



HCSW Mentoring workshop, 2024

Background and Aim

In 2016 the Welsh Government established the HCSW Career Framework with the aim of ensuring all HCSW's across the nation were trained in a standardised, accredited way, with clear career progression routes. PHW deliver health screening for Wales and were employed to scope, design, and deliver high-quality, accredited workplace learning programmes for Screening HCSWs, which has been an **ongoing project since 2018**, across the following screening programmes:



- ✓ Diabetic Eye Screening Wales
- ✓ Breast Test Wales
- ✓ Newborn Hearing Screening Wales
- ✓ Bowel Screening Wales
- ✓ Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening
- ✓ Bowel Screening Wales

This supports the PHW Screening Division Equity Strategy 2022-2025 (2) in its commitment to improve health outcomes through screening by considering inequities that can occur at any point along the screening pathway.

Results

By **equipping HCSWs with enhanced skills and knowledge**, the training facilitates **improvements in health screening uptake** and therefore early intervention, thereby supporting efforts to reduce health inequalities across Wales.

Example: Diabetic Eye Screening Wales HCSW's study 'Diabetes and it's Complications'. This has given staff a deeper understanding of both causes and wider health implications of having diabetes. In turn they offer a more empathetic service when understanding why participants may fail to attend screening appointments, or the health issues they may be experiencing.

The Role of Workplace Learning in Reducing Health Inequities in Health Screening in Wales

A Newborn Hearing Screening Test

Introduction

Health inequities in Wales significantly affect the uptake and outcomes of health screening services (2). Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions, including the delivery of workplace learning to the Public Health Wales (PHW), Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) who deliver screening across Wales. This ongoing project uses accredited, workplace learning, to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of HCSWs, with the aim of ultimately improving health screening uptake, reducing health inequities, and outcomes, as a result of early diagnosis and intervention.

Methods

A focus on **access to equitable learning environments** is paramount, utilising diverse delivery and assessment methods such as:

- Observation
- Competence-based assessment
- Professional discussions
- 1:1 support
- Allocated assessor/mentor

With an emphasis on **addressing the diverse needs of the Welsh population**, training content encompasses:

- **Person-centred care**, including informed choice and consent.
- Principles of health Screening, including **understanding the reasons participants do not attend for screening**, ranging from cultural awareness to deprivation, age, gender and geographical location.

- Responsibilities of the HCSW role in supporting participants, promoting health and well-being.
- Delivering an accessible screening programme.
- Inclusivity, equality and diversity and **an awareness of the challenges faced by others**.
- Safeguarding to support all participants.
- Communication skills to enable HCSW to **overcome barriers to communication** with participants.

Achievements and Results

From Jan 2018 - Dec 2024 the following whole qualifications, across a range of health screening related subject areas, have been achieved by PHW HCSW Screening staff:

Level 2 Clinical Inductions - 89
Level 3 Diplomas - 189

Level 3 Certificates - 2
Level 4 Diplomas - 63

The workplace learning programmes contribute to **building a well-informed and inclusive HCSW workforce**, fostering awareness of health inequities and strategies to increase screening uptake. HCSW adult learners report **increased confidence and knowledge to deliver health screening services tailored to the population's diverse needs** (1). The projects emphasis on inclusivity and flexibility ensures accessibility for all learners, addressing potential barriers to participation in learning and development.

By investing in the PHW HCSW staff we aim to **increase staff morale**, reduce staff turnover and **retain knowledgeable and experienced staff** able to **deliver a quality screening service**. Of the minority who have chosen to leave the organisation, accredited learning has given them a **springboard to impact health services** more broadly:

3 HCSW learners have gone on to secure places on BSc Radiography, 3 to BSc Nursing, 2 have become work-based learning assessors, 1 has joined the prison service as a family liaison officer.

Conclusion

- ✓ Workplace learning for Screening HCSWs in Wales plays a supportive role in reducing health inequities in health screening. High-quality, inclusive, and equitable learning environments, combined with accredited training programmes, effectively enhance workforce capacity and capability to address disparities. This approach underscores the importance of investing in workplace learning to create sustainable, long-term improvements in population health outcomes. Evaluation (1) following initial deliveries has informed further improvement such as additional knowledge to be delivered. It has also illustrated the need for continuing CPD in order for HCSW's to maintain knowledge and current practice competence.