

## Making workforce support as inclusive as possible for care providers in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS have embraced the role of social care in workforce planning. This includes engagement with Skills for Care's locality manager, who has worked in partnership with the ICS for a number of years, sitting on the People Board and a number of its subgroups.

This partnership has resulted in relationship building across the system, workshops and events and increased engagement of care providers on a range of topics and initiatives. As a result, social care is included more effectively within the ICS's People Plan and has a greater degree of inclusion with a range of topics and initiatives established by the ICS. A number of these are explored below, with some key themes that have supported the development of integration work across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

### Include social care in recruitment of key planning roles

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS have a '[People Hub](#)' which works across the system supporting health and social care workforce recruitment requirements. This funded central hub enables a significant amount of resource to be dedicated to workforce matters. It creates more opportunities to look in depth at targeted issues (such as the marketing of roles) and to drive solutions and action.

Staffordshire and Stoke ICS have recently set up a Retention Team across health and social care. Skills for Care's locality manager in the region has been involved in the recruitment of this team, sitting on interview panels for the Retention Manager. The full team will consist of several Retention Coordinators, two of whom will be dedicated specifically to social care.

Active efforts are underway to recruit people with a background in social care. This is a welcomed step to ensure that social care is not an afterthought, but an integral part of the whole workforce planning. This is supported by a Retention Steering Group which is under the ICS but works in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council's workforce strategy to ensure plans are linked across the system. This group is looking at establishing a face-to-face event bringing people round the table to focus on solutions and ideas. It is proactively ensuring the voices of social care providers are represented in their work.

### School and university connections

To raise the profile of health and social care as a career, Staffordshire and Stoke ICS have supported a successful graduate scheme. They are working with local colleges to bring in young people to take part in the healthcare workforce. The placements available span both health and social care and have led to positive engagement of young people, which is a crucial element of future sustainability planning. Social care providers have been increasingly involved in this work, which is funded by the ICS.

This work takes place alongside the adoption of Skills for Care's 'I Care Ambassador' service which promotes social care across the region. Skills for Care are working with local schools and colleges to promote care as a career to young people. Virtual work experience placements have also been offered to people interested in starting a career in care, including a dedicated social care virtual placement in the past few months. Working with the ICS Careers Hub, some effective resources and a series of YouTube videos have been developed outlining career pathways in social care and showcase stories of people who have made use of the graduate scheme.

Social care partners have also been included in an ICS-funded mentoring programme established with Derby University for the healthcare workforce. Under the programme, managers from either health or social care will mentor individuals who can come from any part of the system while they undertake a small project. The cross-sector mentoring will mean people are exposed to a wider variety of relationships and jobs across the system thanks to social care's involvement.

### **Inclusive marketing**

The Local Wellbeing Hubs across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have developed a unique offer for social care, including specific support sessions being made available for the social care workforce. There are regular links between the Wellbeing Hub and the registered managers network, and the Skills for Care locality manager is on their steering group, which informs the direction of this offer for social care.

To ensure that social care is fully involved in the Wellbeing Hubs (including during their Wellbeing Week in April), Skills for Care have been engaged to feed into the marketing for activities, ensuring that it is not too exclusively health focused. The Hub team have also directly engaged registered managers networks and visited care organisations individually. This is to ensure people are aware of the support the Hub can offer, while offering bespoke sessions for staff. This has been immensely positive, and they are now beginning to hear feedback about the difference the support has made to care managers and staff. The Hub's understanding of the importance of recognising Social Care Day of Remembrance led to them having a stand in the local market which they marketed widely to attract as much engagement from both care and health partners as possible.

Elsewhere across the system, funding has been allocated by the ICS for learning and development and training opportunities for the health and social care workforce. They have a raft of opportunities available to social care but identified that take up by this section of the workforce was limited. As such, work is underway to pull together all the different training opportunities across the system in a central directory developed in conjunction with the Staffordshire Local Authority Workforce Strategy group. If a provider wants to develop a senior carer on a streamlined career pathway, they can easily find out what is available across local universities, colleges, Skills for Care, and Health partners (particularly the Midlands Health Academy) thanks to this central directory.

Skills for Care are among a number of partners working with the ICS to ensure the training offer is inclusive of social care. Language is a central component of this. Ensuring that wording does not just refer to health or clinical terms (for example pay bands), and that the branding used is not exclusively NHS.

### **Nursing Associates programme**

Nursing is a prominent role which operates across both health and social care. Staffordshire and Stoke ICS's Nursing Associates programme supports their ongoing focus on career pathways between the two sector areas.

The Nursing Associates Programme, which is an ICS offer, gives participants the chance to gain real insights into both NHS and care roles, particularly the number of different roles in care and nursing homes. This work has been developed with Health Education England and the ICS and includes linking local care providers to people looking for nursing placements as part of their training.

To date there have been seven placements successfully made and they are looking forward to beginning their placements later in the year. A number of care providers have engaged with this work thanks to social care levy funding and mentoring support available from the ICS. The manager of one provider even took part in a promotional piece with the [Nursing Times](#) to speak to the benefits of the programme in supporting service improvements and closing the skills gap between the registered nurse and healthcare staff.

**“It’s been really great to be involved in the recruitment of the new Retention Team, and to make sure that work across Staffordshire and Stoke to improve workforce retention includes a specific social care focus. Being proactive and solutions-focused is important, as is using every relationship and connection to get people on board with plans and initiatives!”**