

## CASE STUDY: CHOOSING CHILDREN'S NURSING: AN ONLINE SCREENING TOOL

### Project background

- Online Situational Judgement Test (SJT).
- Designed for use early on in a recruitment process to select the most appropriate applicants and reduce the numbers taken forward to later, more resource intensive selection processes (for example, interview).
- Presents applicants with a series of nine children's nurse-related scenarios and asks them to consider and rank five possible courses of action for each.
- Designed by MENDAS (a firm of business psychologists) in collaboration with London South Bank University (LSBU), Great Ormond Street Hospital and Children's nurses from around the country for use when recruiting students for Children's Nursing Programmes.
- Specifically designed to be relevant for applicants for Children's Nursing Programmes (i.e. not reliant on technical, clinical or procedural knowledge).

### Project aims

- Ensure only the highest calibre potential nurses are recruited.
- Educate potential applicants about what it means to be a children's nurse and raise awareness of the sorts of situations they might face.
- Help manage applicant numbers.
- Reduce resource required during later recruitment processes.

### Process

#### 4 Stage process:

Stage 1: Understanding what makes a good Children's Nurse

Stage 2: Developing content and scoring

Stage 3: Pilot and analysis

Stage 4: Implementation and evaluation

### **Stage 1: Understanding what makes a good Children's Nurse**

- Profile of an effective Children's nurse generated.
- Based on conversations with a variety of children's nurses, including those educating students and managing new recruits.

### **Stage 2: Developing content and scoring**

- Psychologists at MENDAS worked with 'Expert' Children's Nurses from around the country.
- 'Experts' must have experience of working with students or newly qualified children's nurses.
- Series of realistic and relevant scenarios generated.
- A series of five possible ways of responding also generated for each scenario.
- Experts agreed the 'ideal' ranking of these responses.
- Important to check that scenarios were appropriate for those without clinical experience. Input from students and newly qualified children's nurses.

### **Stage 3: Pilot and analysis**

- Tool implemented as part of recruitment of children's nurse students at LSBU.
- 325 applicants completed before attending interview (but results not used to inform decisions).
- Results allowed identification of the extent to which performance on the tool relates to performance at other stages and eventual selection decisions.
- Check that the tool does not adversely discriminate against any demographic group.
- Feedback from applicants was gathered.
- Performance on Choosing Children's Nursing significantly correlates with performance at interview and is associated with eventual selection outcome.
- Results in less discrimination against minority groups than current selection methods.
- Favourable feedback from applicants (96% agree the tool is engaging).
- Tool can be used to reduce applicant numbers by up to 20%.
- Very few objections or queries from applicants.

Comments from applicants:

*“I think that this test is a good idea as it gives the opportunity to think of scenarios which may arise as a child nurse.”*

*“I think the questions asked have given me a real insight into the possible scenarios I may one day face as a student.”*

*“The test was an insight of how the profession involves us in dealing with both parents and the children during both in profession and when not in work. These small decisions make a big difference and help to build up further confidence.”*

*“The scenarios were very realistic and engaging which helped to prepare for some of the situations you may be faced with while on the wards during the duration of the course.”*

#### **Stage 4: Implementation and Evaluation**

Implement as part of selection process at LSBU:

- continue to monitor performance including applicant feedback and demographic data; and
- positive impact on student performance to date.

Longitudinal analysis – tracing pilot participants, examining relationship between scores on tool and:

- offer-to-acceptance conversion rates;
- retention;
- academic/practical performance; and
- successful placements into role.

Following evaluation of the data the scenarios were changed. The scenarios are now hypothetical, i.e. ‘as a student nurse’ rather than the everyday situations which were previously used.

#### **Key challenges**

- Needed a tool applicable to Children’s Nursing, rather than Adult Nursing, generic nursing, one NHS Trust specific or London-centric.
- Ensuring the process of SJT had a good fit with the UCAS application process.
- Efficient communication of data between the MENDAS team and the Admissions team in the university.
- Ensuring the student data was captured on the student record.
- There is a discussion to be had around whether it is fair to test student values at this age and whether their values are fixed at this age.

- Applicants were sent a link to complete the tool. It is not possible to verify that they received this link unless they contact the university to say that they haven't. Similarly if applicants are unable to complete the test for whatever reason, unless they contact us it is not possible to track.
- The two tests now in place have different scores to 'pass' as identified by MENDAS. LSBU has implemented a higher score to invite to interview (same for both tests) as a result of experiences last year. This has resulted in a larger number than predicted failing the MENDAS test, and particularly from those taking the 'lower scoring' test.

## Impact

- Currently being used as part of selection process at LSBU. It is reducing applicant numbers by 20% and this is being monitored.
- Annually, approximately 1500 applicants are completing the tool.
- Performance continues to be monitored including applicant feedback and demographic data.
- Emerging trends being monitored from September 2014.

## Example materials

The university now has two tests that are in use with candidates.

Example scenario;

"A couple of weeks ago, Michelle, one of the parents you have been working with for a few months requested to be your friend on a social networking site. You accepted the invitation because you get on very well with her, and because you think she's feeling quite lonely. A colleague has now complained to you because a photo of her on a night out has now been seen by Michelle. Your colleague also mentioned that you may be breaking hospital policy. What would you do?"

Example courses of action;

- a) Tell your colleague you're sorry that you've upset her but that she shouldn't worry as everybody's doing it
- b) Immediately and permanently block Michelle from your page, so she can no longer access information about you
- c) Immediately speak to your ward manager to explain the situation and to ask for advice

There are new scenarios as a result of the re-convened focus groups which include a variety of ages, ethnicity and gender which were not monitored in the first focus groups.

## Next steps and sustainability

- Project explored the potential for London-wide implementation for Children's nursing.
- Pilot for Adult Nursing.
- Pilot for Mental Health Nursing.
- Future potential for use in recruiting other staff groups to support values based recruitment.
- Course team plan to evaluate if VBR is the most effective tool to measure behaviours or values, to ascertain exclusion groups (if any) and to evaluate whether filtering is appropriate.

### Key Tips

- Keep communications open, for example, ensuring that the Admissions team of the university are fully updated with the project.
- Continually analyse data to examine if the tool appropriately excludes applicants without the values for the profession.

**This case study has been produced by London South Bank University, for further information please contact:**

Karen Chandler  
Principal Lecturer, Children's Nursing  
[Chandlek@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:Chandlek@lsbu.ac.uk)

Or please see the London South Bank University [website](#).