

## Bluebird Care

# Fund helps small organisation to maintain staff development

This case study examines how Bluebird Care in Central Bedfordshire has used the Workforce Development Fund to support the ongoing professional development of its staff to maintain and improve the quality of care and support. Bluebird Care is a national provider of care and specialises supporting customers within the comfort of their own homes. Services range from personal care to support with shopping, household duties, cooking daily and escorted trips to the shops, friends, family or doctors.

### Background to the WDF

Skills for Care believes that all staff working in adult social care should be able to access and participate in learning and development, in order to carry out their roles effectively and deliver high quality care.

The WDF supports this ethos. It is a funding stream from the Department of Health and is distributed by Skills for Care. It is available to support employers to make an investment in learning and development that will benefit the organisation, its employees and those that are cared for and supported. The fund focuses on the achievement of qualification units and supports the ongoing professional development of staff across

the adult social care sector within England.

### What they wanted to achieve

Bluebird Care is the fastest growing care franchise in the UK. The central Bedfordshire office was established in 2011. One of its main objectives is to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to learn and develop in their roles, in order to provide absolutely the best care and support services to customers in the community.

Bluebird Care in Central Bedfordshire has around 50 employees that each cover between 15 and 40 hours per work. They support customers in their own homes on a temporary, short or long-term basis, depending on each customer's wishes. Support can be related to many issues, including dementia, Parkinson's, Multiple sclerosis, elderly needs or spinal injuries.

Bluebird Care's core aim is to support its care workers' learning needs, particularly to develop their knowledge and skills through formal qualifications. This has led to Bluebird Care being able to support an ethos of promoting from within the organisation rather than outsourcing, leading to greater staff satisfaction and retention.

Emma Stimson, Registered Care Manager for Bluebird Care discusses the positive impact of the WDF on her Central Bedfordshire franchise.

"To run a successful care business like ours, we need to train, develop and promote staff from within the organisation. We therefore understand the huge importance of professional development

and high quality learning for our employees. This is where the WDF has really supported us.”

## What was done

Bluebird Care has worked in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council’s Learning and Development representatives to access the WDF and has found the support proactive and very useful from the outset. The council had proactively approached the care organisation about applying for the WDF for the ongoing development of its care workers, so the funding was accessed in late 2013.

Emma Stimson at Bluebird Care has used a local learning provider to coordinate the learning needs of her staff. The provider has also supported her to access further funding for the Level 3 Health and Social Care Diploma from additional sources.

“We’ve worked closely with the council and Skills for Care to understand, apply for and access the fund to support our learning environment. Being part of a local forum that helps us to network and learn about new training and funding developments is really useful as it offers a wider perspective.”

## What was achieved

Bluebird Care fully supports its team’s learning and development needs. Team members range from those recently joining the organisation at the age of 18 to staff that have been established in the social care workforce for over thirty years.

To date, the WDF has funded three care workers to complete the Level 2 Diploma in Health and Social Care, with another seven studying and working towards their Level 2 and 3 qualifications. There is also scope within the funding for another

three care workers to start working towards qualifications in the near future.

“Without securing the Workforce Development Fund, as a small business we wouldn’t be able to afford to pay for everyone to undertake qualifications. It supports us to move our training schedule forward.”

As an employer, Bluebird Care is experiencing a number of direct benefits from the fund. The ongoing training programme is allowing Bluebird Care’s staff to continue earning, whilst learning and gaining the required skills and knowledge of the sector. Ultimately, the WDF is helping to retain a good team of qualified staff and supporting the company’s aim to promote and maintain quality care across the business.

Training assessors have been impressed with all employees, particularly whilst shadowing them in the community and making observations during home visits. A recent social services compliance audit resulted in a ‘Very Good’ status.

## What was learnt

Bluebird Care has accessed the WDF for the second time and has found no barriers or challenges to the process. By partnering with the council and a local learning provider, the process has been simple and hassle-free.

“I would definitely recommend any care organisation to go through this funding channel. The continued support through our local council and external learning provider has made things much simpler for us.”

“The training, funded through the WDF, offers positive steps forward and gives our employees a real sense of achievement and progression onto the next level. Some of Bluebird Care employees have moved into nursing and physiotherapy roles. Even if they move into another area of social care, their skills and qualifications are transferable and still support the sector’s needs.”

# Skills for Care Recommends

Our website hosts a range of information about the Workforce Development fund and how to access it.

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## Workforce Development Fund

This page gives a general overview of the WDF including what it is, what it can be used for and who is eligible.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdf)

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## Workforce Development Fund for grant holders

The information on this page is for grant holders who are responsible for the disbursement of the Workforce Development Fund (WDF).

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfgrantholders](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfgrantholders)

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## Accessing the Workforce Development Fund

The information on this page provides an overview of how you can become eligible for WDF, how to make a claim for it and the terms employers will be bound by when accessing the fund.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accessingWDF](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accessingWDF)

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Skills for Care  
West Gate  
6 Grace Street  
Leeds  
LS1 2RP  
telephone 0113 245 1716  
email [info@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:info@skillsforcare.org.uk)  
web [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)

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