



**The Development of the Learning Portfolio and delivery of the new training packages (Accelerated Learning Packages) to Health Visitors**

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## **Purpose of Document**

This case study focuses on an improvement in service quality, innovation or a new way of working, specifically along one or more of the strands of the health visiting service vision and family offer

**Community  
Universal  
Universal Plus and  
Universal Partnership Plus**

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## **Brief Description of Case Study**

The new health visitor specific training packages were developed to provide local health visitors with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to lead and deliver the Health Visitor Implementation Plan (Ref 1) effectively to children and families within Sirona Care & Health CIC Health Visiting Service. A health visitor/practice educator designed the learning portfolio as part of a secondment role, working with a clinical lead for health visiting.

The enhanced training opportunities offered within the learning portfolio framework aim to improve service quality by giving health visitors the knowledge and skills to develop new ways of working in accordance with the evidence based Healthy Child Programme (HCP, Ref 2) and the new Health Visitor Implementation Plan. For example, courses on motivational interviewing and cognitive behaviour therapy are providing health visitors with the tools and skills to work in strengths based ways in partnership with parents and families. These Accelerated Learning Packages (ALPs) will contribute to increased success in the delivery of services at all levels of the family offer, but particularly at the universal, universal plus and universal partnership plus levels. These training courses or ALPs are in addition to the training already available to health visitors and other team members e.g. community children's nurses.

The components of the learning portfolio are summarised in the leaflet (Appendix A). A booking form was developed for health visitors to use to apply for the ALPs. This is attached to emails sent to health visitors with the dates and other details of the ALP. The booking forms can also be accessed on the organisations intranet. When a place is booked by the practice educator or administrative assistant the health visitor is informed by email the details regarding the venue etc. It is expected that each health visitor will maintain their learning portfolio, including information from taught sessions as well as evidence of self-directed learning and reflective writing. The seconded practice educator is exploring the possibility of the learning portfolio being academically accredited for those health visitors who choose this option.

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## **Challenges**

Most health visitors have voiced a concern about the increased number of hours needed for achieving the training set out in the learning portfolio and how this impacts on the time they have available to manage busy caseloads and deliver the current service offered.

They are motivated to attend the additional training and to learn new skills and ways of working but feel the impact of balancing this whilst continuing to provide good levels of service to families.

Initially, the leadership programme was available to health visitors only in accordance with the Healthy Child Programme and Health Visitor Implementation Plan.

Following consultation with staff, the clinical lead and seconded practice educator responded to the strong level of interest from staff about the ALP and have plans in place to arrange further training opportunities. This will add to the existing training accessible to all members of health visiting teams which includes Solihull, HENRY and other training opportunities. Training relevant to the work of community children's nurses and community nursery nurses as well as health visitors during the coming year, such as fathers' inclusion, will be added to our current learning and development programme.

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### Achievements

- Production of the learning portfolio leaflet and booking form
  - Launch of the learning portfolio for health visitors at a clinical focus meeting
  - Motivational interviewing held for health visitors with follow up sessions arranged through practice educator
  - Presentation by Dr Crispin Day re: promotional Interviewing and needs checklist for health visiting teams, clinical leads, practice teachers and guests such as children's centre manager, clinical psychologist
  - Neuroscience and attachment sessions delivered by early relationships specialist practitioners delivered at a clinical focus meeting as well as safeguarding training (Level 3)
  - Two day ALP training in cognitive behavioural therapy / overcoming postnatal depression programme, provided by a clinical psychologist from Sirona Care & Health CIC
  - Three promotional Interviewing sessions delivered during 2011/12
  - Practice educator and health visitor working with social care / children's centre trainer to develop a fathers and family men inclusion and involvement programme, with the aim of making this part of the health visiting service during 2012 / 13
  - Staff development day hosted by the three health visiting clinical leads for 66 participants including health visitors, community children's nurses and community nursery nurses
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### Impact

- The learning portfolio framework clarifies the training specific to the workforce and gives the rationale for local change in delivering the Healthy Child Programme
- This training allows partner agencies and commissioners to see the new skill set in health visiting and to understand the evidence underpinning local changes in service delivery

- The learning portfolio embeds training into staff portfolios. It encourages reflective practice
  - The EIS training database allows evidence-based reporting to the Department of Health
  - Accurate costing of the new training for health visitors has been facilitated by developing the learning portfolio framework
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## **Benefits**

- The training packages (ALPs) are all client centred with their content reflecting the needs of local children and families, for example training on the neuroscientific and emotional bonding/attachment evidence. Training packages have been developed to benefit clients by increasing the knowledge, confidence and skills of the health visitors thus increasing the effectiveness of their work with families and children, ultimately producing enhanced outcomes for children. For example, the use of the promotional interviewing tool at earlier antenatal contacts and new birth contacts is likely to result in identification of health needs/earlier intervention by the health visiting team as part of a care package, or referral to another professional or agency. If the need identified is an emotional attachment difficulty between infant and parent, early recognition of this and appropriate action such as sharing information, teaching infant massage and supporting the parent may produce a good outcome for the baby and parent. If a referral to an early relationships specialist practitioner is required, this may occur when the baby is weeks old rather than months later.
  - Health visitors benefit from the increased training available which also provides opportunities to share good practice and knowledge between individuals and teams.
  - An additional benefit is the contribution made to increasing the quality of service provided, therefore minimising clinical risk and strengthening governance.
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## **Innovation**

The concept of the learning portfolio as a tailor-made package designed to meet the specific training needs of local health visitors supports those in the early implementer site in delivering the Health Visitor Implementation Plan. Each health visitor keeps and maintains their learning portfolio.

This fits with the previous established training for health visitors in the Bath and North East Somerset area and with the vision of the leaders of the health visiting service for a strengths-based approach to service delivery, working in partnership with children, families and other agencies.

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## **Personal Narrative Story**

Below are some testimonials from health visitors that we have gathered to provide a flavour of the experience of those involved:

Maria, Health Visitor re the CBT training, first day;

*'It was quite good and flowed well. It's lovely and fantastic to do, but for example, the couples session is one and a half hours and there are six or seven sessions at weekly intervals... it will make me feel more confident about listening visits '*  
Nicola, Health Visitor re the Motivational Interviewing training (2 days);  
*'It felt really positive...we needed two full days to get to grips with all the concepts...Not having time to consolidate what was learned and then put it in to practice was a difficulty but it was worth doing and I enjoyed it.....I am wondering how to take it forward now...."*



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## Additional Information

### References:

- Ref 1 – The Health Visitor Implementation Plan 2011-15: a call to action, Department of Health, published February 2011  
Ref 2 – The Healthy Child Programme: pregnancy and the first five years of life, Department of Health, published 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009

**Appendix A** – the Learning Portfolio leaflet, Sirona Care & Health CIC, November 2011