

Supporting Social Care Partners to Embed Workforce Initiatives in Sussex

With almost £250,000 invested to date into the sector to help with Continued Professional Development (CPD) and provision of education and skills training, Sussex ICS have shown a real commitment to engaging and supporting adult social care.

A big part of this work has been the planning to understand gaps, barriers and needs across the sector and aligning resources to meet these.

Skills for Care's locality manager has been a consistent presence on the ICS People Committee since its inception, allowing greater access to insights and plans across the sector. Meanwhile, the Chair of Sussex ICB has recently engaged with the two local care associations and other partner colleagues to discuss provider links to the Integrated Partnership Board. These connections demonstrate the system's willingness to meaningfully involve social care partners in their planning.

Following the success of these early initiatives, Sussex are now exploring ways to ensure they build a more 'mature' system in which the processes and policies exist to sustain the engagement they have established.

Empower providers to upskill their own teams

Sussex ICS have funded several initiatives to support adult social care providers to develop their in-house skills and development programmes for staff. This has given providers the support and infrastructure to shape their own offer for colleagues.

Using additional funding, an initial training needs analysis (TNA) was undertaken by Skills for Care locally to understand how providers currently approach learning and development, and to identify any gaps or challenges providers face in this regard.

The results of that analysis demonstrated a need for greater resource to support learning and development leads within social care services. In particular, smaller providers who typically have less support infrastructure or dedicated resource in their organisation.

After identifying this need, the ICS went further to meet it; funding a dedicated Learning and Development Lead across the system to support learning and development and education programmes in individual care services, along with a Clinical Skills project.

Registered managers are crucial leaders in the development of the wider workforce. Sussex ICS have funded almost £200,000 in an initiative which supports them in this role. Following the launch of their Registered Managers Wellbeing programme ([SCARRF](#)), Sussex People Group Leads and Skills for Care recognised the need to provide greater support for registered managers to access support for their ongoing leadership development. They have therefore commissioned a leadership CPD project which will provide signposting, peer support and coaching for registered managers across Sussex to consider their ongoing CPD. The move is a welcome sign that workforce health and wellbeing and leadership development is not a 'bolt on'; it is an integral part of an integrated health and care system.

Encourage social care and health to work together, and share skills and resources

As part of the work to support providers to develop their approach to learning and development, a community of practice is gradually being established. This will support providers to communicate opportunities, encourage chances to support one another and share expertise. For example, learning and development leads are networking to share their approach to learning and the resources that support this.

Sussex ICS have identified that skills sharing can prove valuable to bolstering the representation of the social care workforce across the ICS. As an example, the local Care Associations have recently secured several successful bids to fund the learning and development initiatives referenced above. These bids can be complex and lengthy to respond to, often requiring in-depth knowledge of the best structure, format, and language. To ensure the Care Associations (who represent care providers in the area) were able to make the most of the opportunities to receive funding, expertise was identified by Skills for Care through a former colleague acting as a consultant and bid writer.

Identifying where social care partners may lack a necessary resource, skillset or infrastructure, is therefore crucial to understand how to overcome potential barriers to engagement. This is something Sussex ICS continues to develop, hoping to embed further the systems and processes which mean this does not rely on single advocates often acting in a voluntary capacity. The Skills for Care locality manager role has been an important broker in this process. They have increasingly been involving providers where there has been an opportunity identified that will be relevant and practical for their engagement. They also raise awareness of any potential barriers to the People Committee and sub-groups.

Use data to bring social care to life

Skills for Care's Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set has proven helpful in supporting conversations between health and social care partners within the ICS. Due to their different structures and funding sources, it can understandably be difficult for people who are less familiar with adult social care to grasp the breadth and variety of people who make up the social care workforce. The workforce data has helped to paint a picture of this rich tapestry, with its up-to-date information on key workforce data, such as on staff turnover and recruitment. It has since been incorporated into the wider ICS data dashboard for workforce planning.

Data has also been helpful for local care associations in supporting their lobbying and policy plans and relationship-building. For example, data on staff turnover, capacity trackers, and insights into what individuals and providers are saying they need, has led to successful funding bids by the Care Association. This includes those for the Registered Managers' Wellbeing Programme and leadership CPD project.

Listen to local care partners from the earliest stages of planning

Across Sussex ICS, several workstreams (planning and project oversight groups) have been developed to support workforce planning – including for Care Home and Care at Home provision. These working groups have received positive feedback for how relevant they are for social care partners, thus enhancing representation and engagement across the sector.

The prominence of these thematic workstreams is thanks to the inclusion of social care partners at the very outset of planning, through a series of workshops using the Health

Education England [STAR tool](#) for workforce transformation planning. These sessions took place while Sussex ICS was still in its earliest stages and facilitated practically-focused discussions about areas on which to focus on in workforce planning. Commissioners, care associations, and a range of providers were involved in those early-stage planning conversations, and they have resulted in a greater sense of connection and ownership with the work of the wider ICS.

Sussex ICS are now exploring the possibility of establishing a series of Multi-Professional Faculties or professional groups to embed this style of practical operational engagement further. They envision that these groups will feed into the higher-level ICS People Committee, but still do the work 'on the ground'.

Keep listening, engaging and talking to each other. Keep reminding yourself, and others, that at the end of the day we all share the same goal: to give people in our community the best possible care and support, provided by people with the right skills, in the right place.