Using a development web to support social workers target, track and evidence their CPD

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

North Tyneside Council initially researched how the outcomes star (registered trademark) model could be used to measure the impact of CPD within social work. This led to the creation of the development web, an excel-based personal development planner designed to enable social workers target, track and evidence their CPD.

Introduction

The **outcomes star** was selected because it is a holistic, service user-led method for tracking the impact of change in partnership with people in need of care and support. It provides a strong visual aspect to measure impact and encourages the individual to take ownership of their experience. There are a range of outcomes stars for different groups of people in need of care and support, but there is no specific tool for use within social work.

A potential use was identified for a similar tool in relation to social workers' CPD. Changes to the method had to be made to incorporate reflection on practice and goal-setting. North Tyneside Council needed to ensure that social workers were able to identify SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timely) objectives in relation to their CPD.

North Tyneside Council also had an organisational requirement to incorporate use of the Professional Capability Framework (PCF) within social work CPD process. The outcomes star does not provide this function, so they created the **development web**, which has been specifically designed based around the PCF domains.

Benefits

The **development web** has support from senior management and the three main benefits have been identified:

1. Supporting social workers (at any level) demonstrate the impact of CPD.
2. Enabling individual employees to demonstrate suitability for a new/different role.
3. A slightly modified version can be used within an internal leadership development scheme.

Supporting social workers to demonstrate the impact of CPD

North Tyneside Council aims to incorporate the development web into formal appraisal systems. This is because it can be used to help social workers meet the HCPC's CPD requirements, which are based on the outcomes of learning and provide a link to the PCF:

- The development web meets HCPC's expectations of a personal development plan (which they recommend using to help target CPD).
- It can be used to keep an ongoing and accurate record of CPD (HCPC CPD Standard 1).
- It incorporates the PCF making it easier for social workers to demonstrate HCPC CPD Standards 2-4.

- It can be used to reflect upon CPD/learning activities and record specific evidence.
- It can be used as a piece of evidence in an audit situation (HCPC CPD Standard 5).
- It can be used by social workers from ASYE level up to experienced social workers.

Enabling individual employees to demonstrate suitability for a new/different role

North Tyneside Council is piloting an approach where they are working with a social worker moving from a senior position in one social work team to a senior position in a different social work team. The skills and behaviours required for the new role differ from those required in the previous role. The development web is being used to help the social worker target their personal development and demonstrate suitability for the new role.

Internal leadership development scheme

A different version of the development web is being used as part of the social work development programme (SWDP). The SWDP gives social workers at North Tyneside Council a chance to take on a project and/or secondment, and enhance their leadership and management skills.

This version does not incorporate the PCF into its structure. Participants use the development web to set personalised development goals and milestones, and then track their progress in the same way they would with the standard development web which can be linked to the PCF.
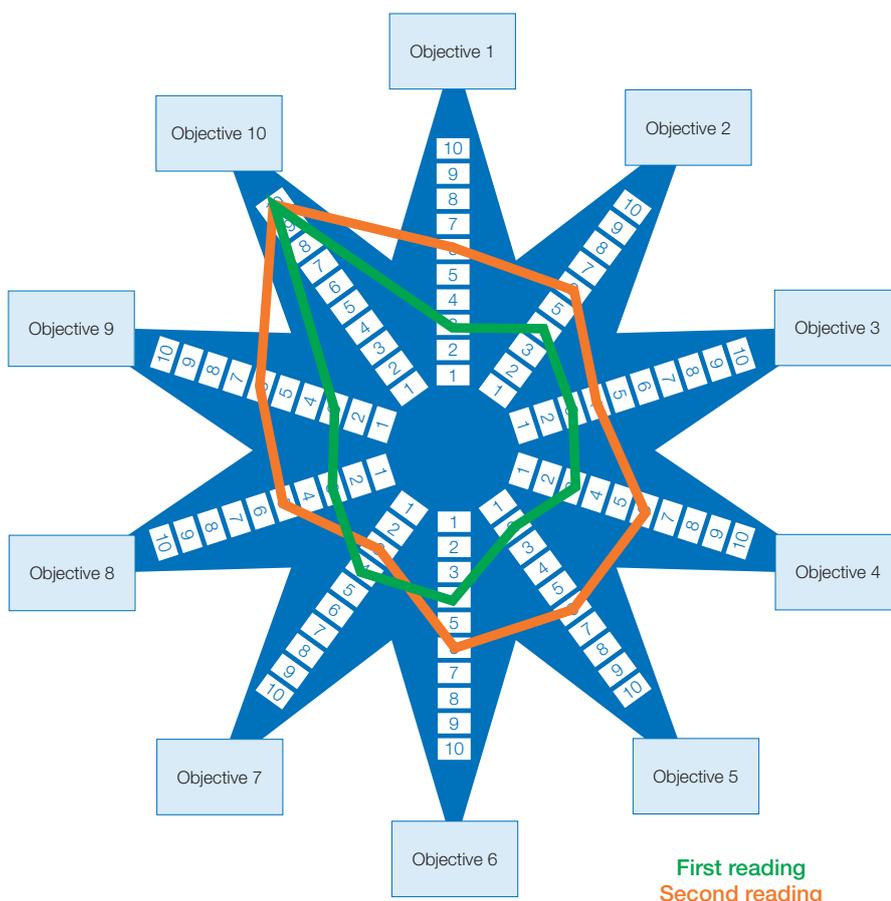
Measuring impact model

The outcomes star measures and supports progress towards specified goals. It uses a ten point scale which charts the progress in key areas of performance. North Tyneside Council ued the outcomes star to create the development web which allows social workers and their managers, to audit and chart progress against the PCF.

First reading
Second reading

Methodology

The development web was created by North Tyneside Council to measure the impact of CPD as it links closely linked to the core principles for CPD.

Principle 1 - Using the PCF

- North Tyneside Council have identified the PCF as the capability for social workers to use when measuring CPD.
- In the development web, assessment and development planning are based on the level descriptors and demonstrated within the domains of the PCF.
- By incorporating the development web into appraisals, the PCF becomes embedded into practice and measuring impact of CPD.

Principle 2 - Work-based assessment

- Individual learning outcomes and expectations for development are linked directly to the domains of the PCF.
- Learning outcomes and the impact of CPD are measured in practice at different review points.
- Measurement of CPD is carried out during reflective supervision, so that impact of CPD on practice is evaluated by the social worker and supervisor.

Principle 3 - Reflective supervision/ supporting reflective practice

- This includes a space for reflective learning.
- The individual social worker's development web is reviewed at set stages as part of supervision, encouraging reflection on progress and personal development.

Principle 4 - Holistic Assessment

- Holistic assessment includes reflective practice, observations and feedback from people in need of care and support.
- Although holistic assessment is across all the domains of the PCF, social workers can primarily focus their CPD on one or more of the PCF domains.
- Assessment is still possible whether a social worker has development goals in each domain, or a selection of domains.
- Social workers can target different levels within the PCF, depending on what is most appropriate for them. For example where

someone is at "social worker" level across six domains and working at "experienced social worker" in the other three.
- NQSW's undertaking the ASYE are assessed across all domains of the PCF.

Principle 5 - Measuring Impact

- The initial development web acts as a baseline. The social worker sets initial scores in each PCF domain, and subsequent reviews are measured against the initial scores.
- Social workers and supervisors agree an initial and target score for each PCF domain.
- Measuring impact takes place at regular intervals.
- Linking the development web to formal appraisals will provide a direct link between organisational needs and personal development.

Principle 6 - Measuring Impact

- The development web helps social workers to meet HCPC's CPD requirements.
- It can be used to map development from the ASYE through to experienced social workers.

Summary

Lessons learned

1. Measuring success

The criteria for success were not satisfactorily identified in the early stages of the project. Desired outcomes of using the Development Web with social workers were therefore not clear from the outset. However, as the project progressed, we were able to identify what kind of change and improvement we expected to see in social workers' professional practice.

2. Accreditation

The internal talent fostering scheme – SWDP– is currently unaccredited. They are in the process of exploring accreditation options with the local HEI, so that social workers gain post-qualifying credits. This process has taken time to complete however the accreditation will be specifically linked to CPD and measuring impact and the development web can then be included as evidence in the portfolio.

On reflection, it may have been beneficial to have had the accreditation in place at the start of the SWDP. If it had been in place at the outset of the programme, participants would have had an extra incentive to focus on measuring the impact of their CPD.

3. Social work buy-in

The project was undertaken with SWDP participants and a small group of NQSWs in order to pilot different versions of the development web. One benefit of working with a small cohort was that North Tyneside Council were able to meet regularly and gather ongoing qualitative feedback. This gave the social workers involved, some ownership over the project and they were able to share any views or issues with the development web and see those changes being made.

Piloting the development web with a broader range of social workers would have had two clear benefits. Firstly, they would have been able to gather feedback from social workers in different settings and levels, including more specialist teams. Secondly, including a wider range of social work teams in a pilot would have increased the buy-in and ownership across adult social care.

4. Organisational benefits

Initially, the project focused on use of the development web within SWDP and the ASYE. However, the link with HCPC CPD requirements was not fully identified until the final stages. This has meant that the management buy-in has taken longer to achieve. Senior management now appreciate the potential organisational benefits to using the development web, including its incorporation into formal appraisals.

5. Practical issues

Feedback has suggested that supervision in social work often takes place without the use of IT, and that print-offs of the development web would be helpful to prompt discussion. If consultation had been carried out earlier, this specific problem could have been pre-empted.

Next steps

The development web now has both senior management and social work buy-in, and will be incorporated into formal appraisals:

Workshops are being delivered to social work teams to demonstrate how the development web can be used to meet HCPC's CPD and re-registration. The workshops are short informative discussion sessions which provide useful information from HCPC, the development web and **user guide**.

- The development web is being incorporated into social work formal appraisals and will help to embed the PCF.
- An additional next step is to evaluate the SWDP. Feedback from this evaluation will further inform use of the development web to measure impact of CPD in the future.
- To address the printing issue (identified above) development web prompt sheets will be developed and available to social workers to print.

Potential further uses

There is interest from other areas within North Tyneside Council; occupational therapy are seeking an impact measuring tool and personal development planner; SSOs require a personal development tool to help target and track their progress. Approved mental health professionals can also begin to use the development web as their standards of proficiency have already been mapped to the PCF.