Personal experiences of preceptorship in newly qualified mental health nurses and their preceptors

Jitka Jancova, Sally Barlow & Alan Simpson
School of Health Sciences
City University London
Many newly qualified nurses (including mental health nurses) report a lack of clinical competence and confidence (Allen, 2002).

Preceptorship is designed to strengthen post-registration learning supported by a clinical supervisor or preceptor. It allows the individual to apply and expand their knowledge base, access support, apply reflective practices and find ways to manage their own learning (DOH, 2010).

Integral part of developing and maintaining the competence of mental health nursing staff, facilitating the transition to professional nursing practice.

Obtaining learning and problem-solving abilities
Supported transition from learning into practice
Increased clinical confidence (Happell, 2009; Yonge, Hagler, Cox & Drefs, 2008; Charleston & Happell, 2005; Allen, 2002)
Aim & Methods

Explore the views and experiences of the users and providers of an updated preceptorship package containing the following:

• 1:1 preceptorship relationship
• Workbook
• Online materials (Flying Start)

• Over a 12 month period in one London NHS mental health Trust, all newly qualified and recently employed mental health nurses (preceptees) (n=33) and their preceptors (n=22) were invited to take part in an evaluation study of preceptorship.

• All participants were invited for interview at the start (T1) and end (T2) of the six-month preceptorship period using a semi-structured interview schedule. Data was entered in NVIVO and analysed.
Findings

Table with N of preceptees and preceptors T1 & T2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Approached</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>Drop out prior T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>Drop out prior T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preceptee</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceptor</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workbook

- Most preceptees & preceptors found the workbook useful as a reference guide to the expectations of preceptorship
- Some queried the overlap with pre-registration competencies and found the workbook a tick-box exercise
- Room for some tweaking in wording in the book
Personal experiences and perceptions - preceptees

T1
• Quick start, know what their job role encompasses
• Vague expectations & would welcome more information

T2
• Most love their jobs, some feel privileged and had good experiences with preceptorship especially thanks to the good preceptors
• Some felt left on their own, and received very little support from preceptors and have been fully implemented into the work schedule (no protected time, not being supernumerary or ‘buffer’)
• All would recommend it to newly qualified staff
• Support from preceptors (and the whole team) and their thorough training mentioned as very important
• Length of preceptorship
## Benefits and Challenges of providing face-to-face preceptorship - preceptees

### Benefits
- Increased confidence & reduced anxieties
- Reduced areas of weaknesses & theory-practice gap
- Being supernumerary
- Strong working relationships & support from the team
- Feeling competent and planning their professional career in the field of MH nursing

### Challenges
- Finding time for formal supervision – no protected time for regular meetings
- Nature of the ward
- Thorough training for preceptors
- CPD lectures and more peer support required by preceptees
- Not enough support / supervision - in the deep end
Personal experiences and perceptions—preceptors

T1
- Training and support was part of their current role
- Many felt they didn’t have adequate training and support for the role—specific preceptorship training would be advantageous
- It is important that preceptors have a readiness to change with the new knowledge that preceptees may bring
- All preceptors highlighted the importance of preceptorship & accountability

T2
- Many describe their experience as a **positive** experience relating this back to previous teaching and mentoring experience
- Would recommend experience to a colleague
- A positive impact on preceptors professional development—challenging and enhancing their own practice (knowledge transfer)
- Emphasis was placed on responsibility in terms of their role of preceptor but also empathic to the fears that preceptees may have
- Flexible—some preceptees require more support than others
Benefits and Challenges of providing face-to-face preceptorship - preceptors

**Benefits**
- Reflecting on their own experience as a preceptee
- Previous teaching and mentoring experience
- Strong working relationships – integration in the team
- Knowledge transfer – new developments help challenge current practice
- Experience and confidence in the clinical area
- Conducive environment
- Confidence & enthusiasm of the preceptee

**Challenges**
- Finding time for formal supervision
- Nature of the ward
- Lack of preceptorship specific training
- Cultural view of preceptees
- Completing some of the competencies in the workbook
- Difficulties in fitting preceptorship around their already demanding role
Recommendations

• Protected time for meetings
• Induction for preceptees focused on what to expect from the preceptor and how to agenda set
• CPD lectures & more peer support events
• Length of preceptorship
• Preceptors specific training
• Flexibility when planning and coordinating shifts
• Alternative experience
• Workbook
Thank you for your attention

Jitka.Jancova.1@city.ac.uk
Sally.Barlow.1@city.ac.uk