisals (public within the organisation) – both are useful and relevant to measuring the impact of CPD.

Linking to the core principles for CPD

It took some work to identify the links between the BRM, the CPD activity being measured and the [core principles for CPD](#). It was clear that the chosen CPD activity (the reflective supervision course) meets these principles but this was more because of the values of those developing the course than the familiarity with the principles. Future reviews of this course will focus on the CPD principles, specifically focussing on how the candidate's learning objectives can be explicitly linked with their Professional Capabilities Framework level.

The BRM supports an outcomes driven model of planning and measuring CPD activity which should be embedded throughout workforce development and planning to be effective. The model appears flexible enough for it to be used in this way, whether you are considering developing a whole organisation's learning and development activity or planning and evaluating a particular CPD programme, as demonstrated in this example.

Lessons learnt

- Embed the SMART learning objectives at the beginning of all CPD activity for individuals and the organisation. This can be supported by the Ripfa training transfer tools and integrated into the team planning process.
- Improving the content and use of the impact evaluation tool on CPD online.
- Embed an annual CPD impact review into the joint appraisal and PDP process for social workers.

Next steps

To achieve these they will:

- create resources for commissioning CPD through their organisation and provider agencies using the findings from this project
- create a learning and development planning tool for the team to be used as part of the annual business planning process which builds on the training transfer tools for [planning](#) and [evaluation](#)
- work with the CPD website lead to develop an impact evaluation tool
- revise the joint appraisal and PDP form .