Managing Caseload – Workload Weighting

Published 2023 (updated from 2020)
Country relevance – UK wide

Introduction

The purpose of this briefing is to look at workload weighting as one system of workload management. If you are finding managing your work and your caseload difficult due to demand and time available, you should in the first instance discuss your difficulties with your supervisor or line manager and consider prioritisation mechanisms.

For the purpose of this briefing, it is important to recognise the different between caseload and workload. Caseload is the number of active cases a practitioner holds and manages. Workload includes the time spent on the caseload along with all other tasks expected of them, including those not directly related to caseload management.

Background information

'Workload weighting' can be referred to as a caseload management tool to monitor case throughput and allocation, aiding and establishing the appropriate number of cases to hours worked per week.

It attributes weightings to a variety of activities and therefore will need to be adjusted to fit particular work environments. Weightings usually measure a number of factors including risk and complexity. Travel may be included for community settings. The experience of the practitioner may also be considered.

Main body of information

What does workload weighting mean for managers?
- A means of managing and allocating demand for service.
- Evidence activity to commissioners.
- Linking in the principles of job planning and effective rostering as a means of helping managers understand the capacity they have within their team(s) for the various throughputs they are accountable for (NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2019) and (NHS Employers and BMA, 2011).
- A way of understanding why some staff can only manage a few cases each month whilst others manage more.
- It could help managers retain staff as they feel they have a manageable workload and know how many cases managers can allocate a month.
- It can help managers rationalise what other activities team members can participate in and the impact of this on caseload.
- It provides managers with an opportunity to observe practitioner's team involvement. What does workload weighting mean for practitioners?
- Having a realistic workload.
- It helps manage workload and fear of being overloaded.
- A way of managing demand that is fair and manageable as well as being transparent across the team.
- A tool to support practitioners because it recognises and accommodates additional workload tasks when considering caseload management and allocation.

What are the ingredients of a successful system?
- It needs to be owned by both practitioners and managers – joint responsibilities.
- Managers must be prepared to question why cases need to stay open.
- Allocation rates for whole time equivalent (WTE) practitioners need to be set on a pro-rata basis for part-time staff – transparency.
- Allocations need to be negotiated on both sides.
- Practitioners need to feel caseloads are manageable.

Outcomes of good workload weighting
- Staff know what is expected.
- May lead to reviewing what tasks support staff undertake.
- Staff competencies matched to tasks.
- Reduction in stress experienced by workforce.
- Transparent system – all treated fairly.
- Effective, well managed teams.
- Satisfied customers.
- It can provide evidence to the practitioner and their supervisor of continuing professional development.

Additional considerations
The *Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics* (RCOT 2021) states:

Professional competence
6.2.1 - 'You only provide services and use techniques for which you are qualified by your professional education, ongoing learning and/or experience. These must be within your professional competence, appropriate to the needs of those who access the service and relate to your terms of employment.' (RCOT 2021 p36).

Capacity
4.10.1.8 - 'You recognise the limits of your own capacity and do not extend your workload or remit to the detriment of the quality or safety of your practice or service.
4.10.1.9 - You document, report and provide evidence (to the relevant manager) on resource and service deficiencies that may endanger the health and safety of those who access the service, carers, yourself or your colleagues (Great Britain. Parliament 1998, section 43B, point (1)d). Local policy should be followed.
4.10.1.10 - As a manager or leader, you act on any reports concerning resources and service deficiencies, seeking to ensure the health and safety of all those affected by your service.' (RCOT 2021 p27).

Delegation
To liberate capacity in our registered workforce, we need to be better at delegating to our support workforce. This would raise the profile of our support workforce and enrich their roles and responsibilities.

6.5.1 - 'When you delegate interventions or other procedures, you ensure that the person to whom you are delegating is competent to carry them out.
6.5.2 You provide appropriate supervision and support for the individual to whom you have delegated the task/s.
6.5.3 Although all registered practitioners are autonomous professionals, responsible for their own practice and professional judgement, you, as delegating practitioner, retain ultimate accountability

for any actions taken.' (RCOT 2021 p38).

Resources
Please visit https://www.rcot.co.uk/ to view the most current versions of RCOT publications.

Allied Health Professions Federation, Northern Ireland. Available at:
http://www.ahpf.org.uk/Allied_Health_Professions_Federation_Northern_Ireland.htm

Allied Health Professions Federation, Scotland. Available at:
http://www.ahpf.org.uk/Allied_Health_Professions_Federation_Scotland.htm

East Sussex and North Essex Foundation Trust (2019) *Increasing AHPs' clinical capacity using job planning and deployment metrics.* London: NHSE. Available at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/increasingp-clinical-capacity-of-ahps-using-job-planning-at-ipswich-hospital.pdf

Health Education and Improvement Wales. *Allied Health Professionals.* Available at:
https://heiw.nhs.wales/our-work/allied-health-professions-ahps/

Health Education England. *AHP support workforce resources.* Available at:
https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/allied-health-professions/enable-workforce/developing-role-ahp-support-workers/ahp-support-workforce-resources

NHS Scotland. Health Improvement Scotland. *Staffing (workload) tools and methodology.* Available at:
https://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/patient_safety/healthcare_staffing_programme/staffing_workload_tools.aspx

NHS England (2017) *Allied health professionals job planning: a best practice guide.* London: NHSE
https://www.sor.org/getmedia/7251219c-6cdd-48a9-ad1b-39f1b011eb9e/final_ahp_job_planning_final_3a.pdf

Scottish Government. Policy health workforce. Allied health professionals. Available at:
https://www.gov.scot/policies/health-workforce/allied-health-professionals/#:~:text=A%20series%20of%20AHP%20resources%20has%20been%20developed,to%20stay%20in%2C%20return%20to%20or%20enter%20employment.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2012) *Managing work - Workload management.* Available at:
http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide01/managing-work/workload.asp

The Kings Fund (2011) *Case management: What it is and how it can best be implemented.* London: The King's Fund. Available at: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/case-management

References
NHS Employers and BMA (2011) *A guide to consultant job planning.* London. Available at:
https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/2021-11/Guide_to_consultant_job_planning%20July2011.pdf

NHS England and NHS improvement (2019) *Job planning the clinical workforce- allied health professionals. A best practice guide.* London: NHSE Available at:
https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/allied-health-professionals-job-planning-a-best-practice-guide/

Royal College of Occupational Therapists. (2021). *Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics*. London: RCOT. Available at: https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/downloads/rcot-standards-and-ethics

All weblinks accessed 11/05/23.