

CASE STUDY: HEALTHCARE ASSISTANT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR PAEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKERS

A Healthcare Assistant Development Programme was developed by Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust in 2012. Designed for healthcare assistants (HCAs) based in paediatric community, clinical or voluntary settings it is a bespoke, standardised qualitative development programme, mapped to national and local standards of care.

It is an enabler for the HCA to examine how they apply the basic fundamentals of care practice, and how this is received by patients and families in terms of their personal experiences. As such it is a catalyst for “small change big difference” thinking.

It was necessary to develop such a programme in-house as there is currently no single qualification across the UK that HCAs in the paediatric setting can access, and no other programme which seeks to provide the fundamental principles of care at its core (communication, values, care and compassion).

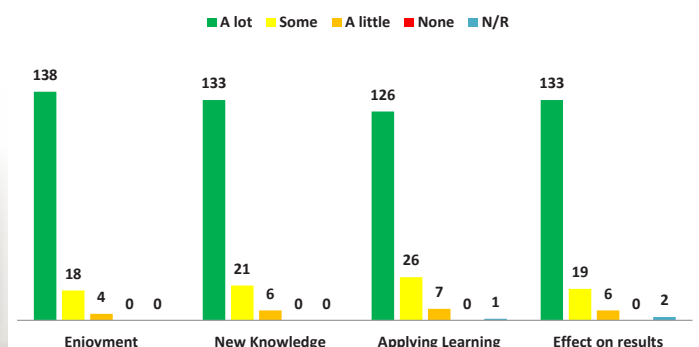
Following successful pilots of this programme a formal launch is now being planned in collaboration with the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE), once the programme has been formally listed on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The emphasis of the programme and the resultant standardised qualitative training will be that as care pathways and patient flows are transformed for the child and family, the application of the

skills and knowledge of the HCA will be enhanced within the clinical team. Given the recommendations contained within the Francis report about this workforce group and the subsequent review of training standards for this workforce group (Cavendish), there is potential that this programme could appeal at a national level, as the only one of its kind, as a standardised accredited programme in the care of sick children.

Key Outcomes

- There was a 100% response rate to the pilot evaluation, with the vast majority of participants reporting that they enjoyed the course, had learnt something new or built on current knowledge, and that they were very likely to use the information and ideas acquired. Indeed 83% felt that what they had learnt would greatly improve their effectiveness and practice.

All questions



- The anecdotal and quantitative evidence collected throughout the pilot suggests that the HCAs involved feel that their experience is now underpinned by theory, giving a deeper understanding of both care and clinical processes, which would in turn lead to improved performance and more standardised consistent care in hospital, community and voluntary settings. This programme has opened participants' eyes around issues such as privacy and dignity, their role and responsibilities, communication, care and compassion, as well as around specific clinical activities such as catheterisation and wound care.

"I will think twice about simple things like urine catheter bags being on view"

"I learnt that I would be accountable for a task if I accepted it"

"I was really made aware of my body language and what I needed to work on"

"I will use this knowledge from this session if I need to listen to somebody in need of some comfort"

- During the programme's development ward managers suggested that what was missing from HCA training was the core foundation of 'why we do what we do' in relation to patient care. This programme provides this with an "aha" moment.

Background

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust (AHCFT)

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust is one of Europe's biggest and busiest children's hospitals providing care for over 200,000 children and young people each year. It is one of only four standalone paediatric trusts in UK and is staffed by 2,800 employees. In addition to the hospital site, the Trust is present at more than 40 community outreach sites and programmes, and consultants hold 800 clinic sessions each year from Cumbria to Shropshire, helping deliver care closer to home. It is a top performing Trust, rated 'Excellent' by the Independent Healthcare Commission for the last seven consecutive years, which puts it in the top 1.8 per cent of Trusts nationally.

Francis Review

Following a highly public enquiry into care standards at Mid Staffordshire Hospitals, recommendations were presented for consideration by Sir Robert Francis QC. Some of these recommendations indicated that there was an urgent need for the imposition of training standards for the healthcare support worker staff group. Furthermore, recommendation 23.102 states that

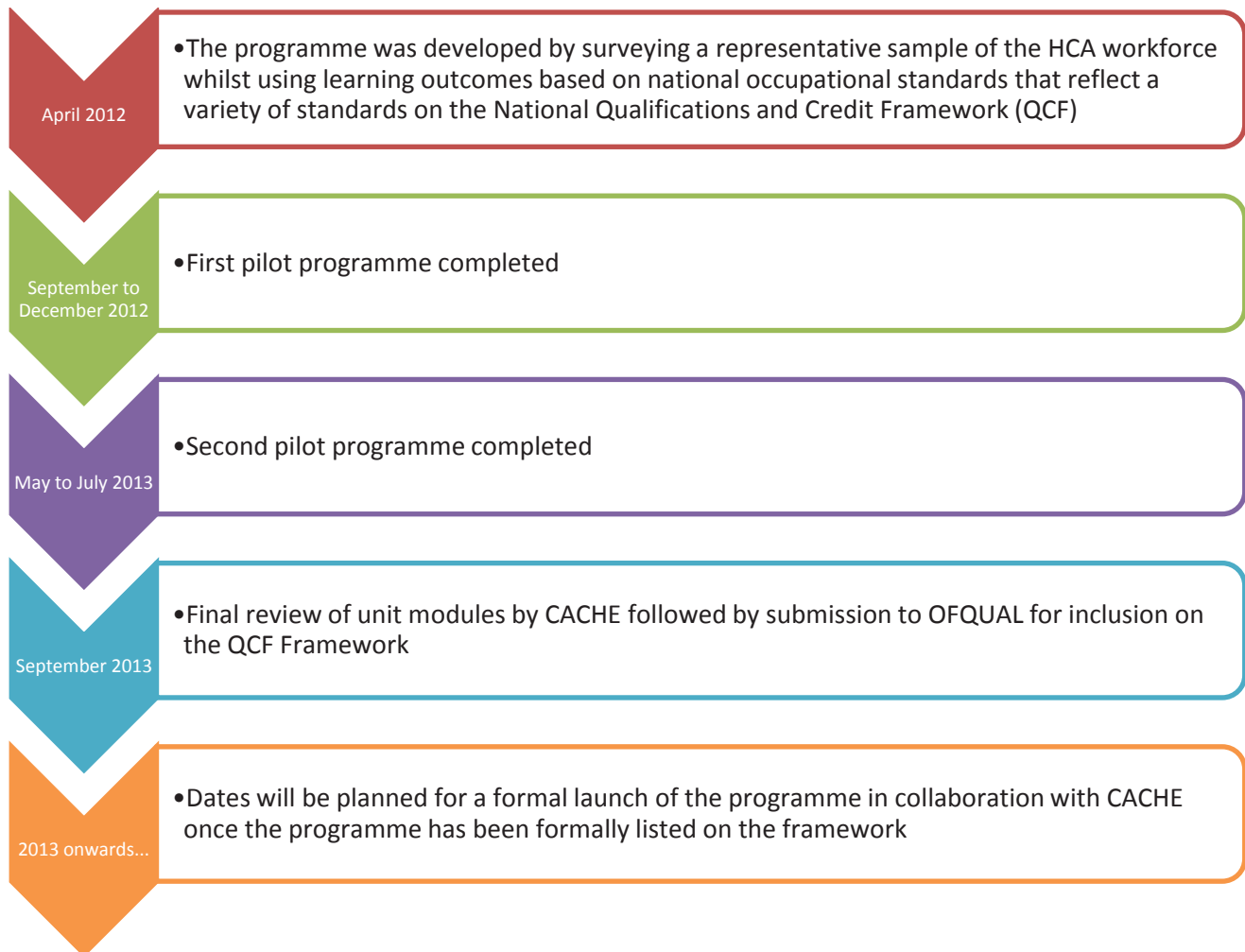
'The patients they care for (HCSW) should be regarded as part of a vulnerable group: all sick and vulnerable people, not just the elderly, have to be able to have confidence that those providing this care have had the appropriate training, and possess necessary competence to care for them...'

Prior to the development of this programme HCAs at Alder Hey, like their counterparts across the UK, had to agree learning outcomes from health, health and social care and maternity pathways, some of which needed to be adapted within the confines of these standards to enable care (competency) needs to be addressed. As a result the Trust did not have a standardised approach to the training and development of HCAs and support workers, whose knowledge and skills were learnt locally and dependent on their area of work, meaning lack of flexibility and reduced transferability of skills and knowledge across different specialities.

Key Aims

- enable and empower paediatric HCAs to direct and develop their own learning pathway, appropriately aligned to their specific roles
- design a qualification and an apprenticeship framework that fits HCAs who work in a paediatric setting and can be used in place of an adult-centric, generic learning framework (an approach which does not afford true innovation in paediatric care)
- develop a standardised approach to training and development so that HCAs can attain knowledge and skills across a range of different specialties; thus leading to greater flexibility and transferability of skills within the health care system
- provide greater opportunities for staff who are involved in paediatric care to undertake individualised and specialist paediatric learning in order to progress within their roles. Previously this was difficult as work-based learning opportunities were offered to clinical support workers via vocational routes, and the availability of further learning akin to their area of practice was limited
- endeavour to have the programme's learning outcomes accredited by an awarding body so that academic credits can be achieved and transferred to other learning opportunities e.g. the Assistant Practitioner model / healthcare undergraduate programmes, whilst providing a flexible approach to learning, so that all staff can update their skills, including those employees who do not wish to formalise their learning

Key Stages of Setup



How It Works

This Healthcare Assistant Development programme, for paediatric healthcare support workers, is a flexible, modular “step on step off” programme, which is geared to the learning needs of both the clinical setting and the individual. It focuses on care and compassion and what the Trust terms softer skills, rather than being a product and process-driven clinical skills course.

It teaches the fundamentals of care in terms of; how to care, how to communicate, how to be competent, what the boundaries are of the healthcare worker and ultimately how to do things properly in the clinical setting.

Accreditation

The programme is still in the process of being accredited, but once this has taken place learners can progress from Award through to Certificate Level 3. Alder Hey is currently working with awarding bodies to gain accreditation, in order to ensure that the proposed learning outcomes are quality assured and formally agreed on the national qualifications credit framework. Therefore the programme lead and team have engaged the following partners to discuss accreditation:

- EDEXCEL/Pearson - an international profit making company with its own awarding body
- CACHE - the Council for Care, Health and Education (CACHE) is a children’s specific, charitable, not-for-profit awarding body (in the top ten of awarding bodies having worked with eight other organisations in the health market formerly known as NNEB). As CACHE is children specific in their field, and share similar organisational principles with the Trust (charitable organisation / child focused) these discussions have gained momentum and it is with this organisation that the work has progressed. The Trust took its lead in developing such a programme from CACHE, as the experts in determining Guided Learning Hours

Programme Content

CACHE, as the awarding body, is the expert, and will make the final decisions regarding guided learning hours, along with assessment and delivery guidance. Yet the programme has been developed along the CACHE framework with subject matter experts collaborating in mapping specific modules to the quality and risk standards of CQC and NHSLA to ensure that these standards are implicit in the programme’s development.

Award Level

The Award consists of four Core Units, all of which are soft topics but vital in providing a knowledge-base for anyone who is working, or would like to work, in a paediatric setting.

- Legal and ethical accountability of the HCA working in the paediatric setting
- Principles of safeguarding and protection of children and young people
- Holistic care and compassion in the paediatric setting
- Communication and behaviours in the paediatric setting

These are all taught sessions with assignments set to show underpinning knowledge. Although the Trust does not, as yet, have learning hours information from CACHE it is thought that this qualification will be delivered and assessed over three months.

Certificate Level

For the Certificate the same core units would apply, plus two others:

- Supporting babies and parents in a care setting
- Understanding health and infection in the paediatric setting

Two optional units would also be chosen to complete the Certificate. There are many units to choose from, which are mainly clinical or mental health related, and would require observation in the work place. As the Certificate is achieved through observation underpinned by evidence of knowledge, it is suggested that training is delivered and assessed over a period of six to nine months.

Resources

The resources gained to support the programme's development were from the Charitable Trustees of Alder Hey. They fully supported and endorsed this programme. CACHE are also absorbing development costs of the project but sadly no other workforce development resources were made available from anyone else.

Key Challenges

The challenges in developing this programme included:

- identifying what patients and families, the workforce groups and clinical team needed against existing guidelines; ensuring that what was requested was actually needed
- finding relevant protocols and policies, including national occupational standards which are generic in nature and do not always exist in paediatrics
- Obtaining support from health sector bodies.
- ensuring that recommendations from papers such as the Francis Report and the Cavendish Review were incorporated into this programme
- balancing the time required for this development alongside people's day jobs when time is at a premium

Key Learning

There needs to be a more robust Project Initiation Document from all stakeholders, which would have been an enabler for best use of everybody's time.

Sustainability

Alder Hey will grandparent the existing workforce to undertake at least the fundamental care core modules and has already undertaken a Bank Staff Induction Pilot, to ensure that transient staff across wards and care configurations are also trained. This pilot was well received which has helped to embed the programme further.

Ultimately the HCA induction and development programme's core modules will be mandatory and fundamentally there will be a drive to increase awareness within the clinical teams in regards to the training programme and how the application of the knowledge and skills can be used to benefit the clinical teams and patients themselves.

Next Steps

It is proposed that the learning outcomes developed by Alder Hey and aligned to this training programme are accredited by an awarding body for use on the national qualifications credit framework (NQF), which can then be utilised by other organisations involved in the care of children and their families.

Roll out is also planned with the Trust's own staff as an accredited qualification, and it is hoped that it can be made mandatory Trust-wide for all HCAs and support workers

Supporting Material

The following resources are available as an appendix to this case study:

- Appendix 1: HCA Pilot Evaluation
- Appendix 2: HCA Programme Leaflet

For more information contact:

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