

# Upskilling staff to prepare for demands in workforce capacity

## Suffolk County Council

In anticipation for a sudden impact on social care staffing levels, Suffolk County Council (SCC) implemented a contingency plan in the event a high volume of staff had to self-isolate due to COVID-19. Early in the pandemic, SCC explored ways to ensure that the people who needed reablement support were still able to get it in the short-term from trained professionals.

As a first step, the council identified which people working across adult services might be able to be upskilled if their support was called upon. The support that was required at the time varied from people doing face-to-face home visits to conducting welfare checks via the phone.

SCC's Workforce Development team then created and delivered 'Preparing to Care', an upskilling programme with a bespoke suite of training courses tailored to an individual's capabilities and the roles they could be potentially redeployed to within the reablement service.

Preparing to Care is a three-stage virtual learning programme covering bespoke training in key aspects of care. Stage one covers the basics of care and was ideally suited to those who would be providing support via telephone welfare check-ins but was equally important for people doing home visits. It introduced the Care Act as well as the Mental Capacity Act, alongside principles around the duty of care and working in a person-centred way, while emphasising the importance of privacy and dignity. Staff would also 'buddy up' with existing people working in the service and have access to a virtual support group to serve as a follow up to the shadowing sessions where they could share their learning.

Stage two of the virtual learning programme focused on staff who would be conducting face-to-face visits. These modules focused on training in infection control, manual handling and medication administration, which was also followed up with shadowing and 'buddying up' with existing staff to provide a fulsome learning experience.

The third stage was designed for individuals who would be redeployed for more than a month, and focused on signposting individuals to follow up training around mental health, dementia and health and safety, amongst other things, with an emphasis on further development.



**“It was important for us that the people we support had continuity of care, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, which is why it was a priority for us to ensure we were ready for any additional demands in workforce capacity and were able to redeploy trained colleagues where they were needed most.”**

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Loretta Greenacre  
Workforce Development Manager, Suffolk County Council

Almost 500 people signed up to complete the virtual learning programme, 81% of whom went on to complete their training. In the end, 114 staff were deployed which reflected the required demand at the time.

Thanks to the 'Preparing to Care' training programme, SCC is equipped to roll out redeployment should there be workforce demands in the future too. Indeed, many of the training modules continue to be used for new staff that are being recruited today.

### Top tips for creating an upskilling training programme



#### **Mobilise the right people with the right skills**

Identify strengths in your team, what skills can be best utilised and clearly define everyone's role.



#### **Implement a staged approach to training modules**

This will ensure that people of all capabilities and job requirements get the training they need to do their job.



#### **Establish a point of contact**

When collaborating with a range of people, have a central person who keeps momentum and ensures everything is on track.

To find out more contact Loretta Greenacre, Workforce Development Manager, Suffolk County Council via [loretta.greenacre@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:loretta.greenacre@suffolk.gov.uk)