

Care Workforce Pathway support programme for care providers 2026

Hello, and welcome to the Care Workforce Pathway support programme introductory webinar for care providers. The Care Workforce Pathway Implementation Team is your dedicated resource for supporting your adoption journey. We don't just explain the Pathway, we will guide you through the tools and resources to implement it within your organisation via the adoption support programme activities. Support from Skills for Care is fully funded by the Department of Health and Social Care so there is no direct cost to systems or providers other than your time, reflecting a national investment in the sector. So, first I'll briefly touch on the Care Workforce Pathway itself. We appreciate many of you will already be familiar with it, but just to bring us all onto the same page, let's cover the basics. As a recap, the Care Workforce Pathway is a shared national language for adult social care provider roles. For the first time, we have clear role categories, defined skills, knowledge, and behaviours, and a structure for progression, and critically, it allows the sector to describe roles and expectations consistently across organisations and places. This is not about replacing local models. It doesn't require job title changes, it doesn't prescribe structures, and it isn't mandatory. Instead, it provides a shared reference point, and that's where the power sits. For years, other sectors have had a clear shared structure for their workforce. Adult social care hasn't, until now. The Care Workforce Pathway is ours. It belongs to us all. This is what the Pathway looks like in practice. The eight published roles for the Pathway sit on the gov.uk website and are seen here on the left. The Pathway sets out clear role categories across adult social care, from people who are new to care right through to leadership roles like registered managers. It's important to note that these are role categories, not individual job titles. If your roles have different names, that's totally fine. What's important is to know where your roles sit on the Pathway. What the Pathway shows is a career journey. It helps people see where they are now, what the next step could be, and it supports them to understand how to get there. It also creates a shared way of describing roles across organisations, so we're more consistent in how we talk about expectations and progression. As part of the next phase, we are developing 10 additional role categories to build on those already published. These are shown on the right-hand side of the table. This includes three full roles: they are nominated individual, care technologist, and activity coordinator, and we also have three context-specific roles: quality assurance leads, learning and development practitioners, and corporate middle and senior managers. These focus specifically on behaviours, knowledge, and skills needed in an adult social care context, rather than the full set of wider role competencies. Finally, there are four ancillary roles: administration, domestic, maintenance, and catering. Again, these are very much focused on what's expected within an adult social care environment, rather than any other sector. We're currently finalising these with the Department of Health and Social Care, with a plan to publish in 2026. Looking at the bigger picture, things like the Employment Rights Act, the Fair Pay Agreement, and the idea of a National Care Service all connect in some way to the Care Workforce Pathway. The Pathway is about helping shape and support the workforce. It sets out what good looks like in terms of skills, knowledge, and behaviours across different roles. It's one part of a wider picture in terms of strengthening and developing the workforce over time.

It doesn't do everything on its own, though. Things like training, take up, and how organisations support their staff all play a big role too. There are also links to things like pay and conditions. The aim is to bring more alignment between people's skills, development, and how roles are valued, although this is something the sector is continuing to work through, with more detail still being developed. The Employment Rights Act is more about putting the structures and legal framework in place, including how pay and conditions can be agreed at a wider level. The Fair Pay Agreement is intended to help improve pay and conditions in the sector overall. All of this is sometimes talked about as part of the journey towards a National Care Service, but what that will look like in practice isn't fully defined yet.

Overall, though, these are all pieces of a bigger picture aiming to create a more consistent, supported, and sustainable workforce over time. Finally on the background, I'm going to share this slide, which shows feedback from those care providers who were Early Adopters of the Pathway. These are real examples with real providers that show the Pathway's early impact. In workforce retention, a 15% reduction in turnover, that's around three times greater improvement in retention that's been seen previously. In organisational performance and quality, a 92% increase in stakeholder satisfaction, or one service moving out of special measures within six months. In recruitment and workforce growth, a net workforce growth of plus 31 staff in 18 months compared to just plus two over the previous four years, with some organisations achieving full staff retention, and beyond those headline figures, we're also seeing meaningful shifts in staff experience and development. Staff report high satisfaction with the Pathway and consistently describe it as relevant and valuable. We're seeing clearer career progression with people moving from entry roles into leadership positions and into new specialist roles. There's increased take up in qualifications, and more staff actively seeing care as a long-term career, and importantly, those structured career conversations focused on the role categories are directly supporting both progression and retention. I hope that short overview was helpful.

This segment of the recording is going to take you through the support programme offer, what it includes, what's involved, and how the different activities aim to support your adoption journey. The Pathway adoption support programme helps you translate national ambition into meaningful practical action on the ground. We offer a structured programme, practical tools, bite-sized workshops, and peer support to help you map roles, strengthen career pathways, and improve retention. Importantly, this isn't about adding pressure or creating extra work. It's about helping you use what's already in place more effectively, starting small, and building from there. If you're looking for a clear, supported way to take the next step on workforce transformation, this is it. Alongside this journey, there are some simple commitments to help keep momentum, and based on learning from those Early Adopters and organisations we've worked with previously, these include nominating a Pathway lead and senior sponsor, developing a straightforward implementation plan, and actively participating in workshops and checkpoints. Each organisation is encouraged to map at least one role and use the Pathway to deliver at least one tangible change, ensuring the work leads to real practical impact. We ask organisations to make these commitments because they help keep the adoption journey focused and achievable. For example, committing to attend checkpoints means you can access troubleshooting support to address barriers or uncertainty as it arises. Attending workshops equips you with practical knowledge and tools, such as role mapping, that enable you to take meaningful action and deliver real change in your organisation. As part of the support programme offer, you will have access to three core workshops that support organisations through their Pathway journey. The first focuses on getting buy-in, helping you

clearly link the Pathway adoption work to organisational priorities, build a strong case for change, and feel confident engaging stakeholders. The second workshop shifts into planning for action, where you'll identify practical starting points, quick wins, and how to measure progress while aligning existing processes. The final workshop is hands on, guiding you through role mapping in practice, using templates and prompts to test alignment and identify gaps, with an introduction to how AI can support this process. As part of the support programme, we also will be facilitating action and reflection forums. Now, these sit alongside workshops, network meetings, and checkpoints, giving you a supportive space to talk things through, reflect on what you've learned, and turn it into real action within your organisation. They're a place to share challenges, test ideas, and learn from others, with a focused approach that helps you build directly on workshop learning and make it work in practice. Checkpoints is a short, structured moment to reflect, troubleshoot, and keep things moving, helping turn activity into meaningful progress. What these focus on is what actions have been taken so far, what's working well, what's proving challenging, and what support might be needed next. The support programme also offers access to the adopter network meetings. The adopter network meetings, these bring organisations together to use the Care Workforce Pathway, learn from each other, and support its use in practice. It's based on shared experience and open conversation. It helps members use the Pathway in their daily work and understand what works well and what does not. It's really important to remember that the adoption journey, it doesn't have to happen all at once. Most organisations take it step by step. You start by laying the foundations, understanding the Pathway, getting buy-in, and testing it with one role. Then you build it into everyday processes like job descriptions and training, and then over time it becomes fully embedded with clear evidence of impact using workforce data. Don't forget you can use the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set to support this. I'd like to now walk you through what the support programme can look like in practice, using Sam's story as an example. Sam is a seasoned manager who first hears about the Pathway through a local network meeting hosted by Skills for Care. That initial exposure sparks interest, and from there Sam learns about the Pathway adoption support programme and signs up to the introduction session. After discussing this with their leadership team, Sam makes a clear commitment to get started. They formally register for the programme, identify a senior sponsor, and begin to develop a plan. Attending the workshops then helps Sam translate the framework into their own care setting with really practical step-by-step guidance.

Now, rather than trying to do everything at once, Sam takes a focused approach. They choose one priority area where there are already challenges, for example, unclear role expectations or limited progression, and they map this against the Pathway. At the same time, Sam sets some baseline measures, so they can track progress. As Sam continues, they attend checkpoints and working groups. These become really important. They help maintain momentum between those workshops, provide support when challenges come up, and create a space for shared learning. A key takeaway for Sam is that progress doesn't have to be perfect, it just needs to be consistent. Because the work is broken down into smaller, manageable actions, it never feels overwhelming. Sam starts to see early improvements, like clearer role expectations and more structured conversations with staff about their careers. These early wins build confidence and reinforce that the approach is working. Over time, Sam moves from testing the Pathway to embedding it more widely across the organisation. By using those baseline measures, Sam can clearly track the impact, such as establishing modifying career progression routes for staff, the cycle of doing, reflecting, and refining, it really helps sustain change. So overall, Sam's journey shows that this isn't about a big complex transformation at all, and all at once.

It's about taking practical steps, building momentum, and embedding change over time. More than just hearing it from us, we always think it's really powerful to hear from organisations who have already started using the Pathway, what that journey meant for them. And what you can see here on this slide are just a few reflections from adopters, and they're really honest. Some of it is about clarity, realising that actually maybe expectations weren't as clear as they could have been, but then being able to fix that. Others talk about the impact on their people, staff feeling supported, understanding what good looks like, and having a clearer sense of where they can go to next. And then there's the measurable difference. Increases in confidence, improvements in satisfaction, which ultimately feeds into better services. So, this isn't theoretical. This is what it looks like in practice in real organisations with real teams. This slide here shows two routes into adopting the Pathway, and both are valid. On the left is the support programme, a structured guided route that helps you build the right foundations, take practical action, and, of course, track progress. The real benefit here is the support around you. It simplifies what can feel complex, helps you move forward more quickly and consistently, build momentum, and ensure everyone is working from a shared understanding. On the right is the self-directed route, where you can start any time using national resources, focusing on your why, identifying a lead, and starting small. If the support programme doesn't feel right for you at this time, you can absolutely begin with the self-directed approach, whichever route you choose, the key message is the same: start small, take practical steps, and build over time. It's at this point, I'd like to make you aware of the Skills for Care web pages, which are a fantastic starting point for any organisation or individual. Here you can find a rich variety of tools and resources to support you on your Pathway implementation journey. And a key takeaway: if what we've explored with you in this presentation resonates, the next step is to act. Remember the support programme, it will support you to turn ambition into practical, manageable action.

If good practice isn't visible, it often doesn't get valued and ASC-WDS is how adult social care makes some of our work visible, so if you're already using the Care Workforce Pathway, or when you begin to, we really encourage you to record that and make it visible through ASC- WDS, which is the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set. If you're not familiar with it, it's a free online service for adult social care providers in England. It helps organisations manage workforce data, understand training needs, and can also open up access to funding for staff development. Importantly, the data collected through this system is used nationally by the government, the Department of Health and Social Care, and local authorities to plan, fund, and monitor our sector. So, recording your use of the Care Workforce Pathway isn't just admin for the sake of it, it creates visibility, so the development work you're already doing is seen. It creates evidence, so you're not having to keep explaining or justifying it, and it creates influence, because it's that collective data that shapes funding, policy, and national priorities. To record if you're using the Care Workforce Pathway in the ASC-WDS, you don't have to complete lots of information. Recording your use of the Pathway involves answering five questions, which are: Are you using the Pathway to support workforce planning? Are you using the Pathway to support recruitment activity? Are you using the Pathway to support retention activity? Are you using the Pathway to support career development? and at the end, there's a multiple choice question about how you're using it. So, for example, are you using it to help you update your job descriptions, help with advertising roles, or help define role values? You're not being asked to upload documents or describe everything you're doing, so it should just only take a few minutes of your time. You also don't have to have introduced the Pathway across your whole organisation to update ASC-WDS, you can just record that you're making a

start. By doing that, you're not committing to a full roll out or a final position. You are simply making one practical starting point visible. If you don't have an ASC-WDS account, that's fine. It's free to sign up, and signing up is part of how you can then go on to access learning and development funding. If you need support, please get in touch with your Skills for Care locality manager. Your local contact can be found on the website in the About Us section, Skills for Care support in your area. So, in terms of making a start with the Care Workforce Pathway, as you are going about your day-to-day work, whether that's appraisals, recruitment, or inspections, just have the Care Workforce Pathway in mind. Think about where it might help with something you're already doing. You don't need to take on everything. Even starting with one role as part of your service is a really good start. And when you do start using it, record that on ASC-WDS, so that your efforts are visible. Everything you need, guidance, examples, practical tools, are available on our website, so you don't have to start from scratch. It's really just about giving it a go in a way that works for you. On this slide is the QR code to help you access the support sign-up page. So, how to get started and what happens next. The registration process is designed to be quick and simple. Just follow the link, answer a few brief questions, and review the commitment statements, so you're clear on what's involved. Once signed up, organisations gain access to the full support offer, including a dedicated resource library, the programme schedule, and opportunity to connect through workshops, peer networks, and working groups. This ensures you have both the tools and the peer support needed to take action and maintain momentum.