

Training PAs in Nene CCG

Background

Nene CCG have been focused for some time on the need to develop training opportunities for Personal Assistants (PAs) in order to ensure that the care they deliver to Personal Health Budget Holders (PHBs) is of a consistently high quality and meets best clinical practice.

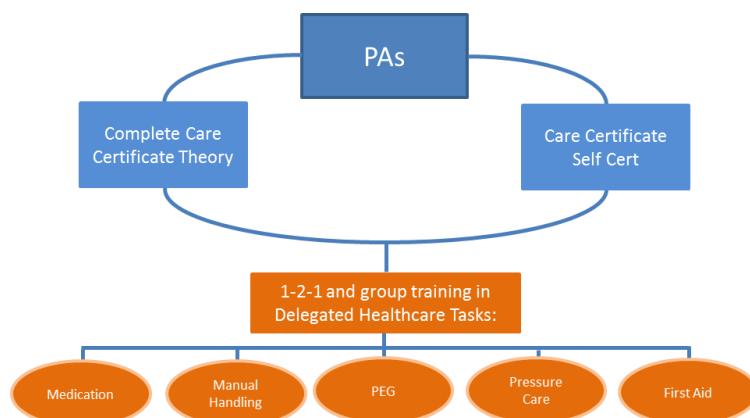
During 2014/15 Nene CCG participated in a pilot examining the use of QCF Units to train PAs on delegated healthcare tasks. The outcome of this pilot was that the approach was not sustainable for Nene CCG and therefore during 2015/2016 they have been supported by NHS England and Skills for Health to develop a model of training provision that meets their local need.

The Training Model

Nene CCG explored a range of training options, examining their current processes and other approaches used across England to train PAs and exploring whether they could be replicated locally. They identified that a local system had to enable PAs to develop their core skills, knowledge and understanding, together with specific skills relating to the delegated healthcare tasks that they perform.

Nene CCG made the decision to build their new model of PA training around the Care Certificate. PAs complete the theory element of all 15 standards within the Care Certificate, accessing online learning and assessment. Once complete PAs are then able to access training relevant to the delegated healthcare tasks that they need to undertake in their role. This is a blended approach to learning that includes e-learning and day courses.

An outline of the training process is opposite.



The Care Certificate is in two parts – theory and practical. During the early part of the project it became clear that most PAs would be unable to achieve the practical element of the Care Certificate as their roles are not broad enough however, there were clear potential benefits that could flow from having PAs complete the theory element as this would give them an underpinning knowledge from the 15 standards.

PAs in Nene CCG therefore do not achieve the Care Certificate but the Care Certificate approach gives PAs a sound foundation of theoretical knowledge and provides some parity in terms of their knowledge and understanding with support workers in the health and social care sectors.

Challenges

The project has faced many challenges, some of which have been overcome, some of which still need to be addressed in order to successfully move the delegation of healthcare tasks to PAs, supported by appropriate training and competence, forward.

There are a relatively small number of PHB Holders and PAs working across Nene CCG, this has several impacts on the development of a training approach that can demonstrate benefits as well as being financially sustainable.

Lower numbers of PAs means that there is less opportunity for economies of scale to be achieved however, Nene CCG believe that their blended approach to training and assessment of competence is now sustainable for the organisation in the long term.

There were a series of practical challenges around the use of the online Care Certificate learning and assessment tools. Whilst the project reported a level of frustration in completing the online assessment the wider benefits of the approach were clear to all.

“Though the online system had its frustrations, like several attempts needed to get answers right without knowing which question you answered incorrectly, it is a great foundation in my view. It would be even better if it was more relevant to PAs working in the home.”

Project Participant

The training of PAs is just one part of the delegation process. Nene CCG need to do further work in order to develop and agree this wider delegation protocol, this will require senior buy-in from the CCG together with the wider involvement of stakeholders.

The Experience of & Benefits for PAs

The feedback from PAs who have undertaken training has been overwhelmingly positive. PAs have welcomed the opportunity to not only have their existing knowledge and skills recognised and updated but the experience has given a small number of individuals the confidence and ability to now undertake full awards and further training.

One PA is now undertaking an apprenticeship and another has been able to gain the experience she needed to enrol on a conversion course to have her healthcare qualifications that were obtained outside of the UK recognised, once complete this will enable her to work in a registered practitioner role in the future.

Wider Benefits

The training approach has surfaced wider benefits for the CCG and healthcare professionals.

The project has highlighted the wider need across the CCG to focus on the skills and competences of PAs in order to ensure that this important section of the healthcare workforce are using their skills safely and in line with best practice.

The PHB Nurses working across Nene CCG have reported that the approach has given them greater confidence and assurance around the basic knowledge, understanding and competence of PAs that they work with.

Once designed and implemented the benefits of the new training approach were recognised by other teams in the CCG, the process has since been adopted by the Children and Young People's Complex and Continuing Care Team.

“It quickly became clear to me that the training and assessment of competence process being developed for PAs working with adults across Nene CCG could be applied to staff working with children and young people with complex needs.”

Shaylea Williams, Operational Lead,
Children and Young People's Complex and
Continuing Care Team, Nene CCG

Next Steps

The work has highlighted the need for the CCG to develop a formal delegation protocol that will include a list of Delegated Healthcare Tasks that can be delegated to PAs across the CCG with the support of appropriate training and competence assessment.

Taking this protocol forward and embedding it in the work of Nene CCG will require further senior buy in and sign off.

