

**Programme: Certificate of Higher Education in Health and Social
Care**

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Role Play**

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Introduction

Professional development is a highly important area in one's life along many other areas, such as family life or personal relationships. Personal and professional development should be balanced in order for us to feel fulfilled and have a high quality of life.

Having a good and healthy work ethic can improve one's mental health and have other positive contribution on life in general, such as quality time with the loved ones, more self-care time, educational opportunities, and many others that are highly important for us as social beings. For example, workplaces can focus more on providing professional development trainings and programmes that can benefit staff and the organisation at the same time (HPD, 2019).

Employees that are not receiving effective training, risk their skills becoming stagnant and losing motivation. This does not just impact individual staff members, but the entire organisation. Employees may be more prone to making mistakes, which can ultimately result in an unsafe work environment and increased expenses. A lack of professional development is also intrinsically associated with decreased retention (McNally, 2022).

In this report, areas such as reflective practices, professional development, and employment goals will be discussed, but we will also create an action plan for future professional progression and analyse personal strengths and weaknesses in achieving set goals.

Reflective Practice

Reflection and reflective practice are often mentioned in the general education literature and the subjects are increasingly defined as essential attributes of competent health care professionals. Reflective capacity is regarded by many researchers as an essential characteristic for professional competence (Mann et al, 2007).

In order for people to learn effectively from their past experiences, which is critical in developing and maintaining competence across a practice lifetime, they must understand the role of reflection, and how this can have a positive effect on future experiences. Most models of reflection include critical reflection on experience and practice that would enable identification of learning needs. This is when professionals can evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and can also work harder on areas of improvement. As professionals develop their identity, there are certain aspects in the learning process that require understanding their personal beliefs, attitudes and values, in the context of those of their professional culture (Epstein 1999).

Another important aspect of reflection is creating a link between new and existing knowledge. Very often we will find ourselves analysing a certain experience that we associate with another and makes more sense than ever before. This is how professionals build integrated knowledge and this process requires an active approach to learning, where they must be self-aware and engage in self-monitoring and self-regulating activities.

Moon (1999) defines reflection as a form of mental processing with a specific scope and expected outcome applied to relatively complex or unstructured ideas for which there is no obvious solution, where Schon (1983) stated that reflection is a tool for revisiting experience in order to learn from it and to frame complex problems of professional practice. All definitions around reflection are talking about creating deeper knowledge and understand of specific subjects or experiences.

There are many models of reflection that have been developed over time, the most popular being Kolb's and Gibbs' ones, both focusing on a past experience professionals can learn from. Gibbs Reflective practice is looking at six main areas and aims to give a structure to learning from experiences. The first step is to describe the experience, then analyse own feelings regarding the experience, evaluate good and bad elements, making sense of the situation, form a conclusion about what has been learned from it and what could have been done differently, and finally, create an action plan for future similar experiences (University of Edinburgh, 2020).

Personal Strengths and Areas of Development

The health and social care environment is very centred on people and their wellbeing, this being one of the main reasons I have joined the field many years ago. I understand that healthcare practitioners should always learn and develop their skills and strengths when it comes to their professional development, and integrating as many skills as possible in my portfolio is highly important.

In healthcare, practitioners should be able to empathise with the patients and understand their difficult circumstances, while offering the best quality of care and offer them a safe environment where they feel empowered and protected (Carrington College, 2019).

A successful career in health and social care requires professionals to acquire certain skills, such as digital competence, self-awareness, empathy, or team collaboration. As a team leader, the skills needed might extend to other areas, including mentoring or relationships management and mitigation, as the role is more complex in its nature.

I am a very confident person and have experienced many ups and downs in my career during the years, having to be in different positions, where many times I felt that I am not living to my full potential, but still managed to demonstrate my best skills and strengths. This is one of the reason I consider a team leader position as the next step in my career. I also have the required digital skills required in the field, while constantly going through trainings that keep me up to date and informed on any changes in the health and social care field. I am still developing skills while being highly active in the work environment, as I consider this is the best way to learn and develop as a professional.

According to Mercer and Reynolds (2002), the encounter between a patient and a healthcare professional is the core activity of medical care. This is to say that practitioners should always maintain a positive attitude and provide the best services to patients, as empathy is considered a great component of all helpful relationships. Due to my previous experience in nursing, I have fully embraced an emphatic attitude towards others, as we may never know their situation and experiences, and everyone deserves a fair treatment, especially when healthcare professionals should be trusted.

Communication is another important element in care, and being able to provide clear information, be an active listener, and always put their needs first are key skills of a healthcare practitioner. According to Wanzer et al (2004), patients associate the quality of care received with the communication skills healthcare professionals have and their interactions. While I am improving my language proficiency, communication has been always easy for me and the interactions I had with patients have been mostly positive during the years.

Systematic Approach to Skill Acquisition

The skills I feel I could still develop are mainly related to continuous improvement, self-development, and proficiency in English. I consider team leaders have a bigger responsibility towards the organisation, other staff members, and also patients, and this is why they should invest more time and resources in their development. For example, it is very important for them to understand legislation, policies, and regulations related to health and social care, as they might be hold responsible for certain circumstances, but also to protect their team and the service users.

All organisations should provide their internal policies and regulations, but understanding the law is key to providing good healthcare, along with possessing the main skills required. Some of the main pieces of legislation are the Health and Care Act 2008 or the Care Act 2014, which set out the powers and duties of health and social care system, and these must be fully understood by all practitioners in the field (CQC, 2022).

Additionally, I am working towards being fully proficient in English, this being one of the main objectives I have before finishing the university programme. I have improved this specific skills quite a lot in the last two years, but understand it can be further improved both verbally and written. In order to achieve my goal, I am taking additional classes, reading material that is recommended in the health and social care field, and listen to audio material while undertaking other activities. Personally for me, communication with the team, the managers, or the patients should be accurate and clear, especially in a team leader role, and I would like to feel confident in this area as well.

Finally, during the last few years, I have been involved in self-development programmes, as I consider my well-being the foundation of my personality and success. Furthermore, I have been participating in professional training, and this is one of the activities I intend to be doing during my professional career, as we can always learn and should improve our knowledge and reflect on it. Reflection is another area I would like to practice more, and will encourage my colleagues to be involved in this as well, as team members can benefit from each other's reflections on different experiences, while individual reflection can also offer very deep insight (Mann et al, 2007).

Recruitment and Selection

Choosing a career that suits me has always been one of my main objectives in life, as I am well aware that this impacts my well being and success in life. I have chosen to opt for a career in health and social care because this field is about offering vulnerable people comfort and a safe space where they can thrive even in more challenging life circumstances.

Individual career development goes beyond the assessment of strengths, weaknesses and training that are meant to improve job performance. Career management consists of contributing to form career paths by interest individual and managers, formally and informally, where a great need is to identify competencies at different levels and determine movement paths (Beheshtifar, 2011).

Conducting the role play where we focused on choosing a career path and identifying reasons why we could be a great fit for a specific role made me look more deeply into my own strengths and weaknesses and assess where I would perform this role at my highest potential. Being a team leader in a health and social care setting can have its challenges, such as being a good mentor, interact well with patients and team members, and also being able to communicate professionally with superiors in certain situations, as the team leader is the first point of contact for staff and will often involve solving their disputes or issues.

The main skills required for the job I chose are supervisory and team leading skills, the ability to deal with conflict, and good English skills to understand and apply policies and procedures in practice (Skills for Care, 2019).

As mentioned previously, I consider myself possessing these skills, but there is always space for development, and an organisation that can offer employees chances for development is more likely to have qualified and professional staff at all levels. The role also has a preference for candidates that have some experience in a similar role, an area well-known to me due to past roles and academic practice. The role play has comprised five questions regarding my ability to perform the job, and I have tried to answer each of them based on personal and professional circumstances, from what I have seen and learned at work, and also in the academic environment. These approaches have felt very close to my personality and professional identity.

Professional identity is critical to the safe and effective clinical practice of all health professions and is defined as the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group (Matthews et al, 2019).

A professional identity is obtained through experience in practice and professional socialisation, this including several methods, such as the role play we performed in class. The

exercise has proved to be a great experience, as I now understand what skills are expected from a team leader in this field, after researching many job platforms and job posts, but also when looking for the best possible answers that suit my professional identity.

Conclusion

This report has covered a few areas important for professional development in the health and social care field and has included scholarly material that analyses the challenges and areas for self-improvement. The next steps in my career development will certainly be very focused on improving areas where I feel not very strong about, but also continue to reflect on my goals and find options that characterise my professional identity and could take me to them more easily. Understanding main gaps and challenges in my professional path is highly important, as people learn from their experiences, both good and bad, by reflecting on them.

I have been analysing what motivates me the most in my career, and realised that being able to support others and bringing a positive impact in their lives is one of the main factors that led me on this path.

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Annexe 1

Job Application Form

Role Title: Care Team Leader

Name: Andrea Ramona Polac

Date: 20/04/2023

Education and Training

Bachelor's Degree in Computer Infrastructure – 1995 to 1999 [Romania]

Nursing College – 2011 to 2014 [Romania]

Certificate of Higher Education in Health and Social Care/ Level 4 – 2021 to 2025 [University of Suffolk, UK]

ATLAS Programme/ Medication Training [UK]

E-Learning Health and Social Care Training Programmes – 2011 to present date

Qualifications

Assistant Programmer

Nursing Assistant

Insurance Inspector

Qualifying towards Level 4 Health and Social Care Professional

Annexe 2

Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you motivate your team as a team leader?

As each person is different, a good team leader or manager should be able to adapt their style in order to have efficient outcome. I consider employees are best motivated when they feel appreciated and listened to in the first place, and also know that their opinions matter greatly. If my team would come up with new ideas that could benefit their role, I would look into them and give them credit for their hard work. Communication is highly important as well, and team members should receive clear instructions and have certain goals identified individually and as a group, and my role as a team leader is to help them achieve these goals easier. This objectives can often be in the form of job progression, and providing opportunities for development should be considered in organisations as well. Lastly, I would like to highlight the role of feedback and a rewarding system, where employees are praised and rewarded for their inputs.

2. Can you explain how you would handle a dispute between team members?

In a first instance, the team leader should be aware of the situation, and listen for all parties involved in the dispute. This can be done by bringing them together or separately and let them explain their side of the story, or both stages can be done consecutively. I would prefer to understand their sides first before bringing them together and trying to mediate the situation. Team leaders should promote team work, and disputes can be very negative for their performance as well. A plan should be put in place on how to overcome the issue, and all parties involved should be open to participate in problem-solving. As the team leader, I will be fair and impartial and avoid any assumptions in the process. Of course, observing them and following up with the dispute must be done to ensure the mediation has been successful.

3. What would you do if you receive complaints from the residents towards staff?

Solving conflicts is a very desired skill in leadership, and very similar to sorting out disputes between team members, as in the end of the day we are all human beings, and the need for a social life is highly important. What team members should understand is that the residents in care homes are often quite isolated from the outside world and the care givers are their only points of contact. As a team leader, I will always encourage a emphatic and respectful environment, where residents are treated fairly and with the dignity they deserve. However, if complaints come up against staff members, this should be treated accordingly, recorded, and investigated. A manager will also be involved in the process, as things can turn into legal procedures.

4. Describe or name a few qualities of a successful team leader

A team leader should always be a motivator for their team, should acknowledge, appreciate and recognise the hard work people put into their roles, and should show commitment to the role, the team, and the organisation. Active listening is very important for team leaders, as they are usually the first point of contact for staff, but also for the service users. Team leaders should demonstrate empathy and integrity in their work, communicate effectively, and be able to achieve goals not only for themselves, but also for their team.

5. Why do you want to become a care team leader?

I have always wanted to be able to motivate people around me, and this also applies to my day-to-day life, not only at the workplace. However, having the opportunity to help others achieve their goals is a very important part of me. Also, I have been working in the industry for an extended period now, and feel that I am ready to make the next big step in my career, where I can fully demonstrate my leadership skills, where I am confident I can excel in. Working in healthcare can be positive in many ways, but for me personally means that I am able to change someone's life for better and be the support they need in more challenging situations of their lives.

Reflection about interview

I was feeling confident during the interview, was a good experience for me and my future interviews for new place work. After this experience I am not afraid anymore to speak anymore in public. I discovered that I am confident I have positive attitude and I can have a high-level discussion.