

Training PAs in Tees

Background

During 2014/15 NHS North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) 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 the organisation 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.

Developing a Training Model to Meet the Local Need

The CSU recognises that the PA workforce is expanding and their priority was to develop a sustainable model of training that could not only deliver high quality, highly personalised training to PAs but to also give community nurses that are delegating healthcare tasks confidence in the skills of PAs.

“PA’s have valuable knowledge and skills in looking after their client with the flexibility of being directly employed providing greater flexibility, choice and control to PHB holder.”

Kirsty Freeman, Commissioning Manager, NECS

The CSU therefore decided that a training approach that was delivered from within the NHS, by nurses that already provide training across the community had the highest likelihood of success. With the support of NHS England and Skills for Health the CSU negotiated with South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to link with their existing training teams to examine how Personal Health Budget Holders and PAs could be appropriately supported and trained.

Building on Existing Experience

The team at South Tees NHS Trust have an excellent depth and breadth of experience in delivering care to complex patients in their own home as well as delivering training to individuals across the health sector.

The Trust also has an Intensive Home Support Team who provide and they regularly deal with Personal Health Budget Holders and patients that are eligible for Continuing Healthcare Funding (CHC).

The team set about working with the CSU to identify the types of healthcare tasks that are most likely to be delegated to PAs from healthcare professionals; these were compiled into a framework of training competences that were supported by a training and assessment package that can be used in both new and existing packages of care. The training and assessment material was built upon existing competency material from within the organisation and any new material has been developed using evidence based literature.

“Our vision was that you’d be able to easily assess any package of care. Then just pick up the relevant competences and offer the PA a bespoke training programme based on their client’s specific needs.”

Angela Milbourne, Clinical Matron, James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough



PAs attending a study day as part of the project



The Training Approach

The process begins with an assessment of the individual clients' needs; the individual completing this assessment produces a list of the competences that are required to delivery high quality, safe care to the client. It is this assessment that determines what tasks can safely be delegated to a PA and it identifies the training that is available to underpin their practice.

Once a healthcare task has been deemed suitable for delegation the training is provided using a traditional taught session that provides the PA with the necessary underpinning knowledge and theory. Once this is complete further training and competency assessment is carried out in the field over a period of approximately 8 weeks.

The training and assessment of competence is provided by a registered nurse from South Tees Hospital NHS Foundation Trust whose previous experience has included the training and assessment of Healthcare Assistants who care for complex patients in the community.

The approach to the training is dependent upon the specific knowledge and skills being acquired by PAs. For many healthcare tasks demonstration and practice of the skills will take place in the classroom using simulation technologies such as manikins and then this will be followed up with further learning and skills acquisition in the client's home.

Key to Success

“We feel that we now have a sustainable approach to training PAs that provides assurance to us that their practice is not only safe but also up to date and based upon evidence of best practice.

The success of this approach has very much hinged on partnership working with South Tees NHS Trust. Their willingness to share their knowledge and expertise with us has been an invaluable part of the process.”

Kirsty Freeman, Commissioning Manager, NECS

Key Outputs and Outcomes

The main output from the project has been the creation of the training and assessment framework and the availability of training packages linked to specific healthcare tasks and competences. There are now fully written training and assessment packages for 34 individual competences and these are now available for all new and existing PHB or CHC clients across the CSU.

In addition to this 4 Standard Operating Procedures and a tracheostomy complex care workbook have been produced by the team in order to ensure that there is clarity around the healthcare tasks PAs are undertaking and .

One of the greatest benefits of the overall approach for the CCU is that the link with NHS Trust means that the training team are able to identify potential CHC eligible clients when they are admitted into the hospital, this has meant that even during the timescales of the project the team has been able to train PAs and family carers whilst the client was in the hospital, thus ensuring a smooth transition back home.

There is also some anecdotal evidence and feedback from Community Nurses who are delegating healthcare tasks that they have an increased confidence in the skills of PAs because they have personal experience of having received training themselves from within the NHS Trust and they therefore feel reassured around the quality of the training and assessment.

