

Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS)

Monitoring & Evaluation Group

Case study template

The following case study template will enable Group members to gather evidence of ALPS' activity and help members engage in reflective practice. This evidence will then be analysed in the context of a particular line of enquiry in the expectation of providing evidence of ALPS' impact.

The case studies might focus in on one or more of the following:

- a cohort of students', or an individual student's, journey involving a particular ALPS activity
- an individual academic, or a team of academics, involved in an innovative pedagogical approach brought about by ALPS
- changes to the student learning experience involving ALPS activity
- partnerships which have been built with different stakeholders to support activities undertaken by ALPS

Title of case study:		
Challenges to facilitating service users & carers becoming a more meaningful part of the process of practice-based competence assessment		
Institution:		
University of Leeds		
Contact/main contributor:		
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Context:
<p>Please describe the context in which the activity/intervention came about. In providing this description think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what was the focus of the activity/intervention? • what led up to it? • what options were considered? <p>During the last quarter of 2006 I was asked to identify a service user of carer who could contribute to ALPS at our site implementation group meetings. This presented some difficulty because I was barely aware of ALPS myself and upon further investigation realised that the project was quite complex and would be challenging in terms of making involvement at site meetings more than tokenistic.</p> <p>Having identified a service user who also has an academic background, and who I thought would be comfortable in the ALPS context, she unfortunately became unable to contribute due to a new work commitment. I then took the decision that it would be inappropriate to involve any of my other service user and carer contacts at that stage (partly due to lack of confidence in my own understanding of ALPS), and personally took up position on our site group to scope involvement potential. As a result I became more aware of the processes taking place, such as development of common competencies frameworks, and realised that the project was going ahead at a pace.</p>

A service user and carer working group has since been formed and is just beginning to work successfully to address some of the fundamental issues that need tackled to make involvement in the project meaningful (such as an ALPS leaflet written in plain language).

This case study takes the form of a personal reflection on how service user and carer involvement, and the elicitation of their views, appears to have been handled so far by ALPS, with reference to common competencies, taking in both negative and positive developments.

Objectives:

- what were you trying to achieve?

ALPS quite rightly aims to achieve the involvement service users and carers in practice-based competence assessment. Key to future assessment will be the common competency frameworks that will be used to inform the assessment tools used in practice.

Clearly these frameworks should reflect professional skills requirements, but should also be consistent with service user and carer perceptions of the requisite skills and attributes needed by health professionals to engage with them in the co-production of positive health outcomes.

It should be our shared objective to ensure that the contribution service users and carers make, in terms of the values that underpin our notions of competency, is a meaningful one.

If this is not achieved then there is a danger that the criteria for assessment will tend to perpetuate traditional professional bias, and as a result the potentially quite progressive involvement of service users and carers in the actual processes of practice-based assessment could become largely irrelevant.

Process:

- what actually happened?
- what did you do and why?
- what worked well and why?
- what worked less well and why?

As common competency frameworks have begun to be developed, there has been increasing pressure on involvement focussed staff across sites, including myself, to 'come up with the goods' in terms of service user and carer consultation on what has been produced so far.

An established and successful involvement community of practice already exists across the 4 West Yorkshire universities. We consider ourselves to be the experts in this field locally, but have only recently been asked as individuals to be part of a specific working group to look at involvement in ALPS. It would appear to me that ALPS has somewhat overlooked the groundwork that we have recognised needs to go into this type of work. For example, service users and carers have repeatedly expressed frustration about organisations that fail to involve them at the beginning of processes. This is common finding is, in a sense, mirrored in the failure of ALPS to engage with our community of practice at the earlier developmental phases of the

project.

So, it is with regret then that we find ourselves in a situation that service users and carers are being expected to comment upon a pre-formed value base for professional competency. Whilst I accept that many of these values may be similar; to frame 'competency' for service users and carers at too early a stage closes the door an arguably more authentic 'grounded' approach to these issues.

In order to regain lost ground, a joint research bid was developed by the 4 partners in the aforementioned community of practice and titled: 'What matters to US (Users of Services): discovering and applying user and carer perceptions of the requisite skills and attributes of health and care students to enable shared care and decision making'. This has been received positively by the ALPS Research Group (pending a few minor changes to budgeting) and works from a grounded position.

The ALPS Service User and Carer Involvement Working Group is keen to further address urgent matters in taking involvement forward meaningfully in ALPS, such as the issue of adapting assessment methodology to the diverse nature of practice settings to involve service users and carers - which in itself is a far from simple task.

Critical success factors:

- what made activity work well in practice?

Preparation

Networking

Communication

Collaboration

Drawing upon relevant expertise and experience

Outcomes:

- what did you achieve?
- what happened as a result?
- was this what you anticipated?
- what has been the impact of the activity on staff, students, practitioners, service users, carers, others?

This is more a question of what we hopefully will achieve.

Key lessons learnt:

- What have you learned?
- How has this learning been used to inform future developments?

I personally have learnt that I should have asked pertinent questions more forcefully and earlier on. I hope the ALPS project will learn the need for:

- Good preparation and a realistic assessment of the groundwork required to make involvement more than token

- Involvement occurring as early as possible in the developmental cycle(s) of the project
- A 'grounded' approach to consultation.
- Building upon existing expertise and networks (as early as possible in the developmental cycle(s))
- Involvement being made more central to strategic oversight
- Earlier and better awareness of the ALPS project across stakeholders

Please return the case study to Trish Walker (t.e.walker@leeds.ac.uk) by **Tuesday 8 May** in order that they can be circulated prior to the next workshop.

Thank you