

# **Impact evaluation of Skills for Care**

2018/19 – 2020/21

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## Executive Summary

Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for social care in England and a delivery partner for the Department of Health and Social Care. The organisation works with social care leaders and employers, the Government, and partners across the social care system, to respond and adapt to the emerging trends and needs within social care, using data and evidence to drive forward widescale change.

Skills for Care has a unique role which includes:

- **Workforce planning** using data and evidence and working with partners to make sure that social care attracts and recruits the right people and builds the workforce for the future.
- **Defining good practice standards** for skills, knowledge, competencies and behaviours in social care, including influencing the curriculums and provision of learning and development.
- **Developing the learning market:** Skills for Care supports the learning market so that there is high-quality learning and development available to support skills, knowledge, competencies and behaviours to ensure high quality care and support.
- **Workforce development:** Skills for Care encourages employers to continue to provide high-quality care and support by developing the skills, knowledge, competencies and behaviours of their workforce; responding to emerging trends, understanding the support that exists and working with all parts of the sector to encourage high-quality care and support through on-going learning and development.

Skills for Care takes a collaborative approach to its work. By working with their partners, Skills for Care has access to an array of expertise, support, and influence, which in turn increases the impact and reach of the work they do.

Skills for Care is committed to being transparent, evaluating and capturing the outcomes and impacts of its work. As part of this commitment, Care Research was commissioned to conduct an impact evaluation of Skills for Care's activities between 2018/19 and 2020/21. This involved a meta-evaluation and economic analysis of programme and project evaluations and programme output data as well as an examination of the expenditure, income and business planning information available.

This report presents findings from the impact evaluation on:

- the outputs achieved, for example the number of employers worked with, the number

of employer assists provided and the number of qualifications, learning programmes and digital modules provided

- outcomes assessed including:
  - increases in the skills of social care leaders, workers, and potential recruits to social care
  - improvements in the quality of care
  - employment outcomes
  - improved workforce retention
- the range of stakeholder priorities that have been met through Skills for Care activities and programmes
- the longer-term impacts these outcomes lead to, for example improved productivity in the adult social care sector, reduced levels of skills gaps, reduced vacancy rates and increased health and well-being for the social care workforce and people who need care and support
- the value for money and return on investment (RoI) that these outcomes and impacts represent for its funders
- the role Skills for Care played in generating change and further activity elsewhere in the sector.

Throughout the three-year period, Skills for Care has worked and maintained engagement with around 55% of care providing locations<sup>1</sup>. In the 2020/21 year, Skills for Care worked with at least 21,000 employers. However, the specific reach of individual programmes varies considerably. There is still a sizeable section of the workforce who are not currently engaging with any Skills for Care activity. This is partly linked to the Skills for Care budget which averages around £34 million per year across the 2018/19-2020/21 period.<sup>2</sup> This equates to around £20.60 per worker in the sector<sup>3</sup> which will limit the number of employers that Skills for Care can meaningfully and effectively work with.

The findings of the meta-evaluation demonstrate that, across the individuals and organisations Skills for Care did reach and work with the vast majority reported positive experiences and outcomes that benefited the sector as a result of their involvement with Skills for Care and their programmes. Evaluation reports from 53 different Skills for Care projects/programmes indicated that employers, workers, and potential recruits to the social care workforce who have participated in Skills for Care activities, either receiving direct services or through funded workforce development or other activities, had experienced a range of positive outcomes. Outcomes included an improvement in the

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<sup>1</sup> Data provided by Skills for Care

<sup>2</sup> Information gathered from the Skills for Care Annual Financial Reports

<sup>3</sup> 1.65m workers within the sector according to Skills for Care (2021) The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England.

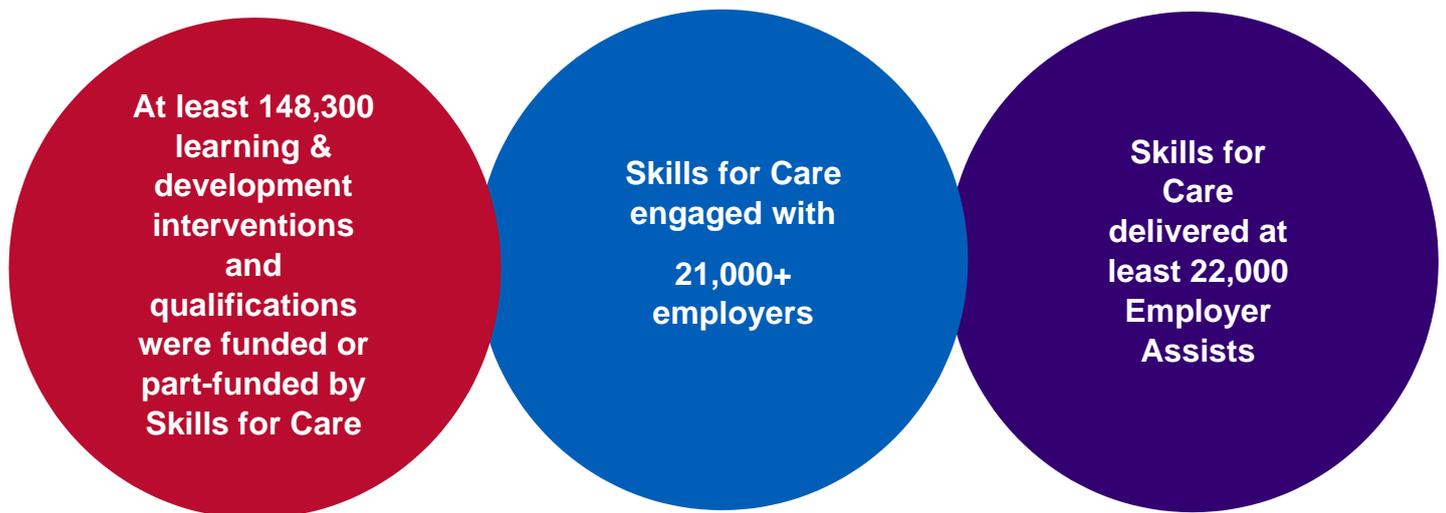
skills, knowledge and confidence of the workforce, from entry-level to senior leadership.

Overall, the evaluation has assessed that Skills for Care is economical, efficient, and effective with the service delivering good value for money for the adult social care sector. The ongoing challenges facing the sector as a result of COVID-19 and Brexit further highlight the importance of the work Skills for Care does for the sector and the relevance of continuing and increasing the funding Skills for Care receives.

Skills for Care hopes to continue to target and maximise its impact through its new strategy, 2021/22-2024/25, which was launched at the end of the three-year period this evaluation covers.

### Outputs 2018/19 – 2020/21

The infographic below shows the key outputs delivered by Skills for Care, supported by the Department of Health & Social Care and other funders, over the period.<sup>45</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, output data was only available for 2018/19 and 2020/21. However, we were also able to combine the available output data with the data collected through the Workforce Development Fund across all three years. As a result, the output data below is likely to be a significant underestimate of Skills for Care's outputs between 2018/19-2020/21.

<sup>5</sup> An employer assist is defined as either £250+ of funding support or 2+ hours of consultancy support. Not all employers assisted over the three years will have been unique employers.

## Outcomes

The work funded or delivered by Skills for Care has benefitted employers, social care workforce staff and potential recruits to the social care sector in several ways:

- Skills for Care has provided bespoke intelligence and data to allow over 20,000 employers to make better strategic decisions about their organisations and workforce.
- Skills for Care responded swiftly and effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic, developing alternative training approaches (which led to a significant increase in online modular programmes completed with over of 61,000 people completing Skills for Care training in 2020/21) and providing bespoke training and research to support and inform the sector.
- Over 50,000 learning and development programmes and digital modules were completed by social care staff as a result of Skills for Care activity (including but not limited to disbursement of DHSC funding), increasing the skills and confidence of social care staff participants.
- Over 6,750 leadership and management programmes have been completed which have supported managers to develop their leadership skills and develop their capacity to coach and support staff.
- Skills for Care has focused on providing innovative responses to problems facing the sector using evidence and testing practical approaches. It has supported over 150 employers to be innovative themselves (primarily through the Workforce Development Innovation Fund and the Integration & Innovation Fund<sup>6</sup>) and to sustain that innovation, where external circumstances do not provide a barrier.
- Potential recruits to the social care sector have gained both accredited and non-accredited training and qualifications alongside employment through Skills for Care's programmes. Skills for Care programmes have supported over 220 people to join the social care workforce, including individuals designated as 'hard to reach' and in long-term unemployment.

Overall, the programme evaluations and other supporting evidence demonstrate that Skills for Care has consistently delivered programmes that meet recognised

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<sup>6</sup> This was a major funding programme from Health Education England in Kent, Surrey & Sussex, and was disbursed by Skills for Care.

needs in the sector. Programmes have consistently had a positive impact upon the individuals and organisations that participate and, by extension, those who receive care. Programmes are innovative, responsive and developed with central aim of meeting the needs of the sector. Across the 18 evaluated programmes, we identified nine different types of outcomes achieved by Skills for Care:

**Increase in leadership skills** - Skills for Care has supported those in leadership roles (including Registered Managers) to further develop their skills and their capabilities and capacities as leaders.

Evidence of impacts included:

- In the Leading Change Improving Care (LCIC) programme, comparisons of pre- and post-programme surveys demonstrated that progression was made in all seven measures of self-belief, confidence, and knowledge. The area in which there had been greatest progress was 'knowledge of how to use peer coaching to find collaborative solutions to improvement challenges' with post-programme self-assessment scores rising by 1.5 points on a seven-point scale. The second greatest area of progress observed was in 'knowledge of how to use coaching skills in my leadership practice' with post programme self-assessment scores rising by 1.27 points.
- In the Rapid Response Action Learning Sets project, all the respondents found Action Learning Sets useful with two-thirds of respondents at the time of the follow up survey (n = 11) finding them very useful.
- Those in the Registered Managers' Supported Year pilot reported improvements over the year in their management skills with 94.1% of participants surveyed stating that they 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' that they had had enough opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the programme.

**Social care workforce skills increase** - Skills for Care has supported people who are employed in the social care workforce (non-leadership) to develop their skills and grow in their capabilities to effectively support people and provide care.

Evidence of impacts included:

- Across all three Workforce Development Fund streams, increases in staff knowledge, skills and confidence were reported. For example, 95% of employers supported by the mainstream fund said it had improved the skills/qualification levels of their staff team. 85% of employers supported by

the fund also stated that the fund had addressed the most pressing skills gaps in their organisation. As a result of this, 84% of employers stated that they had become more interested in staff training and 83% of employers stated the support from the Fund had increased productivity.

**Increasing the skills of potential recruits to social care** - Skills for Care has enabled individuals who are not currently employed in the social care workforce to develop their skills and find out more about the opportunities and career pathways available to them in the social care sector.

Evidence of impacts included:

- Four-fifths of Seeing Potential participants (n=246) received non-accredited training as part of the programme.
- Participants in projects funded through the Integration Innovation Fund increased the skills needed to secure and sustain a job in social care and increased confidence and empowerment.
- Graduate learners across all three cohorts on the Integrated Graduate Management Programme for health and adult social care showed an increase of 2.45 points on the seven-point scale in the post-programme self-assessment of their knowledge of 'how to apply systems leadership to improve outcomes for people who need care and support'.

**Care service improvements** - Skills for Care has had a direct impact on care services which have demonstrated observable and measurable improvements following involvement with a Skills for Care programme.

Evidence of impacts included:

- Skills for Care delivered the CQC Working with Regulated Providers pilot. Four providers were re-rated during or after the pilot intervention, three services had an improved overall rating with two reaching a 'Good' rating.
- Of the 300 employers who responded to a survey about the Workforce Development Fund (Mainstream fund), 59% stated that the fund had 'significantly' improved the quality of care that they provide while a further 33% believed the fund had improved the quality of care provided 'to some extent'. Furthermore, 43% of employers believed the Fund had 'significantly' improved staff productivity while a further 40% believed the Fund had improved productivity 'to some extent'. Lead partners involved in the Fund were confident that accessing good quality training through the Workforce Development Fund can have a positive impact on Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings.

- Over the years 2017-2019 an average total of 83% of employers who responded to the survey about the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for social workers believed the programme had a positive impact on outcomes for people who receive care and support.

**Employment secured** - Skills for Care has enabled individuals to secure meaningful employment within the social care sector.

Evidence of impacts included:

- After completing the learning in the Sector-Based Work Academies for Personal Assistants, social care recruits, who had been claiming benefits before joining the programme, were estimated to be better off by a total of £538 each due to moving into employment with this saving continuing to grow exponentially if employment is sustained. 94% (n=15) of cohort 7&8 graduate learners on the Integrated Graduate Management Programme for health and adult social care said the programme was important or very important in securing employment. For Seeing Potential, the evaluation confirmed that completion of the Skills for Care funded programme had a significant impact on people finding employment. For every £1 that was invested in the Seeing Potential Programme there was an ROI of at least £2.31 to England's economy, due to people moving off benefits and into employment.

**Further funding secured** - Support from Skills for Care has enabled services to obtain further funding following involvement in a programme.

Evidence of impacts included:

- Ten percent of employers supported by the Workforce Development Fund stated that they had already applied for or accessed other funding while a further 39% stated that they were likely to apply for further funding in the future.
- One beneficiary of the Integration Innovation Fund secured £425,000 of lottery funding to sustain the project, which supported apprentices in social care.

**Enhanced sector recruitment processes** - Skills for Care programmes have supported services in helping them to enhance their recruitment processes.

Evidence of impacts included:

- The Sector-Based Work Academy Approach to the Recruitment of Personal Assistants led to Individual Employers (people who employ their own care and support) feeling more empowered to effectively resource, recruit and employ personal assistants.

- One notable example of the enhanced recruitment provided by this approach was that a vacancy that had been open for six months was filled as a result of the programme.

**Sector workforce retention** - Skills for Care has supported care services and Individual Employers to better retain their social care workforce.

Evidence of impacts included:

- 63% of respondents to a survey (n=40) about the assessed and supported year in employment for social workers (2018) stated that the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme 'had a positive impact on the retention of social workers beyond their first year'.
- 70% of employers who had been supported by the Workforce Development Fund stated that the support from the funded had improved staff retention. 28% stated the programme had 'significantly' helped them to improve staff retention.

**Skills for Care engagement** - There has been increased/targeted engagement with Skills for Care. Engagement is an enabler which allows Skills for Care to continue to deliver the outcomes above.

Evidence of impacts included:

- the Engage and Improve pilot included a postal and email campaign that then developed into a telemarketing campaign. In total, the project resulted in 153 managers from care providers rated as 'Requires Improvement' registering with the Skills for Care portal and 22 benefiting from a consultancy call from Skills for Care.

Many projects/programmes met multiple outcomes.

Alongside this, 12 programmes were commissioned across 2020/21 which were designated as COVID-19 activities<sup>7</sup>. These included the COVID-19 essential training, the learning digital module (root causes), the 'support recovery for the adult social care sector through delivery of team resilience' programme and the Black, Asian and ethnic minority background workforce recovery programme. The speed at which these programmes were devised and delivered, and the adaptations Skills for Care made to its current offerings during the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrate the understanding Skills for Care has of the needs

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<sup>7</sup> Evaluation Plan 2020-21

and challenges the care sector faces and its' capabilities to effectively support its workforce.

## Programme Beneficiaries

Across the 18 evaluated projects/programmes, four distinct beneficiary types were identified. These were:

- social care workforce
- registered managers
- services rated as 'requires improvement'
- prospective social care workforce.

Analysis of the evaluation reports demonstrated that the vast majority of Skills for Care's £21.9m expenditure was spent on programmes targeted at the social care workforce (£16.4m) with further £3.9m spent on programmes that focused on the prospective social care workforce. £1.7m was spent on programmes targeted at Registered Managers while a further £0.7m was spend on programmes targeted towards services rated as 'Requires Improvement'. A total of £1.6m was spent on beneficiaries designated as 'other'.<sup>8</sup>

## Stakeholder priorities

Care Research identified five separate stakeholder groups that were considered important to Skills for Care:

- Care providers
- The Department of Health & Social Care
- The Department for Education
- The Department for Work and Pensions
- The NHS.

In addition to these stakeholders' priorities, we also looked at long-term sector wide priorities.

It is clear from the evaluated programmes that Skills for Care consistently delivers programmes that meet several governmental stakeholder priorities. Skills for Care is a key strategic partner in delivering programmes and initiatives that support

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<sup>8</sup> Please note that, as multiple programmes met multiple beneficiary types, these expenditure amounts total to more than the £21.9m spent across the evaluated programmes. Please see the Skills for Care Key Outcomes and Expenditure excel document for more details and figure 4.1 for more details.

several government departments in meeting their national policy objectives.

## Impacts

The longer-term impacts of Skills for Care's work for the adult social care sector are harder to quantify and directly attribute to its work, given its size and the range of other factors that shape and influence the care sector. There was some evidence in the evaluations that Skills for Care's activities will have benefitted the sector by reducing skills gaps, increasing staff productivity through investment in workforce development and supporting services to recruit and retain their staff. Other impacts are harder to determine from the data available.

## Economic Analysis

Where the unit costs for activities could be calculated the unit costs appear reasonable for the activity provided, indicating that Skills for Care money has been spent economically and efficiently. Using the figures currently available, where economic benefits could be monetised, **the economic impact of Skills for Care activities is estimated to be almost £276 million during 2018/19-2020/21.**

Comparing the economic benefits generated to Skills for Care expenditure, where both data were available consistently, demonstrates a return on investment (RoI) of 3.43; that is, **for every £1 spent by Skills for Care, £3.43 of benefit is generated to the economy in England.** That means that **Skills for Care is more than tripling the value of the taxpayer's investment** in the organisation.

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