

Volition Shadowing Initiative Report: January – June 2007

Introduction

The voluntary and statutory mental health sectors in Leeds recognise the valuable contribution that staff shadowing initiatives can make in improving communication and developing understanding across the sectors.

In order to gain some experience of shadowing, Volition in partnership with Leeds Mental Health Trust, established a **pilot** work shadowing scheme in 2006. This enabled a small number of staff from voluntary sector mental health organisations to shadow staff in Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs). The feedback from the pilot was very positive and it was decided to seek funding to develop a larger scheme. Specific comments from shadowers were incorporated into the new scheme proposals.

Volition was granted Change-Up funding from WYLDA (West Yorkshire Local Development Agencies), via Leeds Infrastructure Consortium, to run a shadowing project during the first part of 2007 for staff in voluntary sector mental health organisations, Leeds Mental Health Trust and Leeds City Council Social Services. Dave Rigby was appointed in January 2007 to coordinate the project up until April 2007. Nikki Hatch was seconded to Volition from the Mental Health Trust for a day a week to continue working on the project from the beginning of April.

The project coordinator's role was to set up, run and evaluate the shadowing project. Support and supervision have been provided by Volition. The project has been carried out in partnership with Leeds Mental Health Trust and Social Services.

Volition's aim of the project was to arrange a total of 40 shadowing placements.

Setting up the project

The following steps were taken to set up the project.

Publicity about the scheme was circulated in December 2006 and applicants were asked to respond with expressions of interest. This included flyers and articles in the Volition newsletter which is circulated to all member organisations and a wide range of other bodies / individuals

Relevant documents were prepared which included the following:

- Information leaflet for shadowing hosts
- Information leaflet for shadowing applicants
- Shadowing application form

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- Shadowing evaluation form
- Equal opportunities monitoring form
- Confidentiality statement to be signed by shadower

Enquiries were made with relevant LMHT managers about **hosting** shadowing placements. Good contacts had been made with the CMHTs during the shadowing pilot. These were re activated and relevant details about the shadowing scheme were circulated to the clinical team managers in January 2007.

Managers in the following teams were also asked if they would be able to host shadowing placements:

- Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment
- In-patient wards
- Acute Community Day Services.

Information about the shadowing scheme is on the Volition website and has been put onto the LMHT internal staff intranet under initiatives. An interview with someone who has experienced shadowing is being arranged for the next edition of LMHT internal magazine Newslines.

Enquiries about hosting were made with relevant managers within voluntary sector mental health organisations and within Leeds City Council Social Services.

Running the shadowing scheme

The scheme has operated as follows:

- Staff enquiring about shadowing opportunities are sent information about the scheme and an application form.
- Applicants stipulate:
 - Where they want to carry out the shadowing
 - How many days they want to spend (between 1 and 3)
 - What they want to gain from the shadowing.

The Co-ordinator approaches the host to seek agreement for the shadowing. Once initial discussions have taken place with the host and they have agreed in principle to take part in the scheme, the Co-ordinator provides the host and the applicant with the relevant contact details and confidentiality statement. Host and applicant then arrange suitable dates for the shadowing. If an applicant requests shadowing with a team that has not previously had information about the scheme then the Co-ordinator makes an initial approach to confirm whether the team is able to get involved. Once this is established contact details are exchanged and host and applicant arrange suitable dates.

A log is kept in relation to the progress of each application and this is updated as and when arrangements are made. This enables other staff who may be involved in the co-ordination

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process to be aware of the stage each application has reached. When shadowing arrangements have been agreed by both parties the Co-ordinator sends each a note of confirmation. Once shadowing has been completed, applicants are asked to complete an evaluation form and an equal opportunities monitoring form.

Details of shadowing 2007

Shadowing has taken place to date as shown below.

Figures as at 29/6/07

Applications received	57
Shadowing arrangements made	45
Shadowing completed	29
Evaluation forms received	17

Applications were received from workers from the following organisations.

Organisation	Applications received
Voluntary sector (Total 47)	
Age Concern	1
Alzheimer's Society	7
Community Links	6
DISC	2
DOSTI	1
Employment Consortium	2
St Anne's Community Services	12
Leeds Health Focus	2
Leeds Homeless Prevention Scheme	1
Leeds Housing Concern	1
SIGN	2
St Vincents	1
Together	7
Volition	1
Women's Counselling & Therapy Service	1
Leeds Mental Health Trust (Total 7)	
Asket House	2
Crisis Resolution	1
Psychology	1
Voluntary Services	1
Malham House	2
Leeds Social Services (Total 3)	
Leeds Crisis Service	2
Community Alternatives Team	1
Total	57

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Shadowing Hosts

Shadowing has taken place with the following organisations

Organisation	Number of shadowing placements
Leeds Mental Health Trust	
Ashwell Centre (Sectors 4 and 5) CMHT	3
Assertive Outreach	1
Becklin Centre	1
Bridge House (Sectors 9 and 10) CMHT	1
Brook House and East Ardsley (Sectors 8 and 11) CMHT	1
Carers Service	1
Concourse House ACDS	1
Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Service	3
Hawthorn House Acute Community Day Service (ACDS)	1
Holly House (Sector 12) CMHT	1
Leeds Addiction Unit	1
Malham House CMHT (Sector 3) CMHT	1
Millfield House and Clarence House (Sectors 1 and 2) Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)	2
Moresdale Lane (Sectors 6 and 7) CMHT	1
North West Intermediate Care Team	1
Older people's mental health services (including?)	1
Personality Disorder network	1
Associate Medical Director - Ingrid Whitton	1
St Mary's House	2
Social Services	
Gateway Worker East - Sylvia Landells	
(York Towers Assessment Team have expressed interest)	
Milgarth Drugs Project (WY Police - seconded Social Workers)	1
Voluntary Sector	
Women's Aid	1
Community Links Alexander House	1
Community Links aspire	1
Community Links Oakwood Hall	1
Community Links Octavia House	1
SIGN	1
St Anne's Community Services	1
Mental Health Employment Consortium	1
	1
TOTAL	

Evaluation of shadowing

Seventeen evaluation forms have been returned by shadowers. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Shadowers made the following comments about what they had learnt / gained from the experience:

- I now understand the role of a CPN and how they fit into the bigger picture of mental health care.
- More understanding of how a social worker engages with their clients and the workload they have.
- I will look more closely at group work and spend more time looking at setting goals for individuals.
- A very helpful insight into clinical work and practice.
- Being a part of the CPA meetings (most significant learning point). I have been working in the field for over a year but not attended any CPAs, so this has prepared me. I have a better understanding of when I might access the service
- I am now more aware of the referral process for both services
- I most certainly achieved the outcomes and was really impressed how the team work so professionally together.
- Attending the team meeting at the start of the shift gave a good overview of what was in store for the rest of the day and made me aware of the level of planning that has to go into every day.

Shadowers comments about the arrangements and the experience as a whole included the following:

- If one person could be allocated to work with you all day (how to improve the shadowing experience).
- I would have liked to spend more time shadowing as one day was not really enough time to see the whole picture.
- Attending a meeting I could have no involvement with (what was least useful) .
- I will be presenting my experiences in my next staff meeting.
- It seems to have been well organised and run very smoothly.
- I felt it worked well and was a good experience
- I thought that my shadowing experience for two days gained me more experience than some courses I have attended.
- You should definitely run this scheme again, it is extremely beneficial.
- Very interesting and eye-opening

Issues arising from the shadowing project

The project has proved popular and successful as demonstrated by the numbers of people taking part and the positive feedback from the evaluation.

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There are a number of points to bear in mind in continuing and developing the scheme.

- The project framework and documentation have been established and are available for continued use. The documentation is available from the LMHT intranet and Volition website. Discussions will take place with Leeds City Council Adult Care Services about making documents available via their intranet.
- The scheme is relatively straightforward to administer but there is a need for the regular input of a co-ordinator in order to ensure that progress is maintained and that the barriers referred to below do not cause undue delays.
- There are a number of potential barriers which can slow down or impede progress. These include the following:
 - Difficulties and delays in making contact with applicants / hosts, because of shift work, leave, sickness absence, staff shortages
 - Difficulties and delays in hosts and applicants agreeing suitable dates
 - The priority that has to be given to other requirements e.g. staff shortages may mean that shadowing arrangements have to be deferred
 - Lack of feedback in some cases, so that it is difficult to establish whether shadowing has been completed
 - Slowness in return of evaluation formsSome of these difficulties are inherent to working life, but perhaps some can be addressed by increasing the priority given to shadowing as part of the staff development process.
- Further steps need to be taken to raise awareness about the scheme. This should include regular use of fliers and newsletters and also where possible attending staff team meetings to “sell” the scheme directly.
- It would be helpful if senior management and team managers in the participating organisations could encourage and support shadowing wherever possible so that it becomes the “norm” both to shadow and to host. In some cases, it has been a slow process securing agreement for a service to host a shadower.

Continuing the shadowing project

With the help of Nikki Hatch who has been seconded from LMHT it has been possible to continue the project beyond the original March 31st deadline. This has been very valuable as it took quite a while to establish the scheme and raise awareness.

The aim is now to ensure that co-ordination input can be continued and that some proactive work can take place to raise awareness further and move towards mainstreaming the initiative.

Conclusion

This Project was initiated by Volition prior to 2007. A grant of £4,980 from Change-Up enabled it to be expanded and developed from January to June and was contingent on arranging up to 40 placements, which was exceeded (45 arranged, 29 completed).

Evaluation of this scheme shows that it has been a useful tool in staff development which has been beneficial to all concerned. The initiative has been well received by managers within LMHT and the local authority: Adult Services are keen to become more involved.

One of the main learning points is that the majority of shadowing placements will only take place if they are supported by someone in a coordinating role. Clear information is vital, but there also needs to be someone available who can make links with prospective hosts, sort out any problems that arise, and communicate with everyone involved.

Recommendations

1. Continuation of the existing cross sector work
2. Social Services and Leeds PCT to get more involved in the initiative, both in terms of hosting placements and in enabling staff to go on placements.
3. Increase take up of shadowing opportunities by staff from LMHT. For this to happen there must be easily accessible and clear information about shadowing, and staff must be encouraged and supported by their managers to go on shadowing placements.
4. Shadowing could be rolled out in other service areas. The Volition shadowing paperwork could be very easily adapted to be used by other services, and learning disability services and Leeds Homeless Prevention Service have already expressed an interest.

The scheme has been very successful and with the funding received has built up momentum. Further funding is required for this project to be continued, and Volition would like to request a contribution from LMHT, Leeds Adult Care Services and the Leeds PCT. Because much of the initial setting up of processes, procedures, publicity and contacts has been done, it would be possible to continue the project for 12 months for £6,000 based on Volition employing a worker for 6 hours a week.

Volition July 24th 2007