



New Roles support elderly patient services

Whittington Hospital Trust uses Skills for Health competences for Therapy Assistant roles.

When Whittington Hospital Trust was invited to act as one of Skills for Health's national demonstrator sites, managers decided to develop a new role at assistant practitioner level.

The Trust was demonstrating how to use Skills for Health competences and test them in practice situations. This presented an ideal opportunity for managers to enable existing support staff to enhance their skills and access a specially designed learning and development package.

First, managers used Skills for Health competences to design a job profile. An important priority was to offer potential post holders a variety of ways to progress into the role and plenty of opportunity to upskill. This flexible approach means a wider group of potential recruits could progress into the band 4 position.

Managers then devised a training programme, featuring a personalised learning portfolio, to support the post holders. Two clinical therapy assistants – one with a focus on the care of the older patient and the other working closely with stroke patients – are now in job roles mapped against Skills for Health competences.



Both Therapy Assistants, previously healthcare assistants, were seconded into the posts working at the hospital's Jeffrey Kelson unit. The post holders have been able to closely relate their learning in the unit with objectives in their learning portfolio. The success of the training programme has been in its delivery, which has been mainly vocational with gradual skill acquisition. It means that once the TAs can demonstrate they have met all the requirements of competency, the learning can be signed off by the clinical supervisor.

“ We feel very positive about how easy it was to use competences to design a job profile for a therapy assistant role on our care of elderly and stroke wards. If we were to think about establishing a new role in future, Skills for Health competences would be our starting point. ”

Rachel Wale, Head Occupational Therapist, Whittington Hospital Trust

Skills for Health has developed a bank of national workforce competences which describe the skills and knowledge required to carry out a task or function effectively. They are designed to underpin and be integral to accredited and non-accredited education and training programmes. Since competences describe what individuals need to know and do, whoever is performing the task, they can be used in many different ways.

The Benefits

- Flexible entry routes for potential recruits.
- Greater opportunity for career progression.
- Significant improvements in bed saving days.
- Patients receiving improved service through more integrated and flexible team working.
- Patients better equipped to manage at home after hospital discharge.

Healthcare leads have appreciated the flexibility of a competence based approach to role design and the competency based portfolio is popular with supervisors and the TAs.

The next step will be for the two post holders to be enrolled onto a local NVQ level 3 course in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy.

The project has enabled more flexibility within teams so patients can be seen more quickly and frequently. TAs have been able to carry out interventions which qualified staff would

have limited time to complete in the acute setting, and early feedback shows that patients are leaving hospital better prepared to manage at home.

The Trust recognises the competence based approach has helped managers and clinicians describe more clearly the need for a role based on evidence.

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.

Use our interactive guides to find out more about competences and how to use them at: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk