

Top tips for measuring the impact of CPD

The employers we worked with identified a number of challenges when implementing processes to measure the impact of CPD within their organisations. This document highlights those challenges and potential solutions, as well as offering some general tips on what to consider when approaching this for the first time.

Challenges and solutions

| Challenges | Potential solutions |
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| Choosing a model /tool to use. | Click here to look a list of the different models and tools which are available to employers. This page also provides examples of how and why employers have chosen particular tools and models. |
| Setting clear objectives. | Refer to ‘What can be measured?’ information below |
| Establishing a baseline. | This can be based on existing information held by the organisation or can be established before any CPD activity takes place. Refer to ‘What can be measured?’ information below. |
| Getting feedback from participants in the short / medium / long terms. | Southend on Sea Borough Council enlisted the support of senior managers to encourage feedback. Click here for more information about HCPC re-registration requirements. |
| Getting organisational ‘buy-in’. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The North West London partnership created ‘PCF champions’ ▪ North Somerset Council tied their work into wider organisational objectives of evidencing value for money. |

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| Getting social worker 'buy-in'. | North Tyneside Council made clear links between the measuring impact project and HCPC CPD requirements so the benefits to social workers were obvious. |
| Writing outcomes | Think about what you want to achieve – what will it look like? Refer to the 'Writing outcomes' section below. |
| Interpreting high level objectives | Organisational business plans may not be able to clearly describe the outcomes on and in practice. You can interpret these and help the organisation to understand the benefits of CPD. |

Before CPD activity takes place

Before any CPD takes place you should identify:

- the targets/objectives of the CPD activity – Why are we undertaking CPD activity?
- the expected impact of CPD - What changes/improvements do you expect to see in the participant's professional practice?
- the expected outcomes on social worker practice- What skills/strategies/ knowledge do you expect them to learn?
- what you will use to determine success – How will you measure success of CPD activity?

After CPD activity

After any CPD activity it is good practice to consider:

- What evidence is there that the CPD activity has had an impact?
 - Has the CPD activity had the intended impact on the participant?
 - Were there any unexpected outcomes?
 - How can the CPD activity be followed up to maximise its benefit?
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Potential outcomes of CPD

Formal outcomes of CPD activity could include:

- statistical data which measures the impact of CPD on student achievement through internal and external assessments
- feedback from questionnaires which provide quantitative evidence of a positive impact on the development of learning, knowledge and skills
- using absence rates and staff turnover to measure the impact of CPD on staff recruitment and retention and how this has contributed to a positive learning culture.

Informal outcomes of CPD activity could include:

- an increased feeling of positive, general wellbeing in the workplace – social workers feel valued and that their learning needs are being met
- staff being able to articulate the culture of CPD within the workplace and are proactively engaged in their own development
- informal dialogue and feedback at performance management reviews
- positive staff attitudes, varied and innovative approaches to CPD taking place at individual, team and whole-workplace levels
- gathering and valuing feedback from people in need of care and support can feed into the on-going CPD of a social worker or department and be used to evaluate the outcomes.

What can / should be measured?

There is a need to move beyond the traditional evaluation of learning and development which simply measures satisfaction - just because someone attended and enjoyed a course doesn't mean they learned anything or changed their practice as a result. You need to look at how the learning and development has impacted on the social worker's behaviour, attitudes and knowledge, and ultimately how this has been reflected on the service they deliver to people in need of care and support.

It's vitally important to set clear objectives at the start, otherwise you won't know what to measure and whether or not your CPD activity has had any impact.

To do this you could use 'SMART' objectives:

Specific - Something that describes a precise, single outcome or achievement.

Use action verbs such as analyse, apply, change, compare, complete, create, determine, develop, differentiate, identify, investigate, maintain, perform, plan, present, review and write.

Avoid terms with ambiguity such as 'be aware of...', 'be prepared for...', 'develop a relationship with...', 'update knowledge about...'.

Measurable - Starting with a baseline, you need to be able to observe and record change in order to evidence that your objective has been achieved. This can be done numerically (how many? how much?) or descriptively ('what's changed?').

Achievable - Objectives should be achievable - they shouldn't be too easy or too difficult, otherwise they will be demotivating to the individual.

Realistic - A realistic objective is one that can be achieved given the time and resources available.

Time bound - You need to set deadlines to focus people's attention on meeting their objectives. This is motivating, providing you have taken account of competing demands that could impact upon a person's ability to meet the deadline set.

It's important to consider how you measure impact over a period of time whether it be short term (immediately after the learning experience) medium (usually about three months later) and longer term (generally 12 months later) to ensure that skills and knowledge are embedded in practice

Writing outcomes

The following advice from Kingston University¹ may help you to think about the type of language to apply to CPD impact assessments.

They preface their learning outcomes with "On successful completion of the module, students will be able to..." to ensure that the outcomes are expressed using the appropriate verbs.

¹ Guide to writing outcomes (2009) Kingston University
http://www.kingston.ac.uk/academic-development-centre/adc-publications/documents/writing_learning_outcomes.pdf

Verbs giving evidence of: KNOWLEDGE

Define, describe, identify, label, name, outline, reproduce, recall, select, state, present, extract, organise, recount, write, recognise, measure, underline, repeat, relate, match.

Verbs giving evidence of: COMPREHENSION

Interpret, translate, estimate, justify, comprehend, convert, clarify, defend, distinguish, explain, extend, generalise, exemplify, give examples of, infer, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarise, discuss, perform, report, present, restate, illustrate, indicate, find, select, represent, name, formulate, judge, contrast, translate, classify, express, compare.

Verbs giving evidence of: APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE/UNDERSTANDING

Apply, solve, construct, demonstrate, change, compute, discover, manipulate, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, use, give examples of, exemplify, draw (up), select, explain how, find, choose, assess, practice, operate, illustrate, verify.

Verbs giving examples of: ANALYSIS

Recognise, distinguish between, evaluate, analyse breakdown, differentiate, illustrate how, infer, point out, relate, select, separate, divide/subdivide, compare, contrast, justify, resolve, devote, conclude, criticise, question, diagnose, categorise, point out, elucidate.

Verbs giving examples of: SYNTHESIS

Propose, present, structure, integrate, formulate, teach, develop, combine, compile, compose, create, devise, design, explain, generate, modify, organise, plan, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, re-organise, revise, write, summarise, tell, account for, report, alter, argue, order, select, manage, generalise, derive, conclude, build up, engender, synthesise, put together, suggest, enlarge.

Verbs giving evidence of: EVALUATION

Judge, appraise, assess, conclude, compare, contrast, describe how, criticise, discriminate, justify, defend, evaluate, rate, determine, choose, value, question.