

"I can see what you can't see" – How Warwickshire County Council involves people with learning disabilities as peer reviewers

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Organisation: Carer and Customer First Team

Country: United Kingdom

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Social protection

Type: Public Service

Launched in: 2011

Overall development time: 1 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

People with learning disabilities know things about the services they receive that inspectors do not or cannot know. This is why the Customer Engagement Team of Warwickshire County Council (WCC) established a group of 23 trained Peer Reviewers in 2011 to co-assess the quality of commissioned services.

Five of these Reviewers have learning disabilities and focus specifically on services used by people with learning disabilities. This case study shows how Warwickshire County Council uses the skills and knowledge of people with learning disabilities to improve service quality.

Why the innovation was developed

- To better address the service gaps or areas of improvement needed in services for people with learning disabilities.
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Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- Capture previously unrecorded information about the customer's experiences of quality in Providers services.
 - Support customers and carers to utilise their lived experiences of receiving services (experts by experience) to input into quality monitoring processes and service provision/development.
 - Provides an extra dimension to the reviewing process that ensures the customer voice is heard and recognised.
 - Recognises the value of people who have/are using services as 'experts'.
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Main beneficiaries

Government staff, People with disabilities

- Residents with learning disabilities
- Warwickshire County Council service providers
- The Warwickshire community

Results

Service quality

Responsiveness:

- Once the Reviews were completed and reports finalised, a Reviewer de-brief meeting was held to allow for the sharing of experiences and make recommendations. The Reviewers were unanimous in expressing that they had enjoyed the process and talking to people to find out how they were supported.
- The Reviewers had expressed that they had found it a steep learning curve taking in the whole environment surrounding services, but that their confidence had increased throughout the process. The Reviewers were clear that it had been a worthwhile experience and that they were committed to undertaking future visits.

Development

Design

This project was part of a pilot peer review programme which involved customers and carers in reviews of services in adult social care. These reviews complement mandatory service reviews.

The Contract Monitoring Team at Warwickshire County Council carry out both proactive and risk focused quality assurance monitoring visits to providers of adult social care, to ensure they are meeting their contractual requirements and that customers are receiving a high quality service.

The visits carried out by the Peer Reviewers have complemented and supported these reviews ensuring that standards are continuously improving.

Implementation

Tools used:

- Review Preparation: The project was managed throughout by 2 Customer Engagement Officers from the WCC Customer Engagement Team. In preparation for the pilot, potential Peer Reviewers were sourced in discussion with a variety of relevant stakeholders, via representatives at Learning Disability Partnership Board meetings, individuals suggested by the Advocacy Service, people with learning disabilities who expressed an interest in participating, after being involved in a review of Learning Disability Day Services.
 - Review Process: When the project was 'live' two reviews ran concurrently at different providers. Reviews were conducted over a period of three days. Reviewers were seeking to assess if services meet the needs of individuals and the outcomes established in the Quality of Life Standards. The Quality of Life Standards were developed using the seven key themes of Warwickshire's joint commissioning strategy for adults with a learning disability for 2011-2014. They cover the whole of a person's life and have seven key objectives: Keeping Safe, a Place to Live, A Fulfilled Life, Good Health, More Choice and Control, Seldom Heard Groups, and Supports for Family Carers.
 - Reporting Post Review: After the review visits, Customer Engagement Officers and Reviewers went through the notes that had been written up during the three days and ensured the reviews accurately captured what was discussed. When writing their reports, a template was used that followed the seven Quality of Life Standards, with a 'sound bite' box at the bottom of each standard section for statements to be entered.
 - Report Findings: None of the reviews highlighted safeguarding or serious concerns but did highlight various areas across services that could be improved and equally some areas to be celebrated as good practice.
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Diffusion

- This project has built a strong case for WCC to continue to develop the programme further. Indeed the Customer Engagement Team are exploring the possibility of broadening the scope of the programme to include domiciliary care health services and acute care in hospitals in the future.
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Challenges and solutions

- Immediately after the reviews a short questionnaire was sent to all six Providers who took part in the pilots. They were asked to comment on pre-review preparation, what went well and not so well on the review day and finally make suggestions for any changes to help in the programme development.
- The responses were positive about the pre-review preparation, although it was suggested that supplementary information about the process would have also been helpful. Looking at how the Peer Review programme can be developed it was suggested by a Provider that a printed leaflet, in easy-read format would allow staff to talk to people they support about the process and how to become Peer Reviewers themselves, which WCC has now produced.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Several issues arose during the project. They included: Confidentiality – because local networks within learning disability services are limited, Reviewers may potentially know other Customers and staff at review sites. This did cause some anxiety to Reviewers, so any potential conflicts of interest will be mitigated in future visits by asking all Reviewers to sign and agree confidentiality agreements and via the training to ensure Reviewers can identify and recognise situations where it would be inappropriate to continue with the visits.
- Skills Gaps – Some Reviewers who visited Customers with high support needs found it difficult to elicit information from people who did not communicate verbally. This is being addressed via specialist input and training for Reviewers to increase skills and confidence in future reviews.
- The reviews carried out by the Peer Reviewers provided additional information to the qualitative data collected by the Contract Monitoring Team and give a unique insight from the Customers and Carers' perspective. This information gathered from the Reviewers, along with other sources assists the CMO to prioritise and risk assess visits to providers, potentially enabling issues or concerns to be addressed before they escalate. In addition it can also highlight examples of good quality care that can be shared.

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