

# Understanding the Care Workforce Pathway

A guide for all



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# Introduction

This guide is for anyone who would like to learn more about the Care Workforce Pathway (the Pathway).

This might include:

- people who receive care
- people who work in adult social care
- care providers who would like to learn more before adopting the Pathway.

It explains what the Pathway is, why it is important, and how it can help an organisation, its staff, as well as the wider care sector.

The Pathway is a flexible framework that helps people grow their careers, learn new skills, and plan for the future in adult social care.

This guide gives clear and simple information to help you understand the Pathway and think about how it can work for organisations of any size, with different goals and challenges.

**“ The Care Workforce Pathway is the first ever universal career structure for adult social care and its rollout is a huge milestone for the sector. This will upskill the workforce, boosting recruitment and retention in addition to the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care. This marks another welcome step towards our vision for a National Care Service that is fit for the future. It provides guidance for progression and development for professionals across adult social care with the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours that our carers need.**

**” Stephen Kinnock, Minister of State for Care**

# The Care Workforce Pathway

People who receive care always need safe and skilled support from people with the right values. People who give care should be respected for the valuable work they do.

The Pathway helps make this happen. It shows that adult social care is more than just a job. It offers exciting and rewarding careers – people can learn new things, choose what interests them, and plan their own career journey.

The Pathway is not something organisations have to follow, but it is very important to the future of the sector. Improving care starts with supporting the people who provide it. The Pathway is part of the Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England.

The Pathway aims to:

- explain the different types of care roles available
- show clearly what training and learning is expected to deliver skilled and confident care
- make care jobs and careers more respected and visible
- show that care can be a great career choice, not just by moving up into a management role, there are many options
- help plan for enough workers in the sector, now and in the future
- bring more people into care jobs and support them to stay.

The Pathway also brings benefits across the whole sector, as it:

- supports local priorities, working with local authority plans for quality and workforce development
- fits national goals, including the Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England
- prepares for a Fair Pay Agreement, supporting fair pay and better working conditions
- is built for what's next, helping organisations adapt to changes in policy and funding.

# Why we need a Pathway

The Pathway was developed to solve challenges in adult social care.

These challenges include:

- **More people in our communities need care.** People are living longer and often have health problems that need extra help.
- **Lots of people leave care jobs.** Many workers leave because pay is low, there are few chances to progress, and their hard work is not always noticed.
- **There are not enough workers.** There are thousands of empty care jobs. This makes it hard to keep care safe and steady.
- **There is no clear plan for jobs.** Care jobs can be very different in different places. Many roles don't have clear steps for moving forward.

Adult social care is also a big part of the UK Government's Health Plan. The plan wants more care in the local area where people live, and more help to keep people healthy.

The Pathway is key to making this happen. It gives the sector the skills and structure it needs to deliver high-quality care closer to people's homes and support people to live well.

“ **The Care Workforce Pathway gives us a language that wasn't there before, to talk about the roles and career opportunities available in adult social care.** ”

” Integrated Care Board (ICB) partner

# Where the Pathway came from

The Department of Health and Social Care introduced the Pathway in 2023. Its goal is to make one clear plan for careers in adult social care.

The Pathway is an important part of making adult social care stronger. It will work with existing and future government policy. Some care jobs, like nursing, already have their own career pathways and the Pathway adds to these.

The Pathway will keep growing and changing over time. Here is what has happened so far:

## April 2023

- People were asked for ideas to help create the Pathway.

## June – September 2023

- Universal role values for care were agreed.

## January 2024

- Four role categories were launched (New to Care, Care or Support Worker, Supervisor or Leader, and Practice Leader) along with a set of universal values for the sector.

## June 2024

- 30 adult social care employers tested the Pathway and its tools.

## April 2025

- Four new role categories were launched (Enhanced Care Worker, Personal Assistant, Deputy Manager, and Registered Manager).

## July 2025 – March 2026

- Over 90 other care employers began working to improve the Pathway
- New role categories were planned (Nominated Individual, Activity Coordinator, and Care/Digital Technologist).

# What the Pathway includes

## Role categories

The Pathway has introduced role categories for the different types of job roles available in adult social care.

We know different organisations may use different job titles, so role categories group similar jobs together. This makes it clear what type of work each group does. It helps everyone understand who is responsible for what and makes planning and organising easier. The Pathway includes knowledge, skills, and behaviours for each role category. It also suggests learning opportunities to support people to develop and move forward in their careers.

There is a list of the Pathway role categories available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## Knowledge, skills, and behaviours

Each role category in the Pathway has clear information about what skills are needed for that role, and how an employee should act. This helps:

- employees understand what good care looks like in that role
- employers to plan the right training for people in those roles.

## Learning opportunities

The Pathway suggests training for each role category. This helps people learn and grow in a way that fits their job. Training can be official (accredited) or informal. Employers can choose what works best.

Resource	Description	Access
<b>Role categories</b>	This website lists all the role categories.	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care">www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care</a>
<b>Role categories: easy read</b>	This website lists all the role categories.	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care-easy-read">www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care-easy-read</a>

# Universal role values

The Pathway has introduced universal role values that were created in partnership with people who draw on care and support. These guide how people work and grow in their roles. Every role category in the Pathway is based on the same role values.

## The Pathway's values are:

- kind and caring
- honest and reliable
- respectful
- brave and fair
- see the whole person
- open to learning
- proud and positive.

## This is important because it means that:

- everyone working in care shares the same values, no matter their job
- career growth builds on these values
- employers hire and train people for their skills **and** values.

This helps care providers find and keep people who care about others and who share the same values as the organisation. This makes adult social care more caring and consistent for everyone.

You can find out more about the creation of the Pathway's values here: [Values-and-the-workforce-TLAP-report.pdf](#)

# Example role personas

Each role category in the Pathway includes example role personas (a simple description of a person's job) showing how real people can start, grow, and move in care jobs. These help people see what's possible and plan for the future. These example personas can be seen at the end of each role category.

# Adopting the Care Workforce Pathway

Adopting the Pathway means care providers decide to use the Pathway's recommended practices and tools in their everyday work.

## Benefits of adopting the Pathway include:

- helping to plan jobs and training
- making it easier to find and keep staff
- giving staff clear steps to grow in their career
- showing care work is a skilled job
- helping to bring more people into care jobs
- making care better for everyone.

## Adoption areas and levels

Introducing the Pathway is a great opportunity to improve and grow as an organisation. The Pathway makes this simple by breaking adoption into:

- **five areas** – planning, roles, recruitment, training and development, Pathway advocacy
- **three levels** – light, medium, full.

## This approach helps organisations to:

- plan and track progress, step by step
- focus on what matters most for their size and needs
- move at a pace that fits their capacity.

Resource	Description	Access
<b>Care Workforce Pathway adoption levels explained</b>	This document describes how an organisation can adopt the Pathway at the three different levels and breaks that down into the five areas.	<a href="http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Developing-your-workforce/Care-Workforce-Pathway/Care-Workforce-Pathway-adoption-levels-explained.pdf">www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Developing-your-workforce/Care-Workforce-Pathway/Care-Workforce-Pathway-adoption-levels-explained.pdf</a>

# The Care Workforce Pathway areas

The five Pathway areas are explained below. The [‘Adopting the Care Workforce Pathway – The how-to guide’](#) looks at each area in turn and talks about what each level looks like and the resources and tools available to support adoption.

<b>Planning</b>	Supporting organisations to stay on track, avoid problems, and show results that matter.
<b>Roles</b>	Making it easier to put the right people in the right roles, plan for the future, and keep teams working well.
<b>Recruitment</b>	Helping to reduce staff turnover, save money, and build a strong team from the start.
<b>Training and development</b>	Preparing teams for the future by improving skills and building confidence.
<b>Pathway advocacy</b>	Helping build trust, attract good people, share good practice, and show the organisation as a leader in care.

## The Care Workforce Pathway levels

Each of the Pathway areas has three levels of adoption, shown below. Each level builds on the one before, so organisations can start small and continue over time. This flexible structure makes it easy for any provider, of any size, to begin adopting the Pathway.

<b>Light adoption</b>	<b>Medium adoption</b>	<b>Full adoption</b>
This level is about helping staff learn about the Pathway and using Pathway ideas in daily work and conversations.	This level is about using the Pathway more often, making clear how the Pathway fits in with existing plans, and helping staff grow skills and confidence.	This level is about making the Pathway part of everything an organisation does, shaping a strong, skilled workforce and sharing good practice.

## Next steps

Now that you understand the Care Workforce Pathway, here's what you can do next:

- **Learn more (for all)**

Visit the [Skills for Care website](#) to explore real stories of Pathway adoption

- **Start your adoption journey (for care providers)**

Use the [Adopting the Care Workforce Pathway – The how-to guide](#) to plan your approach.

The guide explains how to put the Pathway into action in clear, easy steps and gives you:

- a step-by-step plan to follow
- helpful tools and resources
- examples of how to make the Pathway work for your organisation.

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