

Continuous professional development and the adult social care white paper

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



This case study illustrates a 'whole system' approach to social work workforce commissioning using the products from the Social Work Reform Board to audit the skills mix and the processes within the organisation. As a result a career and CPD framework were developed. Building on the development of the ASYE, the CPD approach was incorporated within the appraisal and performance management process including the use of holistic assessment. The CPD approach includes the beginnings of a system to measure the impact on social work practice and service improvement.

Workforce commissioning

The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames developed an Integrated Adults Workforce Strategy to address the skills needs identified as a result of redesigned services after undertaking the Health Check recommended by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB). The workforce strategy included recommendations from the SWRB, and the adult social care white paper 2012. A number of elements were addressed, including a revised continuing professional development (CPD) framework in line with the [Professional Capabilities Framework \(PCF\)](#) and revision of the role profiles of social workers to take account of the PCF. An [audit](#) to assess the organisation's areas of strength and identify development needs was based on the [Standards for Employers and Supervision framework](#).

The development of a brokerage hub to enable more effective commissioning of services, including a database of services that social workers can access and build upon, was relevant to this project. Recognising the need for a new skills mix for this service, a training programme

was developed for social workers working in the brokerage hub to develop micro commissioning skills and robust support planning skills, including developing skills in effective communication, negotiation, and managing transitions. The learning from this has been embedded in further workshops with staff (which all staff attended).

The desired outcomes of this programme were that social workers would be more outcomes-focused, better able to develop market stimulation skills and able to apply the concepts of best value when developing support plans. There was also an outcome for improving service delivery, in that social workers worked on developing a resource tool to be used as part of developing support plans. The resource tool includes a practitioner resources SharePoint site, detailing local resources for use by social workers, and it also hosts an online forum and discussion blog for social workers on support planning, which is used for asking questions and sharing ideas and good practice.

Career framework

As part of implementing the recommendations from the Social Work Reform Board, we undertook a review of the social workers' career progression scheme. The framework in adults' services did not include a progression scheme for senior practitioners, whereas one did exist in children's services, so there was an inconsistency between the services. As an organisation we wanted to create a framework that was consistent, that incorporated the requirements of the HCPC and that enabled social workers to develop capabilities at the required level as described in the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

As well as spending time on developing internal and partnership arrangements for the framework for ASYE, we were beginning to formulate ideas for social workers' CPD beyond ASYE, building on the development of ASYE to support such a framework.

Using the evidence requirements of the HCPC, which are more outcomes-focused, we examined in detail the assessment tools for ASYE and felt that these could also be adapted to assess social workers' capabilities, while at the same time meeting the CPD evidence requirements for the HCPC.

Overview of the CPD framework

The CPD framework has been launched and CPD portfolio building sessions for social workers are being run in the autumn.

The CPD framework for social workers builds on the ASYE framework and integrates the principles of holistic assessment. Social workers' progression is assessed over a two year period in line with HCPC requirements. Reflective supervision is integral to the process. It is intended that the CPD framework will be linked to the organisation's performance management framework with the following as the evidence requirements for all social workers:

1. One direct observations per year.
2. A reflective account to evidence applying critical reflection and analysis to casework practice, application of legislation and research.
3. Feedback from people being supported.
4. A training and development plan.
5. Evidence of reflective supervision.

6. Evidence of supporting the learning and development of others.

In providing flexible CPD opportunities, the 'Developing Practice Experts scheme' aims to offer opportunities for staff to think creatively about different kinds of learning opportunities which could both help improve services in line with the annual service objectives and support practitioners' continuing professional development. Practitioners are encouraged to identify areas on the service plan which could be used to develop practice expertise and could be invested back into the service. This was very successful and we will be running it again.

Measuring impact

The impact of the support planning training will be measured over time using the three stage evaluation process. This will include feedback from learners and trainers, along with feedback from managers about how the learning has been used in practice. As the training relates to support planning practice, a review of the longer term impact on service outcomes should be feasible.

This will be undertaken in a number of ways, using the principles of holistic assessment including:

1. Direct observation of practice: how are social workers applying their learning, how are they effectively using the resource tool to support practice?
2. Reflective supervision.

It is intended that the generic CPD framework will enable learners and managers to evidence impact on practice and on the service through the following processes.

1. The social workers' reflective logs or learning and development plans will provide evidence of impact upon practice.
2. Direct observation and feedback from people being supported will also provide evidence of outcomes they experience.
3. The range of activities and assessment methods will enable social workers and their line managers to measure outcomes against the nine domains of the Professional Capabilities Framework.