

Learning in the Workplace

Welcome to this short overview of Learning in the Workplace.

We've split this overview into a number of elements that will highlight:

- Why you should undertake learning in the workplace and how it impacts person-centred, safe and effective care.
- The different types of learning opportunities in the workplace and practical ways in which you can include learning into your busy day-to-day practice.
- How you can record and evidence your learning so that it can be used for your professional development.

What is Learning in the Workplace?

"I'm too busy trying to get my job done, never mind trying to fit in learning as well."

"I've just completed a whole set of training days - I don't need any more development."

"I prefer to be trained by a qualified practice educator - I don't believe it's possible to really learn anything new when I'm working"

"I'm only recently qualified - no one would listen to any ideas I would have - I need to get a few years under my belt before trying to make any changes."

"I constantly think about what I'm doing - I don't need to write anything down - I just get on with it and show others what I'm doing when I can"

"What's the difference between learning in the workplace, on the job learning and vocational learning - is it just about learning at work and not having to go to College?"

Do any of these statements ring true with you? If they do - then read on!

An important part of being an Effective Practitioner is that you use and value your own day-to-day experiences to help you develop your clinical practice and support your continuing professional development. Formal training has an important part to play as it provides a strong theoretical and practical foundation that you can use, refine and develop within your workplace. However, it is the ongoing reflection on your practice, using for example the learning activities contained in the Effective Practitioner website that will ensure that you keep yourself up-to-date and continue to deliver person-centred, safe and effective care.

There is a popular model of learning called the 70/20/10 formula from Princeton University¹ that incorporates experiential learning. It proposes:

- 70% of learning and development takes place from real-life and on-the-job experiences, tasks and problem solving.
- 20% comes from feedback and from observing good and bad practices and working with role models.
- 10% of learning and development comes from formal training.

Find more work-based learning activities on the effective practitioner website at www.effectivepractitioner.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Effective Practitioner embraces the principles of the 70/20/10 model and the broader term of experiential learning² and recognises that a large majority of what you learn can take place through reflection on your practice, asking for and receiving feedback and using your colleagues as role models.

Learning in the Workplace involves a number of core skills and activities. These include:

- Discussing your practice in an open and trusting way with colleagues and patients/clients.
- Listening to the views of others, particularly your patients/clients and observing what is happening in your environment.
- Reflecting on your own practice to see if, how and where you might improve on the care you are providing and optimising the way in which you work.
- Questioning your own practice and questioning your colleagues so you can learn and develop together.
- Questioning the role of others in the wider multidisciplinary team so you can develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of their role.
- Accessing information to allow you to make more informed decisions on improving your practice.
- Accessing help from others who can guide you in developing your practice.
- Asking for and receiving feedback on your practice and using feedback to focus on specific areas of your practice.
- Giving feedback to your peers and colleagues in a supportive and constructive way.

1: Lombardo, Michael M. and Robert W. Eichinger (1996) *The Career Architect Development Planner*. Lominger Limited, Inc. p. iv. ISBN 0965571211.

2: Itin, C. M. (1999). *Reasserting the Philosophy of Experiential Education as a Vehicle for Change in the 21st Century*. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 22(2), 91-98. Kolb, David A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Why get involved?

There are many good reasons to get actively involved in learning in the workplace:

- **Enhancing Care:** There can be significant learning opportunities through taking part in practice developments e.g. clinical audits, getting involved in working groups to develop in your area of practice; participating in audits/surveys/research and using the findings to improve care; or developing learning materials and clinical policies and procedures within your current workplace.
- **KSF:** Work-based activities can provide valuable evidence as part of your KSF review, as long as you evidence and record your learning.
- **Professional Development:** A record of your work-based learning activities can provide the necessary reassurance to your regulatory body that you are keeping your professional skills up to date.

Learning in the Workplace goes beyond focusing on tasks within your current job - it is about developing your critical thinking and communication skills so that you can optimise what you are doing in your already busy schedule.

It involves:

- critically thinking about the way you work so that you can be more efficient and improve the care that you and your colleagues are providing;
- valuing your own experience and having the confidence to suggest and document changes and contribute to the overall goals of your organisation/team;
- putting changes into practice and monitoring their effects over time so that you can continually learn and improve on what you are doing day-to-day;
- sharing your learning with others so that each member of the team can work together, provide support and benefit from the learning that you have undertaken.

Opportunities to Learn

There are a wide variety of ways in which you can undertake learning in the workplace.

Learning in the Workplace doesn't need a lot of time. Even something as simple as asking how a patient or client feels about the care they are receiving may be valuable work-based learning. It's what you do with this information that is important.

Inside Current Workplace

There are a wide variety of opportunities to learn within your current workplace; this list is not exhaustive. You should explore the range of opportunities available to you with your line manager.

Critical Incident Analysis

A critical incident is an event or incident that has had a significant impact on you, your colleagues or your patients. It is useful to consider why the incident has had an impact on you, alternative actions you might have taken and if you were faced with a similar situation in the future, how you would act.

Feedback from others

It is useful to get feedback from a number of people you work with including colleagues, patients, carers and families. They can give you honest and objective information to help you improve for example the care you provide or your communication skills. In addition, there may be an opportunity to do a more formal 360 feedback where a standard set of questions are completed by your line manager, colleagues, patients/clients or other individuals that you work with.

KSF Reviews and Personal development planning

KSF Reviews and personal development planning can identify your strengths and development gaps. Put a practical plan in place with goals and target dates to address your development gaps for your current role or your career aspirations. You can also share your strengths with others to support the development needs of peers.

Peer Review

Peer review involves you working with colleagues at the same level and evaluating each other's performance in a constructive way.

Practice Development

There can be significant learning opportunities through taking part in clinical audits, getting involved in working groups in your area of practice or developing clinical policies within your current workplace.

Reflection in Practice

Reflection in practice is a process where you take time to reflect on for example a single event or the events over a day to examine what happened, what was good or bad about the experience, what else you could have done, and what you would change or improve in your practice as a result of this learning.

Outside Current Workplace

There are a wide variety of opportunities to learn outside your current workplace; this list is not exhaustive. You should explore the range of opportunities available to you with your line manager.

Action Learning

Action Learning involves a small group of practitioners (the 'set') working together on issues or problems that are real and current in their workplace. Group members will share their problems, with other constructive questioning, challenging assumptions and views and sharing their own experiences. The purpose of the activity is to gain new understanding and actions to address the problem and improve practice and care. Members will give feedback to the group on what actions worked and didn't work. An Action Learning set can be guided by a learning set facilitator or can be group-directed.

Job Shadowing

Job Shadowing helps you to gain useful insights and a greater understanding into other people's jobs by observing their daily practice and asking lots of questions in person. You should set objectives for your job shadowing activities and reflect on what you have learned when you return to your workplace.

Literature Search

A literature search allows you to search the published literature (books, journals, the internet, government policy papers) on a selected research topic. It is important to have a clear understanding of what you are researching and for whom, how far back you want or need to go in your literature search and a search strategy and list of key words when you are using online databases. A good literature search will provide you with a solid evidence-based approach on which to develop your practice.

Secondment Opportunities

A secondment is a temporary transfer to another job typically within your area of practice but outside your current place of work. The secondment will typically be project based, and allow you to share your expertise with others in your new place of work or project.

Visits

Visits to specific clinical or other work-related areas can be valuable as it enables you to observe best practice in another workplace setting. During a site visit you will typically meet with key members of staff in the site, carry out informal interviews and have an opportunity to observe and listen to examples of their best practice or case studies. It may be helpful to have visits that include a number of your team to minimise the impact on the site you are visiting. You will need to negotiate time away from your workplace with your manager, arrange the visit in advance and give feedback on findings when you return to your workplace in order to get maximum benefit from the visit.

Support Roles

Here is a sample of different roles that support learning in the workplace - this list is not exhaustive. Access a full list of support roles http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/589599/glossary_of_titles_-_support_roles.pdf. You should explore the different support roles available within your workplace - you could also act in these roles yourself, thus providing further opportunities to learn and develop in the workplace.

Buddy

Buddying enables you to be supported by either a colleague of equal standing or a more experienced colleague who will work with you on a collaborative basis to help develop your competence in the workplace.

Clinical Supervisor

Clinical Supervision is a formalised system of support and development that is designed to help you improve your practice through a process of self-reflection and problem-solving. It typically involves regular meetings with your supervisor on a one-to-one basis or in group settings.

Mentor

A Mentor is someone who has recognised skills and experience and can provide guidance and support to help you develop your practice. A mentor will typically be selected by you and approved by your line manager. Mentoring is achieved through a process of relationship building between you and your mentor and takes place over a period of time.

Role Model

A Role Model is someone who you believe is a model of best practice and possesses qualities that you would like to have. Learning through role modelling is not just about observing and imitating behaviour. You need to be able to convert what you have observed into practice and get timely and constructive feedback from your role model where possible.

Top Tips

We have compiled a list of tips for Learning in the Workplace and evidencing and recording your Learning in the Workplace.

Top Tips for Learning in the Workplace

There are a number of things you can do to get the most from your learning in the workplace:

- Ensure that you know the goals and core priorities of your team and your role within the team as this will help you focus on your clinical practice and professional development.
- Carry out a self-assessment to identify the areas that you need to focus on.
- Engage with your line manager to get the support you need to undertake learning in the workplace - discuss the range of learning opportunities available to you in the range of learning resources available.
- Visit the [learning activities](#) area of the Effective Practitioner website to select 1 or more learning activities that you can undertake and would benefit your current work.
- Pick a challenging area to focus on, but one that doesn't overwhelm you. Also, pick a learning activity that is outside your current practice area as this will help your professional development.
- Pick a type of work-based learning that suits the challenge, you and your work environment. For example, there is no point in suggesting a secondment activity if your work environment cannot sanction this opportunity.
- If a learning activity requires a discrete piece of work, set yourself a date to complete your learning activity - it's always best to build in goals that you can work towards, rather than keeping them open-ended.
- Share your learning with your colleagues and ask for help when you need it.
- Build in 'quality time' during the day to allow you to think about your practice (ref Flying Start).
- Reflect on the tasks you have completed each day - what has worked well, did you feel uncomfortable about anything during the day - why was that? Was it because of your lack of knowledge or skills or those of your colleagues? Was it related to the attitudes or behaviours of others? What would you do differently the next time it happened? How do you plan to change what you do as a result of this learning and reflection?

Top Tips for Evidencing and Recording Learning

Reflective practice is one of the core elements of Effective Practitioner. Reflection turns both positive and negative experiences into learning. It's important that you record and evidence your learning and reflections in the workplace as this will not only support your practice development but will also provide valuable evidence for your KSF review and your professional development portfolio.

- Your evidence and record of learning should cover all learning you have undertaken - learning within the workplace as well as any formal training or development you have undertaken throughout the year.
- Ask your manager and colleagues for feedback (verbal & written), particularly if you've recently taken on a new area of responsibility or developed new a new skill. Record how you have used this feedback.
- Reflect on a learning activity as soon after the event as possible. Very often we evidence and reflect on activities only when we are asked to provide evidence for a review interview or an audit of the portfolio. It's best to reflect, record and evidence when the event is fresh in your memory. You may wish to follow-up an initial reflection with a further review after a period of time to allow for a deeper, more objective reflection, particularly for those events or incidents which you found emotionally challenging.
- Don't just focus on the number of hours completed on the learning activity - focus on the issue that you worked on and how you have improved your practice as a result. This 'output' based approach is a more valuable way in which to record your learning in the workplace.
- Select the most appropriate methods to record your learning - this might be a paper-based form or an ePortfolio. Select a recording tool and be consistent in its use - you need to keep a record of learning over time that can be easily collated and submitted as part of a review meeting or as evidence for an audit by your Regulator.

Click <http://www.effectivepractitioner.nes.scot.nhs.uk/learning-and-development/recording-learning-and-development.aspx> to access a range of tools that you could use to record your learning.

Click <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pesl/themes/placement/portfolx635/> for a short video on the benefits of maintaining an ePortfolio.

- Periodically look back at your evidence collectively and record key strengths, your areas for development, what opportunities would be most beneficial - a bit like a map charting your critical learning situations.
- Include evidence from as many sources as possible - it is not just about certificates. Other useful pieces of evidence could be a client testimonial, a patient story, results of a clinical audit or a policy document you worked on (cognisant of confidentiality constraints) or metrics on how an action you have taken has optimised a workflow within the team.

Next Steps

As a next step why don't you:

- Carry out a [self-assessment](http://www.effectivepractitioner.nes.scot.nhs.uk/practitioners/self-assessment.aspx) - <http://www.effectivepractitioner.nes.scot.nhs.uk/practitioners/self-assessment.aspx> to identify your strengths and development gaps.
- Select one or more learning activities to help you develop your practice. Don't just concentrate on activities related to your current job role. Pick at least one activity that challenges you outside your current work activities. This will support your long term professional development.
- Speak with your line manager so that he/she is aware of your interest in developing your practice and get the support you need to undertake learning activities.
- Reflect, evidence and record how the learning activities have improved your practice over time. Use the reflection tools to record your learning so that you can build your portfolio of evidence over time - and have it on hand when you need it for your KSF review, your PDP plan or revalidation with your Regulator.
- Revisit the learning activities and pick another 3 learning activities to focus on.
- Share, share, share your learning with others as this will enable a wide network of colleagues to benefit from your learning activities.