Measuring Client Outcomes in the Mental Health Local Area Co-ordination Service

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The Local Area Co-ordinator (LAC) service was established in mental health in 2014 to provide community based support across Scottish Borders which aims to reduce isolation and promote recovery by enabling clients to participate in their local communities, engage in meaningful activity and where appropriate support opportunities for employment. The purpose of this project is to establish a method of measuring client outcomes which demonstrate the effectiveness of the service and which increases client flow through the service by enabling discharge when identified outcomes are achieved.

AIM: By June 2018, 80% of clients supported by the Mental Health Local Area Co-ordinator (LACMH) service will have outcomes measured at assessment.

Method

A process mapping session was held with the LAC team which identified the points in the system where measuring client outcomes were appropriate.

A driver diagram was also developed to identify possible change ideas which included outcomes training for staff and testing an existing measurement tool to establish whether this was fit for purpose in a mental health setting. PDSA cycles were used to undertake tests of change.

Driver Diagram
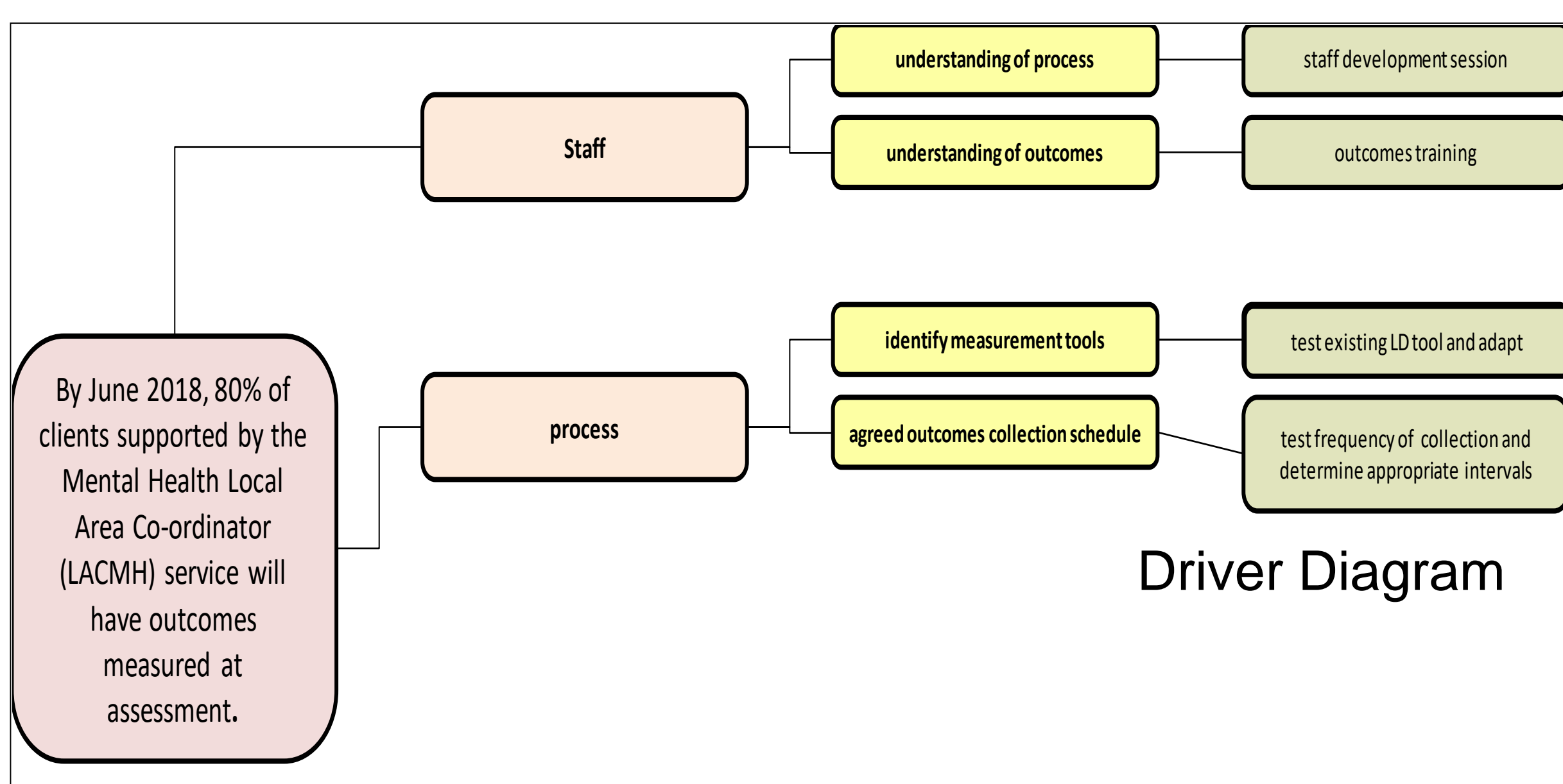
Process Change

The measurement tool was tested by one member of staff with one client in the first week. This identified that the tool was useful in an assessment appointment and enabled a focussed discussion about what the client hoped to achieve from LAC support. Following this, the staff member then tested with all appropriate clients again with positive results. The rest of the team then tested the tool and fedback their experience, this resulted in a change to the tool to ensure that all improvements were indicated by an increasing score.

Measurement tool V1   Measurement tool V2

Staff within the service also undertook outcomes training which helped their understanding of the rationale for implementing the process. This also helped establish a protocol for frequency of collection with each client.

Results

LAC staff quickly saw the benefit of using the measurement tool. Staff training in outcomes added weight to this and supported staff to engage in PDSA cycles. The testing identified that for some of the outcomes, an improvement would require a lower score whereas for others, an improvement would require an increase in score. It was agreed that it would be better if all outcomes should move in the same direction and the tool was amended accordingly. Staff found the tool user friendly and helped to focus conversations with clients.
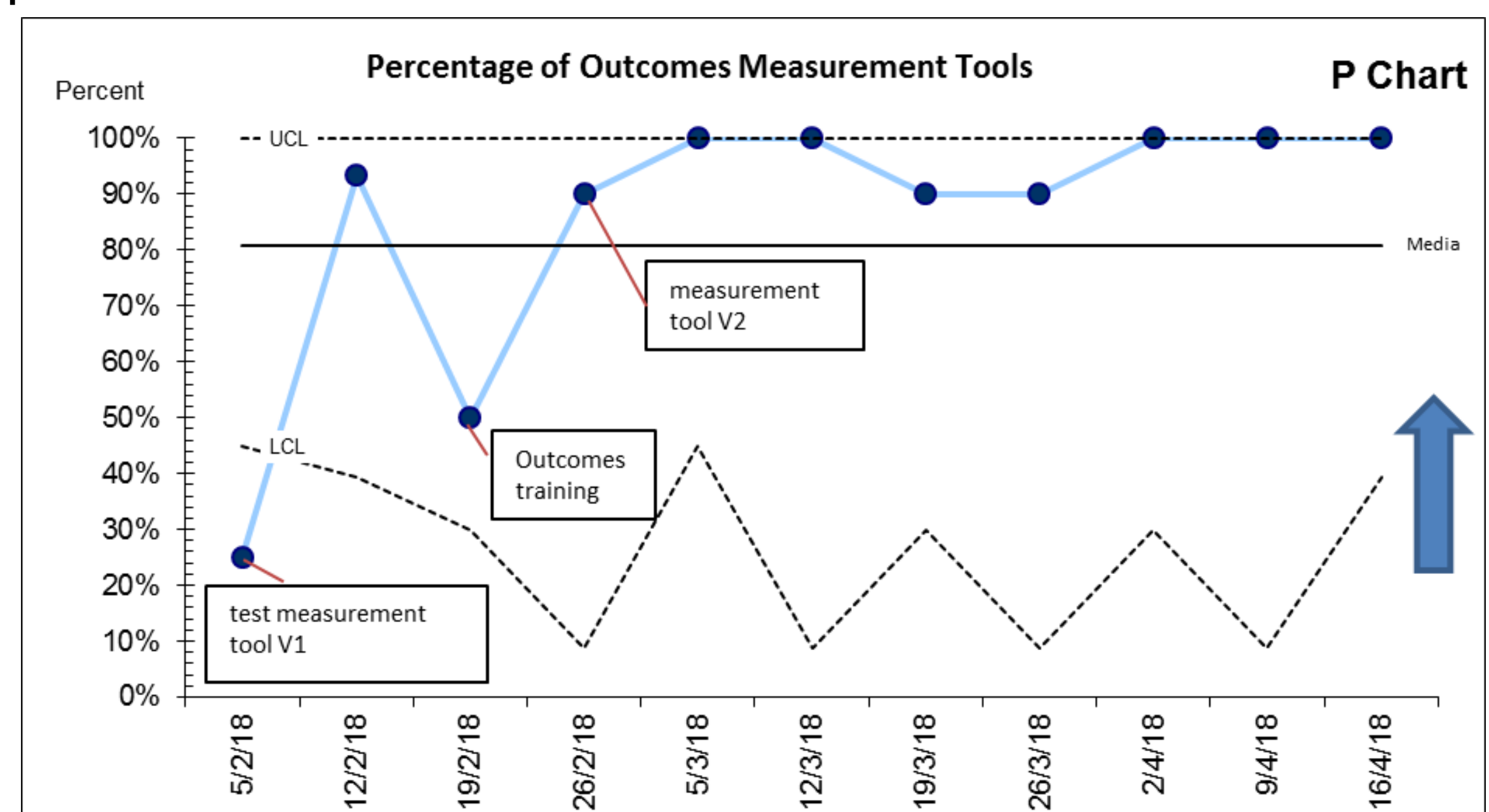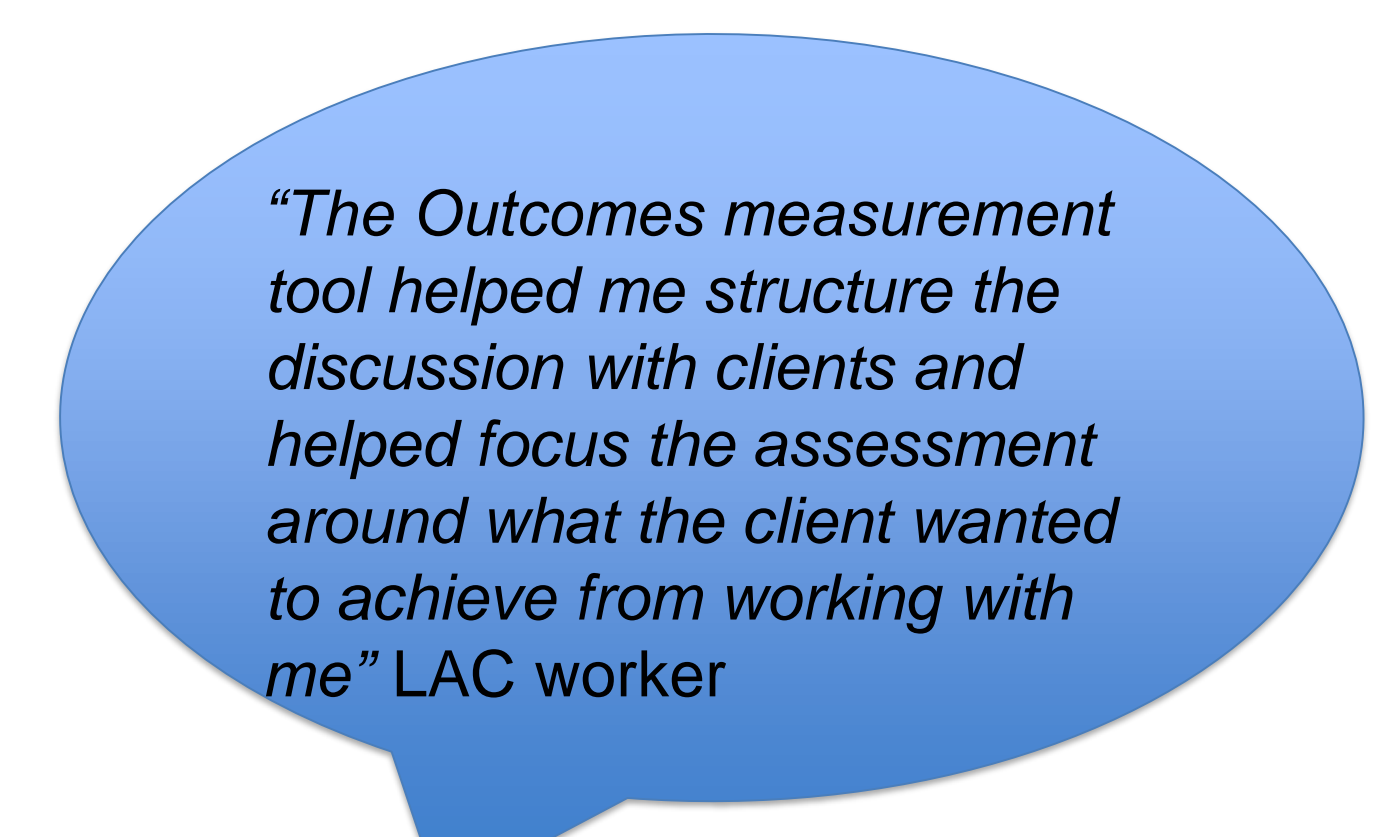

Conclusion

The project has had positive outcomes for both staff and clients. The aim of the project was achieved with 100% (against the 80% target) of the appropriate clients completing the outcomes measurement tool with their worker.

"Using this helped me see how things had improved since I started working with (LAC worker)" Client feedback

"The Outcomes measurement tool helped me structure the discussion with clients and helped focus the assessment around what the client wanted to achieve from working with me" LAC worker

Key Learning Points

This was the second project undertaken as part of the ScIL course. The first failed mainly due to lack of staff engagement, the success of this project was as a result of positive engagement with a staff group who sit within my line management responsibilities. It highlighted the impact people can have on the process of change. Understanding motivational value systems enabled me to adapt my approach which in turn supported a positive outcome.

Achievements

I have faced many challenges throughout this course and I'm proud to have overcome these and completed a successful project! I have enjoyed moving from using the acronym PDSA to fully understanding the process and look forward to putting my learning into practice within Mental Health Services.

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