

INTRODUCTION

In 2007 Carolyn Wallace won a prestigious Florence Nightingale Travel Scholarship (Welsh Assembly Government sponsorship) to explore standardised assessment frameworks, visiting sites in mainland UK and Europe. The knowledge gained from this study informed the case study approach the authors had developed for educational purposes, while working with practitioners in the early development of the Unified Assessment Process in Wales. Although the original policy focus was in Wales, this has been expanded to acknowledge the diversity that exists through devolved health and social care across mainland UK. By taking this approach the authors have been able to share their experiences with a wider audience.

WHAT'S THE AIM OF THIS BOOK?

The aim is to introduce the student or practitioner to the concept of standardised shared assessment frameworks, such as the Single Shared Assessment, the Single Assessment Process and the Unified Assessment Process. This is achieved through giving a step-by-step guide to the process of shared assessment. The introduction of this process can sometimes be greeted with reluctance and trepidation. It is the intention of this handbook to overcome some of the anxieties associated with change and provide realistic guidance on the implementation process and the change process. It also gives the student or practitioner a chance to reflect on his or her knowledge of sharing assessment information and the standardised frameworks. The Knowledge Barometer is introduced as a tool for reflecting on your own knowledge and practice (National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH), 2008).

As a result, it gives students and practitioners an opportunity to discuss the practical sharing of health and social care assessment information relevant to the service user, carer and practitioner within the assessment process as implemented across the UK. Fundamental to this is an understanding of an individual's experience and the roles of staff within the process.

What is your knowledge and understanding of sharing assessment information?

Place yourself on the Knowledge Barometer overleaf to help you become aware of your knowledge and practical application of sharing assessment information. Later, you will be asked to refer back to this to reflect on your learning.

Activity

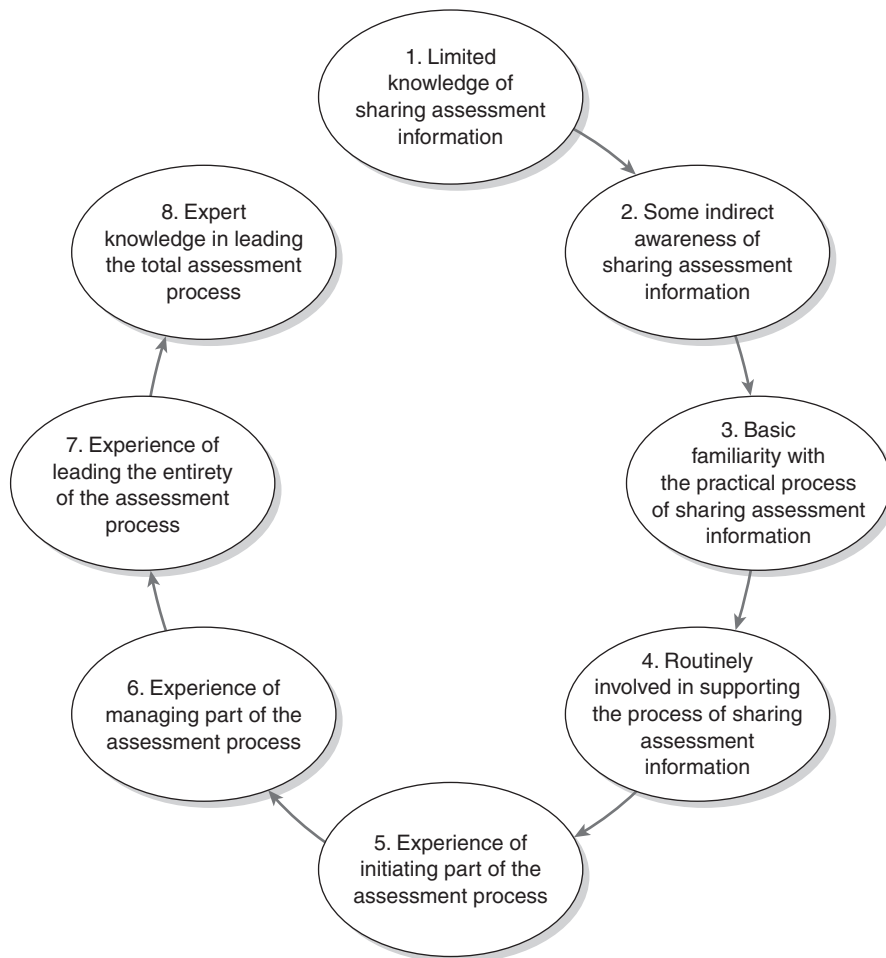


Figure 1.1 Knowledge Barometer, adapted from National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (2008). *Passing the Baton: A Practical Guide to Effective Discharge Planning*. Llanharan.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS BOOK?

The need for this book has arisen as a result of the now standardised approach to assessment and the sharing of information and documentation within and between health and social care. Staff working within health and social care are responsible for undertaking assessment at different stages of the assessment process. This person-centred approach to assessment requires health and social care to work in partnership to ensure that assessment is holistic, proportional to needs and outcome focused, avoids the risk to independence, well coordinated

and so avoiding duplication. As standardised assessment processes prescribe a layered approach, staff are required to be competent in assessment and have the ability to think about how risks may impact upon a person's independent living (WAG, 2002). This demands partnership and teamwork which is multidisciplinary and multi-agency in nature and is consistent with the demands of current regional and UK policy and culture, i.e., that professionals and organisations working with people who have complex needs should not work autonomously but with a shared awareness and understanding that leads to better communication and enhanced patient/service user care (Department of Health, 2007; National Assembly for Wales, 2003; Martin and Rogers, 2004) but with shared awareness and understanding that leads to better communication and enhanced patient/service user care.

The practical translation of national and regional guidance for health and social care professionals and agencies will be made through the use of case scenarios. With the introduction of real life scenario-based material to work through the stages of assessment and subsequent roles and responsibilities, the practitioner or student will gain an insight into the processes and the many influences along the service user journey. The scenarios help to draw out issues in regard to the opportunities and challenges allowing for interactive and problem-based learning. These are addressed in a question and answer format. Illustrating the assessment process with case scenarios allows for practical direction and understanding. As such the book is a support tool to assist learning for those in educational and training settings to understand the realities of the process; While for those professionals in practice it will aid them to apply principles and theory to their practice and current knowledge.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is intended for students studying health and social care courses at undergraduate level. In addition it can be used as a foundation for training purposes within work settings across health and social care.

SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three sections.

Part 1: Where it all Began

The two chapters within this section provide an insight into the UK policy context and theoretical basis for sharing assessment information. That is, the drivers for sharing assessment information and the development of standardised frameworks for assessment. UK policy refers to the Department of Health and devolved

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health and social care policies of the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales. These have tailored policies in order to meet the needs of differing populations and cultures. The theoretical basis for shared learning and assessment in this book differentiates between Unified Assessment in Wales, Single Assessment in England and Single Shared Assessment in Scotland. In addition to identifying key concepts and principles of all three approaches, the student and practitioner is prepared to apply these in practice through using scenarios within the book.

Part 2: Applying Theory to Practice

This section provides an interactive problem-based learning opportunity that includes practitioner/student focused exercises. It highlights service user and carer need, goals and outcomes, in addition to suggested learning along with professional roles and responsibilities throughout the assessment process. Some exemplars of needs identification and information are provided to act as potential triggers for the assessment and eligibility criteria in forthcoming chapters. It provides a holistic approach to acquiring and sharing assessment information as applicable to individual members of the family and their eligibility for services.

It achieves all of this through introducing a potential real family, which includes a description of their family life context, including examples of their health and social circumstances, where assessment may be required. The whole scenario considers the needs of the individuals from person centred perspectives and addresses carer issues relating to the needs they encounter. This includes issues relevant to their personal circumstances, health and social care issues. Each member of the family is introduced in their scenario, which includes geographical as well as health and social care context. The student and practitioner's involvement in the acquiring and sharing of assessment information is illustrated through the case and interactive exercises. Exercises are provided and are followed by 'informing practice', which are linked to the relevant theory, studies and experience.

Part 3: Opportunities and Challenges for Individuals, Staff and Organisations

The third and final section considers the change of approach in gathering assessment information across the UK and consolidates the journey that you have taken while reading this book. The acknowledgement of many opportunities, accompanied by some challenges to all those concerned, are provided for consideration and discussion. A question and answer format to address many of the issues raised in managing this cultural change across health and social care is used in the first chapter. The final chapter draws together the main themes of the book, those of UK and regional policy with regard to sharing assessment information, person-centred care, interprofessional working and boundary spanning. These are addressed from both a student and practitioner perspectives.