

Pharmacy training specialist: putting learning into practice

Helen Middleton is a continuing professional development manager and training specialist at London Pharmacy Education and Training (LPE&T). She is responsible for developing and delivering a strategy to support CPD implementation in pharmacy departments in NHS organisations across London, Hertfordshire and Essex, and developing and delivering study days on the LPE&T annual programme. Her hobbies include travelling, reading and cooking.

Reflection When I joined LPE&T almost three years ago, I was confident as a trainer because I had gained experience of training and facilitating staff development throughout my career, and had attended a number of short courses for trainers as part of my CPD. However, I wanted to learn more educational theory to undertake a training specialist role.

Planning and action I read training books in the LPE&T library and used an online encyclopaedia of educational resources (www.infed.org). I found out about different learning theories and more creative ways of training. This increased my knowledge, but the challenge was putting my learning into practice so I decided to try using a new theory or technique at each training session I ran.

Evaluation I realised that I had identified an enormous learning need and this made my overall CPD record difficult to evaluate (see below). Nevertheless, I have definitely improved my knowledge and am more confident as a result. It was easier to evaluate the records I had written after each training session and looking back at these after sometime enabled me to see changes in the way I handle situations. I am now a more flexible trainer and have moved from a trainer-focused to learner-focused approach. I identified more specific learning needs, for example, learning more about group dynamics as a result of training some challenging groups and this formed part of further CPD.



Recording I recorded my original learning need as “I want to have more theoretical knowledge of educational models” using the “Plan and record” template for learning that starts at reflection. My learning from the training sessions where I tried different training methods was recorded using the “Plan and record” template for learning that starts at action.

I started recording my CPD in 1999 using a portfolio provided by LPE&T but have used “Plan and record” since 2002. I find the online version easy to use and I write a CPD record at least once a month. It was difficult, initially, to make the transition from a less structured way of recording CPD but I have realised that “Plan and record” can be used flexibly, and that I can choose the level of detail I include.

Supporting individuals with their CPD is one of my key roles. I think some people struggle with CPD because they either choose something so huge that they find it difficult to achieve or they choose so many small things that they feel overwhelmed when trying to record them. Thinking of a tree can help. If the learning need is the size of a tree trunk you need to break it down into branches and focus on the branch-sized learning. In addition, if the learning need is the size of a twig is it really important enough to record?