



Effective workplace assessment

in adult social care

Free summary edition

Introduction

This is the free summary edition of **Effective workplace assessment in social care**, which has been published by Skills for Care to support adult social care organisations plan and implement effective assessments of their workers.

This summary gives you the outline of the full publication, which is available for sale at £20 through the Skills for Care online bookshop at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/bookshop

You will also find Skills for Care's **Effective supervision** guide there.

In both cases, as well as giving fuller information, the priced editions contain quotes and tips from a range of social care employers who are recent winners of relevant Skills for Care 'Accolades' awards.

Effective workplace assessment and Effective supervision are for any adult social care organisation, and may be useful also for individuals who employ their own care workers.

Both publications make particular reference to the expectations placed upon CQC-regulated social care employers by the Care Certificate in respect of inducting new workers.

Background

It is known that there is a variety of practice among social care employers in assessing their workers' competence. Both overall concern for the quality of care delivered and specific Care Certificate issues mean that managers need to assure themselves about the quality of their worker assessment processes.

There is no need to repeat assessment of the existing abilities of those who have worked in the sector for many years, but it is important to assess their competence in activities for which they have been newly trained.

In all cases, assessment of any worker new to a workplace, whether they are new to care or with prior experience, must determine **whether they are competent to work unsupervised**, i.e. beyond the line of sight of co-workers whose competence is reliably known.

Effective workplace assessment provides advice and information about the role of the assessor, including about who can be an assessor, plus practical suggestions on how to conduct effective assessments. You will also find tips on how to save time and resources by using 'holistic assessment' within care home environments, and practical suggestions for how assessment can be undertaken for homecare workers.

Why assess your workers?

Many adult social care employees have to work outside of the direct line of sight of more senior workers and so an assessment of competence is essential to know that they can deliver safe and effective care. Assessment is also used to ensure that workers have met parts of the Care Certificate.

Training alone does not guarantee that a worker understands what was taught and the standards of care that must be delivered. Every employer has a responsibility to assess competence rather than merely assume that learning will be applied.

Assessment is based on what the worker can do and involves the worker, supervisor and assessor.

Effective workplace assessment supports safe good quality care, shows where training and development is required and gives evidence of its effectiveness for regulators.

What does an assessment look like?

In adult social care most assessments will include a combination of observation and communication.

This could include observing a worker while they carry out specific tasks and/or talking to them to assess their knowledge and skills against pre-determined criteria and then creating a record of the assessment.

Observing and talking with the worker, and with colleagues and the people being supported, are key assessment methods, although tests and quizzes can also be useful. Some Care Certificate standards specify the assessment methods to be used.

Quality assurance

To ensure the quality of the process, organisations will want to have established procedures for undertaking and recording their worker assessments, including determining the training and qualifications of assessors, whether in-house or external.



The assessor

It is the registered manager who is legally responsible for the quality of care, and often for signing off the completed Care Certificate, so they need to be confident that assessments are carried out by occupationally-competent person(s).

Employers can appoint whoever they feel is best suited to the role of assessor. Although no formal qualifications may be required, an assessor is expected to be knowledgeable in the particular area that they are assessing and should regularly refresh their knowledge.

Assessors must understand the particular worker, what they are assessing and why, and the standard to be achieved. And they must do so with appropriate values, ethics and relational skills with regard to both the worker and the people being supported.

Assessors must have practical experience and, ideally, vocational qualifications in the particular work in which they are assessing a worker's competence. They may or may not be senior to the worker in the organisation's hierarchy.

If utilising external learning providers to assess competence, it is worth remembering that not all trainers have actually directly delivered care. It is always best to check with the learning provider whether they can provide assessment, or just learning.

There is no requirement for assessors to have a particular qualification to assess Care Certificate candidates. However, it will be beneficial if they have training, experience and, ideally, qualifications in the area of work they are assessing and in assessment skills. They will need also to be organised and reliable in their work and the administration of workers' development.

Occupational competence is likely to include understanding of legislation, standards, etc., applying to both the care work and the workforce. Clearly, assessors must carry out their role with proper regard to the workplace's agreed ways of working and the dignity of the people being supported.

A high level of competence in safeguarding and information handling is also to be expected. **Effective workplace assessment** lists the competences that employers should look for in appointing anyone to assess their workers.

Continuing professional development of assessors

Support and professional development for assessors may be delivered internally or by an external learning provider. If the latter, Skills for Care's Choosing Workforce Learning and endorsed learning providers may be useful in this process.

Skills for Care's Recommendations for CQC providers guide (section 5) lists a number of care-related training courses which can refresh assessors' learning and there is a range of short courses and qualifications that can strengthen existing skills and develop new ones.

Searching for 'assessing' and 'assessment' under 'Search Qualifications' then 'Qualification Title' at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/> will show information on relevant qualifications.

Principles of good assessment

Workplace assessments should always be completed face-to-face between the worker and the assessor, using real-life situations with the people who need care and support. The Care Certificate makes it clear where simulation is permitted – such as for basic life support.

Assessment must cover both knowledge and ability, as both are required for competence. Different assessment methods are required for knowledge and ability—the latter being based on observation of either actual practice or simulation, depending on the activity.

The assessor must ensure that evidence they record of the worker's competence is valid, authentic, current, reliable and sufficient.

They must also ensure that the worker is fully briefed on what is required of them, and that the person being supported is aware of and satisfied with what is going on, too.

The organisation and the assessor must know in advance what they are going to do if a worker fails to meet the required standard for any part of their assessment.

'Holistic assessment' is the term for assessing more than one skill or competence at a time. It is useful when performance objectives are interrelated and a detailed single observation can meet several criteria at the same time. It is important to be able to differentiate the different skills and knowledge being demonstrated, so that any gaps can be spotted.

Providing feedback

Rather than simply telling a worker if they have 'passed' or 'failed', feedback should help them understand *why* the assessor has made a particular decision.

Feedback also helps workers and their managers plan further training and development.

It is encouraging for the worker if the assessor can begin the feedback by explaining what was positive about the observation before moving onto any areas where further learning or development may be needed.

The assessor should record the feedback in writing and provide the worker with a copy.



Assessing the Care Certificate

Effective workplace assessment suggests some ways to assess different standards of the Care Certificate.

The Care Certificate standards are intended to be assessed in stages as the workplace and worker needs, whether that be standard-by-standard or using 'holistic assessments', as described above, that assess parts of several standards at once. There is no set sequence to assessing the different parts of the Care Certificate.

Assessment of providing privacy and dignity in the **delivery of personal care** is at risk of itself actually compromising that privacy and dignity. While it may not be appropriate to observe while a worker delivers personal care, there are other ways to assess their performance, such as checking their preparation, getting them to describe what they are going to do, listening in but not viewing the care delivery (with the person's permission) and, again with agreement, talking with the person being supported.

Assessment of those new to care

It is anticipated that induction of a worker new to social care may take around 12 weeks. However, this will vary from workplace to workplace and from worker to worker. For example, induction might consist of several cycles of a week or two of training and supervisory support, accompanied by a further week of assessment.

There is no set limit to the number of assessments a worker can take before they are successfully signed off. Each employer must determine what is appropriate and what action to take if someone is not able to meet the standards.

Assessment of those with previous experience

When somebody joins an organisation with previous adult social care experience, or possibly relevant health experience, it is unlikely that they will be expected to undertake all of the Care Certificate if they can successfully evidence past learning.

Employers can use the free Care Certificate Mapping Resource to identify where the particular worker's gaps are (there are new areas of focus that will not have been covered by the earlier Common Induction Standards or diplomas).

Don't just ask new workers what they know – ask for evidence too.

The Care Certificate is transferable between different social care providers and is not intended to make workers repeat learning and assessment that they can evidence having previously done elsewhere, and that is still current.

Evidence and record keeping

Assessment evidence may include:

- assessor observation records and feedback on real and simulated activity
- written answers, case studies and assignments
- audio files or transcripts of sessions between the assessor and the worker
- testimonials from people being supported.

Certificates of attendance on study days or e-learning without assessment of what has been learnt is **not** evidence toward achievement of the Care Certificate.

Both the worker and the assessor can use either paper or electronic portfolios to record evidence of learning and assessment. Assessors' records should show why particular assessment judgements were made, as part of the evidence of the quality of the process (which might be inspected by the CQC).

The evidence is sufficient when the assessor is confident that the worker has met the standard. This decision is a judgement of the individual assessor.

Effective workplace assessment has templates in its appendices that can be used to create a system for recording evidence.

Sign-off

There is no need for a worker to complete the Care Certificate standards in any particular order, so different parts of the Care Certificate can be signed off at different times, once the assessor is satisfied that the particular standard has been completed.

Careful consideration should be given before signing off the Care Certificate. The

assessor must be confident that the worker has achieved all the relevant criteria and can safely work unsupervised.

Within a CQC-regulated service it should usually be the registered manager who signs the certificate itself, although assessment may have been delegated to others.

We recommend that copies of the Care Certificate should be given to the worker. In addition to the Care Certificate, the employer may wish to provide further evidence of what training they have received, how and when it was assessed.

For more information and resources to help with the Care Certificate, see www.skillsforcare.org.uk/carecertificate.

Skills for Care's Effective Workplace Assessment guide

The full guide for Effective Workplace Assessment is available from our bookshop. You can buy the full guide for £20 from www.skillsforcare.org.uk/bookshop

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