

# A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care

## Supporting the Government's three shifts

## Introduction

Adult social care is key to achieving the Government's shifts from **hospital to community**, **sickness to prevention** and **analogue to digital**. The Workforce Strategy created by the sector under the leadership of Skills for Care sets out a plan for the social care workforce over the next 15 years that contributes directly to these shifts and the creation of a National Care Service.

The Workforce Strategy also supports economic growth and the Government's drive to Get Britain Working. The sector's 131,000 vacancies on any given day – and the 540,000 extra posts we'll need by 2040 – represent a significant number of opportunities to get people into work and increase the sector's economic contribution, which is already £68.1 billion a year. Effective social care also supports economic activity by reducing the number of people who have to leave work because of health issues themselves or to care for loved ones.

The Strategy supports the Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunities too, by enabling greater access to training and qualifications – and supporting equality in the workplace.

The Workforce Strategy has recommendations for action by the Government – along with many others – that will help it achieve its priorities. Recommendations primarily for Government are indicated below with a blue bullet point (■) and recommendations that require some form of Government action with a yellow bullet point (■). Many of these are low-cost. And public support alone for the Workforce Strategy from the Government will increase its impact at no cost, by encouraging adoption of recommendations by lever-owners outside Government.

In a sector that is dispersed in terms of over 18,000 separate employers providing care in 40,000 locations – and also in terms of where the levers for action sit - there is no 'magic bullet' to quickly bring about lasting change. This kind of change will only be possible with sustained action and, crucially, the right building blocks in place first.

Having the right infrastructure in place to support the workforce is key – along with the right standards for the workforce. These building blocks will enable better, faster and more consistent scaling to achieve lasting change.

The recommendations and commitments on the following pages, which specifically support the three shifts, therefore need to be underpinned by action on the Strategy's broader recommendations, including:

- A legislative mandate for workforce planning
- A central body to drive this
- Government leading joined-up, consistent action on pay

# Hospital to Community

## How does the Workforce Strategy support this?

Social care is community support. By providing assessment, planning, support services, coordination, monitoring and advocacy, social care empowers people to keep or regain their independence, improve their well-being and live fulfilling lives in the community.

The move from hospital to community cannot happen without effective social care, delivered by a skilled, well-staffed and valued workforce – which the Strategy is designed to enable.

## What needs to change?

- Government, Integrated Care Systems and health systems all need to better understand and value the role of social care in supporting this shift. This will help drive collaboration over competition, which will support integration in practice.
- Funding needs to flow from health to social care, or directly to social care, to recognise the changing expectation and role of social care and allow it to deliver the potentially seismic shift from hospital to community. We can't keep adding tasks to social care without paying for them, because the sector is unlikely to be able to absorb them.
- We need a better understanding of the growing and changing needs of our population – and to link that to the capacity and skills of the workforce. For example, we're expecting a 43% increase in the number of people with dementia in England by 2040 – and this is just one example. So we'll need to focus on building different skills in the workforce. We have to improve our long-term planning for changes to the needs of the population and the workforce needed to meet those needs.
- We need to invest in the capacity of the social care workforce to meet increased expectations. This means more people with specialist skills - including nurses and nursing associates - to oversee and drive increased delegation of healthcare tasks, more occupational therapists and allied health professionals in the community - and more social workers to carry out more assessments and ensure the right support is in place. This growth in capacity will need to vary between areas depending on the needs of the local population. For example, we'll need more additional capacity in coastal and rural areas than urban areas.

## Key recommendations and commitments supporting this shift

### Attract and retain

- Attract more social workers and occupational therapists
- Attract and retain more registered nurses and nursing associates working in social care
- **Completed commitment:** Public health training resources

**Train**

- Delegated healthcare activities
- Expand skills through the Care Workforce Pathway
- Train and develop social workers
- Invest in training and development for occupational therapists
- Train and develop registered nurses working in social care
- Support new managers, occupational therapists and social workers
- Develop Directors of Adult Social Services
- Ensure high-quality training

**Transform**

- New roles
- Attract workers to social care in coastal and rural areas
- Support ICS workforce planning

## Sickness to prevention

### How does the Workforce Strategy support this shift?

Social care plays a central role in prevention - especially tertiary prevention - for the people it supports, who often have significant health needs. Social care:

- supports people with existing conditions or disabilities to manage their needs, manage medication, prevent further deterioration, and improve their quality of life through personalised care for managing health needs, preventing complications and promoting independence;
- supports reablement to help people regain lost skills and independence after an illness, injury, or hospitalisation;
- supports people to access community resources and support, which can reduce social isolation and improve mental well-being;
- helps people to access adaptations to make their living environment safer and more accessible, preventing falls and promoting independence.

When social care supports people to live better, it reduces escalating need, provides more appropriate early support and reduces the number of people needing NHS treatment.

The workforce in social care is core to supporting the shift from sickness to prevention. The Workforce Strategy is designed to enable effective social care, delivered by a skilled, well-staffed and valued workforce - with the skills and time to support people before their needs escalate.

### What needs to change?

- Government, Integrated Care Systems and health systems and leaders need to better understand and value the role that social care plays in prevention. This will enable social care to do what it does best to support this shift, by driving collaboration over competition.
- More of a focus on prevention in how services are commissioned.
- We need to support the workforce to develop new skills to be able to support prevention to its full potential – and we need new roles to support this.

### Key recommendations and commitments supporting this shift

**Attract and retain**

- Attract more social workers and occupational therapists
- Attract and retain more registered nurses and nursing associates working in social care
- **Completed commitment:** Public health training resources

**Train**

- Delegated healthcare activities
- Expand skills through the Care Workforce Pathway
- Train and develop social workers
- Invest in training and development for Occupational Therapists
- Train and develop registered nurses working in social care
- Support new managers, occupational therapists and social workers
- Develop Directors of Adult Social Services
- Ensure high-quality training

**Transform**

- New roles
- Attract workers to social care in coastal and rural areas
- Evaluation of current research priorities and funding in adult social care
- Support ICS workforce planning

## Analogue to digital

### How does the Workforce Strategy support this shift?

Digital transformation of adult social care is crucial for achieving the shift from analogue to digital in the NHS, for several interconnected reasons:

- **Integrated care and data sharing:** Digital transformation in social care promotes the adoption of common data standards and interoperability with NHS systems, ensuring that information can be easily shared and accessed across the care continuum. If the

NHS is digitally enabled and social care isn't, transitions between providers, hospitals, GPs and others are more difficult and less safe.

- **Improved efficiency and effectiveness:** Digital tools can lead to streamlined processes, freeing up care workers to focus on care, support and prevention. They can also give better insights into trends, patterns and areas for improvement in social care delivery, leading to more effective and targeted interventions.
- **Enhanced quality of care:** Digital systems can support the development of personalised care based on needs and preferences, promoting independence and well-being and preventing escalating needs. Digital technologies - such as telehealth and remote monitoring - can enable people to receive care and support at home, improving their quality of life and reducing the need for hospital admissions.
- **Futureproofing:** Digital solutions can help the social care sector manage increasing demand for services, particularly with an aging population.

The Workforce Strategy supports the integration of digital technology, data, and AI into care to improve both quality and efficiency. It will enable the sector to attract digitally skilled workers and train existing staff in the effective and ethical use of these tools. All of this will lead to better care for individuals and better value for taxpayers.

## What needs to change?

- We need more digital skills in the workforce than we currently have - and new roles focusing on technology.
- Training providers and assessors need new capabilities to meet the changing needs of social care, including being able to assess digital skills.
- There needs to be better interoperability data across health and social care - and between care providers - and we need to develop skills in the workforce to use it to its full potential.
- Commissioning needs to change so that, where appropriate, technology is commissioned rather than care packages.
- Pockets of effective existing innovation need to be identified and scaled up for the benefit of the whole sector.

## Key recommendations and commitments supporting this shift

### Attract and retain

- An attraction plan with people with digital skills as an area of focus

### Train

- Expand skills through the Care Workforce Pathway
- Develop Directors of Adult Social Services
- Support new managers, occupational therapists and social workers
- Overhaul apprenticeships
- Ensure high-quality training

**Transform**

- New roles
- Evaluation of current research priorities and funding in adult social care
- Expand digital skills training
- Support ICS workforce planning
- **Commitment in progress:** Pilot a Care Technologist role

## Further information

If you'd like any further information on the Workforce Strategy, please contact Skills for Care's Workforce Strategy Implementation Unit at ASCworkforcestrategy@skillsforcare.org.uk.