1. **What are Trailblazers?**
Trailblazers are groups of employers creating new Apprenticeship standards for unique occupations. The metaphorical term indicates that employers should cut a fresh pathway through the labour market, starting from scratch by defining the generic occupation, identifying what competences are required by someone undertaking that occupation and then working out how to assess that competence at the end of their Apprenticeship.

2. **Are these new Apprenticeship standards going to be implemented across the UK?**
No. The reforms only apply to England.

3. **What is Skills for Care’s role in the new Apprenticeship standards?**
Skills for Care is being funded by the Department of Health to support a diverse group of adult care employers to create new standards in the adult care sector.

4. **How do the new Apprenticeship standards affect the existing frameworks?**
The government’s plan is that the standards system will completely replace the frameworks system by 2020. There will be a transitional phase where equivalent frameworks and standards will run side-by-side as standards are embedded but government has not yet decided how long this will be.

5. **What are the new standards?**
In adult social care, there are four new standards approved by government so far:
- Adult Care Worker (level 2)
- Lead Adult Care Worker (level 3)
- Lead Practitioner in Adult Care (level 4) and
- Leader in Adult Care (level 5).

These occupational titles are deliberately generic as it is recognised that they will cover a vast range of job titles. You can read the standards here: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/newstandards

6. **What is the difference between an Apprenticeship standard and Apprenticeship assessment plan? The.gov website mentions both.**
The standard is a two-page document summarising the occupation and the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to be competent. The assessment plan sets out how these competencies will be tested in the round and at the end of the Apprenticeship. Making sure that the apprentice is fully tested at the end, irrespective of whatever form their training has taken, is an important change from the frameworks system and a key one for government.
7. I understand about the standards and the assessment plans – what can you tell me about funding, are there any major changes? 
Yes, there are big changes to the funding system. In the financial year 2016-17, apprentices starting on new standards are funded through a co-financing model. Government sets a maximum price on the delivery of the standard from one of six bands. The employer engages a lead learning provider and a different end-point assessor and negotiates a price and payment schedule. The employer pays one-third of that price (cash contributions only) and the government pays the rest. There are additional fixed-price incentive payments to the employer if the apprentice is under 19, the employer has fewer than 50 staff and upon completion.

From April 2017 the system has changed again. Government has introduced a new Apprenticeship Levy. This is an automatic deduction, through the PAYE system of 0.5% of the value of annual payroll over £3m. This money (plus an additional 10% top-up from government) will be deposited in an online digital account for the same employer. The employer may only use this money to pay for Apprenticeships, with a learning provider who is approved on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP). Any money unused after 24 months in the account will be reclaimed by government. For example, an employer with a payroll of £5m will therefore pay 0.5% of £2m annually (but taken in monthly instalments) which is £10k which they can spend on Apprenticeships. In practice the system is expected to affect only 2% of employers but generate £2.5bn a year for England by 2020. The remaining 98% of employers will continue with a co-financing model but the proportion is yet to be decided.

More information on this emerging policy other Apprenticeship funding can be found at: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/apprenticeshipfunding

8. How much will the new Standards cost? 
Government has set a maximum price of £3,000 for Adult Care Worker and Lead Adult Care Worker. Under the current co-financing model, one-third of the price (to a maximum of £1,000) is paid in cash by the employer and this will trigger a two-thirds government contribution of up to £2,000. All this is paid to the learning provider.

The exact price and the staging of payments is a matter of negotiation between the customer employer and the supplier learning provider. The cost includes what is required for the end-point assessment which will be paid directly to the assessment organisation chosen by the customer. There are additional incentive payments for the employer for taking on 16-18 year olds (£600), for being an employer of fewer than 50 (£500) and upon completion of the Apprenticeship (£500).

9. Are there any other Apprenticeship standards to be introduced to social care? 
Employers can make expressions of interest to government if they have an occupation which is not already covered by an existing standard. The Adult Care Trailblazer group is open to suggestions and a number of suggested occupations are currently under review to see if they are covered by existing standards. A new Trailblazer group has now been set up to develop a standard for Social Work.

10. When can I start hiring apprentices using the new Apprenticeship standards? 
Now the assessment plans are published at level 2 and level 3, the standards are officially ready to be used. However, in practice, there is still some work to do by learning providers and end-point assessors so we recommend that you talk to providers for advice.
11. **What extra support is available for me?**
Keep an eye on our page about Apprenticeship changes. We will be running a marketing campaign to keep you informed and our consultants will be able to offer more detailed help on your organisation’s specific situation.

12. **What is the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations?**
This is a new online government Register. Any organisation that wishes to be an end-point assessment organisation has to apply to the Register where their suitability and financial situation will be examined by government to make sure they are fit to offer end-point assessments for a specific standard. For any apprentice, the end-point assessor has to be independent. This ensures that those making a decision on the competency of the apprentice have nothing to gain from the outcome of the assessment. For more information go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations

13. **I am a learning provider, so what do Apprenticeship Standards mean for me?**
- The government has set a target of three million new starts by 2020, by which time all should be through the new standards, so you will need to check that your business model can cope with the new system.
- Under the levy system the money will be directed to the employer through their digital account who will then pay you.
- Under the co-financing system your client must pay you cash not in-kind contributions before government will release its contribution.
- From August 2017 the system of allocated budgets from government will cease.
- The government’s new Apprenticeship Service will include a search tool for learning providers.
- The end-point test introduces extra rigour to the system and if you are the learning provider, you cannot carry out the end-point assessment so it will be vital that your apprentice and client employer are properly prepared and that you fully understand the end-point tests.