CASE STUDY: RECRUITING FOR VALUES

Project background

The University of Worcester has been using values based recruitment since 2009. In 2013, the process was explicitly mapped on to the 6Cs to meet the requirements of the Compassion in Practice document (DH, 2012) to ensure that we have the right staff with the right skills in the right place. The 6Cs were chosen as the criteria for selection as they are now embedded within the curriculum as well as clearly reflecting the values identified in the NHS Constitution (DH, 2013). An innovative recruitment strategy was designed drawing from medical Selection Centres (Plint & Patterson, 2010) and nursing Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs; Perkins, Burton, Dray & Elcock, 2013). These two ideas were incorporated to produce a strategy that aims to recruit for values into our pre-registration Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing.

Project aims

The strategy aims to make explicit within the selection framework that the necessary values and behaviours are measured effectively. It was also important to ensure that the University of Worcester met the NMC requirements with regard to literacy and numeracy. This selection process forms part of a longitudinal study being conducted to assess the effectiveness of this strategy over a four year period. Students successfully recruited into the September, 2014 cohort will be invited to take part in the four year study which will map their progress academically and clinically. This information will be utilized to assess their professional values and attitudes as well as their resilience.

Process

The recruitment strategy was designed following workshops to explore the development of the values based MMIs. These workshops were attended by the university's service user and carer team, clinicians from a range of settings, practice facilitators, members of academic staff and current students. The MMIs were designed and mapped against the 6 Cs and the NHS Constitution values to form the framework for assessment following ideas generated from these collaborative workshops. This was then piloted using current students, clinicians, service user and carers and academic staff before being launched in November, 2013.

The selection process has five stations lasting between five and twenty minutes with each addressing three of the 6 Cs from Compassion in Practice (DH, 2012). There is a mix of written and interactive stations. The written stations include reasoning and responding to ethical scenarios and numeracy. The interactive stations are a group work exercise where the candidate is asked to act as an advocate, an individual interview and a patient interaction with a service user. Service users and assessors are involved in the assessment process. Once a candidate has completed all six stations the mean score on each of the 6 Cs is calculated. Should any equality and diversity 'red flags' be identified then applicants would be not be considered for the programme. All candidates and assessors have been given the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the process. There is a formal evaluation being undertaken following use of the strategy for one UCAS cycle. This evaluation will form the first part of the longitudinal study.

Key challenges

Validity of the process is in the initial stages of evaluation, with positive correlations with a measure of candidate emotional intelligence. Further evaluation of validity and reliability of the scoring system in terms subjectivity of the mean scoring is being considered, which will be a lengthy process requiring expertise and longitudinal research. Timetabling can be complex, particularly when large numbers of candidates attend. A timetable for 24-28 candidates runs smoothly. When numbers increase to 32, it becomes more challenging. However strategies to deal with this are being considered. Sample timetables might be something useful to share. From a practical point of view, rooming the different exercises has posed a challenge within a busy university. The aim is to provide candidates with a smooth experience and as such rooms need to be close together. Often the only practical option has been to use dividers within large rooms, but this poses the problem of confidentiality as candidates can hear each other between exercises. We are sharing our experiences with colleagues from other disciplines who are interested in adopting the strategy and we are considering developing a bank of generic resources.

Impact

Initial feedback indicates that candidates, service users and assessors viewed the MMI values based process as a fair and beneficial tool for selection. The process has been evaluated by 466 candidates, with 98% reporting perceptions of a fair and positive experience. This evaluation will be presented at the NET conference in Cambridge, September 2014.

Examples of materials

We are completely open to sharing materials with universities on request, and are suggesting that in the first instance a visit to see the process in action would be a useful starting point.

Next steps and sustainability

The multi method VBR process has the potential to transform the recruitment process for health care professionals throughout the United Kingdom and could prove extremely important in addressing the matter of compassionate care in nursing. Longitudinal studies planned will focus on the success of each candidate recruited for values and provide reliable data regarding the predictive validity of this method. Compassionate and competent

practitioners are fundamental to high quality healthcare. If this method facilitates the recruitment of appropriate individuals, the benefits to practice will be considerable. Work with partner trusts will be needed to ensure that these students progress into supportive working environments with congruent leadership in practice.

Key Tips

- Use a rigorous design process. The key design stages which we have used and would recommend are:

    1. Identification of criteria for selection (we have used 6Cs, but competency framework could be an alternative).
    2. Development workshop to design stations to assess the criteria, including a range of stakeholder perspectives (service user input has been invaluable).
    3. Production of documentation to standardize instructions for and assessment of each station, plus to support the running of the MMI overall.
    4. Pilot with current students, amending documentation as appropriate.
    5. Plan selection days including booking of rooms, assessors and service users.
    6. Training for assessors and service users.
    7. Run selection days for one UCAS cycle.
    8. Evaluate and review. The HEE VBR literature review provides excellent guidance when planning evaluations.

- Identify someone to act as an administrator for the process. Admin tasks are essential to the smooth running of what is a complex timetable. Tasks for the person would include: inviting candidates and assessors to selection days, room bookings, production of paperwork, collation of paperwork following the selection day, communication of outcomes and feedback to candidates.

This case study has been produced by the University of Worcester, for further information please contact:

Helen Jones
Senior Lecturer and Admissions Tutor Pre registration nursing
h.jones@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Helen Scott
Senior lecturer in Occupational Psychology
h.scott@worc.ac.uk