

L5 Commissioning for wellbeing with a learning disability and autism focus

Learning providers

Christiana Evans

I'm here with Bev Cole from Bespoke Consultancy Education Limited to talk about a project that we worked together on last year. Skills for Care and BCE worked together to run a pilot to deliver the level five commissioning for wellbeing qualification but with a learning disability in autism focus. The aims of the pilot were to bring health and social care commissioners together to improve understanding of each other's roles to gain a better understanding of the commissioning cycle by supporting market shaping, and what the outcomes need to be for people in receipt of care and support services. The pilot was supported by a steering group to ensure that delivery of the qualification meant learning outcomes really helped commissioners to procure services that better meet the needs for people with learning disabilities and autism. It ultimately aims to assist commissioners to rethink and improve their commissioning practice. The pilot started in April 2020 with a cohort of 12 commissioners, six from social care and six from health. Bev, in your opinion, do you think that the pilot achieves these aims?

Bev Cole

Yes, Christiana. In short, yes, I think they do but to expand on that we've always encouraged health and social care commissioners and providers to take this course up and historically the main cohorts I've been having is with social care. One of the things that the pilot did was make sure that what via the steering group was brought different groups of people to the qualification. It brought people from health it brought people from social care together. By bringing them together and having that good mix of learners people were able to bring their own challenges, barriers and successes to the qualification and share that, so that shared learning is what was really important. That shared understanding of what you know, the impact of what you're doing is having on the other part of the system and it's starting to build together

to change that or to improve that and so that people get the right services that for them.

Christiana Evans

Why do you think this qualification is important? And why do commissioners need to do it with a learning disability and autism focus?

Bev Cole

The qualification is important because in all areas of commissioning, we need a workforce that understands that ever changing landscape that commissioning brings is it's constantly evolving, it's constantly moving, and that and that's great, because that's about supporting people and supporting people in the right way and that changes all the time. I think with learning disability commissioners and autism commissioners adds an additional layer of complexity. And we see from research and reports or media that their services have not met people's needs. And that's about a whole system approach, but commissioners are a great, great part of that. So, it's about commissioners commissioning services that are fit for purpose and getting it right for people. So, this course, sets a good standard, it sets a good baseline, and it inspires people to reach further than the baseline that's required. It also it also looks at how to create best practice and by sharing those good things that have happened and sharing those excellent experiences that people have to develop services and improve services that can go across the country.

Christiana Evans

So what do you think you have learned from the pilot?

Bev Cole

To be honest Christiana it does make me smile that I learned something from every cohort that I have, there's some excellent, there are some excellent commissioning practice, and there's not so good, there's not so good commissioning practice, but the not so good commissioning practice stuff gets highlighted. So I learned from all the courses about really good things that's

going on in the country. And actually, other learners learn that too and take away from that something that they can use in their own services. But I think from this course, in particular, there's been learning about having direct rather than indirect experiences of people who experts by experience for us or people who use services. And, that that kind of difference or buy in from some support for managers can make. So, if I expand on that a bit, we've always we've always had the viewpoint of experts by experience commissioners and providers that that support commissioners that understand the co-production to understand outcomes-based commissioning. But not always we've not we've not really engaged in someone directly delivering that and in the pilot, we did have somebody to directly delivering that and that actually gave learners more of an opportunity to deepen their thinking, they were able to kind of ask questions that that were important to them, it gave them, it gave them an opportunity to look at things from a different perspective and to see the impact of what good co-production could be. It also gave the person delivering the training, the kind of opportunity to understand some of the barriers and challenges that commissioners face, and some of those that are beyond their control. But the sort that the evidence that this this, this this course is brought forward, is when someone's had the additional support and buy in from the manager, the learning that they did that they take from the course they're inspired to do more. And, when that's supported back in their workplace they can achieve more. So, everybody, achieves great things when they've done this course. But I think we need to get more buy in from managers, and we need to get more support from managers, you know once people have done this course and for the support one.

Christiana Evans

What do you think has been the real lightbulb moments for your learners? And how has that impacted upon them?

Bev Cole

Oh, gosh, there's, there's so many there, there is so many lightbulb moments, and sometimes they're so small in terms of the the kind of context of the course but so huge for individuals. So I mean, when, as I said already, one of the great pleasures I have as a tutor is seeing people

develop and develop their knowledge and then with that increase in knowledge, there's an increase in confidence for them to challenge things that people see that are not quite right. So, I mean, one of the one of those examples is about one of the learners had kind of worked well as a course we have a lot of detail about what the outcome the difference between outcomes and, and outputs and you know what that is and how those things can be measured. And, and what difference that that makes to individuals. But there's a there's a lot of confusion between outputs and outcomes. And, those words are used in interchangeably. And, don't they end up not meaning the right thing. So one of our learners took a good understanding of what outcomes was. And then went back to her workplace and when people were kind of talking using the term outcomes. But actually what they were referring to was output she was able, she felt confident to be able to support them to understand what the difference was. So that that means that this cause stretches further and obviously she come back and told me that she was proud to do that so that's that's amazing really. And I suppose if another thing that, you know, there's lightbulb moments for learners actually is co-production so again that's a terminology that's our overtime been watered down. So people talk about co-production and they believe that they're doing co-production, and then they come onto the course they really can see what co-production looks like and they realise actually, I'm not doing kudos and I'm actually more likely doing consultation or engagement. That's okay, it's okay to do consultation engagement, but it's about being clear about what that is what you're doing and you're being clear to those that people that are involved in that process that that's what it is, and not allowing people to be thinking that they're part of something has been co-produced. And then actually when the end product comes out, actually what they've been involved in doesn't reflect within that end the product, so people then feel kind of angered or frustrated that actually they could, they could have changed things but actually that that opportunity to change has been lost because its not been its they've not been co-produced.

Lynda Tarpey

Today I'm talking to Linda Tarpey from HASCA Limited, a training provider who offer the level five commissioning for wellbeing qualification and have been working with us to deliver the qualification with a learning disability and autism focus. Hello, Lynda. Hello, Christiana. Could

you describe for us the difference between the level five commissioning for wellbeing with a learning disability and autism focus and other commissioning qualifications? Well, the difference between the commissioner the certificate in commissioning for wellbeing and other courses, is that this is actually the only regulated qualification for commissioners in health and social care. There are excellent courses for teams and individuals available, but they don't give the participants a nationally recognised qualification that's externally validated and awarded by a nationally recognised awarding body. Our learners don't do not end up with a certificate saying they completed a course with HASCA Limited, they receive a qualification delivered by HASCA but externally quality assured and awarded by Highfield and that means that that everybody understands what they've achieved by achieving that qualification, what the content was of that qualification, and it's transferable across the country. What's the difference between taking it with a learning disability and autism focus than undertaking the qualification as a generic one? Well, the benefits are that the learning outcomes are the same as our programme without a learning disability and autism focus, so the learners getting the same qualification. And indeed, over the last four years, we've been delivering the qualification many commissioners working in this field have achieved the qualification on programmes without this specific focus. However, from my perspective, the advantage of programmes where there is a specific focus means that the guided learning can be contextualised and directed, and it gives the opportunity for a deeper dive into the history context and future direction of commissioning for that specific cohort of people. In the case of the programmes run by HASCA, we've always had elements of co-produced and co-trained sessions with people with lived experience and carers. Having cohorts with a specific focus means that we can ensure the co-trainers are people with lived experience of learning disability and or autism and family carers with experience of those services so that the conversation can be much more specific between that lived experience and the commissioners on this particular programme,

Christiana Evans

Why do you think commissioners should undertake this qualification? And what are the added benefits of doing it with a focus on learning disabilities and autism?

Lynda Tarpey

There are several reasons why commissioners should take undertake this qualification. But increasingly, I hear from learners that there are organisations are planning to make it an essential requirement of the job. So those that have the qualification will be much better placed in the workforce in the future. I've also been delighted and surprised by how many of our current and former learners have achieved significant career progression, partly on the back of having this qualification. So we have learners who are now heads, commissioning leading teams and it's nice to see the signatures of those people on the application forms of people who are now the junior members of their teams. So from a personal point of view, I think there's a really good reason why people should undertake this because it is going to improve their career prospects give them confidence and a good grounding in commissioning that will take them forward. But on a wider note, we need to change improve and liberate commissioning. When people are telling me that that is what this programme is enabling them to do through the knowledge that they've gained. And I don't think there's any service where that's needed more than in learning disability and autism support

Christiana Evans

In your opinion as a learning provider, can you talk about how commissioners may change their practice as a result of taking this qualification?

Lynda Tarpey

Yeah, I think I would say to that. People may change their practices based on the feedback that I've heard from, from learners about how they have actually changed their practice. People have found the content of the programme around value values based commissioning outcomes based commissioning, co-production has really informed this thing thinking and inform their approach. One of our learners said, you know, I was beginning to think I was probably in the wrong job because it seemed what I was doing was so far away from what I wanted to achieve and the values I brought to it was actually having got gain the knowledge from the programme she saw that she was actually in the place that she needed to be to be the change that she wanted to be. And I've always said, from my experience, and certainly

from my time as a directorate TLAP, that commissioners that absolutely crucial facing any step changing in the system. We've got lots of legislation that gives people permission to commission differently, but I think people often don't have the confidence to use that legislation policy. One former learner said to me that having been through the course she felt that she was confident to go toe to toe with contracts and procurement and finance and to actually insist that they did do things differently and to be able to argue the case that it was legal, it was legitimate and it was within the governance that applied to the organisation for which she was working. So I think that that real confidence to do whatever they are there to do differently, is the real, the really important thing that people are gaining out of the qualification. You know, what one learner said to me that it's been invaluable to her and that she will be using what she's learned to champion and move towards a true outcome based and co-produced commissioning model in her authority. Someone else said that it has allowed them to make connections between theory and practice. And someone else said to me, that they feel that they're now a better Commissioner for having done this course, and are applying the knowledge and approach in all leg commissioning work.

Christiana Evans

And what do you think is the most important thing that a learner needs to know before taking this course?

Lynda Tarpey

Well, I would say that, what they need to know is that particularly on the learning disability and autism focus programme, where they're having the the opportunity of funded places, which are a very scarce and precious resource, is that they need to be serious about it, they need to realise that they are getting that precious and scarce resource invested in them. And to actually think carefully about what their how they're going to undertake that it is a substantial qualification. It's 170 hours of guided learning, which is equivalent of 23, full time days of work on top of the guided learning. So people need to think seriously about their commitment to it, as well as the benefits and the potential career advantages that it's going to give them. So we

are a group of senior commissioners all with experiencing commissioning, who are delivering a training programme. We didn't come at it from the other, the other end of being a training

provider who isn't delivering on commissioning. And I think, I would hope that throughout through all the programme and through all the guided learning, that passion for the potential of commissioning to change the world and create better outcomes for people comes through.