Thulani's revalidation story

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Qualified mental health nurse Thulani works for Medacs Healthcare, a healthcare agency providing healthcare professionals to the NHS, public and private sectors.

Practice setting

Thulani qualified as a mental health nurse in 2001. He developed a passion for forensic nursing early in his career and has since built up a wealth of experience working with serious offenders with mental health problems.

Thulani took the decision to start working for a nursing agency.

> "This year," he explains, "because of my specific experience, I have been lucky to get a block booking, so now I've got the stability of working in one place."

Preparing for revalidation

Thulani remembers feeling quite apprehensive about revalidation when he first heard of it.

> "We are already stretched in terms of the paperwork we do and the difficulty of staffing wards, so I wondered how revalidation was going to tie in. Was it just going to be more work?"

Thulani's agency and the Trust he works in both organised a series of seminars and workshops to prepare nurses for revalidation. Thulani also met with a mentor to talk through the requirements to further build his confidence.

> "Having discussed it, it didn't seem as hard as I first thought. You need to take the time to prepare yourself, but once you know what you have to do it is an achievable process."

Practice hours and continuing professional development (CPD)

Working as a full-time agency nurse, Thulani found it easy to meet the 450 practice hours required. It was also simple enough for him to evidence the hours, as the agency use an online system, giving him easy access to his timesheets and payslips electronically.

Thulani is fortunate that his role gives him plenty of opportunities for CPD. He is currently working at a teaching hospital and every Wednesday at lunch time he attends an academic presentation on topics relating to mental health. Over the last three years, he has also attended a number of courses and seminars, including his mentorship training.

Being a sign-off mentor is particularly helpful, Thulani says.

> "While the focus is on providing learning opportunities for my students, I am constantly revisiting my practice and learning new things myself. It's about keeping up to date with my own clinical practice, too."

Practice-related feedback

Thulani was not used to collecting feedback on his practice, but it's something he has approached proactively for revalidation.

> "I've received compliments from people I've worked with, so I've gone back and asked them what part of my practice has been useful."

His feedback has been varied, coming from colleagues, student nurses and from his agency too.

> "People are quite happy to help," he says.

Written reflective accounts

Like many nurses, Thulani is used to going home at the end of a busy shift and thinking about what went well and what could have gone better. Writing the reflective accounts has simply formalised this process for him.

Thulani based one account on an experience he had with a colleague who was struggling at work and the steps he took to provide her with more mentorship and support.

> "That particular experience was about treating people as individuals, listening and helping them to practise effectively. When you write it all down you can see how it ties in to the Code and I think that is really useful," he says.

Reflective discussion

Thulani completed his reflective discussion with a lead nurse he met through a leadership course.

> "I felt she was very knowledgeable and someone I could look up to," Thulani explains. "It was quite interesting when we went through my reflective accounts because some of the experiences I have gone through, she has gone through as well."

Initially they set aside a couple of hours to go through all of the reflective accounts, but they ended up splitting it over a two-day period because of the amount they had to discuss.

> "We went through things in a lot of detail, and it was a learning experience for her as well as for me. I found it very useful," Thulani says.

Confirmation

When it came to choosing a confirmer, Thulani spoke to the service manager at the Trust where he has done the majority of his work since joining the agency.

> "I said to him, 'I've been working in this Trust on a regular basis since October – how do you feel about doing my confirmation?' He offered me an appointment and we went through my portfolio," Thulani says. "It was his first confirmation so we went through it thoroughly. It was a very straightforward process."

Final thoughts

Thulani's main piece of advice for other nurses is to be prepared, and not to leave things to the last minute. He also encourages people not to be afraid of asking for feedback.

> "For me, revalidation was fairly straightforward, and everybody that I approached for help was readily available to support."