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Evaluation of Current Practices to Involve Service Users and Carers in Practice Assessment in 11 Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Scotland

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Background

- 2010 NMC Recommendation

“Programme providers must make it clear how service users and carers contribute to practice assessment”.

- NHS Education Scotland (NES) response
- 2010 published a literature review: *‘National Approach to Practice Assessment for Nurses and Midwives Literature review exploring issues of service user and carer involvement in the assessment of students’ practice’ (Gray & Donaldson, 2010).*
- May 2011 NES published *‘Developing a National Approach to Practice Assessment Documentation for the Pre-registration Nursing Programmes in Scotland’.*

Evaluation Tasks

- Provide an update of literature, post the 2010 NES commissioned literature review, on involving service users and carers in practice assessment
- Review current processes for involving service users and carers in practice assessment in Scotland's 11 HEIs.
- Consider current practice in tandem with the 2010 literature review undertaken as part of the National Approach to Practice Assessment Documentation (NES, 2011) project.
- Clarify criteria used by the NMC (or their agents) to measure service user and carer involvement in pre-registration projects.
- Following analysis of the above activities, report findings, and make recommendations to NHS Education Scotland.

Evaluation Details

- In January 2013 all 11 HEI's in Scotland providing pre-registration nursing programmes were contacted.
- A total of 11 semi-structured interviews with 15 HEI members of staff were conducted (Lecturers & Senior Lecturers in Nursing).
- New literature, post the NES commissioned 2010 literature review on service user and carer involvement in practice assessment, was reviewed.
- Current processes and documentation for involving service users and carers in practice assessment in the 11 HEIs were reviewed.
- An update of NMC literature and general material in relation to service user and carer involvement in student assessment, post their 2010 guidance, was also reviewed.

Post -2010 Literature Update

- Whilst the 2010 NMC recommendation could be seen as a logical follow-on from service user & carer involvement in curriculum design, student selection and research – challenges involved in practice assessment are not fully considered
- Where is the evidence base for introducing this and guidance to introduce – without either – danger - *'tokenistic and/or tick box exercise'*.
- Patient protection – where is guidance to protect unwell or distressed patients being approached and patients who may feel 'unqualified/uneasy' about assessing students.
- Given challenges – process shouldn't be assessment – but review or comment

Represented Significant Challenge

- More challenging than Service User/Carer involvement in Research, Curriculum Design, Student Selection
- The Willis Commission (2012) report *'Quality with Compassion: The Future of Nursing Education'* referred to the recommendation as:

"...a relatively new and challenging concept for most HEIs, and for their service provider partners. Academic staff needed training to work with service users in a meaningful way, and the NHS was thought to be a hierarchal and patriarchal structure still task-driven rather than patient driven.....There were many examples of progress, but much more to do"

(Report of Willis Commission, 2012:p.39)

Review current processes for involving service users and carers in practice assessment

- 2 out of 11 HEI's very early stages of implementing recommendation
- 9 out of 11 HEI's established measures to involve service users and carers to contribute to assessing nursing students' practice skills.
- HEI's believed that the NES short term evaluation was a catalyst for putting measures in place to assess progress of involvement of service users and carers in this area.

Key Themes from Interviews with HEI Representatives

- Commitment to Working with Service Users and Carers in the Education and Training of Nursing Students across all Scottish HEIs:

“We have just recently appointed a full-time service user in our School here to support and develop service user and carer involvement.

(HEI Rep. 6)

We have a strong commitment towards involving service users and carers in what we do here and believe it has been enormously beneficial to the students, to ourselves as staff members, and most importantly to improving patient care”

(HEI Rep. 5)

Key Themes from Interviews with HEI Representatives

- Feeling that a more robust discussion on the rationale, evidence base and challenges behind the 2010 NMC guidance should have taken place before the guidance was presented to HEIs in the UK.

“Talking about assessment of student nurses’ practice skills by service users and carers is a totally different challenge than other areas of patient involvement. Would patients really feel qualified to do this? Would they do this willingly”? (HEI Rep. 11)

Our University would say the student has the right to be assessed by an assessor properly trained and recognised....”
(HEI Rep. 3)

Key Themes from Interviews with HEI Representatives

- **Where is the Evidence Base for introducing this? - What about Potential Affect on Patients?- What are we Measuring?**

“Have we really established (a) why we should be doing this in the first place?- Where is the Evidence?”

“Have we really considered approaching sick, tired, confused patients and asking them to assess a student’s practice skills?”

“How are we measuring patient and carer views on student practice skills? Have the procedures been tested and validated?”

Are we all doing the same? If not then – potentially-we might be measuring different things. A consistent approach to what we’ve been asked to do would be important”

(HEI Reps. 4 & 6)

Key Themes from Interviews with HEI Representatives

- If not Meaningful- Danger could be seen as Tokenistic or Tick Box exercise
- Terminology: Should the Process be one of Assessment, Review or Comment?

“Do we really think all service users will be confident about assessing a student nurse’s practice skills? I think many would feel uncomfortable either because they thought they weren’t capable of providing effective assessment or many would be reluctant to criticise a young student. Is this really meaningful involvement?”

“When its not meaningful there’s a danger its seen as a tick box thing or tokenistic.....then that defeats the purpose”

(HEI Rep. 8)

“There is a need for greater clarity on what exactly we mean by assessment and what the aim of that assessment by service users and carers is..... it should probably be comment or verbal reviewing

(HEI Rep. 10)

Other Key Themes from Interviews with HEI Representatives

- Training & Resource Implications for Mentors and Service Users/Carers
- What about Social Inclusion Issues – if genuine?
Especially about Challenges around hard to reach and seldom involved groups (Language issues)
- Learning from Mental Health Nursing and Learning Disabilities

Clarification of criteria used by the NMC (or their agents) to measure service user and carer involvement in pre-registration projects.

- **NMC 2008 *Standards to support learning and assessment in practice*** (SLAiP) – limited reference apart from as recipients of care
- **NMC 2010 *Standards for pre-registration nursing education*** – move towards recognition as an important part of nursing education specifically:

Structure, design, delivery – can contribute to this

Assessment – ‘providers must make it clear how service users and carers contribute to the assessment process’

Clarification of criteria used by the NMC (or their agents) to measure service user and carer involvement in pre-registration projects.

- NMC 2011 *Advice and supporting information for implementing NMC standards for pre-registration nursing education*
- ‘Being involved in assessment in a meaningful wayand where ...[they]...do contribute, the outcome should not rest on their judgment alone’ [p.19]
- Stress that they need to be prepared and supported
- May be issues around validity and reliability
- Examples given – testimonies/mentor feedback/OSCEs/video scenarios
- NMC recognise that this is a sensitive issue for HEIs

Recommendations

- Clarification of purpose of service user and carer involvement in assessment required
- Further discussion required around models of practice assessment and terminology e.g. formative/summative
- More in depth discussion with stakeholders around what is the most effective and meaningful way to involve service users and carers
- Discussion around whether the procedure is assessment, comment, or review
- Need to develop robust functional measurement tools to quantify service user and carer involvement – should these be standardized across HEIs?
- HEIs need to offer training and support to service users and carers
- Mentors may require additional training to fully support the process
- Patient safety and ethical issues need to be a key driver in any developments

References

- Gray, M & Donaldson, JH (2010) National Approach to Practice Assessment for Nurses and Midwives Literature review exploring issues of service user and carer involvement in the assessment of students' practice. NHS Education for Scotland (NES)
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- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010) Standards for pre-registration nursing education. NMC
- Stacey et al (2012) Service user involvement in the assessment of student nurses: A note of caution. Nurse Education Today 32 (2012) 482–484
- Willis Commission report (2012) Quality with Compassion: The Future of Nursing Education.



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