Introduction

- In 2011 City and Hackney’s health visiting service became one of three early implementer sites in London for the Health Visitor Implementation Plan: A Call to Action. This is a national service transformation programme that runs from 2011-2015 and aims to grow the health visiting workforce, for health visitors to lead the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, to return to intensive early intervention work starting with targeted support in the antenatal period, particularly for vulnerable pregnant women, children and families and to improve partnership working across health, children’s social care and education services.
- First Steps was commissioned to train all of City and Hackney’s health visiting, community nursing and nursery nursing staff.

Research aims

- For practitioners to reflect on current knowledge, skills and practice.
- To provide a feedback loop from practitioners to senior managers.

Method

- The Director of Research and Development at Homerton University agreed that the Trust would sponsor the study and gave approval for the conduct of the study.
- The sample consisted of 68 primary healthcare professionals who completed the training. The study employed a non-experimental design.

Quantitative Results

- 96% of participants completed the questionnaires.
- A paired sample t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant improvement in Healthcare Professionals’ scores between Day 1 (M = 6.02 SD = 1.33) and Day 2 (M = 7.14 SD = 1.35); t(65) = 11.199 p < 0.00. Table 1 shows the mean score for each question on Day 1 compared with Day 2. These results indicate that Healthcare Professionals’ perception of their knowledge, skills and confidence (in relation to the aims/learning objectives of the Solihull Training) significantly increased following completion of the Solihull training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean Day 1</th>
<th>Mean Day 2</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 Overall, how well supported do you feel in your clinical work?</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 To what extent are you aware of your own emotions when working with children and families?</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 How knowledgeable are you about factors that may negatively impact on the emotional and psychological well being of children and families?</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 How confident are you in your ability to speak with others about your professional knowledge and skills?</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 How well do you understand parent-child interactions and how this impacts on a child’s development and well being?</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions and Responses

This stage of the evaluation of the project has identified four principle areas of need from the responses of the healthcare professionals who completed the questionnaire. The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the healthcare professionals’ responses was a need for increased knowledge and understanding. The First Steps team have therefore offered additional support to the healthcare professionals trained with six weekly follow up consultation sessions.

The second theme that emerged from the data was a need for more time to support families. Some practitioners reported feeling overwhelmed by their workload and reported only feeling able to carry out essential target driven tasks. 25 additional health visitors are in the process of being recruited to the Trust and it is hoped that this will result in practitioners having more time to support families in the near future.

The third theme that emerged from the data and was communicated verbally by many of the healthcare professionals during the training was a need for supervision and a greater level of support with their work. Discussions are currently underway to explore the adoption of a Restorative Supervision model for the health visiting teams in City and Hackney from 2014.

The final theme was the need for improved communication and partnership working. The First Steps team have recently begun offering the opportunity for clinical psychologists and healthcare professionals to work jointly with some families who require early intervention. Parents’ experiences of working with practitioners using the Solihull Approach in City and Hackney are currently being evaluated.

Qualitative Results

Practitioners were asked if there were any things that could help them to do their work better with families. A thematic analysis of healthcare professionals’ responses to this question revealed the following four themes:

1. Need more theoretical knowledge to help professionals understand child/families’ difficulties
2. Need more time to work with families
3. Need more feedback and support from colleagues and other teams
4. Need support for understanding and interpreting emotional aspects of work

Some examples of practitioners’ responses:

- ‘More time to spend with families in order to listen, empathise and support them’
- ‘Effective collaboration with other professionals to ensure improved client satisfaction’

References


Acknowledgements

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