Start and Stay: examining recruitment and retention of health visitors

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National Nursing RESEARCH UNIT

www.kcl.ac.uk/nursing/nnru

The research team

Overview of presentation

- Brief background
- Methods – what we did and why
- Preliminary findings & conclusions based on health visitor and student data collection

Our research contribution

Literature review
Narrative synthesis of health visiting practice

AIMS

Empirical study

Exploring service users' views

Empirical study

Recruitment and retention for health visiting

Recruitment and retention study

Referred to as ‘Start and Stay’

To provide evidence on three main areas:

1. factors impacting on decisions to join or stay
2. what health visitors want from their job
3. criteria for selecting candidates for health visiting

Methods

- Two case sites – North and South
  - Each with a single HEI and NHS partner
  - Total 53 participants
  - AI workshops and group interviews
    - Health visitor students, n=17
    - Practising health visitors, n=22

    } Follow-up with 8
  - Individual face-to-face or telephone interviews
    - NHS managers, n=4
    - HEI Lecturers, n=6
    - SHA Implementation Plan Leads, n=4

Preliminary findings

- Appreciative Inquiry informed workshop reflective written exercise
  - *'tell us about a practice experience you have felt excited and motivated by and briefly describe the factors that contributed to this'*
- Prompted positive talk
  - Contemporary examples of what students and practising health visitors valued about their practice
  - Reference to a 'Golden Age'

Reflections on Health Visiting

~~that~~ It highlighted peoples strength in the face of adversity. I came away feeling very humbled that someone who had circumstance previously of such trauma, could be so trusting and open.
It inspired me that this was an area of work where I could feel valued and welcomed.

Student - North site

Throughout the 26 years of my Health Visiting career,I have valued the unique and privileged opportunity we have to work with families with young children over a period of time . No two families are the same and each and every new birth notification and "movement in" presents an exciting challenge. The first time you knock on the door you are starting a new and exciting journey. The challenge is knowing that in order to accompany the family on this journey you have to develop and sustain a relationship based on trust and mutual respect . The ability to achieve anything will depend on being able to get it right from the beginning . This is what inspires and motivates me about the job.

Health Visitor – South site

What was valued

- Making a difference - Family & Community
  - Privilege
  - Achievement
  - Worthwhile
  - Sharing

- Growth area
- Public health
- Work/life
- Autonomy in practice

Reflections on a Golden Age?

When I was able to do Health Promotion work as well as my caseload.

I Knew my caseload as I had worked it for a number of years, I had managed it autonomously doing more visits than at present. The caseload was GP attached but was confined to a geographical area.

I was able to set up baby massage group, walk for health walks, and undertake Health stalls

Health Visitor – North Site

Sense of control (autonomy)

Reduced control (threats to where we work and how we work)

- ‘Pulled away’ from community & home visits
- ‘Waters have muddied’ over roles
- ‘Things are imposed’
- ‘Don’t get feedback’
- Fire fight
- Limits on practice
  - deskilling

- ‘Don’t know them’….

  …….what’s around the corner?

Sense of control (autonomy)

- **Good sense of control**

- Shared effort with clear purpose
  - Multi-agency & integrated working
- Good leadership
- Knowing the families and community
- Putting skills/knowledge to good use
- Time for reflection – room to grow

Maintaining a sense of control

What helped people stay:

- Taking up opportunities
  - Practice teacher role
  - Further study
- Working out solutions
  - Remaining true to principles
  - Supportive inspirational leaders
  - Working with human resource
  - Capitalising on technology

Presentation Summary

Preliminary findings suggest:

- Decisions to join or stay
  - Privileged insight into the lives of others
  - Worthwhile purpose
- What health visitors want from their job
  - Desire to be able to full fill their role - meet the needs of children, families and community
- Criteria for selecting candidates
  - Solution focused, strengths focused
  - Ready to embrace technology

Desirable job

– "Lone-worker" – like to work autonomously + organise my day (with some in-built "constraints" such as clinics etc)

– Work in GP practice (covering 4 GP practices) → very good liaison links + with good interprofessional working with Childrens Centre staff etc.

– I know my caseload. Good continuity of care as I am fortunate enough to build up an relationship from first contact.

Health Visitor – South site

Thank-you!

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http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/nursing/nnru/prog/hv.html

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