

making the case

CSP ePortfolio: Personalising products and processes

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Theme(s)

Teaching/Professional practice: Continuing Professional Development

The background context

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a responsibility of professional practice (CSP, 2011). For the physiotherapy workforce, changes to healthcare regulation and employment practices during 2004-5 mean that CPD is no longer just a private matter, but has become subject to public scrutiny. The regulators' standards for CPD (Health Professions Council, 2006) expect registered healthcare professionals to keep a log of their learning, and to demonstrate how that learning has improved the quality of services and benefited the service user. The introduction of a competency-based framework (KSF) within the National Health Service (NHS) in 2004 means that career progression depends on being able to develop and demonstrate specific sets of knowledge and skills.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) is the educational, professional and trade union body for 51,000 physiotherapy students, support workers and chartered physiotherapists. It has a quality assurance and enhancement role for physiotherapy practice: it establishes expectations of its members' practice (CSP, 2011); and promotes the quality of learning and development through its quality assurance and enhancement schemes and processes.

Mindful of the increasing demands on members to show evidence of CPD for regulatory and employment purposes, the CSP adopted the PebblePad eportfolio during 2008. The timing was designed to align with the Health Professions Council (HPC) CPD audit of physiotherapy registrants' in March/April 2010

All CSP members were given access to a PebblePad account, and were advised to use the system to plan, record, evaluate and store evidence of learning. The CSP eportfolio was

introduced as separate but complementary to the CSP's other CPD resources which included briefing papers (paper & digital), handbooks, iCSP's virtual networks, and its physical networks/events. The system was demonstrated at CSP events and during work-based seminars. All members received an eportfolio workbook, and could access personalized support by telephone/email from CSP and PebblePad. By August 2010, 34% of members were eportfolio account holders, but only 70% of these accounts were active.

Surveys of CSP members during 2010 illustrated their preference for paper-based portfolios. This was unsurprising given the challenge of accessing appropriate ICT (hardware and support) in the clinical environment. There was a further disconnect – the regulator's CPD audit and staff appraisal systems were using alternative systems e.g. eKSF or paper-based reporting. The limited uptake of the eportfolio could therefore be a symptom of limited access to ICT, which remains unchallenged because work-based CPD processes use alternative systems. Even where access to ICT was not an issue, eportfolio uptake was low which suggests that the CSP's eportfolio tool was not constructively aligned with the demands of members' practice.

Data from surveys and focus groups conducted during 2010 spoke of members' need for an eportfolio system that was quick and easy to use, comprehensive, inclusive and incentivised. The data also highlighted members' need for support (technical and pedagogic).

Why PebblePad?

PebblePad has enabled CSP to:

- work collaboratively with members to create an interactive resource to support the (CPD) needs of 50 000 CSP members;
- review and streamline existing quality assurance and enhancement processes.

The purpose

Work to develop the eportfolio system began in Spring 2010.

The project aimed to:

- address members' concerns about access to CPD;
- develop a CPD resource that would support a CSP members' career development by integrating the CSP's physiotherapy career framework with other material that could support members' CPD;
- address issues of sustainability and content management of CPD resources;
- explore the eportfolio as a tool for facilitating collaboration with members to develop new resources/processes;
- enhance members' experience of using the eportfolio.

Effectively, these aims required a shift in members' construct of the CSP eportfolio – from an online repository for CPD to a personal learning space. The project's timing was ideal – qualified members would be subject to the regulator's CPD audit in Spring 2012.

The approach

Work began in April 2011 to design a webfolio of CPD resources (CPD webfolio) that was based on the structure of the CSP's career framework. A virtual learning group was established to explore the possibilities of the PebblePad platform and to work with the CPD professional advisor to create a single reference point of information, learning resources and tools that members could personalize.

An action learning approach was adopted because we wanted to facilitate a truly collaborative approach that is consistent with our ethos. The process of action learning would ensure that any resources/processes developed would be subject to critical evaluation, and would offer CPD opportunities for all participants (staff & members alike). There was an open invitation to all CSP members to join the online group – the only criteria were an interest in CPD and reliable access to the internet. 35 members volunteered – an exciting, rich mix of people who brought a wide variety of perspectives to the work.

The plan was to publish a new webfolio (a small section of the final resource) to the group gateway every few weeks between May and September 2011 and invite the group to engage and feedback. The timing ran to ensure some overlap – so that feedback from one webfolio could inform the development of the next. The feedback from the group was rich, constructive and invaluable in informing the design and content of the final resource. It offered insights about the alignment of the resources with practice across a variety of contexts, as well as the practical experience of using the resource (e.g. ICT glitches).

The CPD webfolio was made available to members from September 2011, and formally launched at CSP Congress in October 2011.

Since October the CPD webfolio is being maintained and refined to integrate new CPD materials and to respond to members' feedback about their use of the CPD webfolio and their CPD needs in a rapidly changing context.

PebblePad's tools, ease of use and its position on the CSP's website means that we can respond quickly to develop resources and processes that incentivise members' engagement with the system in ways that are sensitive to their needs. Examples of these resources include CPD Syd's (a fictitious physiotherapist) countdown to Christmas calendar, and the blog of being called to participate in HPC's CPD audit. Examples of processes include an eLearning module to support the CSP's recognition scheme; and use of a gateway/webfolio resource to fulfil its QAE role. These examples are underpinned by an ethos of collaboration and co-construction, and provide opportunities to showcase the eportfolio's spaces and tools and role-model good pedagogic practice.

The result

The process of using a gateway to work collaboratively with members to develop and refine resources and processes was successful and is being used for other pieces of work within the function.

The CPD webfolio is sitting on a gateway in the eportfolio system. Since its launch in October 2011, 378 members have subscribed. The subscription rate increased rapidly during January and early February as members prepared for the prospect of being called to participate in the HPC's CPD audit.

By drawing members into the eportfolio gateway space, members have started to engage with pieces of collaborative projects to develop CSP resources (e.g. CSP practice education guidance) that sit on other learning and development gateways.

Members' engagement with the eportfolio has changed. The queries we receive have moved from 'what do I use... for?' to 'I want to do... Can you explain how?' This shift in focus from process to purpose reflects a move towards proficiency/expertise in eportfolio use.

The number of accounts has changed: 42% of membership have an account, but the proportion of active accounts remains relatively static at 71%.

Current activity:

- Maintenance of the CPD webfolio to ensure that it retains its currency and alignment with demands of physiotherapy in a rapidly changing context of practice.
- Piloting an eLearning module with a group of members who have applied for CSP recognition of their programmes of learning & development.
- Starting work to embed the CSP quality & enhancement support (resources and processes) so that through their engagement with these activities, members generate evidence that can be used by the individual applicant to fulfil CPD requirements & by the CSP to fulfil QAE requirements.
- Starting work to embed the CPD process into its educational award schemes so that the application process is streamlined and generates evidence that can

be used by the individual applicant and the CSP to fulfil governance requirements.

The impact

- Positive learning opportunities offered through the development of resources and processes.
- Increased evidence of members' engagement with learning/CPD.
- The collaborative, co-constructed approach has enhanced credibility and usability of CSP's learning and development resources and processes.
- By embedding CPD and learning and development resources/processes into one space, we have raised their profile and the inter-relatedness of both.

Lessons learnt

The action learning process provided opportunities to modify our approach along the journey – which is ongoing.

In brief – making the case for PebblePad

- Options for personalisation & choice.
- Opportunities to promote collaboration – between individuals, across the organisation & the profession.
- Opportunities to integrate resources to maximise their CPD value.

References:

CSP (2011). *Code of members' professional values and behaviour*. London: CSP.

Health Professions Council (2006). *Continuing professional development and your registration*. London: HPC.