

Improvement in Pre-Registration Education for better, safer healthcare

An NHS Institute initiative to introduce pre-registration health and social care students to improvement

'Giving greater freedom to the frontline staff ... to use their expertise, creativity and skill to find innovative ways to improve quality of care for patients'.

(Department of Health 2008)

'Making Service Improvement a habit is my new outlook in practice'.

Occupational Therapy Student (Tribal 2008)



The Aim

Since 2006 the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement has been working in partnership with local universities (Higher Education Institutions - HEIs) and local NHS employer organisations, to develop short courses in improvement, applicable to all health and social care students. We are seeking to develop a future workforce that has the mindset to challenge and be challenged in the way that healthcare is delivered, together with the skills to make the necessary improvements. This initiative aims to embed the message into the initial stages of professional education and training, that everyone, whatever discipline or grade, has a contribution to make to provide better, safer healthcare.

Our plan of action

In 2006 the NHS Institute commissioned three HEIs and their local NHS communities to each develop and pilot short courses designed to enable students undertaking their initial clinical training, to develop an understanding and practical knowledge of Service Improvement, before taking up their roles in the NHS. Although different in their design and delivery, each approach includes an introduction to the four equally important and interconnected, fundamentals of improvement (Clark et al 2004, Penny 2002):

- public and patient involvement
- personal and organisational development
- process and systems thinking
- initiating, delivering and sustaining improvement and innovation.

In the academic year 2007 – 2008, the NHS Institute recruited 6 additional consortia, each comprising a HEI and one or more NHS partners, who adapted these short courses for their own pre-registration programmes. Over 2,000 students were involved from the full range of different health and social care professions.

For the academic year 2008/09, eighteen additional universities have joined the initiative. This equates to over 25% of the HEIs currently offering healthcare education in England introducing students to improvement as part of their professional education and having the opportunity to use and test improvement tools and techniques in practice.

The design principles make this different

Learning from the external evaluations of the initiative and our HEI and NHS partners, a set of design principles has been established to ensure practical experience as well as theory. This is achieved by making improvement explicit in the curriculum, so that students know they have studied it and giving students the opportunity to use the tools in a clinical setting. All participating universities have agreed to adapt the learning resources provided by the NHS Institute according to these principles:



A minimum of one day stand alone introduction to improvement

- o entitled 'Improvement for better, safer healthcare'
- o in partnership with the service: NHS or social care

Introduction to improvement to include

- o exposure to a patients / user experience
- o principles of process mapping
- o Model for Improvement including PDSA (plan, do, study, act) cycles (Langley et al 1996)

Practical application in a clinical setting

- o supported by clinical facilitators
- o as appropriate for the student

Faculty and clinical facilitator development

- o exposure of faculty and clinical facilitators to the same tools and techniques of improvement.

External evaluation 2007/8

The evaluation of the initiative in the academic year 2007/8 is extremely positive.

The conclusion states that *'the perceived benefits of the improvement learning were considerable for HEI and NHS staff, students and SHA representatives. Its goodness of fit with national and regional policies to develop innovative services in line with the expressed wishes of patients is impressive and this acted as a key driver'*, and that improvement learning *'equips them (students) with skills and confidence to identify improvement opportunities and engage qualified staff in improvement activity'*. (Tribal 2008)

Particularly encouraging are that of the 1,135 students who responded to our questionnaire, 88% felt improvement is important for their professional development and 94% think it is important to patient safety (Tribal 2008). Quotes from students support this.

'I am beginning to witness the positive outcomes of my suggestions on placement now, which prior to this module I would not have felt confident in suggesting let alone researching, process mapping, explaining and justifying to others and indeed implementing these improvements.' (Participating student)

'My previous perception was that the organisation in the NHS was all set by government legislation and NHS management. The truth is that small improvements developed by all workers in the health service can be put in place to change services for the better.' (Participating student)

This initiative to embed improvement in pre-registration education is certainly contributing to building capability for a self improving NHS, one of the six priorities of the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement www.institute.nhs.uk.



For more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/37khfx>
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