An evaluation of the inclusion of service user feedback in practice assessment of student nurses

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Aim and objectives

**Aim**: To report on an evaluation of the inclusion of service user feedback in the practice assessment of student nurses.

**Objectives**

1) Discuss the rationale for including service user feedback in assessment;

2) Explain how service user feedback is included in a new practice assessment document;

3) Present perceptions of how service user feedback contributes to practice assessment, from students’, practice mentors’ and academic staff perspectives.
Background to project

- NHS London made it contractual for Adult Nursing as part of tendering process
- Project funded by NHS London and the 3 London Local Education and Training Boards
- Already established Pan London Practice Learning Group (PLPLG) in relation to practice learning
- London – universities in competition
Why include Service User Feedback in student practice assessment?

• Current health policy and legislation (2012 Health and Social Care Act) to increase inclusion of service users in health care decision making

• Service users already involved in selection of student nurses onto programmes (HEE, 2014)

• NMC (2010) – good practice to include service user feedback in student practice assessment

• Implementing service user feedback in student nurses’ practice assessment can be challenging (Stickley et al. 2010; Casey and Clark 2014).

• All universities agreed that service user feedback would be formative and contribute to the overall feedback the student received
Development of Service User Feedback Form in PLPAD

- Project Team scoped the approach to service user feedback and the forms used in the existing validated practice assessment documents for the 9 universities.
- Overall limited, not service user focused, a box for mentor to complete on behalf of service user.
- Project Team organised workshop with LSBU Service Users from Adult, Child and Mental Health. 2 further meetings with service users at Bexley Mencap for learning disability service user consultation/engagement.
- Purpose of workshop to develop Service User Feedback form.
- Development of form – led by Service Users.
Principles in developing Service User Feedback Form

• Language – plain English, no jargon and easily understood by service users
• Keep it simple
• Template developed should be from service user perspective i.e. for service user to complete under direction of student’s mentor
• Questions phrased from service user perspective
• Arial, size 16 font – visual impairment
Principles in developing Service User Feedback Form

- Include faces to enable service user to visually see - to reflect their “mood”. Reflects “Friends and Family” Test faces being used at the time of development
- “Smiley faces” received most feedback in consultation with stakeholders – views polarised: either liked faces or disliked faces
- After considerable discussion, decision to retain faces by Project Steering Group and to include feedback on “faces” /approach as part of evaluation
- Considerable interest in Pan London approach to service user feedback; template being used by other regions in England
Service user feedback form

Practice Assessment Document

Patient/Service User Feedback Form
Mentors should obtain consent from patients/service users who should feel able to decline to participate.

We would like to hear your views about the way the student nurse has looked after you.
- Your feedback will help the student nurse’s learning
- The feedback you give will not change the way you are looked after

Tick if you are: The Patient/Service User [ ] Carer/Relative [ ]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How happy were you with the way the student nurse...</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>I'm not sure</th>
<th>Unhappy</th>
<th>Very unhappy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...cared for you?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>...listened to your needs?</td>
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<td>...understood the way you felt?</td>
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<td>...talked to you?</td>
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<td>...showed you respect?</td>
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</table>
Evaluation method

• An initial evaluation was conducted to investigate the views of nursing students, mentors and academics regarding implementation and use of the PLPAD

• Mixed method survey: online questionnaire and focus groups

• Included specific questions about service user feedback

• University Research Ethics Committee approval

• Data collection: March-April 2015
Questionnaire respondents

- 1205 student nurses and 258 mentors:
  - all fields of nursing (adult, child, mental health, learning disability)
  - all 9 universities.
- Students’ year on course:
  - 1st year: 42.7% (n=502)
  - 2nd year: 42.7% (n=502)
  - 3rd year: 16.7% (n=201)
Questionnaire results

- 80% (n=766) students reported that service user feedback was very helpful or helpful to them.
- 83% (n=195) mentors considered that service user feedback generally reflected the student’s qualities.
- 92% (n=238) of mentors had found service users very willing or willing to give feedback but 8% (n=20) had encountered service users who were unwilling:
  - Service users often say that they are not interested to contribute to the assessment of the student.
A different perspective

• 12% (n=30) of mentors reported that servicer user feedback had highlighted qualities in the student not previously identified.

• 16 comments including ‘Kindness’

• ‘service users have a different perspective - very good addition’

• ‘potential to identify a quality that maybe the mentors have missed. The service user is the one being cared for not the mentor!’

• ‘It’s rare. Students’ poor qualities and negative values are usually identified by staff before patients get to know students on placement’
Contribution to assessment

• Caring attributes: ‘soft skills’, communication skills, personal qualities, friendliness

• Service user feedback is difficult/inappropriate to elicit in some placements e.g. outpatients, theatres, emergency care, cognitive impairment, mental health crisis, nursery

• Varied views about accuracy: reflect student’s ability well vs skewed or too simplistic

• Service users generally provided positive comments without suggestions for improvement
Open comments from students

• Smiley faces: some considered patronising or childish but one student pointed out that: ‘as long as it is explained that the form is designed to be accessible to everyone then there are usually no issues’.

• Some students appreciated the positive feedback gained: ‘can be encouraging and motivating’

• Others were concerned that service users will feel they are being treated well so they will give good feedback
Focus groups

• Students (n=46 in 6 groups), from 7 out of the 9 universities
• Mentors (n=46 in 7 groups), from a range of practice settings
• Academic staff (n=42 in 6 groups), from 8 out of the 9 universities
• Topic guide with open questions and follow up probes
• Transcribed and analysed using the Framework approach (Ritchie & Spencer 1994) and NVivo
Service user feedback- key themes

• Motivating and rewarding
• Enhances confidence and communication skills
• Offers alternative perspectives on students performance
• An important learning experience
• Feedback format
• Collecting feedback-
  -who collects it?
  -practicalities
• Obligation to provide positive feedback
Motivating and Rewarding

• Important for students

• Motivating and rewarding

• Highlights personal attributes

• Positive reinforcement

‘gave students a bit of a lift’
(Academics 5)

‘emotionally rewarding’
(Academics 5)

‘it’s a nice bit of feedback to have. It makes you feel good’
(Students 2)
Enhances confidence and communication skills

• Confidence to approach a service user and ask for feedback was seen as an important part of the student nurse’s development

• Enhanced communication skills by accustomising the student to request and receive feedback.

• Encouraged students to engage with service users more fully which also developed their communication skills.
An alternative perspective

- Balanced view of performance
- ‘because the patients are the ones that we are caring for and treating’ (Students 2)
- Personal attributes
- Alternative perspectives on strengths and weaknesses
An important learning experience

• Highlights what patients value

• Practical and constructive feedback

‘... that extra smile, good morning ‘Mrs Jones, did you have a good night?’-just a little something can make all the difference....’

(Academics 1)
Service user feedback tool

- Good design for balanced feedback
- Easy and quick to use
- Emoticons - 'Smiley faces'

‘I am sometimes almost hesitant to give it to a patient because it is almost so simple that they might go, ‘am I that simple that I need a form that simple?’ (Students 6)
Collecting feedback - whose responsibility?

- Mentor selection- student collection/ mentor collection
- Student selection-mentor collection/ student collection
- Impromptu feedback- mentor collection
Collecting feedback - practicalities

- Leaving PLPAD with service user
- Lack of space
- Difficulties in certain health care settings

‘In sexual health........just not appropriate because the students don’t see the same patients time and time again’ (Academics 3)

‘I don’t think I’ll ever find it appropriate to ask a parent whose child’s in intensive care’ (Students 1)
Obligation to provide positive feedback

- Overwhelmingly positive
- Biased selection
- Lack of anonymity
- Obligation

‘...I haven’t seen a negative one yet’
(Academics 5)

‘So if they tell you you’re a lovely nurse you’d say ‘oh can you fill this in please?’ It makes me wonder its value’
(Academics 1)

‘They [service user] are very much trapped.... “How can I say negative things when the student is standing right in front of me”’ (Mentors 7)
Conclusions

• Inclusion of service user feedback in practice assessment of healthcare students aligns with health policy for patient and public involvement in healthcare: conveys an important message

• The Pan London Practice Assessment Document has standardised the approach to gaining service user feedback across London

• Inclusion of service user feedback is well supported overall - seems to give additional insights: a more rounded assessment?

• The process of eliciting feedback and contribution to assessment needs more clarity.

• Service users’ views about feedback on students are an area for future research
References


• Nursing and Midwifery Council (2010) *Standards for pre-registration nursing education* London NMC

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