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CIS Assessment TOP-TIPS

How to manage staff development with less money and still improve quality



Sarah Knapp, of www.cis-assessment.co.uk, shares why classroom based training should be reduced and why more emphasis should be placed on evidencing the knowledge and skills of your workforce.

Until August 2010, I spent nine years as a Local Authority Social Care Training and Development Manager as part of the senior management team and I know the difficulties the current financial situation presents. But whilst we are facing a major change, it is by no means a new challenge. I regularly say to social care managers “if you don’t like and won’t embrace change, then don’t work in social care” because change is part of our daily lives. Every time we are presented with a serious and difficult challenge we have to turn it into an opportunity to review and improve.

I am delighted to be able to share with you my top tips for managing staff development with reduced budgets. These are based on budget cuts, reviews and improvements I have managed over the years and I hope they will inspire you to manage with less money without compromising the quality of training and development which is essential in safeguarding the vulnerable people you support.

- I want to start with **classroom based training as it is one of the most expensive training methods**, the biggest cost being the time the worker spends out of the workplace plus a replacement worker to provide cover. Despite these high costs, courses are still one of the most widely used training methods. Although training doesn’t suit everyone’s learning style, there is clearly a need for courses but I would warn against “sheep dipping”. By this I mean asking workers to attend set induction and refresher courses so they can return to work with their certificates of attendance, which alone, do not evidence worker competence.
- **Use a skills scan assessment system www.cis-assessment.co.uk**, as described in Skills for Care’s guidance for using the Common Induction Standards, to assess and evidence what workers know and what they don’t know because the knowledge they have acquired has a direct impact on what they can and cannot do in their job role. www.skillsforcare.org.uk. Managers have a duty of care to the people they support, to ensure that all workers are competent and that they are

putting their knowledge into practice. Managers should not accept a certificate of training attendance or elearning course completion as the only evidence of competence.

- **Only ask workers to undertake training activities to fill the gaps in their knowledge**, rather than repeat training courses covering what they already know. Workers will feel more valued and less frustrated. A skills scan assessment system will give you learning needs information and enable you to reduce the number of courses you buy, reduce the amount of time workers spend repeating training unnecessarily and focus your budgets in areas of identified need, possibly freeing up some funding for specialist training based on individual’s conditions and needs. Savings evidenced by West Berkshire Council, case study available at: www.cis-assessment.co.uk under “resources”.
- **Use a blended approach including a range of different, and often far more cost effective, learning and development activities.** For example, 1:1 supervision discussions, mentoring by a more experienced worker, internet research, shadowing and e-learning. There are lots of free e-learning resources see www.scie.org.uk. CIS Assessment provide a free workbook learning resource for the Induction Standards with the assessments. These learning methods can support workers to gain knowledge without the need to spend large amounts of money and time out of the workplace.
- **Combine assessment of knowledge and blended learning with workplace observation and supervision** to ensure workers are putting their knowledge and skills into practice. This is much more robust evidence of competence than a certificate of training attendance because it uses real situations. A simulated training environment does not evidence whether the principles and person centred values are integrated into workers’ practice. Make sure observations are recorded as part of the training and development in the supervision process.
- **Make sure workers are clear about what it is they need to learn** before they undertake any learning activity and make them accountable for gaining the knowledge they need for their role. You are then asking workers to undertake a learning activity with a purpose making the learning activity more effective.

- **Make sure workers return to supervision describing what they have learnt** and how they will put this into practice. If learning is not achieved, you need to evaluate the learning activity you selected as it might not be adding any value. This supports Investors In People standards around evaluating training and development which can be difficult to evidence. It is worth benchmarking your organisation against all of the IIP standards even if you do not apply for accreditation. www.investorsinpeople.co.uk.
- **Provide career progression and enhanced pay for workers achieving milestones** like the required standards for their role. You could do this by starting them on a lower pay grade. Be clear about what the standards are from the outset. This incentivises workers to develop and recognises their development achievements. Alternatively, you could pay a small bonus or give shopping vouchers as a reward for achievement. Reward is not always financial, recognition is just as important. Always give lots of thanks, praise and encouragement – it's free but highly valued by workers.
- **Make managers accountable for their development and performance.** Managers' knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour are critical in enabling the success of your workers and the quality of services provided. Managers need to understand the standards and competencies workers require and how to support development to meet them. The Skills for Care leadership and management strategy includes management competencies, a supervision framework and managers' induction standards which are all useful for formally assessing and benchmarking managers' knowledge and skills. www.skillsforcare.org.uk.
- **Where possible, train in-house workers to become qualified instructors in the core learning areas,** for example, moving and handling, first aid, fire awareness. This will save money but also gives training flexibility, instant access to expertise and a trainer committed to reporting and correcting performance issues raised during training. You can use knowledge assessment results combined with observation to target learning to meet identified knowledge gaps in individuals or small groups. This creates evidence of competence. Smaller organisations could fund and share with others.
- **Assess workers' knowledge before they join your organisation** as part of the interview process to find out the level of knowledge qualified and experienced applicants actually have against the national standards. It costs around £5k to recruit and induct a new worker. This is a huge investment - save money by making good recruitment decisions.
- **Value new starters' prior knowledge and experience.** Tailor their induction and development to meet their knowledge gaps. This will improve staff retention and satisfaction during the first year. Significant savings evidenced by Bracknell Forest Borough Council, case study available at: www.cisassessment.co.uk under "resources".
- **Meet with new workers to plan their induction before they start work.** This maintains the relationship whilst waiting for CRB checks and references. You might find some workers keen to get started with learning to meet the Induction Standards before they join which could lead to being competent and safe to work alone much faster (especially if you have linked development achievement to a bonus or enhanced pay).
- **Never compromise on the quality of learning activities.** Poor experiences will discourage people from learning. Use good quality e-learning; pilot and test before buying. Make sure in-house or external trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced for each subject. Skills for Care have developed a training code www.skillsforcare.org.uk under "qualifications and training". The code sets out questions, values and issues to be considered when buying training. Institute for Learning membership is recommended for trainers. www.ifl.ac.uk. Training is a profession and trainers should be professionally qualified if they are delivering more than one session a month.
- **Use learning styles questionnaires to identify how each of your workers learn** and consider these when discussing appropriate training activities to meet knowledge gaps. There are several free resources available on the internet.
- **Use a 360 degree feedback system or a customer survey** to find out from the people in receipt of care and support services, if workers are providing a high quality service. www.three60degree.co.uk Use this as part of your appraisal system. Ensure your managers are 360'd first so they are sensitive to the process and make sure they are skilled at giving constructive feedback.
- Use evidence of workers' knowledge together with 360 degree feedback as a **method for managing performance issues and to encourage development and improvement.** If you have clear evidence of a workers' knowledge, it is harder for them to say "I haven't been trained" when dealing with complaints and disciplinary situations.
- Finally, **consider how you support and value your managers** because this translates into how they

support and value the workforce and this translates into how workers support and value the people in receipt of services. This contributes toward the culture of your organisation and influences whether workers are actively engaged or just doing a job whilst waiting for something better to come along. Regularly say thank you and give praise to your managers and expect them to do the same.

At a conference about Shaping the Adult Social Care Workforce of the Future on 13th October 2010, Dr Linda Hutchinson, Director of Regulatory Development at the Care Quality Commission, said "Stop training everyone and start evidencing knowledge and competence". This is an encouraging message confirming that CQC know that things have to change but it also confirms that there will be no compromise on the quality of workers providing care and support.

About www.cis-assessment.co.uk:

We provide online assessments to support managers and workers to quickly and easily evidence their knowledge against national training standards. We enable organisations to save money by reducing training course dependency and targeting training budgets to areas of identified need. See the case studies and cost benefit analysis on our website showing how organisations have used the assessments.

Our product range includes an electronic 360 degree feedback and customer survey system to support individuals' and teams' with their performance management and development.

www.three60degree.co.uk

If you would like me to create a cost benefit analysis to identify how much money you could save or discuss any of the content of this document, please do not hesitate to contact me, telephone: 0845 873 0373 or email: sarah.knapp@cis-assessment.co.uk

Find out how online assessments can save you money and increase evidence of competence:

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Visit our website to read customer case studies and testimonies about how organisations are using our online assessments to save money and strengthen their evidence of worker knowledge and good practice

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