



National Telecare Development Programme

Model Induction Programme for Call Handlers

Brian Kerr

Introduction

Call handlers, the staff who respond to the alerts and information sent by telehealthcare equipment from service users' homes, play a critical role in a safe, credible and developing telecare service. The training needs of call handling staff have formed a significant aspect of the training agenda of the National Telecare development programme.

The first stage of training, the induction, provides the essential platform for subsequent development of the staff member. It has become clear from our contacts with local telecare call handling services that while there is some variety and inconsistency in the programmes that have developed for new staff, there is recognition of the importance of this period, induction is well resourced and programmes carefully worked out.

We felt therefore that it would be useful to draw together the elements of various local programmes into a 'model' induction programme which could be used as a benchmark by local managers. We also have in mind the revised requirements of the Telecare Services Association for accreditation (Staff and training Standard 9):

- *'Service providers shall provide all new and reassigned employees with an induction programme.*
- *Staff shall attend an induction programme shortly after joining the service¹.*

Managers and services seeking TSA accreditation should find this model induction a useful check-list when preparing this aspect of their application.

A further aspect of the training agenda for call handling staff is to identify or develop further accredited and validated training opportunities for further skills and career development. This model induction provides the baseline from which that work starts.

The model was developed in discussion and consultation with call handling managers from across Scotland, and their help is greatly appreciated. Particular thanks to East Ayrshire Council, Bield Response 24, and Angus Council for their help, and willingness to share materials.

¹ Telecare 2009 Code of practice Documentation; Telecare services association (TSA) Wilmslow; January 2009.
www.tsa.org.uk

Model Induction programme

Objectives

The objectives of the induction period should be

- To induct the new staff member into the organisation.
- To induct the new staff member into the service.
- To enable the new staff member to begin to understand the place of the service within the wider local health and community care service.
- To provide a period of closely supervised and monitored practice, ensuring continued safe service for service users, and a confident start for the staff member.
- To ascertain their competency and confidence level in carrying out all tasks related to the role.

Content

Induction to the organisation

Good organisations will have an induction manual which all staff use to learn about their new employer, their conditions of employment, key policies and procedures (including whistle blowing, and the complaints procedure) an organisational chart, and the vision and values of the service.

Induction to the Telecare service

a) Core skills

This will *introduce* the staff member to:

- Standard Greetings (in/out)
- Using the equipment
- Listening
- Questioning and the importance of repeating back
- The impact of language and tone of voice
- Transferring calls
- Responding to 'no speech' calls
- Reacting to anger or distress
- Responding to hearing impaired callers
- Responding to confused callers
- Accessing assistance for Service User.
- Operating other telecare equipment e.g. Beta Vista, LWS

b) Procedures and Protocols

This will identify for the new staff member key procedures and protocols for and will include Procedure Manuals where in place (e.g.):

- Emergency service calls
- Equipment /warden test calls
- Checking service user information/logging on
- Referring to key holders and response services
- Low battery calls
- Recording procedures
- Reporting faults/maintenance calls

c) Values

The new member of staff will need to be introduced to the key values of the service, including:

- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Courtesy
- Equality
- Empowering
- Patience
- The duty of care
- Clients Rights

d) Information

The new staff member will need to have a basic understanding of other local services likely to be important in the support of service users, particularly the health service (including NHS 24) sources of referral and continuing contact such as assessment teams, home care services/rapid response installation and equipment services.

The importance of this aspect will be determined by the nature of the service, for example a national service will not be able to provide any level of detail because of their national coverage. Where call handlers also carry out installation and response team duties, the needs will be different again at this induction stage.

e) Supervised and monitored call handling

New staff members need to observe/listen in to an experienced and skilled call handler over several shifts before answering their first call.

They should be closely supervised /listened to by an experienced and skilled handler during their first call handling shifts.

They should have immediate access to a skilled and experienced call handler for advice/'rescue'/information until they are fully inducted.

They should have weekly opportunities during the period of induction to discuss with a

supervisor 'their' recorded calls and they should have tasks signed off on a check-list when both the experienced worker and the new recruit are happy that they can undertake the task confidently and competently.

Delivery of Induction

A good induction programme is likely to last for between four and six weeks i.e. it will be at least four weeks before a decision can be made that the new call handler is able to handle calls without close supervision.

The stages and content of the induction programme should be recorded and 'signed off' as completed satisfactorily by a supervisor or senior member of staff.

Ideally this member of staff will also provide a mentoring and 'buddy' service to the new member of staff, throughout the induction period particularly for the supervised call handling and analysis of recorded calls. (Pairing up the new member of staff with different colleagues does allow experience of different styles and views about how the new member of staff is developing).