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# INVOLVING ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE PRE-REGISTRATION EDUCATION OF NURSING & SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS



**A service evaluation of 'Partners in Learning' involvement in the BSc (Hons) Applied Nursing (Learning Disability) & Generic Social Work, Sheffield Hallam University (2016)**

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## INTRODUCTION

- The needs of people with learning disabilities are not sufficiently met (Department of Health, 2014). To reduce inequalities, people with learning disabilities must be involved in pre-registration education of nurses & social workers (Health and Care Professions Council, 2014, Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2010).
- Partners in Learning' is a group of people with learning disabilities involved in the 'BSc (Hons) Applied Nursing (Learning Disability) & Generic Social Work' (ANSW) in the Faculty of Health & Wellbeing at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). In-house policy (SHU, 2014) provided a framework against which Partners in Learning's activity could be evaluated.

## METHODOLOGY

**AIM** An evaluation of 'Partners in Learning' contribution to the BSc ANSW at SHU in relation to the service user involvement principles outlined in Experts by Experiences (SHU, 2014).

**OBJECTIVES** From a range of stakeholder perspectives, to appraise the extent to which service user involvement principles (SHU, 2014) are achieved by Partners in Learning's involvement in the BSc ANSW at SHU. This requires the researcher to assess:

1. whether a clear reason for Partners in Learning engagement is documented & adhered to.
2. the appropriateness of Partners in Learning's ANSW input.
3. to what extent partnership working exists.
4. to what extent 'Partners in Learning's contribution is rewarded.
5. to what extent 'Partners in Learning' influence practice.
6. to what extent barriers to 'Partners in Learning' involvement are identified & overcome.

**DESIGN & METHODS** A cross-sectional design utilising a pragmatic approach with qualitative methods: (1) focus group with members of Partners in Learning, (2) focus group with ANSW students, (3) semi-structured interviews with ANSW academics & senior faculty employee.

### SAMPLING & RECRUITMENT

Purposive sampling identified 'Partners in Learning' stakeholders. 10 people participated: 5 members of Partners in Learning, 2 ANSW students, 2 ANSW academics, 1 senior faculty employee.

### DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Data was audio recorded & transcribed. Transcripts were coded iteratively, & codes matched to six service evaluation objectives. Overarching themes for each objectives were formed & evaluated.

## RESULTS

**1. Service user involvement rationale is documented (SHU, 2014) but some stakeholders are unaware of this** "There will be in-house documents. I know there will be a raft of things that we should or shouldn't do - but have I read them? No. I would hope that my professional codes and ethics would match those documents" (ANSW Academic).

**2. Partners in Learning input is appropriate despite involvement ranging from minor to significant** "Formally accessing students work is the hardest thing for service users to be involved in" (Senior faculty employee).

**3. Partnership working is evident when Partners in Learning's involvement is significant** "We [Partners in Learning] all have a say together. We're all a team... Us and X [ANSW Academic] because we share ideas. She respects us for what we do. I know because how she acts around us, how she treats us" (Member of Partners in Learning).

**4. Partners in Learning input is valued; however, rewards are insufficient** "The way that we pay people makes it very difficult for people to be part of that. People need passports & driving licenses, or three months' bills to bring in. All those things are very difficult when you're working with a group of people with learning disabilities" (ANSW academic).

**5. ANSW stakeholders benefit from Partners in Learning, but the impact on ANSW students post-registration is unknown** "Partners in Learning helped me understand that people should not be defined by their LD because their lives extend beyond that... I now hang back to the point where you see what they can do & what their life is. You can't go rushing in, saying, "You need..." (ANSW student)

**6. Insufficient time presents as Partners in Learning barrier, & initiatives to address this are inadequate** "There's a lot of work that we still do that's not given formal hours" (ANSW academic).

- ▶ Partners in Learning facilitates SHU's service user involvement duty (HCPC, 2014, NMC, 2010). Given the existence of barriers Partners in Learning overall input is satisfactory.
- ▶ Nevertheless, scope to develop Partners in Learning's ANSW input exists.
- ▶ 7 recommendations are therefore made.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All ANSW Partners in Learning stakeholders to be made aware of relevant regulatory requirements (HCPC, 2014, NMC, 2010) & relevant in-house documents (SHU, 2014).
2. Develop an outreach plan to broaden Partners in Learning's membership.
3. Explore Partners in Learning's suggestion of a £10/15 payment per Partners in Learning teaching session.
4. Consider the use of certificates, external awards & access to SHU services / facilities as non-financial Partners in Learning rewards.
5. Consider the usefulness of evaluating the impact of Partners in Learning input on ANSW graduates' professional practice.
6. In light of the potential to reduce faculty staff & service-user meetings from four days per annum to two half-day events, anticipate & evaluate the impact this has on Partners in Learning stakeholders.
7. Consult faculty employees with service user involvement remit on the updated work allocation scheme proposal to discuss whether sufficient time for service user involvement duties will be allocated.

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