Service Evaluation Project (SEP)

Background and rationale

The Standards for Doctoral Programmes in Clinical Psychology state that "Trainees must complete at least one formally assessed smaller scale project involving the use of audit, service development, service evaluation or applied research methods related to service delivery or professional issues."

The Service Evaluation Project documents a small scale evaluation or audit of clinical activity usually undertaken by the trainee on the second, third or fourth of their four core placements, i.e. the placement in which the trainee does not complete a Placement Assignment. The assignment is completed as part of the trainee's activity on placement, and is supervised by the placement supervisor. This approach mirrors the approach to evaluation that a qualified clinical psychologist would take, and has congruence with assignments on other Clinical Psychology Doctorate programmes regionally and nationally.

Structure of the assignment

The Service Evaluation Project is a 3,000 word (maximum) report which will usually take the following form:

- Summary
- Introduction – describing the context for the evaluation or audit.
- Audit standards – if applicable
- Methods
- Results
- Action plan – including plans for re-audit if applicable
- References (in APA format)
- Appendices

The report should be fully anonymised by removing any information that identifies the service or individual stakeholders.

The project can be either a service evaluation or a clinical audit, depending on the requirements of the service. Whilst there are similarities in these two methods, they differ in the knowledge they aim to produce. Where a service evaluation can be quite broadly designed to define or assess some aspect of current care, a clinical audit is more narrowly designed to ascertain whether a service reaches a predetermined standard. An evaluation is usually carried out as a one-off, bespoke project, whereas an audit may be a routine part of service provision, with an established protocol and audit cycle in place. Where trainees

decide to conduct an audit they will need to ensure that their project follows existing protocols.

Assignment Processes

Trainees can choose on which of their second, third or fourth core practice placements they will carry out the project. This decision must be made early on in the placement in discussion with the placement supervisor, ensuring that a suitable project is identified that relates to the needs of the service. Thus, trainees should be both proactive and open to suggestions.

Once a project has been identified a brief proposal form will be completed (adapted the current SRP assignment proposal form format, which can be found here) and submitted to the programme assignment co-ordinator for approval. This is to ensure that the project proposed is ethical, and appropriate in scale, scope and focus. The project should not require NHS ethical review. However, it may require approval by the host Trust's Research and Development Officer to confirm that such a review is not required.

Trainees should submit their proposals to the programme as early as possible in the placement, and no later than 24 days into the placement. After submission, the proposal will be reviewed and, if suitable, approval given within 15 working days. Trainees and clinical supervisors will receive feedback on the proposal, which may require them to amend and possibly resubmit the proposal before approval is given.

Once a project has been formally approved by the programme, the trainee should, as far as possible, complete the assignment within the placement, under the oversight of their placement supervisor and consulting other sources of advice available to them on placement. As the data are collected on placement, careful consideration must be given to the demands it places on placement time and resources. The trainee's work on the project in placement time must be balanced with other elements of their placement activity.

Assessment

The assignment will be submitted and marked as a single piece of written work.

Markers will actively grade the assignment in relation to the following domains: Gathering, Analysing, and Deciding & Communicating.

Support for Trainees

Teaching sessions will be timetabled during the first 55 days of training to support trainees in understanding the requirements of the assignment; identifying the type of project that would be suitable; understanding the methods used in evaluation and audit.

The principal academic and practical support for the assignment will come from the trainee's practice placement supervisor. Training regarding these projects will be provided to supervisors within the bounds of the current supervisor training programme and the supervisor / trainee pair will be able to consult relevant tutors regarding suitability of proposed projects before finalising submission.