

Professional Development Issues in the Community Care Sector



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Maria De Leo

Professional/Management Roles in Community Care

This sector provides care at home and in community venues for the frail aged, younger people with disabilities and their carers

Case Management is one of several key professional/management roles along with nursing, allied health, assessment, community care worker management and others

A working Definition of Professional Development (PD) in Community Care

A shared professional practice model that includes:

- The ongoing personal responsibility of the individual practitioner to prepare for work with the client group and setting
- Is multi disciplinary
- A community care sector wide approach relevant to all roles and organizations
- Ongoing employer responsibility to provide practical and moral support
- A responsive and relevant education sector

Why is PD in Community Care needed?

- Practitioners come from a variety of education and work experience backgrounds
- Many practitioners do not have detailed knowledge of client, setting and policy
- Community care is rapidly expanding and becoming more complex
- The nature of community care
- The policy context and social environment changes

Barriers to PD in Community Care

- Ideological positions held by specific professions/occupations
- Horizontal career patterns
- Staff job turnover and length of stay in sector
- Employer not always supportive
- Staff overconfidence or under confidence
- VET and higher education separate systems to community care
- Staff have family and other responsibilities

Key PD areas for Community Care

- Understanding the ageing process, disabilities, chronic illnesses and community care settings
- Understanding the policy context, community development and promoting independence
- Understanding job role and role specific skills e.g. assessment
- For clinical roles keeping current in clinical practices

Key PD areas for Community Care

- Occupational health and safety
- Self care and stress management
- Computer skills
- Management training/education

Meeting the need for PD in Community Care

- Relationship to initial qualifications
- Relationship to postgraduate qualifications
- The relevant use of competency based training
- Formal and informal learning methods

Possible benefits of PD in Community Care

- Consistency of practice over time and across staff and services
- Higher standard of service to consumers/clients
- Professional Development is essential to achieving and maintaining excellence in practice
- Greater job satisfaction for staff
- Staff may identify/develop further career pathways

Possible disadvantages of PD in Community Care

- Overconfidence
- Too much informal learning and not enough assessment
- Risk aversion
- Substitutes for critical thinking and self reflection
- Just plain wrong – need for PD quality control

Towards a professional development strategy for HACCC Assessment staff

- Working Group
- HACCC Assessment Framework
- Identify needs
- Identify qualifications
- PD modules
- Liaison with education providers