

Taking the mystery out of assessments

Assessments are done by a number of people who work in health or social care. A day each month is put in the diary and people make time to call in if they can for as long as they can on the day to assist with assessments.

Assessors do not claim extraordinary expertise; they are simply passionate about promoting a positive experience of dignity for people having a health or social care service.

Once applications arrive in our in-box they are logged and placed in an individual folder. Following assessments, passed applications are emailed to a range of key contacts, who together will have knowledge of each service making the application. Each application is printed off for the next assessment session. The e-mail asks if there is any reason why the application should not be assessed.

We do this for the obvious reason that we want the Campaign to build a strong reputation – the nightmare situation would be a CQC inspector arriving to close down a service whilst a member of staff is meanwhile busy putting up their new dignity award certificate on the wall!

We have had occasional concerns raised from these standard e-mails and yes we have deferred applications until the service is on a sound footing - 'deferred' rather than 'refused'. We want everyone involved in the Campaign, but only if the time is right for the service.

Option 1 applications are read by two people. They are looking for sufficient evidence for each of the three bullet points which accompany each standard. They have in front of them the same guidance as is on the dignity website. This offers them a reminder of the sort of evidence we have agreed we want to see. The fourth bullet point is the same each time; asking if on reflection the team applying thinks they could do better and if so to note down what they will do.

A third assessor looks over the assessment for gaps and gives an opinion if assessor 1 and assessor 2 have a differing view. The team applying is asked to address any standard assessed as less than fully by any of the assessors. There is nice feeling in the room when an application presents a picture of a service which clearly understands how to offer dignity and the application sails through with flying colours...

Option 1 re-submissions or renewals are read by one person.

Option 2 applications are read by two people. We have just revised the layout of the Option 2 format in the light of experience.

Option 1 – a desk top assessment of evidence of actions and developments since achievement of the bronze award.

For Options 2, two assessors are asked to read and see if there is enough evidence indicated to make the application ready for a site visit. As they go through they both think of the things they would like to understand better during a site visit and make/ share notes. If ready one (usually just one) of the assessors sets up a bespoke visit with the team applying.

Once the visit is done a report is sent back to the team applying. The number of teams applying successfully is growing and they are featured on the dignity website.

The dignity campaign would not be possible without the work of busy colleagues who volunteer their time. The presence of both health and social care staff at assessment sessions is reminder that the Campaign is very much a joint effort.

The website does also refer to a withdrawal policy if a service raises concerns and yes also we have withdrawn dignity awards. At the time of writing lots of services have their award withdrawn.

An Adult Care Contracts Manager has recently visited a service which previously had their dignity award withdrawn and later reinstated. The verdict on the service now is 'fabulous'. It is so good to hear of such progress.