

Voluntary and Community Workforce - Phase Two

Skills for Care and Development - Case Study

Review and Update Standards

Background

The Sector Skills Council – Skills for Care and Development launched their new national occupational standards for Care and Development in February 2005, following a major review. The review was a joint project with Skills for Health as the Standards are jointly developed.

The review was detailed and thorough taking nearly 2.5 years to complete. The previous NOS shelf life had expired and whilst moderations had been made during their five year life span these had been peripheral. Skills for Care and Development had listened to their stakeholders, monitored key policy indicators and trends and undertook a major review of the standards.

The review included representatives across the sector, ensuring representation and access to all whether public, private or voluntary; whether lead employer, educationalist, assessment centre or practitioner. It included key civil servants and policy makers. The project covered the whole of the UK with a main Steering Group covering the four administrations.

The review was broken down into two main phases:

Phase One

Phase I provided the critical evaluation. UK wide consultation was undertaken, managed by the four countries. The consultation took the form of:

- Workshops
- Newsletters
- Website

They involved the key policy drivers for the 4 administrations, along with employer representation, voluntary representation, education, training providers, private and public sector service providers. It wasn't exclusive to anyone. It was open to all from practitioners to senior officials.

The key function of Phase I was to ascertain:

- Gaps
- Problems
- Changes in Practice
- Cross Sector Units
- Policy drivers
- Future trends

Skills for Care and Development wanted to ensure that they had “employer buy-in” that stakeholders felt that

what they had been saying would make a difference. They ensured that the feedback from the consultation clearly and directly impacted on the development of the new NOS.

Skills for Care and Development already worked closely with their employers ensuring on-going representation through their project reference groups, technical groups etc this was built on during the review.

Skill for Care and Development linked closely with the voluntary sector, both through lead representative organisations across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and direct access with local service providers. The voluntary sector makes up a large percentage of this sectors' workforce. This was recognised during the project and part of the “Cross Sector Work” drew in units from the NOS for management of volunteers, along with others such as Health, Youth Justice and Early Years.

Phase I mapped out the Sectors' requirements that the new NOS must fulfil.

Phase Two

Phase two ensured that all the key messages from Phase one were reflected into the drafting of the new standards.

This was facilitated by the four different administrations, coming together under the Steering Group to ensure coherence and compatibility. It was a major overhaul of the standards.

The feedback from Phase I moved the standards from structured pathways to a more fluid standard, allowing flexibility and qualification design by employers and employees. There is now one Award with the specialisms being covered in the context that they are assessed and not in the standard. This new Award structure provides four core units plus two optional units at Level 2; four core units plus four optional units at Levels 3 and 4, with a total suite of 214 units covering all the key roles within the Sector.

The standards were drafted and consulted on, and underwent six draft revisions, clearly showing Skills for Care and Development's commitment to listen and respond to the needs of their stakeholders. It was important that the consultation was seen as accessible and real.

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Reference groups within the four areas led the process of “endorsement” ensuring each standard was signed off, within their region, before going to the Steering Group to bring the four together for accreditation.

SkillsActive also identified 5,000 people working in community sports development and anticipated a growth of 3.9% over the next 10 years and a need to address their training needs.

Promotion

The new standards were launched through joint events between Skills for Care and the Awarding Bodies across the four countries. It was also promoted through newsletters, websites and leaflets.

The standards have been warmly received by the Sector and usage is very high with around 80-90% using them.

The work undertaken in Phases 1 and 2 ensured that they had employer “buy-in” that the standards had been developed with them to meet their needs both for now and in the future. This has already had a positive impact with progression rates already increasing!

Due to the diversity of the standards and their size, they have been made available on CD or on-line (download).

Skills for Care and Development have developed Skills Sets for CPD and Job Transfer to support employers, employees and volunteers to move more fluidly within the Sector. They have also recently developed a NOS Navigator which will be launched in February 2006. This will be available on-line and in CD format and will provide practitioners with a quick and simple way of gathering the standards they need for their specific roles, or to find out what units might be required to “top up” if they are moving from one part of the sector to another. Previously, this might have involved doing an entirely different qualification.

Key messages

Employer and partner Engagement! No lip service. Whilst the process might have been more time consuming and costly the benefits are now being reaped with active employer use and involvement.

Employers and stakeholders must see that their views have impacted on the process. Whilst key representative organisations were involved this was not to the exclusion of others, recognising that not all organisations feel their views are being fully represented.

The inclusion of the voluntary NOS recognises the high level volunteer involvement and service provision that is delivered within the Sector.

Skills for Care and Development are now moving towards an Incremental Review process. This will involve holding an on-going record of trends, developments, issues etc to enable more short specific consultations being undertaken where and when a need has been identified.

Skills for Care and Development will continue to work closely with their stakeholders, maintaining their commitment and ensuring on-going relationships to mould, not just Standards, but the full SSC remit to meet the developing needs of a developing sector.

Representation and consultation is not a separate activity but is woven into the core business.

More Information

Further details and up to date news can be found at: www.ssda-volunteer-workforce.org

If you would like more information on this project, please contact:

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