Implementing the Allied Health Professions (Wales) Career Framework; Lessons learned and implications for practice

Background
- The career framework “Modernising AHP Careers in Wales” was launched in 2016.
- ABUHB OT Service developed documents to use alongside the framework setting out role expectations for each band.
- We were asked to map the performance of the Learning Disability OT team against the documents.
- Some hesitation in using the framework to self-evaluate performance was recognised in the team.
- The reasons for this were explored as part of an MSc Advancing Healthcare Practice project, with a view to better understanding implementation and potential use of the framework.

What we did
- OT’s were asked to self-evaluate their performance in relation to the framework.
- Progress appeared slow and the implementation stalled.
- A review of evidence about career frameworks was completed; this included journal articles, policies and health websites.
- A workshop was held with staff to gather the team’s reflections about the process.
- Clinical supervision and reflective journals were used to reflect on my role in the process as a leader.
- The emerging narratives and evidence base were explored to identify how to move forward.

What I learned
- For the team:
  - OT’s now use elements of the framework to support identifying development needs and consider career progression.
  - The need for leadership skills is recognised at all levels - delegation skills, chairing meetings and supervision skills.
  - More freedom to use a framework to suit individual needs, some OTs exploring the Career development framework (RCOT, 2017).

- Leadership implications:
  - Recognised the importance of starting with “Why” (Sinek, 2009)
  - Collaboration and getting team on board is essential to make changes.
  - Giving greater freedom to team members to use the framework in their own style had positive results.
  - Acknowledging my oversights has provided a rich learning opportunity.

Information from Practice
- The reasons why we were using the career framework and role expectations were important to the team.
- Some staff found the benchmarking process threatening at first; there was a perception of scrutiny.
- The opportunity to voice concerns and reflections openly, enabled me to change my approach.
- Working collaboratively helped to shift perceptions of the process from a threat to an opportunity.

 evidence Review Findings
- Clear policy drivers for using career frameworks.
- There are potentially benefits to the service, patients and employees from their use.
- Challenges include the potential for perceived threat to professional identity.
- Implementation and practical application of the framework is key.

The impact on practice
- For the team:
  - OT’s now use elements of the framework to support identifying development needs and consider career progression.
  - The need for leadership skills is recognised at all levels - delegation skills, chairing meetings and supervision skills.
  - More freedom to use a framework to suit individual needs, some OTs exploring the Career development framework (RCOT, 2017).

- Leadership implications:
  - Recognised the importance of starting with “Why” (Sinek, 2009)
  - Collaboration and getting team on board is essential to make changes.
  - Giving greater freedom to team members to use the framework in their own style had positive results.
  - Acknowledging my oversights has provided a rich learning opportunity.

References
Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2017) The Career development framework; Guiding principles for Occupational Therapy. London: Royal College of Occupational Therapists

Melanie Vale, Professional Lead OT Learning Disabilities, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Melanie.Vale@wales.nhs.uk Project undertaken as part of MSc (Open) Advancing Healthcare Practice
AHP career framework image copyright of Welsh Government (2016)