

Building momentum together with Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board

Coventry and Warwickshire's adult social care landscape is large, interconnected, and constantly shifting. With over 24,500 filled posts across two local authorities and a turnover rate of just over 25%, the area faces many of the challenges seen nationally. More than half of the workforce (54%) has no relevant care qualification and much of the recruitment pipeline comes from within the sector itself.

Against this backdrop, partners from the social care sector across the area, facilitated through Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), began working with Skills for Care as part of an ecosystem support programme to explore how the Care Workforce Pathway could help strengthen the workforce, support career progression, and build a more consistent experience.

Coventry and Warwickshire ICB and Skills for Care brought together system partners, including Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council, Solihull College and University, Warwickshire Skills Hub, CU Health and Care, Coventry College, and a range of care providers, educators, and community organisations, through a series of online sessions and in-person workshops to build a shared understanding of the Pathway.

These sessions sparked a series of practical next steps, including integration of the Pathway into Coventry and Warwickshire ICB's Attraction and Recruitment in Social Care Working Group and the development of system level Key Performance Indicators to help monitor, guide, and support implementation of the Pathway. The ICB will also use reflective questions to help organisations consider governance, workforce intelligence, and opportunities for collective action.

Coventry and Warwickshire ICB took the lead in convening partners and taking recommendations forward to support greater understanding of the Pathway and practical implementation across the system. Prior to the Pathway, partners were working hard on recruitment, development, and employability initiatives but this activity at times happened in isolation.

Danielle Fullwood, Head of Strategic Education and Skills at Coventry and Warwickshire ICB, says: "The Pathway offers the perfect scaffolding to bring us together as an ecosystem. It gives us the structure and the shared language we need."

For this ecosystem, parity of esteem between health and social care is one of the more significant opportunities offered by implementing the Pathway.

Danielle says: “This means if people move between sectors, and in and out of the NHS, they’re staying within a single health and care system, which strengthens skills and keeps people motivated.”

Recognition and reward are also powerful drivers for the ICB and the wider ecosystem. Work within the ICB to clarify delegated healthcare activities had raised concerns about asking care workers to take on clinical tasks without the right acknowledgement. Mapping delegated activities to the Enhanced Care Worker role category made it clear that care professionals carrying out delegated healthcare activities should be recognised and rewarded for it.

Louise Gallagher, Head of Workforce Transformation at Coventry and Warwickshire ICB, believes the Pathway will play a crucial role in building mutual understanding across integrated neighbourhood teams.

Louise says: “It gives us a language that wasn’t there before, to talk about the roles and career opportunities available in adult social care.”

Danielle agrees, she says: “We are increasingly working as equal partners across health and social care, but that can be difficult if we can’t articulate what roles actually mean. With the Pathway, we have shared definitions. It creates a foundation for trust.”

Across Coventry and Warwickshire, partners are beginning to explore how the Pathway can help provide a clearer experience for people entering, working in, and progressing through adult social care. Early plans for action include aligning existing roles to the Pathway, exploring how the Pathway can be embedded into existing commissioning, contracting, quality assurance and performance structures, using Pathway language in provider forums and newsletters, and applying shared messaging to workforce planning discussions.

While Coventry and Warwickshire’s ecosystem is large and complex, there is a strong and growing sense of shared purpose. The Pathway provides clarity and consistency which is helping to minimise duplication, strengthen coordination, and support workforce confidence. The Pathway is already enabling conversations with employability teams about transferable values and skills, helping education providers develop courses, and creating clearer career expectations for people new to the sector.

Reflecting on the journey so far, Danielle says: “The Pathway is helping us to build the parity, the recognition, and the shared understanding we need. It helps us articulate what a career in care really looks like.”

For Coventry and Warwickshire, the work is just beginning but early signs of progress show that the system is beginning to turn the Pathway’s intended benefits into real improvements. The foundations for a more joined-up, confident, and skilled adult social care workforce are now in place and system partners are committed to building on them together to support a fully integrated workforce.