

Danos-based HR management and development

David Jackson, DAT joint commissioning manager, explains how the partnership is using the Drugs and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS) to recruit, develop and retain the people to tackle substance misuse in Middlesbrough.

In Middlesbrough, the joint commissioning group is determined to ensure it recruits, trains and retains a competent workforce to help substance misusers address their problems, both now and in the future.

Training needs analysis

In order to have a full picture of the capacity and competence of the workforce – and their training needs – we commissioned a detailed and ongoing audit of our people, their jobs, their strengths and learning needs.

In September 2004, substance misuse workers and their managers from all services in the Middlesbrough area attended half-day workshops at which they used the Performer software to develop their role profiles (the set of DANOS and other National Occupational Standards relevant to their roles), identified priority units and assessed themselves against these.

Participants used an online questionnaire to identify their role profile. The role profiles clearly identified both the common competencies and the distinctive specialisms of the different groups of workers involved – administrators, CARATS workers, counsellors, nurses, project workers, service managers, social workers, strategic managers, team leaders and young persons' workers.

When they were happy that their role profile described their job, participants prioritised up to four units and assessed their own knowledge, skills and performance against these units. This revealed many strengths, particularly in specialist substance misuse areas, but also development needs for some workers in the areas of:

- working with children, young people and families
- a structured approach to personal and professional development and supervision
- competence in substance misuse awareness training

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- helping develop the competence and managing the performance of team members.

We have been able to commission training programmes over the next 12 months to meet these common development needs.

Training provision

In parallel with the training needs analysis, Middlesbrough DAT carried out an audit of both in-house and external training provision in the area.

Training managers and training providers attended a workshop to help them map their current training provision to DANOS and other relevant National Occupational Standards and enter this on Performer's learning resources database. As they develop new courses, they are encouraged to map these to NOS and enter them onto the database, ensuring continuous provision of training that meets both national standards and local needs.

Now, whenever an individual member of

staff recognises they have a learning need, they can use the software to help them find an appropriate training course or learning opportunity, either within their own organisation or within the local area, which will allow them develop their knowledge, skills and competence in line with the DANOS standards.

Continuing development

All substance misuse staff now have a live portfolio on Performer which they can use to monitor and continuously develop their knowledge, skills and competence in line with their changing needs. Line managers have been trained how to use the software to understand their teams' strengths and weaknesses, recruit people with the necessary knowledge and skills, agree developmental objectives with individuals and support people's development through learning activities, coaching and supervision. With the arrival of the new DANOS-based NVQs and cluster awards, we will soon be in the position to offer national recognition for people's learning and development.

Our plans for 2005 include working with outside agencies to recruit new people with skills and experience from complementary sectors, and provide them with an induction package tailored to their needs. At the same time we will support existing staff and volunteers to develop their careers through a better understanding of, and preparation for, new positions for which they would like to apply.

Mainstreaming our work

Middlesbrough DAT intends to put DANOS at the heart of its human resource strategy over the next two years. DANOS has allowed us, for the first time, to have an overview of the capacity and competence of the workforce in the area. We want to increase this capacity by working with mainstream employment organisations to recruit people with the appropriate abilities, develop their competence to meet the national standards, help them attain nationally-recognised qualifications and retain them in the sector by offering them career opportunities and transferable skills.

The joint commissioning group recognises, however, that we cannot do this alone. During 2005 we will be getting all those working with children and young people – Connexions personal advisers, pupil referral unit workers, school nurses, educational psychologists, mentors and many others – engaged with DANOS, and training them to help young people tackle their drug and alcohol problems at an early age.

Next month: Positive Futures Workforce Quality Initiative – using sport as an antidote to drugs and crime