

Online assessment of Common Induction Standards

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The Common Induction Standards have been designed to help organisations to provide a structured start to the first weeks within a new organisation. A significant challenge is identifying sections of the induction that experienced staff need to complete, considering their previous experience.

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council implemented Common Induction Standards for adult social care and the children's workforce to ensure workers met the standards within the required timescales, before progressing towards future qualifications.

Wakefield was already using workbooks and delivering training as part of the induction process, but for some managers it was not always possible to get a clear picture of a worker's knowledge base.

The main challenge was evaluating how much someone has understood after undertaking training. Many people attend training on a regular basis, but how do you know that they have actually been paying attention? How do you know what they have understood and what they have missed? The key thing is that the manager has to know that the worker has the right level of knowledge in order that they can work alone, but more importantly that they will apply the knowledge in their daily tasks.

The Common Induction Standards require the manager to sign the certificate of completion. The onus for assessing a worker as either competent or not lies clearly with their line manager.

Action taken

We implemented online assessments for the Common Induction Standards enabling the authority to carry out training needs analyses, prioritise training, streamline the induction process for new workers and help existing workers to identify where to target their continuous professional development.

We recruit from many different areas and backgrounds, some people who are brand new to care alongside experienced workers, so we needed a way to make the induction effective. In the past everyone attended the induction program whatever their experience. It was felt that this was duplicating effort and was not always effective.

We aim to assess everyone as part of their induction plan so that training needs can be

identified and prioritised and experienced staff can demonstrate their knowledge via online assessment. Managers will be able to use the reports as an induction progress monitor and a supervision and appraisal tool. Online assessments were found to be easy to use and most importantly could be used to identify training needs in minutes.

The assessments would be used to support either the workbook or future training. Managers can refer workers back to the workbook whenever the assessments identify a potential gap in their knowledge. But the real difference that assessment would make is the ability to check how much worker's can still remember weeks after the induction period has finished. The online assessments will enable Wakefield to quickly ascertain a workers training needs

almost as soon as they join. They will be used as part of the induction planning process and throughout the induction period to ensure that the 12 and 24-week timescales are met. One of the key benefits of assessment as part of the induction process is that it is a fair and consistent measurable method to identify training needs.

Assessments will allow managers to reduce the number of questions they have to ask each worker, enabling them to spend more time discussing their answers. In addition the reports can be used to demonstrate to inspectors that workers have been assessed against the Common Induction Standards and stored in their induction folder as evidence towards CPD. In time, the assessment reports will be used to identify individual's learning needs, evaluate effectiveness of training and provide supporting evidence for inspections.

Part of the implementation plan, developed in partnership with the lead organisation, was to hold a number of workshops. These were co-hosted events to introduce the assessments and enable participants to 'have a go'.

Outcome

The workshops enabled us to support our managers who have the ultimate responsibility for signing the certificate of completion. We knew that they were concerned about how they would carry out the assessment process, but at the same time ensure that the evidence collected is of a high standard.

Prior to using the assessments we had no method for ensuring the consistency of assessments across different managers. Some would do too much and some too little. The assessment process will now ensure standardisation, reporting and central tracking. Assessment will also support supervision, mentoring and appraisal and will target identified training needs and inform recruitment plans.

Future plans

The plan is to use assessments to support the induction and selection process and develop this system into other specific areas such as learning disability, safeguarding adults, dementia.

The Supporting Induction in Social Care or SISCO tools, which encourage the use of IT and address communication and number skills at the point of induction and skills for life development, will be used by Wakefield in its further development of online assessment.

Key Learning points

The assessments are designed to support training and do not replace delivery. Underpinning knowledge based training will still be required to support any assessment, helping us to identify training needs and target individuals. Ultimately online assessments can reduce the costs of delivered training as we will be able to target training plans.

We hope that over time we will be able to measure an improvement in standards of care but feel that at this stage it is too early to assess.

Prior to using the assessments it was difficult to measure effectively the knowledge gained from training. Now it does not matter what kind of learning a worker accesses as we have a method to check the knowledge retention.

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