

“Recognising the art of the possible” with Leeds Health and Care Academy

Leeds Health and Care Academy brings together the design and delivery of learning and development opportunities and collaborative workforce projects for all health and social care staff and organisations across the city of Leeds.

Inspired by the Leeds Academic Health Partnership, the Academy is co-funded by five partners within the ICS: NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and Leeds City Council.

The Academy encourages and facilitates collaboration and breaks down barriers between the city's health and care organisations, including primary care, hospital services, voluntary and community services, local authority and independent providers, and educational institutions.

The Academy team have found that fostering a sense of shared purpose and accountability has helped to unite its partners, and worked to ensure that health and care initiatives across the city are truly inclusive and collaborative at every stage. As a result, they have seen working relationships, and communication and problem solving between different parts of the sector, flourish.

Embed codesign and coproduction from planning through ongoing delivery

The Academy was borne from a cross-city project (led by the Leeds Academic Health Partnership) to try and design what such a model could look like. Every organisation working in health and social care in Leeds was invited to take part in the design consultation process – bringing everyone from small VCS organisations to Leeds Teaching Hospitals (with over 20,000 staff) together to capture as many voices as possible.

Not only was the Academy model co-designed in its inception, but it continues to be guided by several thematic advisory groups to constantly capture the priorities, feedback and wishes of people from across the system. Members of the Academy Leadership Team also routinely attend representative forums such as Leeds City Council's Providers Network, where they present to, and engage with, their ICS counterparts on shared topics such as workforce development or skills.

Social care and health partners are therefore directly involved in developing plans, and the Academy team dedicate resource and time to understanding the different priorities, concerns, and goals of their partners which drive the direction of initiatives.

Encourage people to think beyond organisational boundaries

Leeds Health and Care Academy have been able to achieve greater engagement from a broader range of partners thanks to its careful positioning as independent from any specific partner within the ICS (as, though hosted by Leeds Teaching Hospitals, it reports directly to the city-wide Strategic Board). They have used this independence to build trust, act as a broker and independent advocate, and to encourage people to look beyond their organisational or institutional limits.

The Leeds Health and Care Academy's goal to recruit more people into the local health and social care workforce aligned with the city-wide objective to enhance the life experiences and employment opportunities of those in the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Building on an earlier pilot aimed at getting more people into the Teaching Hospital staff team, the Academy were able to establish a clear programme of values-based hyper-local recruitment by breaking down organisational barriers.

By engaging with targeted local communities and identifying people's individual interests and obstacles to employment, the Academy could remove practical barriers such as transport and training by galvanising other organisations and parts of the system – for example, working with local colleges to support people to gain English language qualifications where this is a requirement for a role.

By dedicating time to building relationships and brokering solutions, the Academy team have facilitated the 'blurring of boundaries' between different organisations, parts of the sector, and types of care setting to build a strong 'talent pipeline'.

This targeted recruitment strategy has proved enormously successful in expanding and diversifying the health and care workforce across both parts of the system whilst also narrowing local health inequalities:



148 individuals have achieved an accredited qualification through the Talent Hub.



146 people, 58% of whom were previously unemployed, have been supported into six different roles across five different organisations in the local health and care system.



After 12 months, an amazing 95% of those supported into employment were still in post.

Encourage a sense of shared ownership and accountability

To enable people across Leeds to maximise their opportunities for health and social care training, the Academy recently introduced the **Leeds Health and Care Learning Portal** – an open access training platform which anyone can access for free if they work or volunteer in a health or care role in Leeds. The portal enables people to search, access and apply for a range of opportunities from e-learning to virtual and in person training opportunities and to learn alongside colleagues from other organisations.

From the outset of the idea, the Academy were committed to making sure the portal felt as though it *belongs* to all those in the Leeds health and social care landscape, and is not something that is part of a system that people are 'allowed' to access. They consulted extensively with people who deliver and use training to understand how best to ensure the portal met their needs.

The open-access, free platform can be accessed by individuals in their own time which removes several barriers identified by the Academy team through their co-design consultations:

- People do not need to rely on being told about opportunities by their managers or their wider organisation.
- People do not need to rely on an @nhs email address (thus making it more inclusive for those in social care organisations who are less likely to be NHS employees).
- People do not need organisational log-ins.

- Accessing the portal at any time means there are fewer issues with needing to secure cover (and backfill payments) for staff looking to take part in virtual training opportunities.

The Academy identified that many of these barriers are typically more common for those in social care roles than those in health systems, and so the co-designed approach has directly enabled greater inclusion of care partners.

Enabling open access for everyone in health and social care to benefit from the portal was not a simple task, but the Academy remained committed to overcoming technical barriers that could have otherwise created inequality of access by:

- Dedicating significant time to running a stringent selection process for a digital partner to help them to build the portal. The partner was selected based on their understanding of the values-based approach and importance of making the platform as inclusive as possible.
- Maintaining an unwaveringly strong sense of values which overrode practical and logistical barriers.
- Reviewing carefully all language used across the portal, and in the way the portal is promoted to ensure it is relevant to different types of partner. Training opportunities should be easily understood and accessed by those across various different parts of the system, and so should not be solely NHS focused – for example talking about standardised grades.
- Adopting a tenacious approach to ‘getting it right’ and being prepared to make bold decisions, repeatedly trying new ideas and testing new solutions.

Feedback from those using the portal both to share and access learning and development opportunities has been overwhelmingly positive from across the sector.

Embracing the sharing and transfer of skills

The Leeds Health and Care Academy recognises the importance of reducing the idea of competition between health and social care organisations looking to recruit. They promote the idea that recruiting and upskilling people into the health and care system in any organisation ultimately goes towards the goal of meeting the needs of the people living in the community. To encourage these collaborative recruitment practices, the Academy has established a cross-city working group to identify opportunities and coordinate representation at recruitment fairs.

The Academy has developed a collaborative apprenticeship programme for Community Care, through which an integrated cohort can receive third-party training together. The Academy is now seeking to enhance this unique approach to integrated training by coordinating rotational placements that allow clinical and care apprentices to experience the full range of health and social care provision.

Leeds Health and Care Academy’s collaborative approach to workforce capacity planning extends beyond training to account for collective and agile resourcing.

The Academy has developed a voluntary Staff Portability Framework, which operates across the city. Through this model, health and social care professionals can be deployed to another employer for a short period of time whilst they are employed by another partner in the city.

Doing so removes traditional bureaucratic barriers and enables providers to respond to critical service needs and shifting demands. So far, 30 partners have signed up to the scheme, including all three Leeds NHS Trusts, Leeds City Council, the GP Confederation, as well as multiple GP Practices and voluntary organisations.

Communicate directly with individuals

Leeds understands the importance of demonstrating the relevance and benefits of The Academy for those working in health and care roles across the city. To reach more people, and share opportunities more widely, the Academy team have adopted a direct approach to communications.

Placing a growing emphasis on targeted social media has enabled the Academy to share opportunities directly with staff in individual organisations rather than waiting for a cascade from senior management or those individuals who are particularly involved in ICS initiatives.

Creating a visible offer that people can see and access directly removes barriers to cross-organisation engagement. To further ensure that partners from across the city feel encouraged to engage with cross-sector opportunities, the Academy also advises on communications including job adverts, health and wellbeing services and training opportunities to ensure they use inclusive language. Doing so allows every part of the Leeds Health and Care Partnership to understand and access listings, and avoids ascribing a dominant representation to either health or social care within the system.

The Leeds Health and Care Academy also benefit from their representation on the ICS' People Board, and on the Providers Network. In these settings, the Academy team maintain a focus on sharing relevant information and opportunities which align with the attendees and their chosen topic of discussion rather than giving a general overview.

“From the beginning of our plans for a Health and Care Academy, we asked ourselves ‘what *can* this achieve?’ It’s about recognising the art of the possible”.