How to implement an effective process around your staff training

There is no question that trying to plan and deliver staff training, in addition to everything else that needs to be managed in a care home, is no easy task. A challenge which has been compounded by the pandemic.

As training providers, with a history of supporting hundreds of care providers, we know the importance and impact that effective training can have on an organisation. In this report we look at some of the current factors affecting staff training within care and offer some ideas on how to set effective training as a foundation for success.

"The best employers know that investment in their staff is key to success"

Stephen Evans – Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute

Covid-19 has compounded and increased the challenges faced within the care sector. There is no questioning that the pandemic has been exceptionally hard on care providers, their staff and the people that they look after. Recently a care trust in the midlands had their CQC status downgraded to "Inadequate". Their number one priority, to make improvements, was to 'train staff in the appropriate way'. What this reflects is a culture towards training and development by an organisation that now understand the value in ensuring the front-line staff know what to do and how to do it most safely and effectively.

Some care providers approach training as a tick box exercise to placate the inspectorate. In these instances, we often find that the bare minimum of courses are completed and staff are generally disengaged with the training on offer, which in most cases leads toward a scenario of poor standards within the care setting. Training needs to be engrained in the company ethos, with an organisational positive approach, built on a process to achieve the business objectives in terms of service user experience and standards of staff performance and avoid complacency and disengaged staff. A tried and tested process for training would be **Plan, Do, Assess, Review.**

Benefit or Burden?

Are your staff aware that training 'must be completed'? In any other setting, where training is optional, the initiation of training is seen as a huge benefit and reassures the employee that the employer values them. Whereas in care, the term mandatory training is often overused, with the potential of turning self-development into a burden. It is about the approach towards training from the top down.
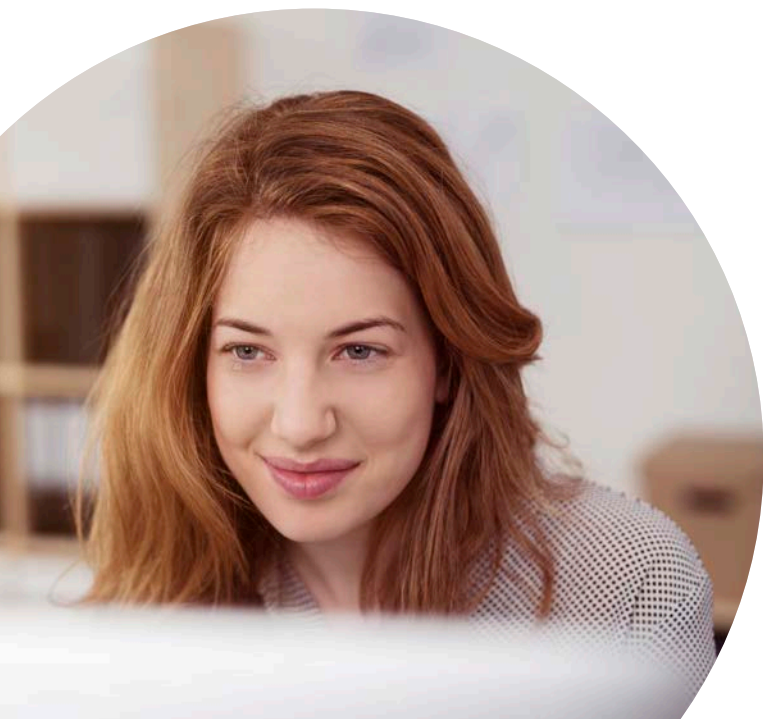
There have been numerous examples of care providers achieving the status of outstanding by setting their own objectives to create the best environment for their service users and staff. By not constantly looking externally and striving to reach inspectorate guidelines, but rather looking internally at what is required and using the inspectorate as a benchmark. If you apply that upskilling concept to training, rather than looking at what the inspectorate say is "mandatory" and beating staff over the head with same topics, the questions could be; what do the staff team supporting 'Mrs Jones' need to make 'Mrs Jones' life the best it can be? What resources do we already have in place and then what resources do we need? Invest in the appropriate resources which in turn improves care standards and increases profitability. **Outstanding rated care homes charge £200 on average extra per month compared to the rest of the market. People want their relatives to go to the best care homes and are prepared to pay for it.**

The social restrictions implemented during the pandemic has left a lot of care providers currently trying to play catch up with their training, especially subjects that lend themselves to a practical classroom delivery. Staff retention and career progression have been highlighted through numerous studies and reports as particular issues within the sector. Staff self-isolating has left providers trying to operate on ghost crews, staff teams reduced in some cases by approx 20%. Future considerations mean that staffing levels and recruitment challenges are likely to be compounded with the roll out of compulsory vaccinations).

It is more important now than ever, that care providers do all that they can to improve standards of care to improve recruitment and, at worst, to de-risk their business.

51% (of social care workers interviewed) have considered leaving their role because of the effect of their job on their mental health.

Providers should seize opportunities and find efficiencies that will help them to remain operational during such challenging times. The current increased changes to the environmental factors mean that providers need to have a greater understanding of their current position and their future requirements. Through the macro lens of training, "does my current supplier add value and offer the right cost-effective solutions?" to the micro; "which of my staff need to update their infection control training?"

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Effective Training is a Process

Our Plan, Do, Assess, Review approach provides a simple framework to help you manage your requirements better and reduce the management time in doing so.

Plan

Use internal risk assessments, your care plans, your staff goals, and your current training budget as a basis for the plan. Take the opportunity to make sure that the upcoming training topics are aligned to the details in the care plans. Is there anything that should be included from a recent 'near miss'? How will a training partner / supplier help to achieve our goals?

Do

Pick the right delivery style or blend of styles to maximise learning, application and budget. Promote a training champion (internally) not only delegating from a manager's considerable work load, but also bolstering staff experience – on the job training. This form of delegation will often supply insight to staff opinions on the calibre and success of training in place, as a training champion may have a different relationship with the staff than a manager.

Assess

Put a process in place to assess both the effectiveness of the training and the staff competencies in line with the latest **Skills For Care expectations**. Create a record of the staff that are likely to need greater support and build a process to facilitate that support.

Review

How effective has the training been? Are there any gaps in your staff competencies? What are your training compliances (as a percentage) and are they where you desire them to be? What additional subjects would offer your staff progression and improve the business and care delivery? How easy is the current training provider to work with?

The pandemic has increased demand for health and safety at work related courses, to include infection control and mental wellbeing. It has also increased most people's reliance and acceptance of digital solutions. Those care providers that have created the time to review their current situation and map out their future requirements have implemented support mechanisms for the mental and physical wellbeing for their staff and service users.

Those care providers have also evolved their training to include digital solutions as either a proportion or a whole of their training delivery. The support mechanisms implemented around physical and mental health will go a long way to counteract future staff shortages, staff churn and reducing absences. Therefore, reducing the strain on the organisation. The digital training packages will increase efficiencies and aid both macro and micro decisions, not only around the training, but also around compliance and profitability.

Maximising staff potential

PLAN · DO · ASSESS · REVIEW

Gain Advantages

Depending on which report you read approx 75% of care providers still rely on paper, and approx 80% of businesses have not yet transitioned their staff training to a digital platform. You have opportunity to gain an advantage over your competition and safeguard the future of your business. Any time that can be saved through more agile digital training, can be refocused on providing care.

"Spending more time with the people they support and less time doing paperwork – a welcome benefit of technology"

Kate Terroni
Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care, CQC

Health Education England very recently announced that it had been commissioned by the Government to review long-term strategic trends for the health and social care workforce. It feels like the long-awaited reforms to the health and social care, promised as the latest PM was put in post, may materialise. There is a strong likelihood that digitalisation will play a major role in the future.

The care providers that take the initiative now and move towards the digital training solutions will be better placed over the coming years compared to those that rely on more traditional forms of training. Having the ability to speed up internal audits will offer greater insight and strengthen business decisions. Furthermore, digital systems can increase the coordination of individuals needs and make a care provider more responsive.

The Right Approach

The right approach to training won't overcome every challenge that a care provider will ever face. However, when the planning, delivery, assessment and reviewing of training are implemented in the right way, huge gains can be made. Effective digital training will offer your organisation reduced risk, reduced churn, a greater feeling of self-worth and will allow the staff team, as a collective, to work more efficiently. By implementing the right training package, you set the foundation for achieving your desired CQC status.

Just because the timing is right, it does not make the task of reviewing your current training situation and mapping your future training goals any less daunting. However, by investing in the process properly the returns will be considerable. If you would like our help to plan, do, assess or review, we would be delighted to help. We are also more than happy to help you build the 'training champion' we mentioned previously by supporting your support staff, just contact us today and we are here to help.