

NBHSW

**Accredited
Learning
Programme**

Project Report

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1. Introduction

In February 2007, Newborn Hearing Screening Wales (NBHSW) began a project funded by the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) to develop a formally accredited programme of learning for NBHSW screeners with future potential for career-pathway development (Appendix 1).

The aims of the project were

- To provide the screeners with a nationally accredited qualification that would allow them to supplement to achieve a higher grade position and/or entrance to a Higher Education Institute (HEI).
- To increase retention rate of screeners
- To introduce an enhanced screener role which would relieve the time pressures on more senior staff
- To consolidate and define the current training provision of the programme in order to formally accredit it.

2. Background

As a new programme NBHSW is committed to developing a sustainable training strategy which complements the strategic needs of the service and promotes the personal and professional development of its staff. Accredited work-based learning creates opportunities for staff development within the service and contributes to improved retention and is a key aspect for programme delivery.

The main burden of training falls to the Divisional Coordinators and Programme Managers. The training is time intensive and does not offer screeners accreditation for their learning. Staff turnover in the first few years of the Programme and the need to appoint staff on temporary contracts to cover Maternity Leave and Long Term Sick leave have meant that, on average, staff have been training 8 new screeners a year. This training and recruitment of new staff is a drain on financial and time resources and divert effort away from service development and day-to-day operational issues. In 2006 NBHSW successfully gained funding from NLIAH to fund an Accredited Learning Project to examine the options available to the service in terms of the development of an accredited learning package and the feasibility of introducing a Senior Screener role.

A project team was formed and comprised Dr Sally Minchom, Associate Director NBHSW, Dr Meg Shepherd, Divisional Coordinator North Wales NBHSW, Alison Dorras, Head of Administration and Annette Dimond, Programme Manager for Mid and South Wales. Dr Meg Shepherd was seconded for a session a week to manage the project and a locum DC, Dr Julie Maloney, was seconded to cover Dr Shepherd's Divisional Coordinator duties for this session.

A Project Worker was appointed in January 2007 to evaluate the current training provision and develop the most appropriate learning programme for

the service. The programme would be designed around the existing screener training and the redesign and development of the screener role.

3. Review of Qualification Options

In April 2007 the Project team were presented with an initial report which summarised the current training provision, presented seven options for the development of the Accredited Learning Programme (ALP) and indicated how the current training would fit into the new ALP.

The seven options suggested were

1. A Foundation Degree
2. BTEC National
3. NVQ
4. Customised Open College Network Qualification
5. City and Guilds
6. Certificate of Higher Education
7. BTEC National + NVQ

Options 1 and 6 were considered pitched at an inappropriately high level and were discarded. Options 3, 4, and 5 were at the required level but did not attract UCAS points. As a consequence, the completion of any of these options would not be considered appropriate pre-requisite qualifications for entry onto a degree programme. The BTEC National was judged as being at the appropriate educational level but whilst it supported the theory it lacked the vocational competencies required of the post.

The most suitable option selected was option 7, the BTEC National + NVQ. In order to ensure that this qualification would meet the necessary criteria, consultations were sought with Skills for Health, Edexcel and a selection of local universities to ensure that the proposed qualification was acceptable. These consultations confirmed that in order to deliver a relevant, recognised, accredited qualification there must be a vocational and theory aspect to the proposed qualification.

Option 7 was judged to be the most cost effective and the easiest to administer with regards to assessment and verification. It provided the screeners with a competence based qualification for the screen and a theory based qualification for all underpinning information required.

4. Review and Rationale for BTEC National + NVQ

The BTEC National is available in three sizes and each qualification is achieved by studying units amounting to 360, 720 and 1080 credits. This qualification is extremely popular and the largest size qualification is offered in colleges nationwide. The BTEC National, being an established and nationally recognised qualification, also attracted University Clearing Administration System (UCAS) points which would enable screeners at a later date to gain entry to a variety of university Degree programmes, should they choose. It was envisaged that this in conjunction with a determined progression route

through NBHSW would help to increase the retention rate of screeners in post.

A programme meeting was held in August to look at the BTEC + NVQ option in depth. Time was rationalised on a per week basis and it was agreed that this extra time commitment would not be possible under current conditions. It was felt that there were not sufficient time or resources within the programme to implement it in its entirety and a consensus was reached that a more workable arrangement would be to combine the NVQ with 3 BTEC Units (rather than the six required to achieve the BTEC award). Screeners would then be able, in their own time, to go on to complete the award and to progress from there to the Certificate and Diploma level, again in their own time.

5. Teaching and Learning Resources

The BTEC National is an established qualification which has recently undergone a considerable revision with a re-launch in September 2007. There is a wide variety of teaching, learning and assessment resources which can be purchased to reduce the time spent writing resources. Edexcel, the awarding body for BTEC, also provide a range of comprehensive teaching and assessment notes to accompany the qualification and offer a support service for the recently re-launched qualification.

Several books are recommended by the awarding body, the project eventually purchased 1 textbook per division and 1 per internal verifier. The book selected was Health and Social Care Book 1 – Editors Beryl Stretch and Mary Whitehouse (Heinemann; ISBN 978-0-435499-15-0). The project also purchased an e-learning resource, entitled ePresentations for Health and Social Care by the same publishers which covers the first three units of the BTEC. This e-resource was loaded onto the nbhswscreener server to be used by the screeners to underpin the theory and exercises provided as part of the learning process during the pilot study.

Supplemental notes, exercises, PowerPoint presentations and final assessment material were collated from a wide variety of sources to ensure that all criteria were adequately covered.

A large proportion of the material was specifically written for the ALP by the Project Worker. The supplemental notes, exercises and parts of the end-of unit assignment which are particularly focused on NBHSW were designed to match the requirements of statutory and mandatory training and the initial training.

The project worker liaised with trainers who deliver the statutory and mandatory training for the trust to assess the possibility of ensuring a parity of provision for all NBHSW training sessions.

Currently there is a diversity of procedure for statutory and mandatory training. North Wales use the divisional training days to ensure that all staff are up to date with this training, Mid and West use a mixture of individual trust training days and divisional training days and South Wales use mainly individual trust training days supplemented by Divisional Training days. In order to ensure an equality of opportunity the delivery of statutory and mandatory training must be standardised across all three divisions to ensure that each screener has the same information and support for each subject. It must also be ensured that each subject is delivered by the same trainer to ensure equitable provision.

Teaching resources from further education colleges were also made available to the Project Worker for use and adaptation for the programme. All these resources were generalised to the health and social care environment and were amended to make them more specific for NBHSW protocols and procedures. A wide variety of learning activities were employed to ensure variety and maintain interest.

All resources are stored in hard copy form Cathedral Road and in electronic form on the NBHSW server in a folder marked Accredited Learning. Within this folder are three folders; each one labelled with the name and unit number. Subfolders were then formed by dividing the work into sessions. These sessions were divided by topic. Each subfolder contains theory, exercises and assessment pertinent to one topic or subject area.

A study guide was written to accompany each folder which explains to each candidate what is required for that session and lists the activities in the order they must be completed, the study guide also maps the end of unit assessment criteria to help candidates to track their own progress through the unit.

It is anticipated that for roll out of the programme these folders will be transferred to the nbhswscreener server to allow screeners to access as necessary.

6. Development of a Curriculum

In order to ensure that the theory included in the qualification was relevant to the job, an in-depth study of all the statutory and mandatory training was undertaken and mapped to topics covered within the 3 selected units of the BTEC. Shortfalls in the theory were highlighted and resources written to underpin the training sessions to aid completion of assessments. In order to evaluate the materials and workbooks which have been developed as part of the ALP, but also look at the practical issues involved in setting up a QA infrastructure which would meet the requirements for accreditation, Divisional Coordinators and Programme Managers decided a pilot should be undertaken. The pilot took place in November and December 2007 using volunteers from established screeners over the three divisions.

To achieve a minimum ability spread it was calculated that the pilot would require two screeners to work on each session of Units 2 and 3. The pilot was carried out over three weeks with three screeners per week. Each screener had a dedicated mentor to contact and was allocated four hours to complete the work. The Internal Moderation system which underlies the Quality Assurance system was also piloted by the three mentors to ensure parity of marking and feedback forms for screener's work were constructed. Feedback forms were also constructed to allow the mentor and internal verifiers to comment on the individual's work. Feedback from the volunteers was also encouraged and to this end a feedback sheet was sent to each volunteer to ask for feedback on the work carried out in each session and a telephone interview was carried out with two screeners.

An experienced tutor of BTEC was asked to act as an external verifier to oversee the marking and standardisation of the volunteers' work to ensure that unit criteria were met sufficiently.

Overall the pilot was an excellent proving ground for all materials written. Because two screeners worked on the same session, mentors were able to acquire in-depth feedback on materials produced.

The findings of the pilot were:

- The mentoring time for a four hour guided learning segment was 1 hour.
- Standardisation of marking took up to 3 hours for each candidate and internal verification took ½ hour.
- All materials met the criteria for a level 3 but a reduction in the amount of work would be acceptable to reduce workload for candidates.
- Instructions for completion of exercises and assessment material should be made more straight forward with an introduction to the award and overview of the process explained before candidates begin the programme.

7. Screener Role Development and Redesign

All screeners are currently employed on Band 2; the average hourly rate for screeners is £7, just above minimum wage. NBHSW currently expects post holders to undertake a significant amount of training but this training does not currently equate to level 3 knowledge within Agenda for Change guidelines. This is due to the fact that training is not currently linked to any accredited structure and entry to the post requires individuals to be educated to GCSE standard only. By supporting the existing training with learning packages for BTEC and NVQ, training requirements will equate to level 3 knowledge.

Previous discussions within NBHSW had identified a need to look at the development of an enhanced screener role which would reduce the time demands on Divisional Coordinators and Programme Managers by undertaking some of the induction training of new screeners. This enhanced

role was envisaged to be a progression route from the initial role and would require an accredited qualification. Having two levels of posts within the programme would encourage individuals to remain within NBHSW. This would also reduce the amount of time taken to recruit and train new screeners by encouraging retention.

At a joint meeting of Divisional Co-ordinators and Programme Managers in March 2008 a general consensus was reached that:

- All the training undertaken by screeners would count towards the accredited learning programme. This would include the training received during induction and the statutory, mandatory and NBHSW-specific training screeners undertook during probation and as established screeners.
- Because of the limited number of enhanced screener posts (henceforth referred to as Screener I posts) available to the programme and because of the cost of running the accelerated ALP programme, a strict selection process to both the accelerated ALP and application to Screener I posts would be necessary.
- The maximum number of Screener I posts across Wales at any one time would be 24
- All screeners would have the opportunity to undertake the programme which, on achievement, would make screeners eligible to apply for Screener I posts. These posts would have additional responsibilities, which would be reflected in a higher banding.

8. Proposed Infrastructure for Roll-Out of ALP

It was brought to the attention of the project in early January that there would be insufficient candidates to allow NBHSW to become an approved BTEC centre. Velindre NHS Trust's BTEC-centre status had lapsed. Limited availability of staff and time resources within NBHSW to carry out the administration procedures associated with the ALP were also identified.

Additionally, there are too few qualified NVQ assessors within Screening Services or other potential partners to support a throughput of 24 screeners over 2008/2009. The NVQ element of the qualification will therefore be suspended whilst alternative arrangements are investigated. Screeners will, however, continue to collect evidence of practical skills via a portfolio of evidence which could be retrospectively accredited once an NVQ infrastructure has been developed.

In March 2008 a business case was approved by the Director of Screening Services, which proposes local processing of the ALP within Divisions by the Divisional Co-ordinator and Programme Manager. This will be in partnership with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS Trust, who will ensure accreditation of the programme, and will be supported by the Education and Training Facilitator. The Facilitator will liaise with BTEC providers, Edexcel, in relation to the requirements of the assessment, verification and quality-

assuring of the NBHSW BTEC and will work with NBHSW staff to ensure these are in place. A named Programme Manager will take on the key role of liaison with the Training Facilitator and Edexcel and Bro-Morgannwg for NBHSW-specific information and expertise.

9. Proposed Timetable for Roll-Out

Screeners currently in post who meet eligibility criteria will undertake an accelerated version of the ALP in 2 cohorts of 12, the first starting in June 2008 and completing in December 2008; the second in March 2009, completing in September 2009. Following completion of the ALP, there will be an opportunity for cohort 1 to apply for a maximum of 12 Screener I posts with a similar number available to cohort 2. Applications for Screener 1 posts (first round) will take place in February 2009 with the second round of applications in November 2009.

Any screener currently in post who wants to undertake the ALP after the accelerated sessions have been completed will be able to do so from September 2009.

From April 2008, newly appointed screeners will undertake accredited learning over a 2-year period.

10. Outstanding Issues

In order to move from pilot to programme, the programme will need a range of co-ordinating structures:

- Internal co-ordination is vital to ensure that all candidates who undertake the programme are adequately supported to ensure success. The time constraints of the accelerated ALP are tight.
- Internal quality assurance systems also need to be established to ensure that candidates' work is returned within a suitable time frame and that time is given for a candidate to resubmit work if required.
- Training for mentors and internal verification (IV) will also need to be timetabled to ensure parity of marking and an IV system robust enough to meet Edexcel's requirements.
- Links need to be forged between Bro Morgannwg, Edexcel and NBHSW to ensure that candidates' work is submitted for external verification and any changes in policy and/or procedures are communicated to all parties within a reasonable time limit.
- Liaison is also needed between trust trainers who provide statutory and mandatory training and NBHSW.

Before a programme is implemented a sound IV and mentoring structure should be in place with times overestimated in the first instance to allow the system to become established.

The problems regarding the delivery of the NVQ part of the programme are still to be addressed. The biggest problem is the supply of NVQ approved assessors who will mentor and track the screeners during the assimilation of their evidence files. On a more positive note, the NVQ system does mean that there will be no input required from NSHSW staff for mentoring, assessing or during the IV process apart from submitting an expert witness testimony for the screening unit. The Education and Training facilitator will become an NVQ assessor if required and will take forward an options appraisal for accreditation of the proposed NVQ elements

11. Conclusion

The outcomes of the Project address a number of key programme and personal-development areas:

- An Accredited Learning Programme will help to attract and retain staff for the needs of the service
- The ALP training and development strategy will maximise screeners' contributions to NBHSW, fully utilising their skills and providing career progression
- The ALP will support the development of a new group in the healthcare workforce.

Accredited learning provides a nationally recognised benchmark for the quality of screener training and sets a high standard of achievement for screeners. Helping to keep screener skills high, it enhances the status of the screener role and enhances the profile of NBHSW as an employer of choice in the NHS. Earning the right to enrol in the award encourages staff to commit to the service for a number of years.

Appendix 1

Timetable

Timeline	Objective	How achieved
December 2006	The project team agreed that it was not possible to take the project forward within the existing time and staffing provisions of NBHSW. The team agreed to appoint an individual to take the project forward under the direction of the project team.	The project team agreed a job description and a person specification. Recruitment process undertaken. Identification of post specific and trust specific induction programmes.
January 2007	Appoint Project Worker	
February 2007	Project Worker takes up post undergoes trust and NBHSW induction. Project Worker evaluates current training provision. Formulation of action plan for project.	Shadowed screeners during a working day to gain an understanding of the role. Spoke to NBHSW staff who undertake training to gain an in depth view of the current training provision.
March 2007	Project worker completes initial training and induction process. Identified screener specific and generic underpinning knowledge required for post. Reviewed work already undertaken by NBHSW. This included current training provision, teaching and learning resources, statutory and mandatory training schedule. A preliminary curriculum was outlined and unit topics and content devised.	Project worker used current training material to identify required underpinning knowledge for new curriculum.
April 2007	Project Worker produced Initial Report with Option Appraisal and outline of current training programme. Current training programme was divided up into units Developed risk assessment of project. Explored training progression routes for screeners post accreditation.	Project worker used the underpinning knowledge and current training to identify accredited training qualifications that met the same criteria. Project worker liaised with all awarding bodies to evaluate all types of qualifications available. Made recommendations on the most appropriate qualifications and evaluated them against the identified underpinning knowledge and skills of the current training provision.
May 2007	Project Worker completed a gap analysis of current training resources. Identified currently accredited qualifications that closely matched current training.	Project worker looked at the current resources available for training and examined the difference between the current provision and a selection of qualifications available.
June 2007	Identify other training packages that could be used by NBHSW	All statutory and mandatory training provided by the trust was attended

	<p>from other sources. Develop qualification outline with units, guided learning hours and NQF levels.</p>	<p>by the project worker to assess links between the training and NBHSW requirements. Liaised with outside companies to estimate the cost of producing a tailored e-learning resource. Contacted other screening services to explore other avenues for the development or source of additional training materials.</p>
July, August, September 2007	Development of resources for pilot of preferred option.	Resources were compiled from a wide variety of sources. NBHSW specific resources were written using current training and competencies required for the post. Initial Quality Assurance system was constructed.
October 2007	Mapping NVQ to current training and BTEC units.	Construct portfolio building instructions and map underpinning knowledge to BTEC and current training. Construct mapping tool to enable screener to build the NVQ portfolio.
November 2007	Pilot Study for BTEC Resources	All teaching and learning resources were organised into 4 hour sessions. These sessions were placed in folders and loaded onto the server to allow access to volunteers for pilot study. E-resource loaded onto server to allow
December 2007	Plot Study for BTEC Resources Confirm arrangements for centre approval/NVQ verification	Resources written for Units 1, 2, 3 piloted over four weeks. Quality assurance system also piloted. Establish trust status with Edexcel. Meeting with Bromorgannwg Trust to confirm verification arrangements.
January 2008	Compile final report	
February 2008	Approval of way forward by project team.	
March 2008	Approval of project by divisional staff. Compilation of NLIAH report. Handover of resources to Gloria Jarmen Early enquiries about NVQ process	

Appendix 2

Summary of project expenditure.

£30,000 was received from NLIAH on the 1st April 2007 following an application to “Individual Learning Accounts for Support Workers in the NHS”. The project started in January 2007 with the employment of a project worker Philipa Bassett. The project was funded by Velindre NHS trust until 1st April. The staff expenditure includes the project worker for a year and the screeners who took part in the pilot study.

	2007/08
All Wales - EAAAA	
STAFF EXPENDITURE	
PHILIPA BASSETT	25,246.00
GEMMA PARRY O/T	389.50
CLARE ROWELL O/T 13/11/07	30.57
KAREN BENNETT O/T 16/11/07	28.73
GENNA SHUTT O/T 14/11/07	28.73
DAWN WILLIAMS O/T 20/11/07	31.75
LYN ORDWAY O/T 21/11/07	30.57
TRACEY JONES O/T 23/11/07	30.57
CAROLE HURLEY O/T 27/11/07	32.46
JANET WILCOX O/T 28/11/07	30.57
CLARE ROWELL O/T 5/12/07	30.57
KAREN BENNETT O/T 7/12/07	28.73
TOTAL SALARIES & WAGES	25,938.75
NON STAFF EXPENDITURE	
MATERIALS	478.57
STATIONERY	260.00
TRAVEL FOR PHILIPA	1,000.00
E- LEARNING TOOL	587.50
DEVELOPMENT DAY	200.00
DEVELOPMENT DAY	352.50
DEVELOPMENT DAY	183.60
TRAVEL FOR OTHER STAFF	1,000.00
MEMBERS ATTENDING DEVELOPMENT DAYS AND MENTORING SCREENERS	
TOTAL NON STAFF EXP.	4,062.17
TOTAL OF REPORT	30,000.92

