

Reduced training costs, saved resources and increased staff competence evidence in Social Care Training at West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council (WBC) reduced training costs and saved resources, whilst at the same time increased staff competence and documented evidence. This followed concern that mandatory adult social care Common Induction Standards (CIS) from October 2006 would not be consistently applied due to varying management knowledge and style as well as significant workloads and issues of capacity. This was achieved by using online assessments for the CIS and mandatory training subjects.

Highlights

- **Assessment before induction has now become mandatory** for all new staff with previous social care experience or appropriate qualifications and is reducing the amount of training people need to attend
- **Managers use the assessment results** to focus on the areas needing to be developed by individuals and not going over areas where knowledge has clearly been evidenced.
- **It is estimated that £49k savings were achieved** in staffing budgets where staff cover for training was not needed after staff evidenced knowledge using the assessments

Background and Context

WBC is a small unitary authority with limited funding and resources to train the adult social care workforce. Collaboration and partnership working is essential and strong links have been in place with Social Care Training at Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and through the Skills for Care Berkshire Committee for the past 8 years.

Continually motivated by Gershon and efficiency savings, we are always looking for ways to make savings without impacting on the service we provide.

Key Learning

- Identify and use champions to bring others on board
- Provide plenty of opportunities for people to learn about the system
- Engage with those using the system to put policies and guidance together
- Allow flexibility so people can use the system for different purposes to suit their needs



Who was involved?

- Social Care Training's Training (SCT) and Development Manager led on the concept and implementation
- SCT's Learning and Development Co-ordinator led on induction compliance and also a sub project for the Learning Disability Induction linked to Learning Disability Qualification in partnership with other Berkshire Local Authorities and Bracknell and Wokingham College.
- Adult Social Care leaders approved proposals and asked that the system be integrated into policies and procedures.
- Adult Social Care managers were consulted and involved through quarterly training meetings and engaged in the use of the system
- Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) social care sector were consulted and involved through regular Workforce Development Forum meetings
- Private sector organisation CIS Assessment was established to create the online assessments.
- Trainers from Local Authorities and other organisations in Berkshire were initially invited to provide content for the online assessments.



The problems

- Concern about the amount of work involved for managers to adopt the new CIS
- Concern that inspectors of registered services were not checking that the CIS were being complied with making it less of a priority for managers to adopt
- Inconsistency across adult social care of use of previous version of CIS (TOPPS Induction)
- Need to ensure new and existing staff were treated fairly and consistently despite varying management style and capacity
- Need to ensure managers had the appropriate knowledge themselves to be able to induct staff to the new CIS
- Professional and qualified staff being made to repeat mandatory induction training that did not appreciate or value the knowledge and skills they already had. This led to wasting resources asking them to repeat training, taking up valuable training places, associated admin and in many cases the cost of replacement staff to cover.
- Concern that existing staff did not have the same level of knowledge as new staff would achieve through the new CIS framework

How we tackled them

- Consulted with managers about the new CIS and listened to the issues they raised. These were mainly about the amount of time involved to check staff competence against each CIS outcome.
- Worked with CIS Assessment to create the online assessments and ensure they were fast and easy to use with particular emphasis on care workers with no previous IT experience.
- Demonstrated online assessment system to managers and acted upon their feedback.
- Encouraged and enabled managers to use the online assessments to first check their own knowledge was sufficient to coach new staff.
- Used the online assessments to identify if new staff already had sufficient knowledge to meet the CIS outcomes or whether targeted management coaching or attendance at training was required.
- Used the assessments to measure the knowledge of existing staff and identify where staff needed to undertake further learning.
- Used the assessments to evidence staff knowledge versus CIS 5 “Recognise and Respond to Abuse and Neglect” as this is one of the reporting targets. This enabled us to identify who was competent and who needed additional safeguarding training both at WBC and in the PVI sector.
- In April 2010, SCT implemented a formal assessment centre using the IT training room to support managers to assess staff as part of recruitment and selection, induction and on-going performance management.

Outcomes and impact

- New staff don't waste time attending training courses where they can evidence they already have the appropriate knowledge. Focus is purely on ensuring this knowledge is applied on the job.
- Managers use the assessment results to focus on the areas needing to be developed by individuals and not going over areas where knowledge has clearly been evidenced.
- Managers have fair and consistent evidence to support recruitment and training decisions.
- Staff and job applicants are treated fairly.
- Evidence was collected for Safeguarding reporting. We increased the level of people who had completed level 1 Safeguarding Adults training **from 354 people last year to 692, an increase of 95.5%** whilst at the same time we **saved approx. £8.2k of social care staff and training resources** where people have evidenced their knowledge using online assessments. 84 people passed safeguarding online assessments versus 179 taken.
- Using the Safeguarding calculations as an estimate basis for other mandatory Standards, it is **estimated that £49k savings were achieved in staffing budgets where staff cover for training was not needed after staff evidenced knowledge using the assessments.** 1124 online assessments were taken by organisations across West Berkshire.
- Assessment before induction has now become mandatory for all new staff with previous social care experience or appropriate qualifications and is reducing the amount of training people need to attend. Feedback from interviewed applicants has been positive.

What could we have done better?

- We could have implemented this much sooner but we didn't have the resources in SCT or adult social care management capacity.
- We need to keep working at this agenda, keep getting people on board and spread the word. People are very busy and consumed with the change agenda. We have to help managers and staff to understand the enormous benefits achieved.



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