

Recommendations



Practical approach toolkit: Leveraging provider engagement in local skills

These recommendations are based on proven practice and lessons learned from the successful Care Connection festival, which was designed by Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group and strategic partners. Each recommendation includes practical steps informed by real implementation experience, demonstrating how co-ordinated planning, strong partnerships and purposeful event design can achieve meaningful and measurable impact. For further detail, refer to the building blocks outlined in the toolkit.

At the end of this resource, you'll find supporting materials and links drawn from the toolkit to help you adapt and implement this approach in your own area.

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Establish a clear shared purpose and strategic objectives for the event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develop a concise case for change grounded in local adult social care workforce challenges and the need to engage with learners early on.■ Agree two or three focused objectives (e.g., raising awareness, shifting perceptions, strengthening employer-college dialogue).			
Action			

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Secure early college commitment and confirm student numbers before recruiting employers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Confirm student numbers, cohorts and coach transport early to give providers confidence that the event will be worthwhile. ■ Select dates that align with academic timetables, avoiding early term pressures and enabling recruitment of full cohorts. ■ Prepare students with briefing materials and cue cards to ensure meaningful and confident engagement with employers. 			

Action

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Form a co-ordinated multi-agency planning group with defined roles and shared working tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bring together Skills for Care, local care associations, colleges and other strategic leads, ensuring each contributes unique strengths. ■ Assign a single project lead to co-ordinate communication, scheduling and the overall plan across all partners. 			

Action

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Select an accessible, external venue that supports safeguarding, capacity and the festival-style approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure the space allows high-energy, youth-friendly engagement, with clear zones for different activities (e.g., a welcoming main stage area for the opening session, a dedicated provider-stand zone for interactive demonstrations, and spacious circulation routes to help students move easily between areas). 			
Action			

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Provide clear expectations and preparation guidance for exhibitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Issue a short exhibitor briefing pack outlining the requirement for interactive, student-centred activities and examples of effective stands. ■ Hold a pre-event webinar to align expectations, answer questions and inspire creative, hands-on stand design. ■ Encourage demonstrations (clinical skills, communication tools, digital care systems) that show the sector’s breadth and professionalism. 			

Action
Empty space for action items

Planning and preparing	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Build a realistic timeline that allows sufficient preparation time for all partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Publish a backward-planned timeline from the event date, identifying milestones for venue booking, provider recruitment and student prep. ■ Hold regular multi-agency planning meetings to maintain momentum and resolve issues early. ■ Provide 8-12 weeks' notice to providers, enabling high-quality preparation and reducing the likelihood of late dropouts. 			

Action
Empty space for action notes

Financing and investment	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Develop a clear, costed budget that covers core delivery while keeping the event accessible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Produce a simple cost model covering venue hire, audio visual, branding, refreshments, transport support, photography/film and marketing assets to avoid hidden costs and late compromises. ■ Where available, use funding for essential delivery to ensure the event remains free for students and providers and to encourage participation. ■ Build in partner-funded enhancements (e.g., incentives, speakers, materials) to elevate the student experience without increasing costs. 			

Action

Financing and investment	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Allocate dedicated co-ordination and practical resources to ensure smooth planning and high-quality delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use reusable branded assets (templates, signage, comms materials) to reduce cost and improve event consistency year-on-year. ■ Involve colleges and providers as active contributors (e.g., staff time, demonstrations, equipment) to expand capacity without increasing costs. 			

Action

Financing and investment	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Build long-term sustainability through a repeatable model and mixed funding approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish a repeatable annual cycle (early-year planning, autumn delivery) to embed the event into the local skills system and reduce planning inefficiency. ■ Consider small refundable provider deposits or formal commitments to reduce dropouts and encourage reliable attendance. ■ Reuse event assets, rotate host areas and combine investment with partner support to keep the model financially sustainable over multiple years. 			
Action			

Involving key stakeholders	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Use warm network engagement to recruit committed, high quality providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leverage trusted networks through Skills for Care and care associations to reach providers with existing relationships and reduce cold call disengagement. ■ Prioritise providers who understand that the purpose is awareness building and pipeline development, not immediate recruitment. ■ Maintain persistent, supportive communication recognising the reactive pressures in adult social care settings. 			
Action			

Involving key stakeholders	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Involvement of providers in shaping content, expectations and the overall student experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speak with providers to understand the specific skills students should be able to demonstrate (e.g., effective communication, essential hands-on care tasks and basic digital skills). Use this information to shape stand activities so they feel realistic and reflect actual workplace expectations. ■ Encourage providers to showcase genuine progression routes, organisational culture and the breadth of roles beyond front line care. ■ Use a pre-event briefing to align expectations and maintain consistent quality and student-centred behaviour across all exhibitors. 			

Action

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Use employer led governance structures to maintain strategic alignment and sector relevance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Position lead agency to provide oversight, ensuring decisions reflect real adult social care workforce needs. ■ Use Workforce Development Partnerships (WDPs) or equivalent to keep the focus on practical workforce priorities and curriculum alignment. ■ Involve employer champions to validate decisions, strengthen credibility and maintain an employer-centred approach. 			

Action

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Assign clear roles and responsibilities to ensure efficient delivery and accountability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define partner roles (e.g., provider engagement, comms, logistics) to prevent duplication and ensure balanced workload. ■ Maintain shared governance documents (issues logs, time lines, decisions records) for transparency and co-ordination. 			

Action

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Maintain structured planning rhythms to track progress and address issues early.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hold routine planning meetings (weekly or fortnightly) to monitor progress and troubleshoot emerging risks. ■ Use a live cross-partner tracker to centralise updates on provider confirmations, comms, logistics and tasks. ■ Escalate delays or risks through agreed governance channels to maintain momentum and keep delivery on track. 			

Action

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Test readiness through co-ordinated pre-event briefings and final-week meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver a pre-event webinar for exhibitors to confirm expectations, reduce variability and promote engaging stand design. ■ Conduct a final logistics alignment session with colleges and partners covering student flows, safeguarding and arrivals. ■ Share an on-the-day running order with escalation contacts to support smooth, co-ordinated event management. 			
Action			

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Deliver a structured, high energy opening to prepare and motivate students before engaging with providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use a confident host or MC to set the tone, explain expectations and create an energised, supportive atmosphere. ■ Include a short motivational speaker and/or panel session to warm students up, reduce nerves and stimulate thoughtful questions. ■ Provide students with prompt cards or simple guidance to help them initiate conversations and get the most from stand visits. 			
Action			

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Manage event flow and space to enable meaningful, confident interaction between students and providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Design a clear circulation pattern through stands, using defined zones and timings so students can engage without crowding or feeling rushed. ■ Use floor-walkers or facilitators to guide students, support exhibitors and ensure consistent quality of interaction across the space. ■ Break the event into short, manageable blocks or rotations to help students pace themselves and speak to a range of providers. 			
Action			

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Support exhibitors to deliver consistently high quality, interactive stands throughout the day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide exhibitors with simple stand-design prompts such as ‘show, don’t tell’ (demonstrations over leaflets) and examples of what great interaction looks like. ■ Encourage providers to bring objects, tools, props or role-play activities that help students understand real tasks and workplace expectations. ■ Use roaming facilitators to offer quick coaching, troubleshoot issues and help less-experienced exhibitors maintain strong engagement. 			
Action			

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Build structured ‘moments’ into the agenda to help maintain energy, pacing and engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce short ‘reset points’ (e.g., energisers, quick prize-draw announcements, movement cues) to keep energy levels consistent between stand rotations. ■ Use clear audible or visual signals to transition students between activities so they don’t feel rushed or overwhelmed. ■ Include a closing reflection or call-to-action session where students can summarise what they learned, identify roles they want to explore further and complete any final surveys. 			
Action			

Governance and implementation	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Embed continuous improvement by capturing learning and applying it to future event cycles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gather reflections from all partners (what worked, what strained capacity, what should change) to refine the model. ■ Use student, tutor and provider feedback to identify logistical or content improvements for future iterations. ■ Incorporate lessons into the annual planning cycle (e.g., timeline adjustments, earlier mobilisation, clearer sequencing). 			
Action			

Outcomes, impact and learning	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Measure changes in student awareness, confidence and perceptions to evidence impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use short before-and-after surveys to track shifts in student understanding of adult social care roles, progression routes and the nature of the work. ■ Capture changes in how confident students feel about the sector and how interested they are in exploring care roles, reflecting both emotional shifts (e.g., feeling more positive or less intimidated) and increases in knowledge. ■ Analyse results quickly and share summary findings with partners to demonstrate the event’s immediate influence. 			
Action			

Outcomes, impact and learning	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Track provider follow through to assess relationship development and real world outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor post-event activities such as placements offered, school/college visits, follow-up conversations and new collaboration requests. ■ Capture qualitative feedback from providers on student engagement, perceived value and improvements to future interactions. ■ Use follow-through data to demonstrate how the event strengthens employer-education partnerships. 			
Action			

Outcomes, impact and learning	Yes	No	N/A
<p>Build momentum by using visual assets and success stories to promote future engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use professional photos and videos to showcase event energy, student engagement and provider contributions, strengthening future recruitment. ■ Share case studies or short testimonials from students and exhibitors to reinforce the event's value. ■ Use these assets in comms, social media and briefings for new partners to widen buy-in and build confidence in the model. 			
Action			

Further support

- [Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set \(ASC-WDS\)/Workforce Intelligence reports](#) – Use workforce data to evidence the case for change, benchmark your performance with others (e.g., how retention rates compare) and identify issues, opportunities and risks.
- [Skills for Care area support](#) – Get help from dedicated locality managers with workforce development, planning, well-being, recruitment and retention, service integration, signposting to local networks and events.
- [Local networks](#) – Join a peer support network for adult social care providers, including front line managers, deputy manager, learning and development leads, CEOs etc.
- [Recruitment support](#) – Use these tools, guidance and best-practice approaches to attract, select, induct and retain staff with the right values for high-quality care.
- [The Care Workforce Pathway](#) – Develop your workforce with clear roles and career progression.