Like last year there is no doubt that 2014 will throw up huge challenges for our sector, but as I travel the country meeting employers, absolutely committed to developing the skills and knowledge of their teams, I think we are well placed to meet them.

If you believed all the media reports you’d be thinking adult social care routinely offers substandard care to the people we support but I know the exact opposite is true. In reality most care is offered to a very high standard by hard working people utterly dedicated to quality care. We can never be complacent as abuse does happen but it is rare and we have much to be proud of which we should be shouting from the rooftops.

If I ever needed a reminder of that then our annual Accolades awards does that and there is a full list of the finalists on page 6. The Accolades see the very best of our employers competing for a national prize rewarding their year round commitment to providing effective learning and development opportunities to their workers.
Last year I joined Twitter, which I must admit I was reluctant to do, but social media is a very effective way of communicating your ideas. That’s why we have revamped both our social media presence and redesigned our website to make it more user friendly. On page 7 you can find out more about the improvements which I hope will help accessing our products, designed to support your organisation, a lot easier.

But I know words are not enough which is why I’m proud we distribute the Workforce Development Fund on behalf of the Department of Health. Once again we have a record number of employers accessing that fund to support the qualification units their workers are doing. The Workforce Development Innovation Fund continues to encourage employers to think differently about how they deliver services. In this issue we look at how one of our employer led partnerships in Lancashire in using the fund.

Late in 2013 we launched the Social Care Commitment where employers and employees sign up to seven statements to show their commitment to learning and development. We’ve already got more than 400 employers who are putting those principles into practice in their own organisations and on page 12 you can find out what the commitment is all about and how it can help your organisation in a competitive marketplace.

My travels also leave me under no illusion how tough things are out there but I also remain convinced that the best way to future proof your organisation is continuing to invest in the training and development of your staff. It is not only the right thing to do for those you offer support to, and their families, but makes good business sense too.

If you believed all the media reports you’d be thinking adult social care routinely offers substandard care to the people we support, but I know the exact opposite is true. In reality most care is offered to a very high standard by hard working people utterly dedicated to quality care. We can never be complacent as abuse does happen, but it is rare and we have much to be proud of which we should be shouting from the rooftops.”

Sharon Allen
CEO Skills for Care
The Care Bill brings together existing care and support legislation into a single legal act with a new well-being principle at its heart.

There are major implications for the learning and development needs of the social care workforce.

In advance of the Care Bill coming into effect in April 2015, Skills for Care, in partnership with the National Skills Academy for Social Care and The College of Social Work, will be helping to identify and plan for the learning and development needs of the social care workforce in England.

This involves developing a programme that will identify what learning and development is needed to enable those working in adult social care to comply with the Care Bill requirements. It will look at whether changes are needed to existing adult social care principles, standards and qualifications.

From 3 March 2014 until 11 April 2014 we will be holding a nationwide consultation with employers and stakeholders.

For more information and to have your say visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/carebill
Backing our apprentices

Apprenticeships have been one of our sector’s success stories with more than 70,000 workers of all ages taking that route in 2012/13 joining thousands of others.

That’s why Skills for Care is throwing its full weight behind National Apprenticeship Week which is a celebration of the achievements of apprentices across England and adult social care has a great story to tell.

We are telling this good news story through a series of radio and bus advertising, national press coverage and video case studies.

Skills for Care’s Apprenticeship Programme Head Sue Smith, said: “Adult social care Apprenticeships have been a major success story on the national stage so Apprenticeship week gives us chance to thank all the employers who have made it happen and celebrate the achievements of our apprentices.

“Whenever I meet any of our apprentices I’m struck by their enthusiasm and dedication to their jobs so it’s not surprising that 72% of employers report Apprenticeships have had a positive impact on their organisations.”

To find out more about how to start an Apprenticeship programme or to expand your existing scheme go to www.skillsforcare.org.uk/apprenticeships
Congratulations to all our finalists for the 2013/14 Accolades

Best employer of under 250 staff
- Nina Clegg for Half Acre House
- Amber Trust
- Cherish Care for you and your Home Ltd
Thanks to our category sponsors: Care Management Matters

Best employer of over 250 staff
- Cornwall Care Limited
- Choices Housing Association
- Local Solutions
Thanks to our category sponsors: Connect2Care

Best individual employer who employs their own staff
- Mr Edwin Dalby
- Lisa-Marie Eastwood
- Mark Chipperfield ‘on behalf of the Jean Team’
- Val Longmore

Best provider of learning and development
- DH Associates Ltd
- St Luke’s Hospice Plymouth
- Tyne and Wear Care Alliance
Thanks to our category sponsors: National Skills Academy for Social Care

Best employer support for Apprenticeships
- Hertfordshire County Council – Workforce Development Team
- Oxfordshire County Council Health and Social Care
- St Mungo’s
Thanks to our category sponsors: Learndirect

Best employer support for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)
- Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight & Portsmouth (SHIP) Social Work Education Network (SWEN)
- Creative Support Ltd
- Hertfordshire County Council Workforce Development Team
Thanks to our category sponsors: The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Best recruitment initiatives
- Extracare Charitable Trust
- Greensleeves Homes Trust
- Mount Ephraim House
- The Westminster Society for people with learning disabilities
Thanks to our category sponsors: Aged Care Channel

Most effective new approach to service delivery
- Making Space Dementia Services
- The Abbeyfield Society, Browns Field House
- MacIntyre
Thanks to our category sponsors: Unique Training Solutions

Celebrating Success

Winners will be announced at our gala event on Thursday 27 March 2014 at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole.

Thanks to our event sponsors: ACTAN, FISSS, Guardian Jobs, The Grey Matter Group
Skills for Care website revamped

Skills for Care has launched a revamped website which has already attracted a record number of visits from across the adult social care sector.

Visit our new website at www.skillsforcare.org.uk

The new site has been redesigned to give it a clean and modern look, helping users to access and navigate through information much faster. A top-level drop-down navigation and accordion style left-hand navigation allows users to access the wealth of information on the site using as few clicks as possible.

Skills for Care’s video clips that promote social care as a rewarding career will be shown on rotating banner slides and visitors can now share any page to their favourite social network.

Pages have also been rewritten to provide a crisp, short summary of Skills for Care’s range of products and resources available with drop-down sections at the foot of the pages containing more detailed information.

Skills for Care is committed to meeting all web accessibility guidelines so the new site conforms to WCAG 2.0 ‘AA’ standards, which means it is accessible and usable for everyone who visits.

The site is now fully mobile responsive so it adapts easily to the vast array of devices and tablets used in adult social care.
Planning for the future

“We found that workforce planning has numerous benefits to the business. It gives us a competitive advantage over other care providers.”

Deirdre Charles
Manager, Muscliff Nursing Home, Bournemouth.

That’s a view shared by employers across England who effectively plan their workforce needs so they can deliver high quality care.

To help that process Skills for Care has developed a new range of resources. The Practical approaches to workforce planning guide and workbook offers a clear way for employers to develop a workforce plan using an easy to use Analyse-Plan-Do-Review approach. The free guide explains what workforce planning is, how it fits with workforce commissioning and how the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) can be used to support it.

The workbook, which costs £25.00*, builds on the guide, but includes key questions to answer, action points and recognised business tools and templates to take you through the workforce planning process.

To order visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforceplanningguide

*Introductory offer, limited copies available. Normal price is £27.50.

Safer recruitment was the topic at an employer event our London and South East team ran in partnership with Croydon and Bromley councils.

The session featured presentations from local authority adult Safeguarding leads and HR experts looking at links between unsafe recruitment procedures and safeguarding referrals, SCIE’s best practice recommendations, the importance of recruiting for values and some of the legal aspects around the recruitment of people working with vulnerable adults.

The Skills for Care team showcased how the Value-Based Recruitment Toolkit can help employers find the right people and the online screening tool ‘A Question of Care’ highlighted how these could be built into recruitment processes. Interactive group sessions offered an informal opportunity for employers to share existing best practice.

One of the highlights of the event was hearing from the Good Care Group, a provider of live-in care, who showed how they significantly decreased their turnover rates through a redesign of their recruitment and selection process.
College students from Sidmouth and Exmouth took part in an X Factor style TV show to help them understand the role of professionals in different care sectors.

The ‘Care Factor’ challenged more than 60 East Devon social care students to consider job roles in our sector and the personal qualities needed for quality care delivery.

The event was hosted by Simon ‘Scowl’ and Amanda ‘Golden’, characters based on the high profile TV presenters. The contestants were three care workers portrayed by actors both live on stage and in filmed scenarios screened to the audience.

80% of the students who attended found the event interesting and nearly three quarters are now considering a career in social care.
Supporting employers with the learning and development of their staff is critical – a crucial reason for the availability of the Workforce Development Fund (WDF) from Skills for Care.

This funding is accessed through a thriving network of employer partnerships across England and the Lancashire Workforce Development Partnership (LWDP) is one of the biggest, working with 275 organisations within the Lancashire, Blackburn, Blackpool and Bury areas.

“We hold events and conferences where we promote the Workforce Development Fund, along with the other services we provide as a partnership” says LWDP’s Lesley Bamber. “We work very hard to get more organisations involved with the funding and, this year, we have had an 18% increase in our membership – that’s 51 organisations, which is an indicator of that effort working, as employers want to fund the qualifications of their staff.”

“The WDF is a critical part of what we do so, without a doubt, it is a good way of developing the relationship with employers and enables them to link into our other services and products too. In terms of investment from the fund and providers investing in their staff, there is a direct correlation.”

Elaine Brady, Managing Director of Willowbrook, both a home care and training provider in Hyndburn, says the partnership is the best way for her to access the fund.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk
Significant funds have been disbursed this year to employers of different sizes through this partnership to help fund their training programmes.

“The partnership is brilliant because you have one port of call and the relationship is already built up,” says Elaine. “LWDP see us as a company that is transparent so they can see the money going back into our staff. It gives staff a sense of belief that they can do it and seeing someone gain a qualification who never thought they’d get one is great.”

For Brian Ryder from Napier Home Care who operate in both Blackpool and Garstang there is a strong business case for accessing WDF funding.

“Any company who can show high levels of training are obviously going to recruit better staff than one that isn’t,” observes Brian. “WDF has made a huge difference as all our staff now have training of some sort which provides confidence to the people they support because those carers know they have had the training needed to provide quality care.”

Elaine sums up in one simple sentence what the funding she draws down through the partnership means for employers like her - “It’s paramount.”

To find out more about the Workforce Development Fund visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdf
Making a commitment to quality

Hundreds of employers have already signed up to the Social Care Commitment designed to help improve the quality of care and support in our communities.

Employers and their workers sign up to seven statements, created in consultation with the sector, helping them to think about the values underpinning their services, backed by a range of easy to use online resources to help embed the commitment into organisations.

CareTech deliver 250 services across England and they were one of the first employers to sign up.

“We have been very supportive of sector initiatives and we felt it was important to get on board” says CareTech Group Learning and Development Manager Nigel Taylor. “If we are looking at defining quality, which can be subjective, our view is the commitment gives all employers statements we could all sign up to and commit to.”

Nigel secured the support of the CareTech board of directors before taking the first steps to embedding the statements in a national organisation with many sites.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk
“We took the whole of our support team, people involved in recruitment, our HR and training divisions out for two days to look at what was in place already, did it work and what we needed to do to make them fit the Social Care Commitment.”

One of the strengths of the commitment is it has been developed with busy employers in mind so the implementation process is designed to be easy.

“There is some crossover in the statements, but there are key values embedded through like dignity and safeguarding”, notes Nigel. “I think it’s great the sector has signed up to it and the numbers are looking good. It is very simple in how it is presented, a logical sequence and easy to understand language.

“CareTech believes in quality services so we have systems in place to ensure and check quality. The commitment galvanises our systems to make a clear set of statements. People who are joining us can instantly recognise what sort of organisation we are.”

“It’s in everyone’s interest that adult social care continues to become more professionalised so we can reduce our waste by recruiting the right people, therefore reducing cost, which will help create a consistency in the workforce and continuity of care.”
The leap from university to the frontline can sometimes be a tricky one for social workers. The Assessed and Supported year in Employment (ASYE) aims to help Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) make that transition by providing them with a bespoke support package and guaranteed time with their supervisors to discuss their progress.
Vickie Din works for the council’s forensic mental health team and she has benefited from ASYE support.

“As soon as I came here I felt very supported,” says Vickie. “I attended regular drop in sessions as part of the learning agreement, had weekly supervision, then two weekly then monthly which I found really helpful as it gives you some validation you are doing a good job.”

“It is useful to talk through your work with your supervisor and feel confident you are doing things correctly legally and ethically.”

Sarah Gibbons did her ASYE as part of the council’s mental health team.

“One of the things I found useful was having direct observations because as someone who has been around Nottingham Council for a few years I’d never had someone come out and give me feedback around my practice so I did find that really invaluable,” says Sarah.

“Having the service user feedback as well was really good as that gave me the confidence to think I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing.”

Nottingham’s NQSWs have the full support of Linda Sellars who is the council’s chief social worker.

“As a social worker it is important that your first year of practice is protected to a certain degree because it is about consolidating your learning on the degree and then moving forward to be able to work with the more difficult situations,” notes Linda.

“It is a way to ensure we maintain a good quality of social work and we are looking at expanding the concept of reflective practice, which is embedded in the ASYE scheme, with more experienced colleagues and those who don’t have the social work qualification. “Social work is a profession and in other professions they have first year practice that is assessed so the ASYE brings social work into line and helps professionalise social work which is important.”

That view is shared by Cllr Alex Norris, portfolio holder for Adults and Health at Nottingham City Council.

“The benefits of this programme work both ways. The newly qualified social workers feel supported and we gain people who have been encouraged to think critically and ask challenging questions about how the services they deliver could be improved.”
We had a theory that talking about powerful sporting memories could go a significant way to providing meaningful activities to improve the mental well-being of older people but the challenge was finding the right opportunity to test this out.

It was a programme that needed the social care sector thinking differently so we made a successful bid to Skills for Care’s Workforce Development Innovation Fund (WDIF) to test out our ideas with a group of care homes in Leeds.

We are now working with 50 organisations across Leeds, including care homes, day centres, neighbourhood networks and leisure services. A key development has been the implementation of regular action learning sessions with all participating organisations coming together so feedback, progress and ideas are quickly shared across the project.

These interactive sessions have proven to be particularly vibrant, with great energy and enthusiasm from everyone taking part, sharing their memories, and providing further motivation to the whole group.

The programme was independently evaluated which was valuable in developing and refining training to embed quality practice in individual care homes and how learning was shared across the project.

The next step for us was to test our ideas across a wider section of the social care workforce and some of this work has been supported through a further WDIF grant.

To find out more about the work of Sporting Memories or to see personal memories donated by world famous sports people like Formula One driver David Coulthard, Ryder Cup winning captain Sam Torrance and World 10,000 metres champion Liz McCoglan go to www.sportingmemoriesnetwork.com