



Interprofessional Learning Unit 3

Group Number: 11

Confidentiality has been respected throughout this work and no names of people or places have been included

This essay is entirely our own work

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the project, undertaken over a two week period on behalf of a local council in the South of England, was to carry out an analysis of the specialised bus service provided to transport learning disabled people to six local day centres, focusing on the opinions of those learning disabled people using the service ("service users"). To maintain anonymity, the routes and day centres are not referred to by name in the Report, but instead as Routes/Centres A, B, C, D, E and F. It was envisaged that the findings of the project be used in conjunction with the results of previous research carried out by the local council, in order to improve the specialised service. The project team was comprised of nine final year students from various health and social care professions.

2.0 METHODS

The analysis was to be carried out by interviewing service users, and a convenience sample of fifty-two service users had been identified prior to commencement of the project, based on ability to communicate and give informed consent. Following consultation with a group of learning disabled volunteers from a local self-advocacy group and input from the local council's Learning Disability Modernisation Co-ordinator, the project team formulated an accessible questionnaire in line with local council guidelines. Relevant legal and ethical approval of both the project and the questionnaire was obtained prior to the interviews being carried out. Interviews were undertaken at each of the six day centres on a one-to-one basis, with questionnaires remaining anonymous. Formal consent was obtained from each service user prior to being interviewed and confidentiality and disclosure regulations were observed. The report also recognises the limitations of the project.

3.0 RESULTS

Fifty of the original fifty-two service users identified were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 52% were pleased with the service provided, with 78% identifying

it as the most convenient method of attending their day centre and 26% stating they felt they would need an escort or someone to drive them if they were not able to use the current service. Nearly half (44%) liked the fact that they could meet with their friends on the bus. Concerns raised included the behaviour of other passengers, people not wearing seatbelts, bullying and buses running late. Whilst 72% were pleased with the drivers, there was concern that frequent changes in drivers caused late or missed pickups and unfamiliarity with the routes. The main suggestion for improvement was the provision of escorts to help reduce noise and bullying by other passengers and to provide assistance to service users if required.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the majority of service users were happy with the service, key concerns related to the behaviour of other passengers, safety issues concerning the wearing of seatbelts and drivers' unfamiliarity with routes. The main recommendations for further practice therefore focus on these concerns. It is also recommended that a further analysis be carried out to include those service users excluded from this analysis due to communication limitations.

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We would like to thank all volunteers, service users, local council staff and other persons who assisted with this project. Without your contribution we would not have been able to undertake the analysis of the specialised bus service and produce this Report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project

The aim of the project was to critically analyse the specialised bus service provided by a local council within the South of England to transport people with learning disabilities to their day centres. The project focused on the direct opinions of those people utilising the specialised bus service, referred to as 'service users' throughout this Report.

The time assigned to the project was two weeks, allowing the team to make a brief analysis of the current specialised bus service. It was intended that some robust recommendations and points for further investigation would be formed during the project via use of steps one, three and four of the 'Plan, Do, Study and Act (PDSA) Cycle' contained at Appendix 1 (Common Learning, 2008). The project also allowed team members to build on some of the essential inter-professional skills learned during Inter-professional Learning units 1 and 2. In addition, members of the group were able to gain a basic understanding of the needs of people with learning disabilities and the current issues surrounding this area of health care. Both of these elements of the project would enable the team members to return to their relevant areas of practice after the project with an improved and more rounded knowledge of their potential client base (National Health Service Plan 2000).

1.2 Background and Rationale

'Learning disability' is a term used to describe a number of intellectual disabilities. A learning disability is not an illness but it may mean that the person cannot learn as quickly as a person not affected by a learning disability. A person with a learning disability may also have difficulty communicating (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2007).

Within this particular locality a public bus service runs along some of the same routes as the specialised bus service. As well as gathering service users' opinions on the specialised bus service, the project considered why service users felt unable to use the public bus service. Mencap (2008) states that in order to promote independence, choice and opportunity, people with a

learning disability should have the option of using public transport in the way that a person without a learning disability can. Prior to the project, no research had been carried out within the project locality to demonstrate how the service users felt about the specialised service, making this project highly relevant and one that falls in line with the Mencap (2008) recommendation of ensuring that transport services are meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities. The results from this project can be used in conjunction with previous research carried out by the local council in order to improve the specialised service provided.

In 2001 the Department of Health published a white paper entitled 'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century' (DOH, 2001). This set out Government plans to assist children and adults with learning disabilities to live full and independent lives in the community. One of the pivotal elements of the project undertaken by the group was to investigate whether transport services in the project locality were in keeping with this. The project was person-centred and the recommendations made arose directly from data collected from service users. Rights, independence, choice and inclusion lie at the centre of service development for people with learning disabilities in the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (Office of Public Sector, 2005).

1.3 The Project Group

The inter-professional project team was comprised of nine final year students, predominately unknown to each other, from various health and social care professions, only two of whom had previous experience of working with people with learning disabilities. Interprofessional working requires various health and social care professionals to work together for the benefit of the client (Pollard et al, 2005). In order for the group to develop in the short space of time and identify their individual roles within the team, the project facilitator arranged for some 'ice-breaking' and self-perception analysis activities to be carried out (Thomas, 2004). In addition to this the group developed some ground rules to set out acceptable conduct within the team (Jaques and Salmon, 2007).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Search for Similar Investigations

A search performed using the Cinhal database and Google to see if there had been similar investigations carried out revealed that within other localities the partnership boards have service users as members, which is how they are informed of service user needs and what their services are based on. However, there was no evidence found of investigations in which a larger population of service users were directly involved.

2.2 Sample Selection

Prior to the start of the project, the managers from each of the six day centres involved identified a sample of fifty-two service users to take part in the investigation. This accorded with Denscombe's recommendation (2007) that a sample size of above thirty be used, as a larger population is less likely to bias the result. The service users agreeing to take part were sent an accessible letter explaining the nature of the project. After consulting The Practical Guide to Sampling (National Audit Office, n.d.), it was established that a convenience sampling method had been used to select the service users. Age, gender and ethnicity were not a selection factor. When choosing the identified sample, the centre managers identified an exclusion criterion which eliminated any service users that did not have the capacity to answer questions and give informed consent. This was in accordance with both the Department of Health document 'The Research Governance Framework' (DOH, 2001) and the Mental Capacity Act (DOH, 2005).

2.3 Design of the Questionnaire

The group's remit was to formulate a questionnaire designed for service users with a learning disability. The questionnaires were to be completed by informal interview, on a one-to-one basis and in a semi-structured manner due to the client group identified (Parahoo, 2006).

Group members had little or no previous experience of working with people with learning disabilities. However, the facilitator provided an education

session and team working activities which involved a group of learning disabled volunteers from a local self-advocacy group. This improved the group's ability to communicate with this client group more effectively and in addition, assisted with the formulation of the questionnaire.

The group spent considerable time thinking about what questions to include in the questionnaire and were assisted by the local council's Learning Disability Modernisation Co-ordinator. The style and size of font used followed guidelines researched and developed in conjunction with Mencap (Fontsmith, n.d.) to aid legibility for service users. The group used the local councils' approved version, which had been adapted to minimise cost. It was essential to word the questions so they were not leading and consequently the questionnaire contained a majority of open questions (Parahoo, 2006). It was decided that the questionnaire would be carried out as a discussion with the service users, with the intention that the answers would be person-centred. In addition, the questionnaire was produced in accessible format to facilitate the service users' understanding of the questions. The questionnaire produced is contained at Appendix 2

2.4 Interviews

Prior to the interviews, it was established that each day centre had private rooms in which the interviews could take place. The group took into consideration the impact of the interviews and the possibility that service users may become distressed and it was decided that trained day centre staff should be on hand to answer queries and offer support to the service users following their interview, if required. Some group members suggested it may be beneficial to have the volunteers from the self-advocacy group sit in on the interviews. However, this suggestion was not adopted, as the volunteers would not be available to attend all the interviews and the group decided this may introduce a further bias to the analysis.

2.5 Ethics

Prior to the project the group's facilitator was required to seek approval from the local project sponsor for an Interprofessional group to carry out the

investigation. The questionnaire and the process of the investigation were given legal approval by the local Research Governance Officer and an independent National Health Service peer assessor in line with the Research Governance Framework (DOH, 2001).

The students were all CRB checked and a copy of the form was provided to the group facilitator prior to carrying out the interviews. In addition, the students were required to familiarise themselves with local council policies regarding conduct, confidentiality and data protection and sign a confidentiality and conduct declaration.

This Report is bound by confidentiality in line with The Data Protection Act 1998 and individual professional codes of conduct (DOH, 2003). For this reason, service users' answers were anonymised. The nature of the project and confidentiality of the Report were explained to the service users prior to gaining verbal informed consent and they were assured that their information would be kept confidential. However, service users were advised that if they disclosed any information that raised concerns for their safety, the information would have to be reported to a trained member of staff. The service users were also advised they would be free to stop the interview at any time.

It is worth mentioning here that there was in fact a disclosure incident raised during one of the interviews. The incident was managed appropriately as above and subsequently reported as an adult protection issue.

2.6 Limitations

As previously mentioned, the group had limited experience of communicating with people with a learning disability. Due to time constraints, only service users with capacity were identified to take part in this investigation. This was acknowledged as a random bias and there was also an amount of unknown bias in the results due to prior selection of participants by day centre managers. However, one other potential source of response bias was removed by the fact that the group were independent assessors of the specialised bus service and were not affiliated to the local council. This meant

that participants could state their opinions freely and disclose incidents without fear of repercussion.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Questionnaires Completed

Fifty-two service users were identified as being eligible to take part in the analysis, 96% of whom completed the questionnaire. There were just two non-responders, one who had already completed the questionnaire at another centre, and the other who was about to go out with their keyworker. Non-response is therefore unlikely to affect the analysis.

3.2 Distribution of Interviews

Six routes were identified, all transporting service users from their home to the interchange, then on to one of the six day centres. The distribution of interviewees using each route is illustrated in Figure 1 below. All participants used the special bus frequently, with a mean of 3 days a week (Standard Deviation – 1.3 days).

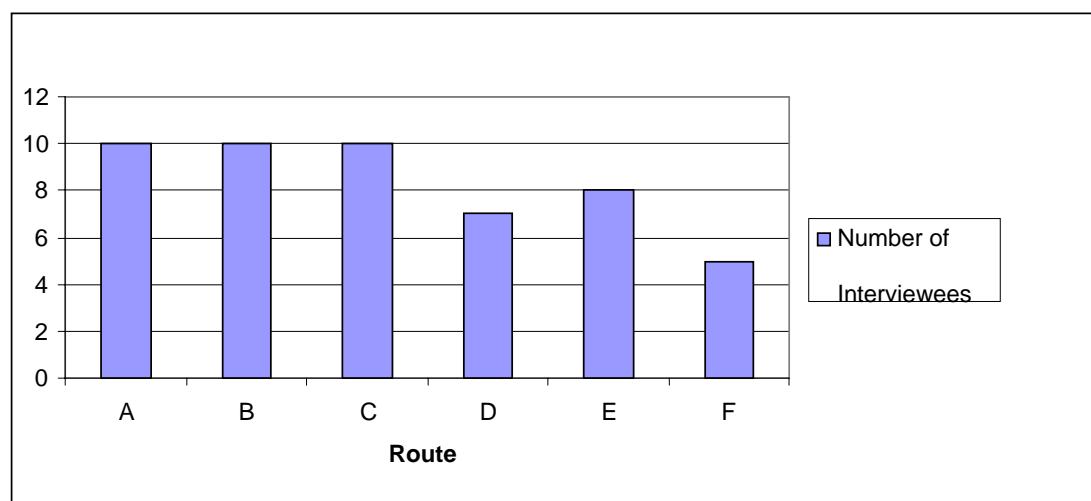


Figure 1: Distribution of Interviews

3.3 Views about the Specialised Bus Service

The majority of service users appeared to have a positive view of the specialised bus service, with 50% having no complaints, and 52% specifically mentioning how they thought it was a good or 'brilliant' service. This contrasts with the findings of the 'Survey of Adults with Learning Difficulties in England' (DOH, 2003/4) which looked into service users' satisfaction with general buses that are used by all members of the public. That survey found that one in three (37%) said they had trouble using public transport and over one in four (29%) said they did not feel safe using public transport.

As shown in Figure 2 below, main positive points raised by the service users of the specialised service were meeting friends on board (44%) and that it provided a comfortable (18%), safe (14%) and convenient (14%) journey. The more negative aspects raised (shown in Figure 3 below) mainly related to the conduct of other passengers, with 28% worried about shouting on the bus and people not wearing seatbelts provided (14%). Buses not running to time was also a fairly common problem, experienced by 16% of service users. Bullying was especially prominent on Routes B and C, raised by 40% and 30% of service users on these routes. This needs to be further investigated with a larger sample size to find out if it is a statistically significant finding.

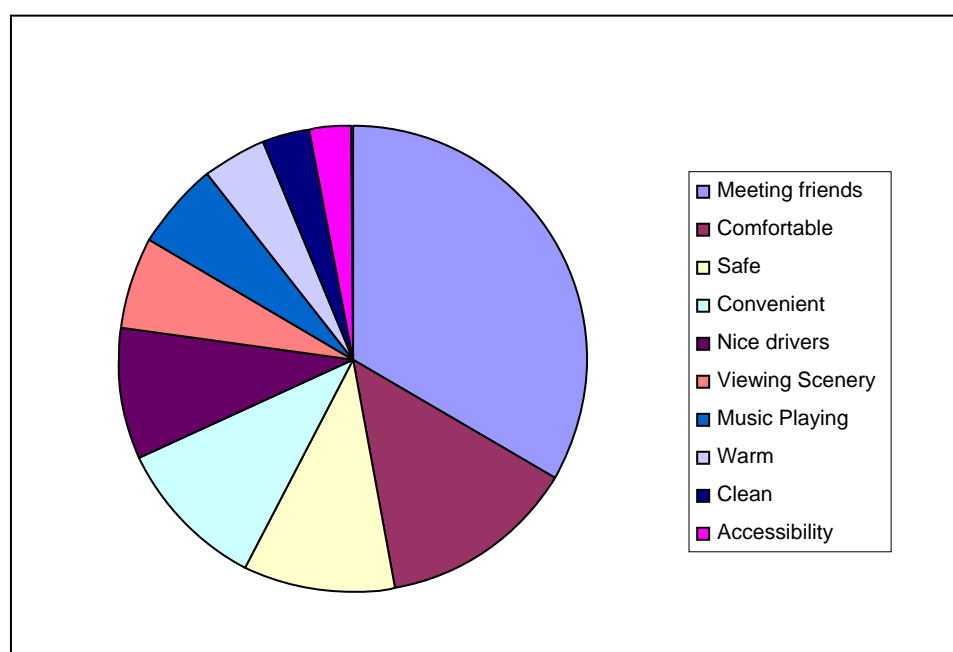


Figure 2 : Positive Points Raised about the Specialised Bus Service

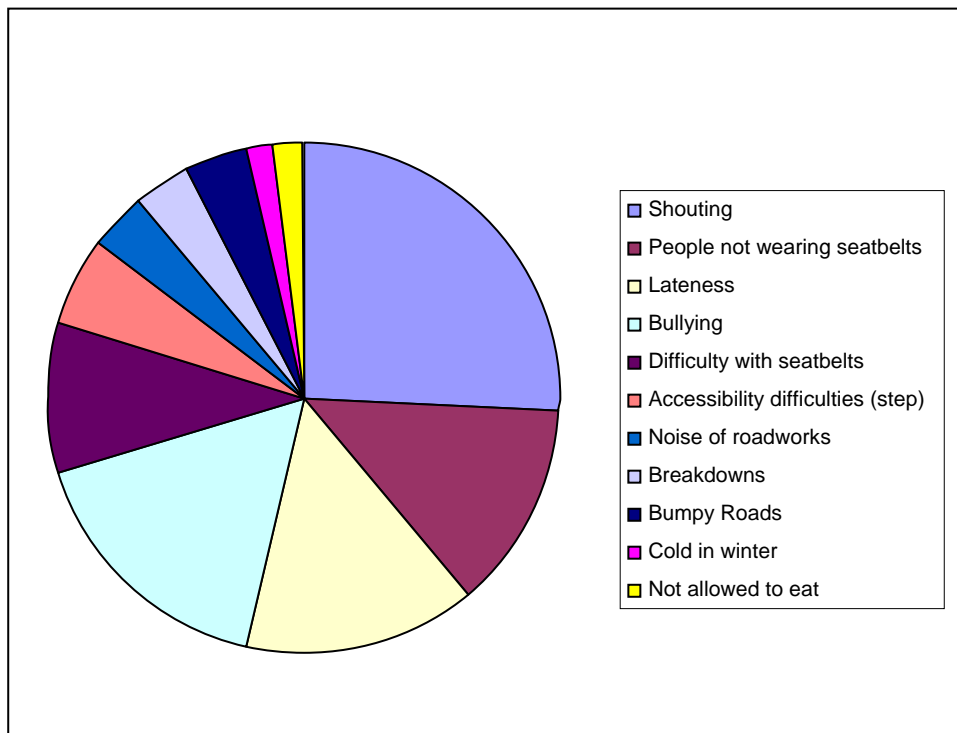


Figure 3: Negative Points about the Specialised Bus Service

3.4 Views about the Bus Drivers

There was a very positive view about the drivers, with 72% of users volunteering that they were friendly, and 74% having no complaints. However, service users from centres C and D said they were frequently inconvenienced by the numerous changes of driver on their buses (raised by 47%). This was felt caused problems both with lateness and missed pickups due to lack of driver familiarity with routes and several service users found the variability confusing. The latter response is not surprising, considering people with disabilities such as autistic spectrum disorders and Asperger's Syndrome often have a strong preference for routine (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2008).

3.5 Suggestions for Improvements

In terms of suggested improvements, the only consistently raised suggestion was to provide escorts (18%). Service users felt that this would help reduce the noise level on the bus, minimise bullying and provide assistance with

seatbelts. This was also identified as a key area for change by a local consultation report conducted earlier in the year (Local Council, 2008).

3.6 Reasons for Using the Bus Service

The majority of service users interviewed (78%) identified the specialised bus as their most convenient method of getting to and from day centres. Whilst only 6% said that they were unable to use public buses at all, many others said they would need to rely on an escort or someone to drive them if they were not able to use the specialised bus service (26%). This is significant, as independence and autonomy are well known issues of importance to people with learning difficulties (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2008). Data also suggests that improvements in transport significantly contribute to improved quality of life and higher usage by people with learning disabilities (DOH, 2005). It is therefore vital to act on the findings of this Report, and continue to improve the local specialised bus services.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

The group's analysis of the specialised bus service found that the majority of service users interviewed were happy with the service provided, with most having no complaints. This is in accordance with the findings of a previous review carried out by the local council, which noted that the majority of service users had few worries about travelling on these buses.

In terms of what service users liked about using the buses, many shared the view that taking the bus provided key opportunities to meet and socialise with their friends. This is a positive response to the Government's call for individualised services which help people develop social skills and the capacity to form friendships and relationships with a wide range of people (DOH, 2001).

Many service users also had a good impression of the bus drivers, describing them as friendly and helpful. There were no complaints about the cost of the buses (at the moment, they are free of charge for people with a learning

disability), a problem previously highlighted by the BILD review. This reflects an improvement in terms of changes being made since the last review on transport services for people with learning difficulties.

As mentioned above, the majority of service users surveyed had no complaints but certain issues were raised, primarily in the form of safety (seat belts, bus being driven too fast), as well as a non-conducive environment on the bus (bullying, noisy passengers). While seatbelts are available on these buses, it would seem that some passengers do not adhere to the rule of wearing seatbelts throughout the bus journey. Furthermore, bullying (mostly by other service users) as well as passengers being too noisy can be very intimidating for some service users. There are worries that these behaviours may distract the bus driver whilst driving, or that people not wearing seatbelts may be injured in the event of an accident.

Additionally, certain service users using the specialised bus on routes C and D reported that temporary bus drivers were not familiar with the route to passengers' houses and that the employment of new temporary drivers sometimes confused the service users.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made, taking into account the opinions and suggestions of the service users interviewed:

- It is felt certain issues require immediate attention and action, with regard to the safety of service users on the specialised buses. The introduction of escorts to ensure that seatbelts are worn by all service users and help control unruly behaviour is recommended. This echoes suggestions made by carers of service users, as reported in a previous local council review.
- It is suggested the local council repeat this analysis within the next twelve months, to include those service users excluded from the present analysis due to limitations of communication e.g. utilising trained independent interviewers fluent in alternative methods of communication such as Makaton or sign language.

- More handles should be introduced on the buses for easier access by service users who do not have good mobility. Again, this was a point reported in the local council's previous review. Easy accessibility is crucial for a safe and comfortable journey for service users.
- Bus drivers should familiarise themselves with their route prior to picking up service users, to help prevent any unnecessary delays to the journey. New drivers should also introduce themselves clearly to the service users, and reassure them of the journey/route being taken. Although there were many positive reviews on the drivers, some were noted to be grumpy - bus drivers should therefore make a conscious effort to consistently provide service with a smile.
- It is suggested that subsequent to implementation of these recommendations, an audit be carried out to review the effectiveness of the changes to the specialised service. This should ideally be carried out within twelve months from introduction of the changes.

In summary, it is envisaged that the results of this project be used both as a framework for further investigation and in conjunction with findings of previous research carried out by the local council. This is with the intention of addressing the issues raised and improving the specialised bus services for service users and staff.

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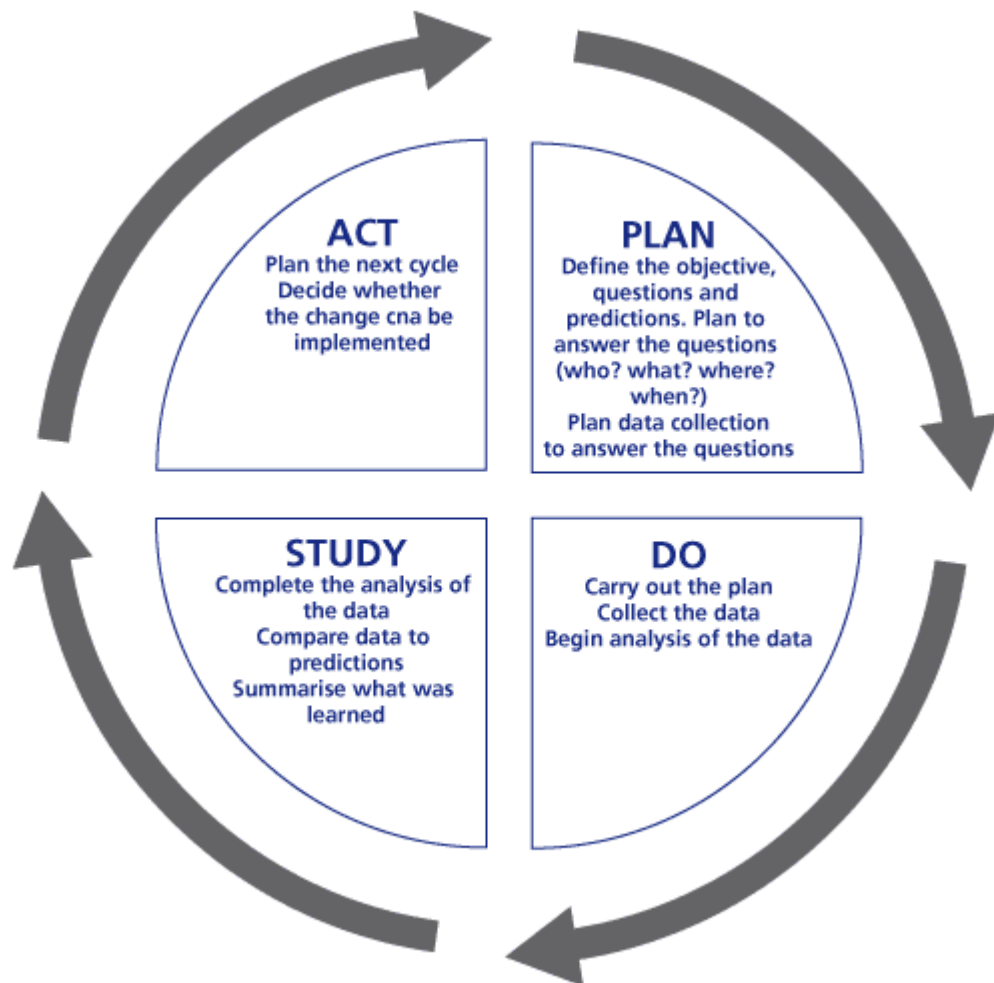
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APPENDIX 1

THE PDSA CYCLE

The PDSA Cycle

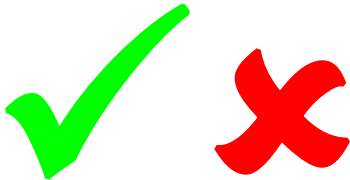




APPENDIX 2

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

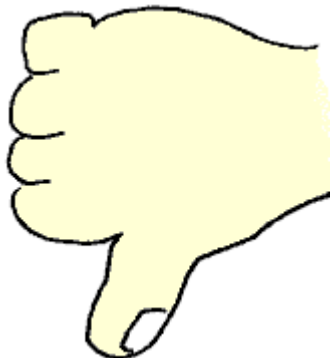
*** Bus Questionnaire

Place identification.....

	<p>Formal consent given? <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Confidentiality & disclosure explained <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Do you use the *** bus?</p>
	<p>Where did you first get on the bus today?</p>



What do you like about being on the bus?



What do you not like about being on the bus?



What would make going on the bus better?



Tell me about the bus driver



Why do you use the ***bus?



Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the *** bus