



Impact evaluation of Skills for Care

2013/14 to 2017/18

Executive Summary

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Written by ICF Consulting Services Ltd

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Skills for Care is the employer-led strategic body for workforce development in social care for adults in England. It is part of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development.

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Executive summary

Skills for Care is committed to being transparent, evaluating and capturing the outcomes and impacts of its work. As part of this commitment, ICF was commissioned to conduct an impact evaluation of Skills for Care's activities between 2013/14 and 2017/18. This involved a meta-evaluation and economic analysis of programme and project evaluations, and an examination of customer satisfaction, expenditure and business planning information. The main objective was to fully explore the following question:

What difference does Skills for Care make?

This report presents findings from the impact evaluation on the:

- views from employers, staff and other stakeholders who have engaged with Skills for Care, on the quality of Skills for Care's work and its strategic role in the sector
- outputs, outcomes and longer-term impact of Skills for Care's activities between 2013/14 and 2017/18
- value for money and economic impact of Skills for Care's activity.

Skills for Care aims to create a well-led, skilled and valued adult social care workforce in England. It supports the sector in different ways, for example:

- providing a range of services, development programmes, tools and advice directly (which may be fully funded by Skills for Care, subsidised or directly paid for by employers)
- making grants to employers and other organisations to support workforce development (through qualifications or training) and innovation in the sector
- undertaking wider strategic activities designed to improve the sector (for example working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Work and Pensions to improve recruitment into adult social care, and managing the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC), developing data and intelligence relating to the current challenges and state of the adult social care sector in England).

While Skills for Care did not work with the entire adult social care sector, its reach remained consistent over the five-year period. Through its NMDS-SC, Skills for Care worked consistently with 55% of care providing locations, which by 2017 was over

22,000 care providing locations, including every local authority in England. However, the reach of different activities and programmes varied over the five-year period. There is a still sizeable section of the workforce not engaging with any Skills for Care activity. This is in part linked to the budget Skills for Care had (under £30 million per year, i.e. £14 per worker in the adult social care sector¹) which will limit the number of employers they can actively engage with.

Among those that Skills for Care did reach, the impact evaluation found that most who participated in evaluation activities had positive experiences, outcomes and perceptions of Skills for Care. Employers and staff who attended Skills for Care events rated Skills for Care, the services it provides and its strategic role in adult social care highly. Evaluation reports from a wide selection of Skills for Care programmes indicated that employers and workers who have participated in Skills for Care activities, either receiving direct services or through funded training or other activities, had experienced a range of positive outcomes. This includes an improvement in the skills, knowledge and confidence of the workforce, from entry-level to senior leadership.

Five evaluations indicated that Skills for Care's support led to an improvement in quality of care for people who need care and support and their carers. However, this was primarily reported by employers and staff who had participated in activities provided or funded by Skills for Care. Evaluations also indicated that Skills for Care had provided benefits for other stakeholders including commissioners, regulators, policy makers and local authorities by improving partnership working, facilitating easier data collection to assist in regulatory requirements, and contributing to the achievement of national policy goals (for example the take up of apprenticeships).

This evaluation assessed Skills for Care as economical, efficient, and effective, delivering good value for money for the adult social care sector.

Over the five-year period Skills for Care progressed towards achieving its overall strategic vision, through supporting the employers and staff it was able to reach. The steps towards achieving the strategic vision include:

Creating a confident, caring, skilled and well-led [adult social care] workforce
Examples of progress in this area include:

- *Confident:* Nearly two-thirds (64% of 123 responses) of registered managers surveyed said that they felt more confident about their role as a result of the Skills

¹ National Audit Office (2018) *The adult social care workforce in England*.

for Care registered manager networks. Sixty-eight percent (n=123) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident and prepared for CQC inspections.

- *Caring*: The Skills for Care Positive Behavioural Support/Autism Training fund helped organisations improve the quality of life for people they support through working together to improve their relationships, reducing their isolation, and reducing restrictive practices among other positive effects of the training.
- *Skilled*: The Skills for Care-funded Apprenticeship Ambition programme created new higher apprenticeship roles which upskilled the workforce. It enabled the first personal assistant (PA) to undertake a higher apprenticeship, to better support his employer. The apprenticeship enabled the PA to develop health monitoring skills and legal knowledge to prevent unnecessary trips to the hospital. He was able to think more scientifically about his employer's health requirements and to be more vigilant, which gave the employer greater peace of mind.
- *Well-led*: Leaders who participated in Skills for Care's leadership development programmes identified how the programmes had improved their abilities. One participant of the Moving Up programme described how it had helped them to better address difficult situations:

"... I was expecting resistance. I was confident though that I just had to bring people on board and that I needed to be as honest as possible. Explain to them that we needed to do this as a team. Explain why I needed to make changes – I knew I could get results if I had the right intentions. Before going on the course, I'd have been a one trick pony but now I knew that if I tried one leadership style and it didn't work then I would have others to try. I made everyone part of the decision making which boosted morale."

- Moving Up participant

Acting as an efficient and effective organisation

Skills for Care has made an important contribution to the sector, using its funding effectively and efficiently. Relative to the total number of people working in adult social care, it used a limited budget to achieve a good return on investment.

The overall finding of the impact evaluation is that engaging with Skills for Care has helped employers (including individual employers) and workers respond to challenges to deliver positive outcomes. Engaging with Skills for Care has also supported employers to improve recruitment and retention of staff, and to improve the quality of care provided.

What do people think about Skills for Care?

There was a high level of satisfaction with Skills for Care among the different employers and staff (including PAs) who use its products and services. Headline findings include:²

- there was a high level of approval of Skills for Care among event attendees –
 - **90%** of 1,281 participants surveyed at Skills for Care's events since 2016 were satisfied (44%) or very satisfied (46%) with Skills for Care's products and services
 - **90%** were likely to recommend its services to peers and colleagues.
- individual evaluations consistently reported that training and resources were either excellent or satisfactory, met participant expectations and made them want to attend future events
 - more than **90%** of 62 IEs (out of a cohort of 353) who responded to a survey regarding Skills for Care's Workforce Development Fund found the fund easy to access.

The wider strategic role of Skills for Care was very positively perceived across employers and staff engaged with their activities. Examples of this include:³

- Skills for Care is providing relevant and responsive services:
 - **84%** of 1,281 event attendees surveyed since 2016 felt that Skills for Care is responsive to employer needs.
 - **13** of 14 employers surveyed as part of the Apprenticeship Ambition programme felt that Skills for Care-funded apprenticeships met their organisational needs in terms of filling skill gaps and vacancies.
- Skills for Care has an important leadership role for the sector:
 - **83%** of 1,281 event attendees surveyed since 2016 agreed that Skills for Care is raising the profile of the social care sector.
 - **83%** felt it positively influences national and local policy and practice within the sector.
- Skills for Care is an evidence-based organisation that facilitates problem-solving in the sector:
 - **83%** of 1,281 event attendees surveyed since 2016 recognised the important contribution that Skills for Care makes to the social care research evidence base
 - **82%** agreed that Skills for Care bring partners together to solve problems.

² All percentages excluded non-response to surveys so that bases vary.

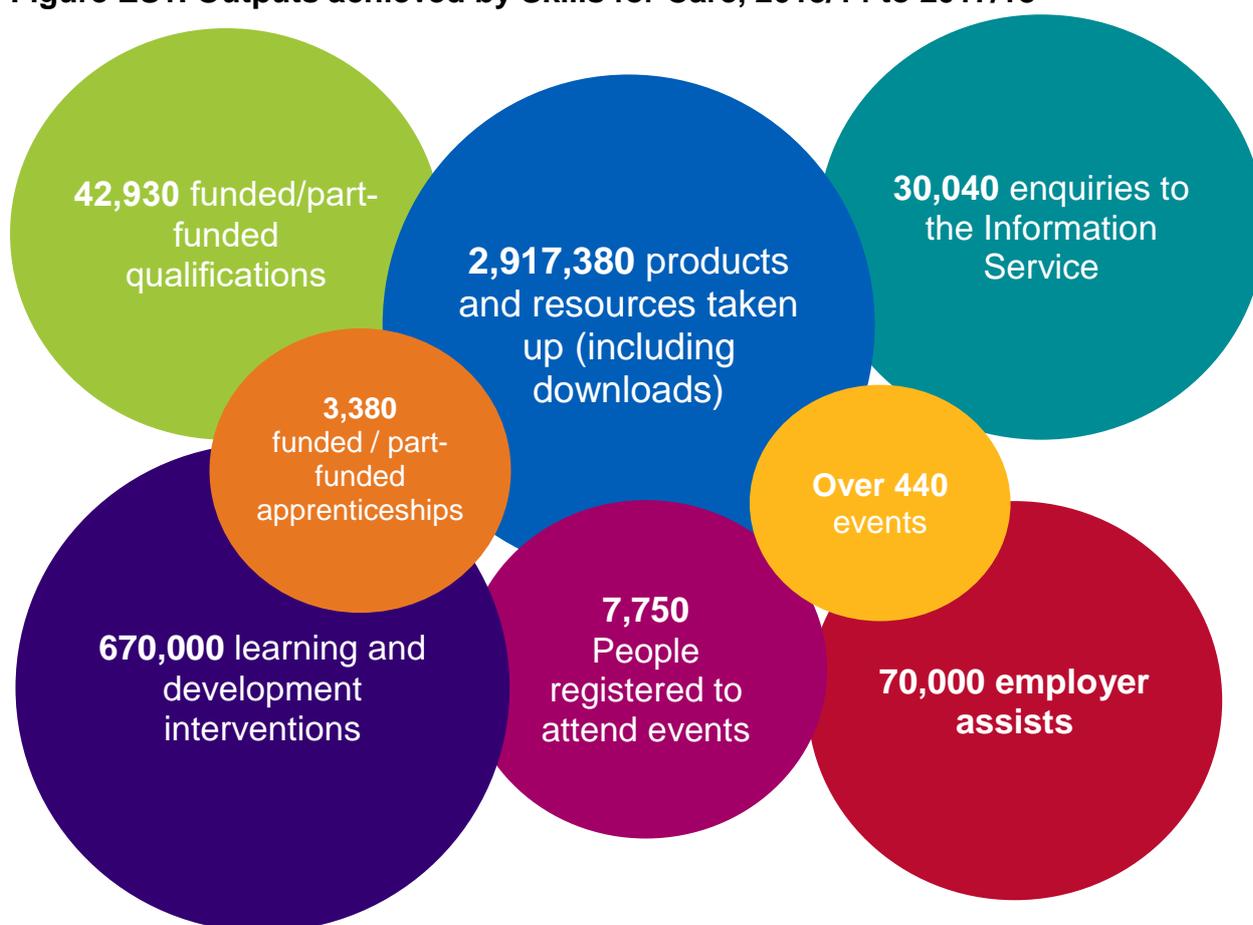
³ As above.

Outputs

The table below summarises some of the key outputs Skills for Care delivered over the five-year evaluation period 2013/14 – 2017/18.

For **employers**, Skills for Care provided over 70,000 ‘assists’ and over 670,000 learning and development interventions for staff. Other outputs over the five-year period are presented in Figure ES1.

Figure ES1. Outputs achieved by Skills for Care, 2013/14 to 2017/18⁴



Outcomes

Skills for Care has helped **employers** by:

- **increasing the skills, knowledge and confidence of the workforce**
There was consistent feedback from different programme participants and grant recipients that training funded or provided by Skills for Care had

⁴ Numbers rounded to nearest 10.

improved the skills, knowledge and confidence of staff and that staff practices had improved.

"I was pleased with some of the service user and family feedback on the way the staff have been developed and how they've changed their practice."

- Local authority, hosting Skills for Care-funded integrated health and social apprentices

- **improving the understanding and competencies of leadership among senior managers**

Leaders taking part in six leadership programmes managed by Skills for Care reported an increased understanding and knowledge of different aspects of leadership, in particular their understanding of the difference between being a leader and a manager and how to apply systems leadership to improve outcomes for people who need care and support. Colleagues who worked with these participants indicated that they had seen these participants increase in confidence and knowledge in how to recognise and respond to challenging issues.

- **providing varied activities, resources and events that have supported better recruitment and retention in the sector**

Participants in a range of Skills for Care activities reported:

- improved job satisfaction, staff morale and productivity
- better quality recruitment
- improved staff retention
- increased investment in workplace development by their organisations.

"... I have used the good practice and guidance provided by 'Finding and keeping workers' to ensure that everything from job adverts to policies and marketing materials reflect a values-based approach built upon person centred care and supported, motivated staff. I like that the information provided is informal, doesn't include the usual jargon and can be easily applied to your own business."

- Owner and manager of recently formed provider of personal home and dementia care, on how 'Finding and keeping workers' resources supported its approach to recruitment of staff.

Employers benefitted regardless of whether they received subsidised support from Skills for Care or paid for it directly. **Employers who directly paid for services** from

Skills for Care also reported these positive outcomes, depending on the focus of their project.

Workforce intelligence provided by Skills for Care has supported employers to gain personalised insights into their local strategic context and workforce, using the NMDS-SC, enabling them to make better strategic decisions.

“The independent analysis conducted by Skills for Care provided a useful insight into factors affecting the social care labour market in Warrington. This will help to inform the commissioning stage of the next contract for home care services, which will allow the council to plan for current and future needs.”

- Operational Commissioning and Contracting Officer, Warrington Borough Council.

For **people who need care and support**, particularly IEs, Skills for Care has supported them by:

- funding or delivering training directly that improves the capabilities of the staff they employ or receive care from
- investing in projects that involve them more in their own care.

These outcomes have resulted in **improved quality of care, improved physical and mental wellbeing among people who need care and support** and potentially increased their **quality of life**. Specific outcomes reported by IEs and employers supporting people needing care include reduced isolation, better relationships and general improvements in health conditions.⁵

“The staff understand my wife’s condition [Huntington’s Disease] much better thanks to the course and we’ve made a few changes to how she’s cared for as a result.”

- Husband of an individual employer whose staff training was supported by the Workforce Development Fund in 2014/15

For **other stakeholders** such as commissioners, learning providers and local and national policy-makers, Skills for Care has supported them by:

⁵ There was little detail available on the difference that Skills for Care have made for carers. Further direct evaluation work with people who need care and support, and carers would enable Skills for Care to explore in more detail the difference they make for this group (including carers).

- providing resources and workforce intelligence, such as the NMDS-SC that have enabled better commissioning and workforce planning
- increasing their understanding of social care, its value and the positive contributions that a career in care represents
- providing work programmes, activities and resources that align with and support the successful achievement of their policy objectives
- increasing the ability of leaders and the general workforce to work in partnership with health, education and other local partners.

Strategic added value

Skills for Care has provided additional value for employers, leaders, managers and learners by:

- providing innovative services that have responded to changes in the sector, enabling employers and their staff to be innovative in the way they deliver care and sharing learning with the wider sector
- providing a catalyst for change or influencing adult social care practice outside of their own direct work
- generating outcomes that are sustainable and support stability in the sector.

Employers participating in evaluations of many of the programmes indicated that the benefits would not have been achieved without the support of Skills for Care. Examples include:

- the majority of 14 employers surveyed would not have invested in apprentices without the support of the Skills for Care Apprenticeship Ambition programme
- the four pilot projects in 2018 working on recruiting under-represented groups into the adult social care sector who all said in their self-evaluation report that the work would not have happened without Skills for Care support
- the majority of establishments who indicated in 2017 that they would not have invested in their workforce in the same way without support from either the Workforce Development Fund (WDF) or Workforce Development Innovation Fund (WDIF).

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. There was some evidence in the evaluations that Skills for Care's activities will have benefitted the sector by reducing skills gaps (from 18% in 2013 to 13% in 2017 in the health and social care sector,

according to the national Employer Skills Survey⁶) and increasing staff productivity through investment in workforce development. Other impacts are harder to determine from the data available.

Economic analysis

Where the unit costs for activities could be calculated, these appear reasonable, indicating that Skills for Care money has been spent economically and efficiently. Where benefits could be monetised, **the economic impact of Skills for Care activities is estimated to be almost £319 million**, using the figures currently available. This means that **for every £1 invested, Skills for Care generated at least £2.27 to the England economy**. However, this is likely to be an underestimate as not all the benefits of Skills for Care activities could be monetised. Taking this into consideration the true return is likely to be somewhere between £2.27 and £3.31 for every £1 invested. This shows that Skills for Care provides value for money.

⁶ Department for Education (2018) Employer Skills Survey 2017; UKCES for previous Employer Skills Survey research.

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