

# Care Workforce Pathway: shaping tomorrow, together

## **SPEAKERS**

Nicola Clarke, Alex Martyr, Paul Tolley, Danielle Fullwood, Paul Tolley, New Directions Rugby, Victoria Coe, Oonagh Smyth, Tina Tate, Natalie Spinks, Rebecca Bool, Debbie McNally, Paul Smith, Vicky Jackson

### **Natalie Spinks**

Now we're going to move on to explore the routes and the development of the Care Workforce Pathway. Skills for Care has been instrumental in the development of the role categories, and you might like to reflect on how they apply in your settings, as my colleague Alex Martyr talks you through the detail, Alex.

### **Alex Martyr**

Thanks Natalie. So, to begin with, we'd like to take a step back to before the Pathway and look at the adult social care landscape prior to implementation. Through our extensive sector engagement, we heard of serious issues impacting the adult social care sector. Before the Pathway, we had no defined career structure for adult social care. So without a clear career structure, it was hard to evidence how someone could develop and grow in a career in adult social care. Lack of a career structure also reduced the ability to deploy new policy and new ways of working into the sector. There was also a lack of clarity on training. Before the Pathway, we heard that organisations were struggling with the complex learning and development landscape, recommendations for appropriate training were unclear, with previous respondents describing the landscape as cluttered and hard to navigate. This problem was particularly pronounced for smaller organisations who might have had less learning and development capacity to source and quality assure appropriate training for their staff. It was also unclear what training was recommended for specific roles. There was no agreement on a defined baseline qualification that would be expected of someone working in the majority of roles in the sector. The Pathway also provided an opportunity to more clearly define the baseline behaviours, knowledge, and skills expected of people working in adult social care. The work has also allowed for us to define a universal set of sector values. Similar to the issue with training, the sector did not have an agreed baseline for the knowledge and skills expected of people working at various levels. This in turn led to issues where people moving from one organisation to another, they couldn't confirm what level of competency the individual was working at. We heard of organisations sometimes needing to start all training and development from scratch to ensure that the new starter was meeting the competency expected of someone working at that level. Finally, we also heard that the sector was struggling with recruitment and retention. Something was needed to support organisations to recruit more staff and then to keep them.

### **Alex Martyr**

So looking next at the policy intent behind the Pathway. On screen in a moment, you should see a quote from the white paper, People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform, where the government set out their desire to develop a knowledge and skills framework for the adult social care sector. This framework was to become the Care Workforce Pathway, developed in partnership between the Department of Health and Social Care and Skills for Care. The policy intent behind the Pathway included detailing, for the first time, sorry, let's go back detailing for the first time a defined career

structure for adult social care. The career structure was to focus, initially, primarily on those working on direct care roles, but as development has progressed, this is spreading to management roles and into other support and ancillary roles. And structure can detail everything from someone's first role in adult social care across a variety of pathways that someone could take in their career. The other policy intent was to support organisations in planning their training and development for their staff. Via the Pathway, we can now define a baseline level of knowledge and skills expected of people working across a variety of roles in adult social care. Aligned with this, we also recommend qualifications and other training that will support people to develop to this level. Another policy intent was to evidence and support how people can grow and develop in a career in adult social care. We have heard the outside perception from some that social care isn't viable for a long term career, and the Pathway helps fight that perception, showing how people can have a full and rewarding career in our sector. The Pathway also provides a vehicle by which new and innovative approaches to social care can be shared with the sector. As further utilisation of the Pathway grows, it provides a more streamlined method by which new ways of working, or new structures entirely, can be shared with and implemented into the sector. Given that the Pathway has been developed via extensive sector engagement, it also provides a means by which we can hear from the sector as new policy and ways of working have been developed. Finally, evidence has also consistently shown that defined development pathways with clear progression opportunities support recruitment and retention. The Pathway has been implemented to support this as a tool to aid care organisations in the recruitment and ongoing support to staff. Moving to the next slide. So first published in January 2024, here we see a statement of what the Care Workforce Pathway is. This has been the ethos behind the development of the Pathway and what it should be. This provides the base for all the development on the Pathway to date and into the future. Next we will look at the timeline of the Pathway development and where we are now with current development activity.

### **Alex Martyr**

So, work on the Care Workforce Pathway started in early 2023, developed in partnership between the Department of Health and Social Care and Skills for Care. Phase one of the development carried out throughout 2023 focused on an initial four role categories in direct care roles. Those categories you can see on screen now are new to care, care or support worker, supervisor or leader, and practice leader. This first part of the Pathway was launched in January 2024 covering these four direct care role categories. Development continued throughout 2024 and early 2025 with a further four role categories added in April 2025. Management roles were added into the Care Workforce Pathway via the registered manager and deputy manager role categories, along with the enhanced care worker and personal assistants. It's important to note here that we use the term role category within the Pathway instead of role, in order to allow organisations to implement the Pathway into their existing structure without the need for the job role itself to be renamed to fit. The role categories are therefore seen as more of a group of roles that align, instead of a specific role title. Some organisations might find that they have several roles that sit within a defined role category, they might just have one existing role within their structure that fits within the role categories that we've developed, or they may find that they don't have any roles at all that currently fit. Within each of the role categories, you will find an introductory description which describes what the person might do in their role and the kind of setting that they might work in. This is intended only as a simple description accessible to those who work outside of the adult social care sector, very much intended to help support people who are looking at the Care Workforce Pathway as a career structure, to understand and have more context about the role category that they're looking at. In addition, each of the role categories also has a persona that helps bring the content to life, included, again, to support people externally to the care sector or who may not have had any experience of that previous role category, to understand more the kind of work that might be expected of them and the kind of behaviours, knowledge and skills, training, and development that they might do as part of working in that role. Within the Care Workforce Pathway, you will also find a set of universal sector values defined by people who draw on care and support. These values aren't intended to replace an organisation's existing values. Instead, they're to be used as a tool for those

organisations who might be looking to describe for the first time their own values, or for those organisations looking to update their organisational values statements, again, to have that as a supportive tool. The intent is also that these could be used as a baseline for those organisations who may not define their values to use for values-based recruitment. Also, included within each role category are the behaviours expected of someone working at that level, along with the baseline knowledge and skills that someone should have, again to work within that role category. For some of those role categories, we have a qualification that aligns with those knowledge and skills. For example, the care or support worker role category has the Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care and for the registered manager role category, we have the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Adult Care. The Pathway also recognises that individuals working at that level may also need further specific training to work within a certain environment. For example, someone working in a dementia registered home will also need additional training, above the standard within the role category, to develop knowledge and skills in that specific area of practice. Finally, also included within each of the role categories, you will also find a series of suggested learning opportunities. These learning opportunities are only suggested in order to allow organisations more control over the learning and development they provide to their staff, and also to meet the previous policy intent about making the available learning and training within the sector easier to navigate. Again, organisations can reuse these as a base to develop their own learning and development offer and then build on top of them, particularly in those areas that might require specific areas of practice.

### **Alex Martyr**

And then now looking at our current activity, in particular the new role category development. So, within the next publication, we aim to include three new full role categories, and these are activity coordinator, care technologist, and nominated individual. We also have three, what we're referring to as 'pared back' role categories, which will be the corporate middle/senior managers, learning and development roles in adult social care, and quality assurance roles. We have titled these as 'pared back' as they already have established quality assurance and learning. What we're specifically looking at to include within the Pathway is articulating the extra elements that are specific to someone working within a care environment that someone doing one of these roles might need to have. Finally, we're also looking at four 'recognised' ancillary roles. These are catering, domestic, maintenance, and administration. With these roles, we once again intend to showcase the kind of knowledge and skills that someone working in these support roles will need to have to work effectively, specifically within a care environment. As we move through further development and post launch, we will also be looking at how people working in these support roles may move into other roles in the Pathway as their career grows and develops. At this time, we do not have a specific launch date, but as we have further conversations with colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Care, we'll be able to share more about when you can expect to see all these new role categories launched. This now brings an end to this section, so I'll now pass back to Natalie, who will take us forwards with the webinar on our journey with the Care Workforce Pathway. Thanks, Nat.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Thanks, Alex. Hopefully that helped to set the scene for everybody and gave insight into how we got to where we are with Pathway development to date. We're going to have two quick polls now to understand where everyone on the session is with that Pathway adoption. The first poll is going to ask about your status, and the second is going to ask about your level of adoption. Please select the option that best describes your situation. And just to say, these polls will capture your name to support us to match the first answer with the second. I can see we're getting lots of responses coming through. Just give it a minute or two.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Great. Yes, so it's looking like the vast majority seems to have not yet started, which isn't necessarily surprising, given that you've come along to this information session today, but it's great to see that we do have some with a plan in place, and some who have actually looked to start, started that adoption journey. And I think for those who have not yet started or don't know, hopefully this session will nurture your curiosity and give you useful tips and directions for getting started. So, thank you.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Now we're going to launch our second poll, which is about the levels of adoption. We have three levels of adoption, which are light, medium, and full. And so kind, to give an example of what that might look like from a practical point of view, if we consider the example of role categories for instance, light would be if you were at light adoption, that means you would have mapped maybe one or two roles, your organisation roles to the Pathway role categories. Medium would be that all of the roles within your organisation have been mapped to the role categories that best fit, and full would be that that mapping activity is being used to inform your workforce decision making and future planning. So, we can see, yeah, we obviously have the not applicable option, because there will have been people who, in the previous poll had said they hadn't started. It's great to see we've got a couple at full adoption, a few at medium, and then, of course, as one might expect, quite a few at light, and that's great. The reason why we set these levels of adoption is that it lets organisations make changes slowly and with confidence. Each level builds on the one before. So, you can start small and continue to build at your own pace that works for you, and this flexible structure makes it easier for any provider of any size to start their adoption journey. So thank you for completing those polls. It just really helps us to get an insight into where people are at with that journey. I'm now going to hand over to my colleagues Victoria Coe and Nicola Clark, who are going to share, amongst other things, some of the key achievements from the work to support Pathway adoption activity we've been doing this year. Thank you.

### **Victoria Coe**

Thanks, Nat. If we could move on to the next slide, please. So, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Vic, and I'm here with my colleague Nic. So we're from the Care Workforce Pathway Implementation Team at Skills for Care. So, we're just going to give you a brief overview of some of the really exciting work that we've been delivering with a number of care providers and adult social care system partners who've worked with us as part of our support programme for 25/26. So, over the past year, we've been focused on building real, practical progress across five key areas. So that's on the screen in front of you there. But what's important to say is that this work hasn't been theoretical. It's been shaped by real care providers, real systems, and real people's experiences. So, whether that's been Early Adopter providers testing the Pathway, small and medium sized providers getting clarity about the Pathway for the very first time, or large providers understanding how the Pathway can align to their internal structures. So, we've seen momentum grow in ways that are really meaningful. So, and to improve the visibility of care as a valued career and to highlight it as an important part of the fabric of our economy, we've been working with designated employer representative bodies for all 39 Local Skills Improvement Plans or LSIP areas across England. And what we're focusing on now is helping others build a stronger understanding about the Pathway to grow in their confidence to use it and to develop a clear sense of what's possible. So next slide please. Thank you. Coming into this year, our focus has been really quite deliberate, so we wanted to help people feel genuinely ready to use the Pathway. So that's meant supporting individuals and system partners to really unpack and dive into the Pathway and to give practical and respectful support that actually works for the size and pace of each organisation. A big part of this has been making the Pathway feel simpler, and that's not by changing it in any way, but by giving people real, tangible examples, visual information, and some tools that make it easier to apply it in their day to day work. So all of this is about building long term confidence, so that organisations don't just understand the Pathway, but they feel really, really able to use it. Next slide, please. Thank you. So, how have we supported providers? So, when we think about how we supported providers this year, the theme that's really stood out for us as a team is adaptability. So every organisation we've worked

with has been starting from a different place, so they all have different pressures, and they've all had different levels of awareness about the Pathway and different capacity. So our support has had to flex to accommodate that. So that's exactly what we've done. We didn't take a blanket approach. We focused on offering the right type of support at the right moment. And not everyone has needed support either. Many people have been happy to work with the resources that are available and just to try it out for themselves. For others, support has meant being there in person, so spending time together face to face, walking people through the Pathway bit by bit, and helping organisations understand what the Pathway can look like in their world, not just in theory. And for others, it's been about creating opportunities to connect with other colleagues, to share their experiences, and for them to realise that it's okay not to have all of the answers. We've really seen how powerful those peer to peer conversations have been, and we've made them a much, much bigger part of our work as the year has gone on. What we think has made the biggest difference, though, has been the ongoing relationships we've built. So those small check ins, the nudges of reassurance, and the practical tools that people have been able to use and to pick up and use straight away. So bit by bit, we've seen care providers shift from curiosity and even some uncertainty about the Pathway to a place of genuine confidence, and that confidence hasn't come from us talking at them. It's come from walking alongside them, helping each organisation move forward at a pace that's felt manageable and meaningful for them. Next slide, please. Thank you. Oh, I think I might have jumped ahead a slide. I will carry on before my colleague Nic steps in. Oh, thank you. So, on our systems side, our work's been about helping our system partners find absolute clarity, consistency, and some collaboration with other system partners by providing introductory sessions about the Pathway, attending their governance forums to speak about it. We've co delivered cross-system Pathway workshops and we've maintained ongoing dialogue. We've also worked to support system partners to see how the Pathway can align with their existing priorities, so that doesn't add new or additional burdens. And the real progress has come from working alongside our system partners as they shape their own understanding and their own ways of supporting care providers in their area. This shared approach is starting to help systems build clear expectations and a foundation for stronger use of the Pathway for the rest of the year. So I'm now going to hand over to my colleague, Nic. Thanks, Nic.

### **Nicola Clarke**

Thanks, Vic. So. let's have a look at some of the activity for 2025 and you can see the stats on the screen there. But what really stands out when we look back at our activity this year is the sheer scale and variety of that engagement. We've worked not just with a large number of employers, but with employers and providers who bring a very different perspective, pressures, and ambitions to the programme, and because of that diversity, the work hasn't been one size fits all, as Vic mentioned earlier. It's been responsive to the needs of those that have been involved. What's encouraging is that the volume of sessions, conversations, and touch points isn't just a number on the page. Each interaction tells us that people want clarity, they want direction, and they want support they can actually use in the real world. Whilst that support doesn't need to be complex, it must be clear and it must be adaptable. The more providers and assistant partners we spoke to, the more we've seen confidence grow, not just because we've given them more information, but because we've given them the practical ways to apply it. So, when you see these figures on the slide, think of them as markers of momentum. They show a sector that's leaning in, testing ideas, sharing challenges, and genuinely trying to build something better for their workforce. And importantly, all of this activity is shaping what we prioritise next, making sure the support we offer in the coming year is scalable, even more targeted, more grounded, and more useful. Next slide please. Okay, so this slide is a summary of what we have learned from this year with the people, organisations, and systems on the Pathway. What's been so encouraging is seeing what really makes the difference. What we've learned that people value support that's grounded in the real world, practical examples, small, achievable steps and honest conversations are key. We've seen how structure helps create momentum, tools, templates and shared language, which just makes action a whole lot easier for everybody that's involved. And we've seen how

collaboration accelerates progress. Perhaps more importantly, there was a cultural shift happening that we've seen. More confidence, clearer expectations, and a stronger sense of professional identity across the sector. Next slide, please. So across every workstream that we've worked with, understanding has grown significantly. People are not only clearer about what the Pathway is, they are more confident about how it applies to their own world. The reason this has worked is because the support is respectful, paced, and recognising individual needs. We haven't pushed change. We've enabled it, and by giving organisations structured tools to map roles, update processes, and develop people, we've seen them take the tangible steps forward. The Pathway isn't abstract anymore, it's becoming a practical part of how people work. Next slide, please. Thank you. One of the strongest themes this year has been collaboration. When teams, providers, and systems come together, momentum builds much faster. We've seen organisations spot opportunities to align their existing plans, reduce duplication, and strengthen workforce approaches. This collective effort is improving readiness for the coming years and how the sector can scale up their adoption of the Pathway. And something we hear consistently is that the Pathway is boosting confidence. People feel clearer about career expectations, more valued, and more optimistic about their future in the sector. That cultural shift is very powerful. To finish, we just want to say a heartfelt thank you to all the care providers and system partners who've been part of the support programme this year. Everything we've shared today comes from their hard work and positive energy. We're really grateful for everything they've done this year, and we're genuinely excited to keep working with them and others across the sector in the year ahead. Thank you.

### **Rebecca Bool**

Fantastic. Thank you so much. Well, you've heard from the Care Workforce Pathway Implementation Team, what we've been doing on our side, now it's time to literally flip the tables. What I would like to do is open it up to, indeed, as our slide here shares, the panel discussion. I'm sorry, I didn't introduce myself. My name is Rebecca, and I'm one of the Care Workforce Pathway Implementation Team here at Skills for Care, and immensely and sincerely proud to say, yes, I am working with those Early Adopters on their Pathway journey and implementation. And yeah, of course, we're here to celebrate the Care Workforce Pathway and yes, to really enrich that, we've assembled a truly fantastic panel for you who have kindly agreed to share their Pathway adoption journeys with us. On a personal note, when I first met our panelists, I was stunned by their achievements with the Pathway, the plans they've got in motion and the really significant outcomes they're having from Pathway adoption, which, of course, we're going to hear about shortly. So, without further delay, please, may I introduce our panel members. Starting with our, we have two Pauls, so again, sorry, I'm going to be, it sounds a little bit formal. I'm going to say your full name, if that's okay to distinguish. And we're going to start with Paul Tolley, so Paul, can you give us an introduction please.

### **Paul Tolley**

Hi everyone. I'm Paul Tolley. I'm Chief Exec of New Directions Rugby. We provide day opportunities, respite, residential, and supported living support to about 100 people a day, and we employ about 200 people, all within one square mile in Rugby in Warwickshire.

### **Rebecca Bool**

That's fantastic. Thank you so much. And can I next have introductions from Debbie, Debbie McNally, please.

### **Debbie McNally**

Hello, I'm Debbie McNally. I work for the Brandon Trust, which is a learning disability and autism charity, sort of from Plymouth up to Nuneaton and across with sort of about 2200 employees. So quite big. My role is Learning Development Business Partner. But my background is I started as a support

worker, was a team leader, was a registered manager, so I've actually done the roles as well, and we were in the first cohort of an early adoption. So I've been living it and breathing it for a good couple of years.

**Rebecca Bool**

Absolutely. Thank you so much. Next on my screen, can I have an introduction Vicky, Vicky Jackson,

**Vicky Jackson**

Hi everyone. I'm Vicky Jackson. I'm Head of People Development at MHA, Methodist Homes. We are a very large care provider, so we support around 6,500 colleagues and 1,500 volunteers to enable us to deliver fantastic care and support to older people all across the country, to enable them to live a fantastic later life.

**Rebecca Bool**

Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you so much. And next on my screen is Paul Smith, Hi, Paul.

**Paul Smith**

Hi Rebecca. Afternoon, everybody. I'm Paul Smith. I'm the Director and Nominated Individual for a fairly new provider group. We're small to medium. We have about 150 beds across three current sites with plans this year to add about another 100 beds. We work predominantly with older persons and people living with dementia and end of life. We're based primarily in the North East, and I am a nurse by background, psychotherapist, researcher, author, etc. And I'm what they call a Pioneer. So I'm kind of the second phase of what you've been hearing about today. We're about a year in and making culturally significant impacts.

**Rebecca Bool**

That's wonderful. Thank you so much. And we're also joined by external colleagues within our system partners, the adult social care ecosystem. So if I can now move to yourself, Danielle Fullwood, for introductions.

**Danielle Fullwood**

Hi, good afternoon, everybody. My name is Danielle, and I am the Head of Strategic Education and Skills at Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board. I am a registered nurse by background, and as we said, one of the ecosystems for the implementation of this Pathway.

**Rebecca Bool**

That's marvellous. Thank you so much. And lastly, but certainly not least, Tina Tate. Hello.

**Tina Tate**

Afternoon, everyone. Nice to meet you all. I'm Tina. I'm Strategic Resourcing Manager for Adult Social Care and Health in East Riding of Yorkshire, particularly the local authority, but sharing all of our work across workforce and educational areas of our social care and health with our internally focused authority staff, but also our external providers and partners across the system.

**Rebecca Bool**

That's fantastic. Thank you so much, and thank you again to everybody on our panel for joining us today, it really does mean a great deal. Now to help us to really get to the heart of our panelists experience, I have some questions that I'd like to share, and these are in two halves. So the first set of questions I'm going to ask, these are to our employers. And then latterly, I'm going to ask some questions specifically for ecosystems, because Pathway approach and adoption, it will be slightly

different for those different groups. So my first question, and I'd like to throw this out to Paul Tolley, if that's okay, my first question is that since beginning the Care Workforce Pathway journey, how has awareness of the Pathway grown within your organisation and what's actually helped people to better understand it?

### **Paul Tolley**

Okay, so we have this title of organic adopter. So just to put that into context for people, what that means is we've got a lot of the fundamental principles, if you like, of the Care Workforce Pathway in place, but we haven't done that through the formal adoption group. We weren't one of the Pioneers. We weren't one of the Early Adopters. And that's because a lot of the elements really hark back to values-based recruitment, etc. It's all stuff that we've been supported by Skills for Care over the years to sort of develop and put in place. So for us, I think we've still got a long way to go in terms of people's recognition and sort of, you know, day to day using the term Care Workforce Pathway, but I think in terms of the elements of it, what's really, really helped us is that we found that when we analysed it, we have so many bits that are already in place and that are in a really good place. We're in a really good place with recruitment, training, etc. And I can wax lyrical about all of our achievements around that, and I probably will, because I do like to show off. What we found was that, we've got core competencies set out for each of the roles that we've got. So we've done the mapping, we've done all the sort of base elements, but what we found was that we've got core competencies for each of our roles, but actually they become disassociated from our probation processes. So actually, we're not using those in our probation periods and all the rest of it to make sure that we're checking are those people actually really living up to those values, and are they as strongly values based competencies as they are core skills? So it's, it's prompted us into a position of saying, actually, this is our area of development. This is where we can do more with this. You know, some of the elements we haven't got, some of the traditional pinch points, the pain points that other providers might have. So at the moment, I've got six vacancies in the organisation. I employ about 202 staff. I've got 15 people that are going through recruitment. We actually paused recruitment last week. We stopped recruiting. And I've never known that before. Our agency use is absolutely through the floor. We've used almost, well, we have used zero agency in our supported learning settings for the last six months. It's incredible. We're in a really, really good place, so we don't have those key pain points to focus on. But what we have done, I said, Okay, let's use this and map across. How can we refine and redevelop those core competencies and make sure they are truly embedded? And that's our weak point, if you like, and for us, that's the approach we're taking, is saying, okay, a lot of this we've already got in place, and yes, we can tweak and refine as we go, but actually that's fine. A key part where we have a larger weakness, and then everybody kind of comes together around that piece. As an organisation, we tend to focus a lot on having our baseline data in place. I measure everything. I have a spreadsheet for everything. I'm really sad and geeky like that. So I need to know, you know that from that baseline, that what we're doing is improving, is improving our retention, is improving our confidence of staff, and improving our retention. So for us, that's the approach we've taken to make sure that staff can get their heads around it. When I sat down with my HR manager and we started looking at the Care Pathway, I think what was really interesting was by the end of that meeting, her sign off at the end of it was, well, that was a lot more fun than I thought it was going to be. And, you know, meetings with me are not always fun, but I think sometimes you can kind of get overwhelmed by the volume of sort of, you know, resources that are there, processes, and trying to sort of map. And what we did is we actually said, okay, what's the one big change we want to achieve with this? And I think by taking that approach with it, that's where then we get greater buy in. So for us, mapping across those core competencies, that's been the key piece that I think people then recognise that. And we've also talked about owning what comes out of that. We may not end up talking about Care Workforce Pathway in terms of day to day. Staff may not say, oh yes, it's because we've got, we're following the Care Workforce Pathway that we're working in this way, or that we can boast that we've got 100% compliance in training across 202 staff, which we can, but we

will end up with a learning and development pathway in the organisation that further reinforces, I think, our investment in staff development.

**Rebecca Bool**

That is fantastic. Thank you so much. And as you were sharing, though, I saw a lot of nodding heads, one in particular. So can I draw you in Debbie now, because you were nodding your head at several points there as well. So I'm imagining there's certain things that Paul shared there that you can resonate, but from Brandon Trust perspective, how has the Pathway awareness grown within your organisation, and for you, what helped your workforce better understand it as well?

**Debbie McNally**

Well, I think being obviously on the first tranche of Early Adopters had its own challenges in you know, we're sort of guinea pigs, really, but it did give us sort of every bit of it to go through. And when Paul would use the word disassociated, I thought, yeah, that's what we were. So we had, obviously job descriptions, and we had sort of competencies somewhere, and we had a recruitment process, but it was, but they, they didn't really flow together. So, the process itself enabled us to really stop, and because we were an Early Adopter, we did that. We used Cornwall, because that's where a lot of our workforce is, to actually do the process. And we did a lot of communication through, not only in Cornwall, but the whole organisation. But particularly the job mapping and really stopping and looking at our job descriptions made us understand that actually we weren't very clear at all. What really was expected at that point in time. Nobody really, it wasn't really clear what they got in return and how they got somewhere also wasn't very clear. So, we basically went back to basics, and we sort of decided, we're going to do this, we're going to go the whole hog. So on the one hand, we've got loads of job descriptions and people. On the other hand, we're fortunate enough to have the infrastructure. So we are now, we've now done this with every single role in Brandon. So that's the finance officer, the communication officer, and all the frontline staff as well. All job descriptions have been totally rewritten, and with that and the job mapping, it's enabled us to get a really good, I believe, competency framework that has five pillars. It's got behaviours, functional skills, general competencies, and technical skills, and then leadership, if it's a leadership role. And within that, there's five levels, from awareness to expert. So we're just in the process of doing a company wide training needs analysis, to understand where people think they are. So we can know where people think they are, but if they want to progress, or they just want to be engaged in their role and not leave, they can see what good looks like. They can see what they need to do if they want to go up to another role, because it's going to be so clear to them, this is the levels that you need, and then that's now linked with their qualifications and training. We're working with two new training partners there as well. The other big thing we did is we didn't have the deputy role, so we've implemented that. We call it support manager role, based on feedback from our colleagues. They didn't like the word deputy, being what they call a red preference, I can appreciate that, I don't want to be a deputy, so called it support manager role, which has meant we've had a complete change to our target operating model, which we're just coming out of, where we now have the stepping stone between team leader and registered manager. It was quite challenging, because we'd already got people in some of the roles, and some people have had to move, in their eyes maybe, down, and others have gone up, the high flyers, but we've found that generally, people do understand the reason for it, financial viability. It's given people more opportunity to not go from team leader, and then all of a sudden, you're registered for CQC, and you're going to have eight houses, and it could all go terribly wrong. So they've embraced the fact that we've done that, and we've also dealt with recruitment, so we've gone more values based. We're doing assessment centres rather than sort of boring old interviews. And we're, you know, we're really looking at people's values and how they interact with the people we support. And I think for what I would say to other people, is when going through the process of being an Early Adopter, after sort of relaxing a little bit, we didn't really worry about whether we've got one person in a particular role or 600 and we didn't really get too constrained with content of the job mapping. We allowed it to guide us, and then we used it as a framework to make

it Brandonised. So it all had the same effect in giving a clear career pathway, but we used it as a framework rather than following it exactly like it says,

### **Debbie McNally**

That's fantastic, and this is a lot really, that if, if time was allowing, I'd love to unpack it further, but you said something there that is really, really important. I think sometimes we're at risk of missing it. The Pathway is excellent, of course, for people who are going or want to progress upwards in their career, but the Pathway has immense value for those who aren't seeking that type of progression, but actually they are content in the role, and it's about being best in role, isn't it? And I think sometimes that can get a little bit forgotten, that it can very valuably serve both, those who want to grow and those who are happy to stay but be the best in the role that they've got.

### **Debbie McNally**

That's where the career conversations, I think, come in. Because the stats we did when we did the testing was more often than not, people wanted to stay within role, when we asked them. It was about 50/50, going into leadership, but more people actually wanted to stay, but they didn't want to get bored, rigid, or undervalued, or, you know just lose the love for the job.

### **Rebecca Bool**

Well, that's fantastic. Very pertinent point. Thank you so much. If I can throw the same question out now to Vicky for your take on that. So, yeah, the Pathway, it's awareness, how it's grown within your organisation, and again, what's really helped your people understand it.

### **Vicky Jackson**

Yeah, no problem. Thanks. Rebecca. So, yes, I think we're quite early to this. So we're one of the Pioneers, so we're in the second group. So I would say we are still very much in the planning stages of this journey. So the, you know, the key thing for us at the start was build awareness, was to have this as a strategic business objective. I think for us it was that important, it needed to be, you know, part of our strategy moving forward for the next five years, and how we're going to implement this. So, as a very large provider, obviously, 6,500 people across the entire country, it's a little more like turning the Titanic. So, it takes a little longer, but absolutely so that that's given it a real focus. And I think what we've also done is not brought too many stakeholders into this at the very early stages. So we have brought stakeholders in as we need to engage with them. So as we've looked at job descriptions, we've brought our recruitment teams in, we've brought our regional directors in. But what we've done, every time we brought somebody in, we have a presentation that we use that really kind of engages them with where we're at. So it really outlines the kind of, the what, why, who, where, and when, and it kind of ensures that what it does is it's about our vision for implementing the Pathway, but also how that aligns with Skills for Care's vision and in terms of the whole sector and how we develop people and how we develop a workforce that are truly professional. So I think for us, that's that's really important. I think listening to lots of other people, probably similar to Debbie and Paul, we've got lots of amazing stuff in place. You know, we had just launched a fantastic kind of behaviours framework that's really interactive, it's an interactive wheel. So it's really nice to read for people, it's online, it's not lots of documents. And what we were really kind of pleased about is lots of the things we have in place, when we started to look at the Pathway, it mapped really easily and it slotted in with us. Because otherwise I think you think, Oh, have I got to change lots of things that I've already got that are working well to do this, and you don't. I think it's about thinking sometimes we're all doing good things, and sometimes it doesn't have to fit completely neatly. It's about, does it have the essence of, is it driving in the right direction? So I think yeah, very early. I think it's really helped us with job descriptions. Really helped us to look at them, a little bit like Debbie was saying, plain English them. Think about the audience that are going to read these. So you're you're basically talking the language of the person who's going to apply.

When you're recruiting a carer, you're not recruiting a strategic director for an organisation, you're recruiting a carer. So talk to a carer, talk to what's important to them, what they want from a job, what they would expect that job role to look like, and ensure that that all follows through. So we're kind of really learning that we're not fundamentally shifting things. We are tweaking things just to make them the best that they can possibly be. So I suppose that's, yeah.

### **Rebecca Bool**

And that's fantastic, because that's one of the things that was hoped for, and indeed it has turned out that way. The Pathway, it can be weaved into things that are pre-existing. Because pre-existingly, you have got some amazing things already happening in your organisations. So where you've got something that can be weaved into what's already pre-existing and complement it, I think it will definitely make life easier and, yeah, improve what's already actually really, really good. Thank you, Vicky, so much. And Paul, Paul again, sorry, Paul Smith, I saw you nodding your head quite a few times as well. So perfect opportunity. Can I bring you into this question about, you know, the Pathway, the growth, again, within your organisation, and what's helped your teams understand it?

### **Paul Smith**

Yes. Well, I'd like to start by echoing the words of the Minister, really, you know. There is a vision, and we all know that we've been undervalued for far too long, and often value is put on how much we can pay. And really, there's, there's a lot more to what we do than, than what you take home at the end of the month, otherwise none of us would do it really. So in my organisation, I came in in my first week, I found three brand new services who had never worked together before, and we took over a brand new home, and we happened to take over one from MHA. So, there was a huge exercise to be undertaken anyway. So I saw this as a great opportunity to actually think 'culture'. And then I thought, well, what's it all about really, at the end of the day, it's about people. So I had to look at, how can I humanise it, you know, because it's, I think we've heard the word framework from Debbie, and that's the, that's the big tip I would like to give everybody. Don't think of it as something that you've got to kind of, you know, take across, and you've got to implement, and you've got to fit all your job descriptions around it. Think of it as a framework to hang things on. Think of it as an opportunity to chuck away some of the old shirts, but also keep a lot of the trousers and the suits that really fit in the first place. And I think for us, it was one, because I had to find a commonality. You know, I had three services. You've got to think they've got three different registered managers. They've all got different personalities. They've all got different skill levels. Some want more, some are at the start of their career, some are at the end. But you look through your whole workforce, and you've got that. So what we had to do was create every job description, map it through with the workforce steps that are available to us at the moment because they give us a kind of skill pocketbook to pull in from. So we changed our training provider, etc, etc, to better, to better do that. But it was really about bringing life to the job description. You know what it's like, you've been in a job for a long time. You know what your role title is, but whether you've still got any interest at all of what the original job description was, which you got before you started years and years ago. So we had to bring life to that. So we used this process to do that, to imbue everything, if you like, with a new life. Because we were looking for a commonality of culture, and that led us to some of the things that Vicky was talking about. You know, we created work groups. Or I created work groups because the managers had not previously met, and there was a chance to bring in various departments at various times. But I was also very fortunate is that we have a very flat hierarchy. There's essentially me, and then there's the teams. So I didn't have all the arguments in the department about well you can't do this and you can't afford that. If I thought it was a good idea, and the team thought it was a good idea, we did it. And I've got a fantastic provider, and he was able to come up with the money because he really believed in the vision, which is to create great places for people to work and to live, because one you know, multiplies the other, and that gives you a satisfaction. So for us, it was that, it was that intertwining of something very, very human, to give value to the people that work for us, because we call them employees or our workforce, but they are the human beings at the end of the

day. They've got to be motivated to want to come into work, and then they've got to see that, you know, and we were able to work from, with the mapping that we did, we were able to work right from the job description right through to how we would start to now interview people and what skills we'd look for right the way through now, to how we would supervise people, how we would appraise people and introduce all those career development conversations within that. Everything was literally geared up to give people this idea that, you know, this job had fuller worth. You know, this is the care industry. And I think one of the things that we forget is that this is an honourable profession. We don't talk about it enough, but what we do is incredibly honourable. You know, you're working with people at the end of their life, very vulnerable, or people with learning disabilities, often, they are rejected from society, and then they're put into these, what used to be called institutions. We have to humanise all of that at the end of the day, and then the people who are responsible for doing that, who are the face of the company, are the frontline workers. So it's not about me, it's not about the provider. It really is about those and if you can get your team behind this Pathway, feeling that it brings value to what they do, and it offers opportunities, and it now becomes part of this big movement, which is this cultural change across social care, whereby we can actually go out and say listen, we all work now to this common standard. This is our code of practice. This is what we are. We're fit to practice, we're fit to work. And that's where we started from. From that, we've created a culture where people are interdependent. We can now move people between environments because they've got similar skills. They might not all, as we've heard, they might not all want to be the next director or the next home manager, but they might want to be the next champion, or we've developed ambassadors, and because within that role, we've been able to see the complexions, you know, it's not just black and white. So that's how we've introduced it. And it's been 13 months, but we have seen significant impacts, provable impacts, because we do satisfaction surveys every six months. So, we have seen tangible impacts, not only on those that work for us, but those that receive care, the families of the people that receive care, but also professionals that work with us. Because I was very brave early on, and I went straight out, and I said, the local councils and the CQC, right, we're going to adopt the Care Workforce Pathway, and this is what we're going to do. And here's my map and where we are. And each time they come in, they consult with us about where we are. So, we've made a concerted effort. We see it as a framework. We see it as a way of helping to create culture, and that's how it's made, the awareness of what we're doing. We, as Paul said, that people may not refer to it all the time as the Pathway, but they know what they're doing, and they know what it's doing to change the way that they feel and the way that they perform. And of course, what we've been able to do is we've created ambassadors, we've create champions, we can monetise it. So we've now introduced bonus structures and things like that, so that people who are performing at this higher level, because we're trying to meet these new standards, they now can earn more money. So at the end of the day, it's a win win all around for us as an organisation, and we're delighted to be Pioneers, and we're delighted to be hopefully presenting to people out there who want to be where we are now and are sitting, 50% of them is where we were a year ago, because it actually is, it is very possible. It's not easy, but it's more than possible.

### **Rebecca Bool**

I think that's amazing. Thank you so much. And, wow, something that you, everything you said there is fantastic. The point that you emphasised about the profession being honourable. My gosh, yeah, absolutely. And anybody who has, you also reference end of life, and anybody who has held the hand, had their hand held or observed a loved one having their hand held by a care support worker, or whatever title they may have, they would never disagree with you. It absolutely is honourable, and that feeds in beautifully to the next question I had for the panels, but I want to stay with you. Paul, Paul Smith, again, using the full title, because you've already you've already started to unpack it, but I want to unpack it further. So out of all of that, what has been the biggest change or benefit that you have seen for the organisation and for the people from using the Pathway.

### **Paul Smith**

I think they, on a business sense, all of that has allowed us to create a culture whereby we have seen in our satisfaction surveys from professionals who visit the service, we've seen a 54 point increase in their confidence and satisfaction with the service within the time frame that we've actually been implementing. So let's say there was four months where we were preparing, doing our mapping, and then introducing it and training people and doing whatever, so we've seen a 58% increase. On our employees, we've seen between 24 and 36 point increase in their levels of satisfaction. We've seen a little less in our relatives, residents, etc, because they're more of a passive audience in this. But again, we can see everything from 12 to 18 to 20% increases in their satisfaction. We've had services that were in a little bit of bother when we took them on, who've had that status removed, so we can tangibly say that it has benefited us on a business footing, big time. What we can say on a real level, is that, employment wise, we're managing to retain people longer. But because it's helped us to define the kind of skills and attitudes that we want, alongside the codes of practice and various other instruments that we have, we've been able to help people to understand that they either didn't belong to us or we didn't belong to them, that there's lots of jobs out there, and we could help them to find a job that maybe better suited them, and we've been able to bring in people that much better suit what we are as an organisation, and that, again, has had tangible impacts. And we've got a kind of, we've taken away a hierarchy, whereas, we've mentioned it ourselves, we've talked about, you know, not everybody wants to be this, not everybody wants to do that. I think what I've got in in the care homes now, I've got people who just want to be the best at what they can be. And I think if the Pathway can be anything, it's that, because not everybody can be a registered manager. I think it was mentioned earlier, you know. Who on earth wants to go to being from the clinical lead, suddenly you never sleep as a registered manager. Even if you do sleep, your ears are open. You know, there's just no downtime. Who wants to go to that? But some people have the aptitude for it, and they do, and this Pathway helps them to do that. So I think across the whole of what we've done, I've been able to measure increases in care and that's directly down to happier staff, more confident staff, more competent staff. I've been able to introduce pathways so that people can move in their own care homes, but also across, because our care homes are fairly, they're strategically they're not too far away from each other. As we grow, of course, that will become a little bit less easy, but that could never have existed before. So I think also, we've got people who will ring each other up now, so there's no fear of a manager just saying, I'll just ring this person or ring that person. And we've got people who have stepped up and are willing to represent the organisation at meetings. You know, we call them ambassadors. We also are creating brands within brands, where by now we've been able to think these are the people that we want to develop to lead our specialist services. We're in touch with the local authority to help to create end of life care to a gold standard level. We're also working with our brand of dementia care called Auguste Communities. The very first person who was ever diagnosed with Alzheimer's was called Auguste Deter. So we're calling it Auguste Communities in recognition of the human being and not a disease. So, we've got all of this, and we've got people bought into that. I don't think we would have gotten there as quick if we hadn't have had the Pathway and the support of you guys, because it's very important to recognise the support that we've had on this journey through the Skills for Care team. But we've taken that, and it was mentioned very early on in the presentations, we've taken that collaborative approach, rather than a top down approach, because if you're going to create a culture, depending on the type of culture you want, then you need to have a culture whereby everybody has an equal stake in what we're trying to do. So, I think again, Skills for Care, everybody knows the quality of Skills for Care, we've been following it for a long time. So being able to get in at this level and then see these tangible results in such a short period, I think that should give everybody encouragement to, you know, dab your toe in and give it a go. But I would say, don't just jump into it. You know, don't, don't act in haste and regret at your own pace, because you do need to understand it first, and then you need to map what you've already got, what you're going to get rid of, and what you're going to keep. As Paul was saying so eloquently, because all of us are doing really good stuff, but the stuff we can do better or differently, and then once you've got your map, engage people, push it through, and you will see results. We've been very lucky, I think, by working the way we have, and having the framework, and having such a small workforce, 150 people,

we've been able to engage people in a very personal journey. So even if you're big, you know, because I've been part of really big, you have to find a way, then, of empowering people at mid level to have that ability to get in and meet, and face to face, and talk, and develop everything that is a common goal. So from your recruitment through to your actual employment, to your induction, your supervision, there needs to be this thread, and this framework actually provides that thread.

**Rebecca Bool**

It can be the golden thread.

**Paul Smith**

It is the golden thread, absolutely.

**Rebecca Bool**

The supervision, the appraisal, and identifying, as you shared, those who are high potential, or they've got that, that aptitude, they've just got that 'je ne sais quoi' as they say, to pick up certain specialisms. Fantastic. Thank you so much. And can I gravitate to Paul Tolley. Because you did say earlier on that, to quote you 'a bit of a geek' when it came to stats and recording and those baselines and things like that, but they're obviously really important because as Paul Smith has just shared, it helps you track that you are going in the right direction, the direction that you want to go. So is it okay with you? Paul Tolley, now, to just unpack a little bit further, you know, the stats that you've got that you saw that encouraged you and actually proved, yes, we're doing the right thing here, and we are on the right road.

**Paul Tolley**

Yeah, I mean, it's a similar story to Paul's in many ways. We track. When I came in, I've been here for six, nearly seven years now, and I wanted to know what the baselines were. I knew we were doing really, really good stuff, but obviously, any organisation you're continually developing, you're continually improving, and I wanted to know what the baselines were. So, I think I said earlier about where we've got to in terms of our recruitment. And I think one of the most powerful things for me was that between April 2020 and April 2024, we were continually recruiting all the way through and social care you never stop recruiting. But we had a net gain of two people. So between April 2020 and April 2024, all we were doing was churning. I had two more staff than I had in April 2020, four years later, and we were expanding and growing as an organisation within that.

**Rebecca Bool**

So literally, four years, the retention.

**Paul Tolley**

Four years, just churned.

**Rebecca Bool**

Just two out of that. Wow.

**Paul Tolley**

So we only had a net gain of two out of those years, and then in the year after that. So 24/25 we ended up with a net gain of 20 staff. And so far this year, 25/6, we've already increased that by a further 10 so I'm now 30 staff stronger as an organisation than I was in 2020 and indeed at the end of April 24. So for me, it's that recruitment and retention and the gift that that gives you as a provider, is incredible, because all of a sudden you've got the space to breathe that you didn't have before. So for me, that is absolutely critical, the fact that we've managed to hit 100% in terms of training compliance across the

board, and that's our new normal. That's our starting piece. If I go back, I think, I think on a good day, because everything was elearning and all the rest of it, on a good day, I suspect we could probably have evidenced something like 65 to 70%, somewhere around there, as a baseline of compliance, so that I could have confidently said, every single member of staff there, every piece of mandatory training, it's there. It's evidence is on file. I think about 65/70 was roughly it. And I can't give you an exact figure, because the systems and the processes weren't working as they should. Today, I sit there and go 100%. Every single member of staff is on for every single one and our processes work to do that. For me, then it's what that translates into. So again, stats and geeky bits, but 91% of our staff say that they are proud to work for us. But, more importantly, 99% say that they feel that they are supported to learn and develop, and that goes back to Paul's point about culture. That's what feeds the culture of the organisation. 99% say: I feel that my employer cares about my learning and development, and they actively invest and develop me as an employee. That is fantastic. So for me, it's all about the interconnected levers, if you like, that lead to being in a position as an organisation where you have the space to breathe because you're not firefighting. Social care, we are under resourced, undervalued, and therefore continually firefighting. And there is nothing that saps energy more out of an organisation than continually firefighting. And you know, Paul's point about middle management, that's where that is felt on a day to day basis. You haven't got, you never feel that you are up to speed. You never feel that you've got the time to breathe because you are constantly firefighting the same problem day in, day out. You're not solving the problem, you're just dealing with it. A bit like we were with the recruitment. And after four years of constant effort, we only had two more staff than we started with. That is the piece that just saturates you and drains you. So for me, you know, I think those are some of the pieces that we can see, and then that, as I mentioned earlier, has translated to our zero use of agency in our supported living settings. In terms of stats and baselines. If I look back, so we've just closed off Q3 accounts, so April to December. If I look back at the year before, we had already spent £225,000 on agency in the first nine months of last year, same point this year, we've, we have spent £56,000 pounds on agency.

**Rebecca Bool**

That is incredible, my gosh.

**Paul Tolley, New Directions Rugby**

But drill that down a bit more that 56k, 41,000 of that was in quarter one, was in April to June. So what that means is, my agency spend over the last six months has been £15,000. If I can keep it at that level, I will have an annual agency spend of 30k or less. And it was one of the things I set out to do when I came into the organisation. You know, came for the interview and I went, that's a lot to be spending on agency. Now, my background wasn't necessarily social care, but I'm looking at it going, that's a big figure. And the reaction I kind of got was, well, but that's kind of our baseline, that's that's kind of normal.

**Paul Tolley**

The norm at that time, right?

**Paul Tolley**

And it just crept up from quarter of a million to 333 I think was our top and it was just kind of going that way because it was normal. If you pull the right levers, you can address the issues, and you can free up capacity within the organisation so that people can feel that they can breathe, that you can collaborate, and also people feel valued. And then that, for me, that's where the the geeky data pieces, they focus your attention on the bits that matter, and then you end up with a resulting improved culture of the organisation that people feel. People don't care about the stats when I tell them. It's about I feel that the organisation cares about me and supports me to learn and develop. Therefore I'm staying.

## **Rebecca Bool**

And again, I think that's another thing about the Pathway. What it can help with, obviously, from what you've just shared, Paul, is it can help with speaking to the head, but also the heart. And that's really lovely. That is really, really lovely. That is brilliant. Thank you so much. Can I gravitate now towards Vicky? Because, again, I saw your head nodding a few times during that so obviously there's things there that you recognise and that resonate with you. Can we share that now, from your perspective, what's been happening in your organisation, you know, what's been, what has for you been the biggest benefit?

## **Vicky Jackson**

Yeah, I mean, I think, as I said, you know, we're early days, so we haven't even gone to pilot yet. That's something we're going to do in the summer. But I think, I think for me, this was our next step. So again, like everyone we've been doing huge amounts of work to kind of get those all important stats in a good place. You know, we are now 16.5% turnover, which is incredible in our sector, again, for the size we are. Our absence is only 3.4%. You know, so lots of things going really, really well. Our recruitment team are now turning around, you know, applications to offers in just 12 days. So again, we're at that point now where it's, how do we accelerate that to the next level? We know we've done amazing things. You know, we've really pushed hard on it. It's about how now we take it forwards. And I think for us, the care career pathways were going to be that cherry on the cake that could help us to just take it to that next level. I think by bringing everything together, combining everything we do, you know, if I think, you know, I think last year, we provided 13,000 hours of learning outside of compliance training. So that's on top of compliance training, but it's how we organise that into those structured career pathways. So how do we ensure that that is taking someone on a journey to where they want to be? And again, like everybody, I absolutely echo, it's not always about going upwards. It's how do I become a specialist in my field. How do I become an end of life specialist? How do I become a dementia specialist, a Parkinson's specialist, you know, there are so many different things where people can expand their role without necessarily moving upwards. How do I become a learning champion that supports others to learn, others to develop through my experience? How do I buddy new starters, help them grow and shape. And I think the career pathways seem to be kind of, I suppose, our vehicle to help us to move all of this together. I think the other thing that was really, that's really big for us, that we're looking into as well is, how do we take those skills assessments that we have very much adapted and we've turned them into I statements? So everything on our skills assessments is about an I statement now, so it's very easy for people to be able to assess themselves against that, but it's about, how do we get those digital. So it's fantastic that we've got these paper versions, but how do we create that into a digital, online tool that people can use to complete, their manager can complete. They can then meet together to discuss that. They can start to then have that inform in terms of their personal development plans. It can feed into their one to ones and appraisals. So that's what we're doing at the moment, is looking at how we build those into our HR system, so that then we can really connect the manager and the individual together through that, and we can start to really capture all of that and have that audit trail in terms of that journey that people have gone on, and most importantly, be able to report on it, which is always the challenge, I think, in our sector. So many of us, has lots of bits of paper, but it's how do we have it so that we can press a button and go, Whoa, okay, that's what that's done. That's how that's connected those people. That's how that's really channeled that person's development, so that we can really see our people grow and progress through. And one of the things we're really excited about is because we've had a hospitality career pathway for quite a while now, so very excited when we heard Alex talking about those new roles that are coming that are supporting that hospitality. We've used apprenticeships for a while now to support kitchen assistants to move through to become chefs in our homes. So really exciting now to see again, how again moving that next stage, how we can start to pull that together and make sure that everything is in line with those career pathways. So we're really

excited to just, yeah, top everything off and bring everything together into really clear, logical steps for people.

### **Rebecca Bool**

That is amazing. Thank you so much. That is brilliant. Before I move on to looking at the Pathway from the lens of ecosystem partners. What I would like to do is just end this particular segment with asking Debbie, you've already shared, you know, some of the huge benefits. So I think it's okay to move on from that. But what I would like, because others have already organically mentioned it, some top tips to those who are just starting out. You did allude to it a little bit earlier on, when you were talking at first Debbie, but you know about the Pathway and how you can see it and how you can use it, but to organisations just starting out, what would be your top tip?

### **Debbie McNally**

I think with two things, one would be what Paul Smith said, just take some time to understand it first, because it can be mind boggling when you first see it. My head nearly fell off, but that's because I'm not a very patient person, and you need a bit of patience. You need to understand it. And then once you understand it, just think about, you know, your own organisation, in essence. It's just about giving a road map to everyone who works in your organisation that enables them to say, I understand my job requirements, I understand where I am, and I now understand if I want to stay where I am, but keep engaged, or I want to move up or different job altogether, I can understand what skills and behaviours I need and what support there is for me, it's a road map. Just use it as that.

### **Rebecca Bool**

Fantastic. Thank you so much. And thank you to all our other providers. That is some fantastic information. And for those who are yet to start on their Pathway journey, you've definitely handed out the bricks and mortar there to start paving the road. So thank you so much. But now, really want to focus on Danielle and Tina specifically, and I have some very specific questions for you. So these are different, because, again, I want to help share through the lens and the perspective of system partners, the Pathway. And in particular, what do you think the Pathway could help fix in respect of workforce challenges. You know, what's your long term vision for the Pathway locally? If I can start with you, Danielle on that, that'd be great.

### **Danielle Fullwood**

Yeah, certainly. So I think we've got to start with a little bit of data for Coventry and Warwickshire, which is a system as a whole. So we've got 9% of our adult social care workforce are under 25 years old, our approximate turnover is around 27% from direct care roles, and 53% of our current adult social care workforce don't have a qualification that's relevant to adult social care. Now all of that comes from our Adult Social Care Data Set from Skills for Care. Of course, it is an average across our system, but for us, it really showed us that there were some things we needed to do differently, and we needed to really prioritise how we could encourage children and young people into social care roles, to consider social care roles, how we could support those in the workforce. I've got a, you know, an education and skills remit, so I'm looking at this very much about how, if we support our workforce to develop their skills in role, what does that do to your turnover rate? When we look at the, you know, the statistics, Level 3 qualification tends to be the highest attainment for this for direct care workers, and I'm really committed to looking at that and saying, Well, how can we build the parity of esteem with our NHS colleagues, who often have a much greater opportunity to develop their skills in-role and a much clearer career progression opportunity. What can we do in adult social care? And so for me, this really the Workforce Pathway is a real opportunity to create some of that parity of esteem. We are an anchor institution, we're a cornerstone employer and it's really important that when we go out and we talk to children and young people about health and care careers, that we're really able to articulate what do we

mean by a career in care? Can they imagine themselves in that role and then where they'll be in five years or 10 years time? And often, when we've gone out in the past, we've done that through the eyes of the NHS, through NHS ambassadors, very much focusing, often on our registered professions. So the Care Workforce Pathway gives us an opportunity to have a much stronger focus with our children and young people on routes into care and care roles and that progression, you know, that progression pipeline that they could, that they could look into. We have an Employability Academy, and they work with sort of adults of working age who want to get into their first role in health or care. And you know, without the Care Workforce Pathway, sometimes it's quite difficult to articulate what the art of the possible is, what skills they've got, and how that translates across. So the Care Workforce Pathway provides us that sort of common, shared language to be able to have that really meaningful conversation with somebody who really wants to find employment and to say, Well, you've done this, so look at the values, skills, and behaviours of this role descriptor. Does it sound like something that you'd like to be able to do? And so for me, that's a real benefit of having the Care Workforce Pathway. Our further education and our higher education providers are really keen on being able to develop education which meets the needs of both our current workforce in social care, but also our future workforce as well. And so being able to actually say, Well, this is the knowledge and skills you need for this role, it really means that we can develop education that says, right, and now you've done that, these are the roles that you could look at. So it provides your tangible kind of, this is the education that suits this role and we can help you through our offer across further education and higher education to be able to get in and get on in adult social care.

### **Rebecca Bool**

That's fantastic, and you've touched on it a little bit there. But just to explore it further, the motivations then behind picking up the Pathway and looking to embed this, just exploring that a little bit further, please Danielle.

### **Danielle Fullwood**

Yes, certainly. So as an Integrated Care Board, we're responsible for convening the system really, to look at workforce challenges and to say, what can we do here? What are our priorities? And obviously, I've shared with you some of the data that helped us to develop our people plan. We developed our people plan in 2024 and in that people plan, we said what our priorities would be, and one of them was developing our support workforce. Now, we meant that generally across health and social care, and we've done a lot of work in working with Coventry College, for example, on implementing the Higher Development Award. We've started to develop a system blueprint for delegated healthcare activities. We've brought in clinical educators in some of our nursing homes in Warwickshire and in Coventry as well. All because it's part of our people plan. We've got a priority about attraction and recruitment into adult social care. As I said, we've got our further education and our higher education providers looking to develop some offers, and we were all doing this work in these kind of different places. And then the Care Workforce Pathway came out, and it was just the perfect scaffolding and structure to bring us all together as that ecosystem, and work on this in the round, rather than sort of these bits over here and these bits over here, but actually say - we are the ecosystem. We're looking at this not just from an employer perspective, but from an education perspective, from an employability advisor perspective in DWP, or job shops or the Employability Academy, we're all looking at different bits of this. This gives us the opportunity to come together with a shared language and implement this Pathway.

### **Rebecca Bool**

Oh, that is fantastic. And Tina, can I bring you in at this point now, because you're from the local authority, so you're looking at it through that specific lens. So same sort of questions for yourself, really, what do you think the Pathway could help and what is your long term vision for it?

### **Tina Tate**

Okay, in terms of those challenges and that work for that long term vision, we really see the Pathway as a tool to tackle all of the challenges, such as recruitment, retention, and, in particular, the skills gap that we're seeing. But for me, in particular, when we talk about recruitment, it's such a big area, the key element for me is attraction, and hearing some of the colleagues stories that are already, you know, along the Pathway is really, really positive and really, really encouraging to hear that some of that long term vision that we would only hope to get to, you're already experiencing. So I feel really sort of invigorated by some of the case studies and the experiences from colleagues this afternoon. Because we're very early on in the days of this Pathway, but we're really excited about the opportunities that it can bring to our workforce. And although I'm supporting the local authorities adult social care workforce, internally, everything that we learn, all of our experiences and knowledge we're sharing outwardly to all of our provider sector and system partners. So, by defining the clear roles and categories that Skills for Care have obviously developed within the Pathway at each level, we feel that that makes social care careers all the more attractive and transparent moving forward, and hopefully that will help us to draw in new recruits, New generationals, but all generationals, which is really, really important to the sector, of course, and that talent pipeline, while showing our much valued existing workforce how they can actually grow within it as well, and that, as colleagues have already alluded to, that's really, really important that we maintain and we sustain that experience and that knowledge base within the sector.

### **Rebecca Bool**

Was that part of the strong motivation, then, for why you started with this, why you picked it up.

### **Tina Tate**

Absolutely and there's lots of other factors, but you know, we're hearing that from our providers and our partners, that they have challenges, and that there's other challenges that we have as a very rural and coastal geography to the East Riding, it's very, very difficult to attract. So the attraction element is really, really important to us. And as colleagues will know the statistics that we're seeing, you know, looking ahead, how we increase the workforce for social care and increase that economic viability of social care, which we all know exists, is really, really important. So, you know, setting that consistency of training and competency standards so that we can target those gaps and ensure that our staff and the workforce have the right skills at the right time. In practical terms, we've begun mapping our local job roles to the Pathway and using it as a framework, meeting with our care providers to align progression routes, and help them, ultimately, to develop training plans across, you know, consistent standard framework. In the long term, our vision is to embed this Pathway across our whole adult social care system. We want every provider and every worker within those organisations to feel that, not only that they can use that Pathway, but they've got to be aware of the Pathway, you know, really embed that awareness across the system so that they can feel stable in its use. And ultimately, and I know colleagues have already mentioned, you know, we want, we're not just doing this paying lip service to it, we want the social care workforce to feel valued. We want them to be appreciated as we all know they should be, and within that feel that they are, they are valued as professionals in the adult social care and health system. And I think you know, having a clear career pathway that shows that ladder of opportunity, whether it's about upwards progression or sideways development and growth is one of the key factors to retaining the existing workforce and ultimately attracting new workers, new generationals to the sector. Because without that, you know, how can we become that employer of choice? Every organisation strives to be an employer of choice, and some of our colleagues have already mentioned how the benefits of using the Pathway are enabling them and helping them to do that, and if we can share the benefits of that across the system, you know, hopefully we'll all get on board with using the Pathway. You know, the benefits are tremendous, aren't they. But in terms of those motivations that you mentioned, Rebecca, we, in embedding the Pathway, see it as a real business benefit. I know Paul mentioned that earlier, but what we were recognising that maintaining business as usual within our

provision and sustaining that was one of the key pressures. Here in the East Riding, as I mentioned, we're challenged geographically in that rural, coastal demographic. But not only that, you know that persistent staff shortages and turnover, again, as others have mentioned, is a key factor, strategic factor for us. We face an ever increasing ageing workforce, you know, amidst not only an ageing workforce, but the demographic of the age profile in the East Riding is one of the highest increasing across the country. So that, you know, those are sort of clashing together as key challenges. Like others have mentioned, those projections in that workforce, we need to increase in the Yorkshire and Humber area by a potential 40 plus, 43,000, over the coming years. That's 25% increase of our existing workforce.

**Rebecca Bool**

Over the four years?

**Tina Tate**

Over the future years. So we're talking the next 10 to 15 years. As national statistics demonstrate that increase over the Yorkshire and Humber region, that's about 43,000 which is 25% of our existing workforce.

**Rebecca Bool**

There not small figures by any means, are they, they are significant.

**Tina Tate**

You know, amidst a growing, ageing workforce, you know, we've only got less than 5% under 25, so attracting those younger generationals and making those career pathways really clear about the opportunities that can be had across social care is really, really important. So, you know, we know that we've got to act decisively within this and to retain that existing workforce, but attract the new workforce, and these pathways, I think, offer that structure and that solution, to align some of that and create that career of choice in social care. In short, our motivation was to be proactive and address the longer term workforce risks. But in joining the Skills for Care Pathway, we can see some real positive benefits. We hope that we can get ahead of the curve with some of these comprehensive approaches to career development, rather than just tackling recruitment and training issues at piecemeal. It's given us a framework to work towards, to unify efforts and improvement, and by developing the career pathway and sharing that and create an awareness of it with our partners in the sector, we're really hopeful that supporting this will ultimately ensure that we have the right capable staff with the right competence, and building competence brings confidence and quality, and that's one of our key goals in this.

**Tina Tate**

That is fantastic. Just before we move on to the plenary part, where we're all going to get together and have a look at some of the questions that the delegates on this session have are going to pose us, just to wrap it up quite nicely, and it leads in from what you've just shared a few sentences earlier. So what does the Pathway actually do or provide that this sector has not seen before? What's so new.

**Tina Tate**

As we've just mentioned, the Care Workforce Pathway for us is breaking new ground. For adult social care, in particular, it's essentially the first universal career structure for our sector. And that's huge. It's a huge milestone that us working in a sector can see the benefits of, you know, and we want to share that loud and proud to anyone else outside of social care, don't we, so that, you know, hopefully we can, we can attract, be attractive as a career of choice. Unlike in the past, where each care employer had its own job definitions, and in some instances, with no definitions at all, we want that career progression to

be clear, so that we all have a consistent framework to work towards, where there are roles and competencies everyone could recognise, and that, in itself, can create that portability and that transferability of roles across the sector with real quality standards that's of benefit for everybody involved. So, as I said, it's unprecedented. The Pathway clearly lays out what the roles are, from entry level to registered manager and beyond, and the knowledge and skills and values and behaviours required for within each. In practical terms, it means that the care workforce for us can see how they themselves can progress to, you know, if their aspirations are to move upwards into a senior role, they can see how they can achieve that and where the gaps are in enabling them to do so, and help managers and employers have those confident conversations with their workforce about how they can achieve that and that in itself, and I'm really pleased to hear colleagues already saying, will have a real benefit on the retention, because that in itself breeds confidence, but it also, for me, it adds to the total value proposition of the adult social care workforce, in that we're keeping our workforce not only confident, but safe. For me, every employees, with an L and D background in terms of learning and development, if I was asked what my key goal was, it would be to say that everybody can come to work to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, and this pathway, I feel, gives us as employers that opportunity to have those constructive conversations about the confidence and the competence of our workforce.

### **Rebecca Bool**

And I can see your head nodding quite a bit, Danielle, is that very much you're in agreeance with that, but you know thinking about your background and as an educator, does that ring true for you as well? So this is something actually very new. The sector hasn't seen this before.

### **Danielle Fullwood**

Absolutely, I couldn't agree more with Tina. We were worried we were going to say the same thing Tina, weren't we? What she said! But from a unique perspective, you know, from the ICB perspective, I think there are three things that this Pathway gives us that we haven't seen before. The first is that parity of esteem and I know I mentioned it before, but the NHS has had the knowledge and skills framework for decades now, which has set out the knowledge and skills that's required of the workforce associated with pay, and now we have the Care Workforce Pathway that means that we've started to now have more of that sort of that equality, which for me, is really important. And you know, as an ICB, we are representing both NHS and social care, but often we see people leave one to join the other, and not so much the other way. Whereas actually this will mean that we, if we do get movement, which we will always have movement, but we will get it both ways. And that, for me, is a good thing, because they will stay in the system within health and care, you know, which is great for sort of broadening skills and keeping people happy and motivated in their job and providing good care. So that's the first thing, that parity of esteem. The second thing for me is recognition and reward. I want to go back to my delegated healthcare activities hat, and when I'm looking at that, you know, the last thing we want to do is to ask someone who is not recognised already as much as they could be for the job they do, to take on a health care activity, and that worsens the inequity then, without any recognition and reward. So what we've done in the blueprint that we're creating is, we have mapped the roles and responsibilities to the enhanced care worker. And when we're saying that, therefore, we're saying that you should be recognised and rewarded as an enhanced care worker. So it's given us the kind of carrot to be able to write that within that system blueprint, to say, if you're going to delegate and be delegated to, then recognition and reward is absolutely essential. And the third thing is, for me, is mutual understanding. If I think about integrated neighborhood teams and the fact that we're going to be coming together across health and social care as equal partners to provide care in a very different way, sometimes that is difficult if we aren't able to clearly articulate what the roles are in certain parts of the organisations and settings. But now, with this, we are going to be able to develop that mutual understanding and that building those trusting relationships because we have this shared language through the pathways that it will enable.

**Tina Tate**

That's fantastic. Thank you so much. That is brilliant, and that is where we'll leave it there for me harassing you with all these different questions. We have overrun slightly, but for very good reason, that is such fantastic information. There's a lot of knowledge in this albeit virtual room, and I know lots of people will be feeding off that, literally devouring it. But what I'd like to do now is hand back to my colleague, Nat, for just a couple of questions, because I believe we haven't got the same amount of time as pre planned, but maybe we could get one or two questions in from the Q&A and as Nat promised, no question will go unanswered. It just means that we'll probably have to park it and come back to those who posed the question later. But yes, I'll stop talking now. Nat.

**Natalie Spinks**

Thanks, Rebecca, and thank you to all our panelists. Yeah, we have run over a little bit, but we didn't want to stop, because everything that you were sharing was so fantastic and I'm really hoping that that has brought to life for those on the call the kind of impacts and experiences they can expect when they're undertaking the Pathway. We do have a couple of questions, but we don't have very much time at all, so let's see where we get to, because we do need to hand over for closing remarks in about five minutes. So, somebody has asked a question of the panelists: Are any of the panel members who have adopted the Pathway experienced it being a recruitment plus point, so actually using it as that recruitment tool that prospective employees choose to work for your organisation, rather than those who haven't yet adopted the Pathway? If anybody is able to respond to that, would be great.

**Paul Tolley**

Yeah, I can. Certainly it is something. So I go into every single induction of every new member of staff that joins the organisation, and it is coming through time and time again, one of the first questions is progression. What chances for progression is there within the organisation? And one of the comments, I think later on as well, was saying, you know, are we using people who have progressed as ambassadors? And we've certainly very much done that. Our registered manager for our residential services was at Windsor last week, I got to shake the King's hand twice, which was fantastic. So thanks to Skills for Care for putting us forward on that one because, but the reason that she was the perfect person to go was because she started at the age of 16 as a care worker with no experience, and has gone all the way through and has been our registered manager for our operations within residential and we have so many people in the organisation who are then those ambassadors who say, I've been able to progress all the way through. It's one thing being able to say it in your recruitment material, but actually having people in the organisation who are living, breathing proof and that have worked for the organisation for decades is a really, really great tool.

**Natalie Spinks**

Fabulous. Thank you, Paul and Paul Smith, you looks like you had wanted to come in on that as well.

**Paul Smith**

Just to reiterate a lot of what Paul's just said, actually, we are, we're still early. You know, it's only 13 months for us, and it's only now that we've got our new website and everything, because we are fairly new. But I think overall, what we're seeing is because our ratings are increasing, you know, and ratings are going up on the independent assessments. We put an advert out, we're getting inundated. You know, there are certain rules, of course, that you know and not but we've got the rural problem as well. You know, we're at the course in Northumberland, etc, shipyards and things like that. So it's not too easy, but what we are seeing is, when we advertise for care assistance, when we advertise, we've got, you know, we don't have problems getting nurses, etc, for our nursing establishments. Now, I'm not sure whether that would have been possible a year ago. So although we haven't integrated yet fully into

our marketing, it is all over our website. It's all over what we do. It's all over how we are approaching recruitment, and it's embedded within our adverts. So it's starting to show. Our retention is much, much higher than it was. Our people who were choosing to leave has dropped to a minuscule amount, so we're in a much better place than we were, and I will be able to demonstrate that within the next six to eight months, what the impact of the Pathway has had on that rather than just looking at the overall contribution of increased satisfaction and increased service ratings, etc. So, come back to me in six months time, and I'll be able to answer that one.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Fabulous. Thank you, Paul, both Pauls, and that is actually where we're going to start to wrap up. It was the very, very short plenary, but as I say, that was because we didn't want to interrupt the flow from the panelists sharing our experiences. So, just a huge, huge thank you to you all for your contributions today, and hopefully you've given lots of useful insights and food for thought for people to be taking home and taking away with them. We've just to, just to reiterate what I mentioned at the start of the session, and that is that any questions that we haven't got around to answering, we will respond to and circulate with the kind of the post-webinar information. But now, I am delighted to hand over to the Skills for Care CEO, Oonagh Smyth, who's going to offer us some closing remarks. Oonagh.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Oh, Oonagh, we can't we can't hear you. I'm afraid. I'm so sorry.

### **Oonagh Smyth**

I was just telling you I had to switch cameras because I couldn't get my camera to work and then I didn't unmute. I think it's because I'm so buzzing about this event. It's been so positive and just so inspirational. It's brilliant to listen to the speakers and all of the panelists, and just to hear such a positive conversation and so much energy. I just want to take a minute to thank, say thanks to all of our speakers, all of our panelists, and everybody that's joined this afternoon. We've had so much interest, and I want to take a moment just to thank my team as well. Everybody is so committed to this work and you can probably tell, we're all very excited about it. And as you know, loads of people have said today, not just, you know, kind of theoretically, but because it's actually making an impact, and we're starting to see that and share that. I was thinking about the keynote address that we heard earlier from the Minister of State for Care, and I think that's a really good reminder that this work is nationally important and that the Government is really committed to supporting it. It's not a kind of initiative sitting over there. It's really at the heart of the long term reform agenda. And what today has shown us all, I think, is just how significant the Pathway has become. It's been in place for just over two years, and it already permeates so much of government thinking and so much of our work at Skills for Care and just the level of engagement today shows that it's meeting a real need. A need for more clarity, for more consistency, for more recognition and progression for people working in social care. I think what we've seen across the whole agenda today is a sector kind of moving with a real purpose, really thinking about the roots and the developments of the role categories, and the kind of reflections we can see momentum building steadily and really practically. You know, some people weren't involved in the Early Adopters, some were. People are getting interested. I found it particularly powerful hearing from people working in care providers and in system partners, just hearing about how the Pathway is already helping to clarify roles, clarify expectations, and kind of strengthen induction and development, and really building that confidence in the workforce and that honesty about the challenges and pressures that organisations are facing is really important too, because this work has to be grounded in reality. The work that we do in social care is too important, it's really important that we know what it's feeling like when people actually try to implement this so when people are kind of sharing what feels difficult, you know, take a breath, take time to read it. It really helps us then to think about the tools that we provide, the resources, and the guidance. But I think the one kind of message has come through really, really

clearly for me today, and it's that the Pathway offers a long term opportunity to really strengthen professional identity across adult social care. That universal structure for roles, articulation of all the knowledge and the skills and the values and behaviours and how you move through the system, is really important and really important that we keep the human story at the centre as well. Our sector is built on compassion and commitment and a really deep expertise, and this Pathway ensures that people who draw on care receive really good quality support from a workforce that's confident and skilled, has the right behaviours at the kind of heart of their practice, and that the Pathway tries to kind of honour that workforce and their strength. So, as we finish today, I just want to put one sort of call for action out there, I suppose. For organisations that are already adopting the Pathway, keep going, keep building on the progress you've made, keep speaking to us about what you're finding so that we can make sure that what we do is working. For those that are still to begin, are still exploring, I mean, there is no better advertisement than the stories that we've heard today from people in your position. So, you know, now is probably the moment to start. Everything that you do helps to contribute to that kind of consistent and confident and professional future for adult social care. And from our perspective at Skills for Care, we're still really committed to supporting you in your journey. So, thank you everyone for your time and your insight and for the work that you're doing, and we look forward to continuing the workforce pathway journey together. Thank you, Natalie.

### **Natalie Spinks**

Thank you Oonagh for your reflections there, and that does bring us to the end of our session. We're just bringing the slides back up. You're going to see a slide come up with a QR code. We would really love to hear, we thought that this was a really good session, and we shared some great insights, but we hope you think the same so please tell us and scan the QR code on your screen and tell us now, whilst it's still all really fresh in your mind. Just reiterating our commitment again to circulating responses to the questions that came through and we didn't have time to answer, we will also be sharing some other information with like the slides, the slide deck and some resources, links and things.