

# Skills for Care's response to the COVID-19 crisis facing adult social care

July 2020



We focus on the skills and development of the sector, nothing is more important to us than those working at all levels in social care being and feeling valued, and having the right skills to meet the care and support needs of people.

We want those who work in our sector to see what a great job it is, be developed and stay working with us. We also want to continue to support and develop those who have supported people throughout this crisis building a stable, confident and skilled workforce for the future.

**Our focus has been to pre-empt, listen and respond swiftly to the needs of employers.**

## The adult social care workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic

Alongside colleagues from the NHS, the 1.49m people working in social care in England have been central and critical to the country's response to the pandemic. Supporting people in residential services and in their own homes and communities by providing clinical care, help with personal tasks, being a vital link with the outside world, and keeping people safe and well.

Analysis of our workforce data shows the impact of COVID-19 on [vacancy](#), [sickness](#), new starters and turnover rates. As of May 2020:

- **The sickness rate is 8% of days lost compared to 3% usually.**
- **Vacancy rate drops from 8% to 6.5% during COVID-19 outbreak.**



## Our response

### Partnership and insight

Engagement, insight and partnership are the foundation of our rapid response. Our partnerships with sector stakeholders, our workforce development forum, board and fellows, our direct relationship with thousands of employers and managers, our ability to synthesise intelligence from the sector and our continued commitment to listen, has informed our response to the crisis from day one. This insight and evidence base will continue to underpin our action as we work to support the sector's reform.

### Using market intelligence and data

Each day, decisions have been made that will shape the future of social care. Data and insight are key to doing this well. We collect and analyse data on around 700,000 individual staff records.

Our robust data, intelligence and insight is used to influence policy, research and practice, influencing central and local government, HEE and academics. Many more access the analysis via our public visualisation which have been viewed over 100,000 times.

**Our future plans** include;

- Using data and intelligence to increase understanding of the scale, shape and value of social care services.
- Increasing use of [ASC-WDS](#) in the sector through improved user experience and unique features e.g. being able to benchmark key workforce metrics against similar care providers.
- Increasing the robustness of the data and intelligence we use to inform and evaluate our work.

## Going digital

We work with NHSX and other partners to deliver on the vision for digital transformation; to ensure access to digital solutions and to develop digital skills and leadership vital now and in the future.



- ✓ We used our data to improve access to key worker delivery slots for social care staff.
- ✓ We used our data to ensure that more care locations will get a broadband upgrade/internet connection offer.
- ✓ We raised awareness of how to respond to COVID-19 using technology with our guidance 'Technology Solutions to CV19' published on [Digital Social Care](#).
- ✓ We helped reduce risk with a webinar on 'Safe use of Mobile devices in social care' in partnership with NHSX and O2.
- ✓ We encouraged the sector to access NHSmail to enable swift and secure information sharing.

## Our focus - Recruit

COVID-19 has impacted on us all at different times and in different ways. For employers, recruiting and retaining workers with the right values, and the ability to develop skills to meet the changing needs of people who need care and support, continues to be a priority.

Our focus is on providing support to managers and the workforce in the immediate term, whilst looking ahead to mitigate the risks to workforce stability.

**We've produced a suite of resources to support virtual recruitment that is safe, fair and values-based.**

### Rapid induction programme for staff and volunteers

We worked with the Department of Health and Social Care to confirm priority training during this period to ensure new workers and volunteers, key to the response, could gain the skills needed to support people. **Key statistics (up to 24 June 2020):**

Essential training page on our website had over **29,000 visitors**



Over **12,000 people** completed the volunteer, rapid induction or essential training programmes



The pandemic has sparked local innovation and new approaches to recruitment. It has confirmed for the public that the social care workforce is the bedrock of local communities, ensuring the wellbeing of millions of people.

**We will build upon this momentum, inform, influence and challenge to establish social care as an attractive long term career option.**

## Our focus - Develop

Managers have been overwhelmed by information. We have checked, refined and curated 100s of sources of guidance and shared this digest via our dedicated webpage and our enews going out weekly to over 22,000 people.

**The pandemic has changed what social care needs to be. This will require a workforce with new and different skills and capabilities.**



We produced webinars based on what people told us they needed. They have been downloaded 5,000 times.

- Essential Training
- DBS checks
- Human Resources
- Distance recruitment
- Attracting workers
- Safe recruitment
- Using technology to support your staff and each other
- End of life care during COVID-19
- Keeping your team motivated
- Dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on your staff
- Supporting people you care for through the use of technology
- NICE Guidance: Preventing infection and promoting wellbeing
- Managing bereavement

## Support for personal assistants and individual employers

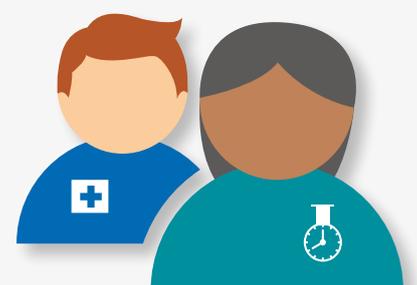
Around 75,000 individuals employ their own staff, and PAs make up 9% of the adult social care workforce. We have provided targeted communication, guidance and support:

- Online PA and individual employers hub updated with COVID-19 related guidance and support. Visits to the dedicated webpage increased by 687% during March and April.
- Ensured individual employers and personal assistants could take advantage of the COVID-19 essential training funded via the Workforce Development Fund.
- Engaged with local initiatives to identify what they were doing to support local PA recruitment initiatives.
- Increased collaborative working with DHSC, NHS England, In Control, TLAP, LGA and ADASS to inform guidance and Q&As for direct payment recipients.

## Support for regulated professionals

We have been the single point of contact for nurse returner deployment for social care.

We have ensured that the ASYE programme for both adult and children's social work can continue to support NQSWs 'on programme' and entering the workforce post COVID-19.



## Skills for the future

We want to ensure that learning and development is supported by a framework that reflects the diversity of social care provision, job roles, career paths and the range of skills needed to provide responsive care and support to people. We will do this through:

- Delivery of a curriculum of learning attached to a knowledge and skills framework – using lessons learned about how training is changing.
- Wider co-production on learning and skills framework with partners to ensure it reflects what the workforce needs.
- Work with Health Education England and the Department of Health and Social Care on development of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in Learning Disability and Autism.

## Our focus - Lead

In some areas the sector has innovated rapidly, leaders have forged new relationships and new ways of working.

**Integration and collaboration has been kick-started, and we will work with the sector to build on this, with a focus on ensuring that social care is recognised as an equal partner within the system.**



## Leadership and Management

We incorporated virtual action learning sets, facilitated peer support calls and expanded some to widen participation:

- **Graduate Management** – for graduate career-entry managers
- **Leading Change, Improving Care** – for registered managers
- **Nurse leaders** – for registered nurses in social care leader roles
- **Moving Up (BAME) leadership** – for aspiring senior leaders and managers from a BAME background
- **Collaborative Leadership** – for senior leaders and managers in commissioner and provider roles
- **Principal social workers/Occupational therapists leadership** – for senior leaders in social work and occupational therapy
- **Leading Together Across Public Services** – for senior leaders and new Directors in health and social care

## Support for registered managers

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented pressures upon registered managers, and Skills for Care has responded by offering the following support.

A dedicated COVID-19 helpline.

Supported Registered Managers Networks to provide peer support and share good practice. To date 89 virtual meetings have been held, with 1,094 attendees.

Our Facebook group for registered managers, currently has 1,848 members.

WhatsApp groups give quick access to peer support. 71% of networks have set these up, with over 2,000 registered manager members.