

Oxfordshire County Council

Background

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is the local authority for county of Oxfordshire, delivering services to over 600,000 residents and making it one of the largest employers in the county.

One of OCC's responsibilities is to ensure that the needs of the county's older, disabled and vulnerable people are met, along with the needs of their carers.

What they wanted to achieve

OCC recognised that the introduction of the new Care Act in 2015 will require the local authority to work in new ways. For example, because the new Care Act incorporates the rights and wellbeing of carers, local authorities such as OCC will need to ensure that they offer assessments, care and support to carers as well as to those who are cared for.

By using the Skills for Care Workforce Capacity Model, OCC wanted to explore what changes may be needed to the way in which social care services are delivered, ahead of the introduction of the new Act.

What they did

OCC took a three stage approach to using the Skills for Care Workforce Capacity Model with a focus on both internal staff and external staff who are employed by contracted service providers.

Stage 1 – Establishing a project team

A core project team was formed to use the model. The team included a wide range of representatives from various areas, including:

- commissioning
- quality and contracts
- social work operational management
- strategy and performance
- research and intelligence
- human resources.

Stage 2 – Evaluating current knowledge

The project team ran a workshop to examine the questions raised by the model in more detail and to identify potential knowledge gaps.

Stage 3 – Providers’ workshop

Following the internal workshop, the project team hosted a second workshop to gather input from external providers and partners. The representatives invited included domiciliary care and care home providers.

What was achieved?

From an internal perspective, OCC was able to establish where there are currently workforce capacity gaps such as the need for greater integration and consistency between various service teams.

Meanwhile, the workshop with providers allowed OCC to discover how prepared providers are regarding the Care Act and how aware they are of the implications it will have on their services. It also enabled the local authority to discuss how an increasing demand for care will impact on the providers’ workforce, what changes may be required to deal with this and how these changes might be made. And finally, it allowed OCC to seek providers’ views on how the local authority can successfully engage with care providers to discuss future workforce capacity and capability requirements.

By using the model, OCC was also able to examine whether it could be successfully applied to different staff groups and service areas. This included both those directly employed by OCC, such as social workers and occupational therapists, as well as various voluntary and community organisations, including community information networks and good neighbour schemes.

What was learnt?

By using the model, OCC was able to identify how initiatives already in progress via their Adult Services Improvement Programme will help change the way internal staff groups work to meet the requirements of the Care Act.

OCC also learnt which groups and service areas would benefit most from workforce intervention to deliver the new Act. OCC found that these were those services commissioned from external providers. This has enabled OCC to identify the need for a stronger focus on workforce issues as part of its commissioning and procurement processes and highlight where changes may be necessary in order to work more effectively with providers under the new Act.

To access the workforce capacity planning model visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/careact > capacity planning model.

Skills for Care has a range of other resources that can support the Care Act implementation. For more information and to access the resources visit

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/careact