

Planning and preparing



Overview of actions

This stage focused on defining the need for a youth centred care careers event, setting clear objectives, identifying risks and selecting an accessible venue and timeline.

Identifying the case for change

“It quickly became clear in the Workforce Development Partnership meetings that there was a need to persuade more young entrants to take a serious look at adult social care as a career pathway.”

Simon Barrable, Engagement Officer,
Thames Valley Berkshire and Oxfordshire LSIPs

The Care Connection festival was conceived in response to a clear need to raise awareness of adult social care roles among early year health and social care students.

- **Learning from national success** – A partner’s experience in national campaigns showed that youth centred, event based engagement could be adapted effectively at local level.
- **Addressing early stage career uncertainty** – Many Level 1-2 students lacked clarity about social care roles, reinforcing the case for early, in person engagement.
- **Rising demand for advanced and specialist skills** – Providers described growing expectations for staff to perform complex clinical tasks and develop digital confidence, with current training provision not keeping pace with what the sector now requires.
- **Difficulty engaging time-pressured and dispersed providers** – Home-care organisations in particular struggle to engage in skills planning due to reactive workloads and geographically dispersed teams, limiting the consistency and depth of employer input.

Setting objectives and benefits

Organisers established focused objectives built around raising awareness of adult social care careers and creating purposeful interactions between students and employers.

- **Designing an engaging format** – A carefully curated festival structure, combining an energising speaker with a relatable provider panel, gently eased students into the day and built their confidence, ensuring they felt prepared and motivated before interacting more directly with employers.
- **Setting clear participation goals** – Establishing specific targets for the number of provider stands and expected student attendance created clarity for everyone involved, guiding decisions on venue suitability, layout, logistics and promotional planning, and helping maintain focus throughout preparation.
- **Addressing stigma by showcasing real skill sets** – Integrating hands on demonstrations of the clinical, emotional and practical capabilities required in modern adult social care challenged outdated perceptions, allowing students to see the profession's depth, complexity and value through authentic, interactive experiences.

Identifying and managing risks

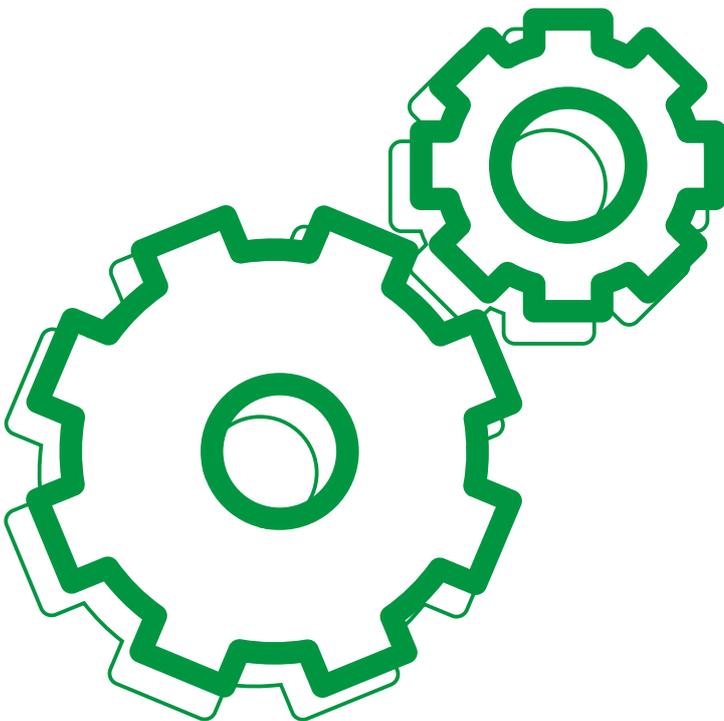
The planning committee identified several early risks and addressed them through targeted decisions on timing, venue and communication.

- **Selecting timing and venue to support participation** – Autumn scheduling and a well located venue maximised attendance, avoided summer disruption and winter pressures, and ensured adequate space for stands, circulation and student movement.
- **Safeguarding and infection control considerations** – Early discussions revealed risks in hosting the event within a care home environment, prompting a safe relocation to an external, neutral venue.
- **Allowing for last-minute pressures on providers** – Because providers often deal with urgent, unpredictable situations, organisers built in several reminder points and check-ins to help them stay on track and ensure they could still attend despite staffing pressures.
- **Anticipating organisational restructuring** – Some providers withdrew due to internal changes, so planners built flexibility into recruitment time lines and maintained ongoing communication to manage expectations.
- **Clarifying event expectations** – A structured provider briefing ensured stands were interactive, student centred and aligned with the festival's purpose, reducing variation.

Developing a realistic timeframe

A phased timeline was created to allow co-ordinated planning across colleges, employers and partners.

- **Confirming the event date early** – Setting an autumn date well in advance gave everyone enough time to prepare and reduced logistical pressures, such as securing transport (e.g., booking coaches), rearranging timetables, and ensuring staff were available to support student attendance.
- **Maintaining disciplined planning cycles** – Regular meetings, a shared tracker capturing activity and uptake, and consistent communication helped keep the multi agency group aligned and avoided duplication or gaps in delivery.
- **Consulting colleges before booking** – Dates were confirmed only after reviewing academic schedules, ensuring attendance was viable and allowing colleges to prepare students in good time.
- **Anchoring communication around the venue** – Once the venue was confirmed, organisers issued detailed information to providers, offering around three months' notice to support stable planning.
- **Building transport planning into the timeline** – Early coach bookings increased certainty around student attendance and helped colleges manage staffing, safeguarding and logistical requirements.



Engaging the right people

“We’d made connection with Roxy Potts from Hallmark Foundation and the Goyal Foundation about the successful event at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. We wanted to provide an opportunity which enabled young people to really mix with care providers and learn more about what they might expect moving into that field.”

Eddy McDowall, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers

The planning relied on assembling a multi agency group with complementary strengths and established relationships.

- **Building a joint planning group** – Skills for Care, Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers, college leads and national campaign experience contributed to a collaborative team capturing and responding to operational, strategic and sector specific insight.
- **Positioning TVCC as lead** – As the ERB, TVCC provided structure, co-ordination and governance, ensuring the process stayed focused and effectively managed.
- **Leveraging trusted networks** – Warm introductions through long-standing relationships encouraged higher engagement and reduced the likelihood of low turnout or late provider withdrawals.
- **Preparing providers effectively** – A pre event briefing supported exhibitors to plan engaging stands, understand expectations and design interactive activities suited to younger learners.

“The Chamber led the co-ordination, bringing together the planning group and giving the structure we needed to drive the festival forward.”

Simon Barrable, Engagement Officer,
Thames Valley Berkshire and Oxfordshire LSIPs



Key decisions

“We were really clear that if we couldn’t confirm student attendance first, employers wouldn’t commit. Getting colleges on board early meant we could confidently tell providers they’d meet over a hundred students, and that made all the difference.”

Ce’Nedra Goosen, LSIP Marketing and Events Officer,
Thames Valley Berkshire and Oxfordshire LSIPs

- Early confirmation of student numbers improved provider confidence and supported successful engagement of exhibitors across both counties.
- Selecting an autumn date and external venue mitigated safeguarding risks, capacity issues and scheduling challenges associated with alternative options.
- Structured planning cycles helped maintain momentum, supported decision making and ensured consistent progress across the multi agency group.



Key learning

The experience emphasised the need to begin planning earlier, strengthen operational co-ordination and give providers and colleges more lead in time.

- **Start planning earlier** – Earlier mobilisation would help avoid compressed time lines and allow smoother co-ordination with the academic year.
- **Make decisions early on** – Confirming elements such as transport, layout and student flows earlier would reduce rework and streamline delivery.
- **Give care providers more time to prepare** – Earlier notice would help exhibitors prepare more interactive, higher quality stands.
- **Improve communication with partners** – Providing clearer and more consistent updates would reduce last-minute confusion and help partners make decisions more confidently.

“The hardest part was the timeline. We started in July aiming for September, which simply wasn’t workable. Pushing it to November gave us breathing space, but even then, it was tight. Next time we’ll start much earlier.”

Ce’Nedra Goosen, LSIP Marketing and Events Officer,
Thames Valley Berkshire and Oxfordshire LSIPs

