

Outcomes, impact and learning



This section highlights the impact and learning from St Monica Trust's apprenticeship programme, which has evolved from a recruitment solution into a driver of cultural and organisational change.

Young apprentices – especially those facing employment barriers – have gained confidence, skills and career progression through tailored support and hands-on learning. St Monica Trust's experience shows that investing in young people builds resilience, renews culture, and prepares care organisations for long-term success.

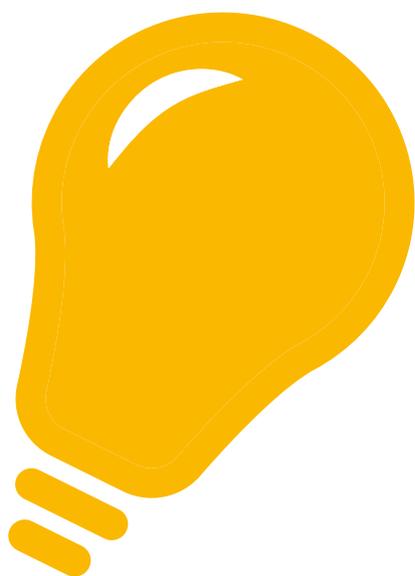
This section is split into the following topics:

- what's been achieved for the organisation
- what's been achieved for young apprentices
- what's been achieved for people and the community
- measuring what matters
- building momentum towards lasting change
- a vision for sector-wide collaboration
- key learning.



What's been achieved for the organisation

- **Embedding apprenticeships into workforce strategy** – Initially launched to tackle recruitment challenges, the programme now underpins succession planning, cultural transformation and long-term workforce resilience.
- **Developing existing staff through mentoring** – Staff gained skills in coaching, trauma-informed support and inclusive communication, strengthening leadership capability and fostering professional fulfilment.
- **Addressing early challenges in readiness** – The first cohort highlighted gaps in organisational preparedness, prompting a shift from large group onboarding to staggered intakes for tailored support.
- **Strengthening cross-departmental collaboration** – HR, training, and pastoral care teams co-designed support structures, breaking down silos and promoting shared responsibility for workforce development.
- **Enhancing team dynamics and morale** – Apprentices bring fresh energy and perspectives, encouraging innovation and adaptability across operational teams.
- **Creating clear progression routes** – Apprenticeships now serve as a strategic talent pipeline, supporting succession planning and addressing workforce shortages.
- **Driving inclusive cultural change** – Simplified communication and trauma-informed onboarding have become standard practice, reinforcing equity and sustainability across the organisation.



What's been achieved for young apprentices

“There's no better feeling than when someone tells you, ‘My father said I'd make nothing of myself’ and then they get a great result from their apprenticeship and progress to a higher level.”

Clare Hucker, Deputy Care Home Manager, St Monica Trust

- **Tailored support for individual needs** – The programme meets apprentices where they are – personally and professionally – through flexible, inclusive practices.
- **Adapted recruitment processes** – Simplified language, visual aids and informal tours reduce anxiety and promote equity, opening opportunities for care-experienced and neurodiverse young people.
- **Structured onboarding and staged responsibilities** – Supernumerary roles allow apprentices to learn without pressure, supported by consistent systems and mentoring.
- **Addressing gaps in workplace norms** – Many apprentices lack understanding of basics like punctuality and break times. Clear communication, written guidance and patient mentoring help bridge these gaps. For example, one apprentice's start time changed, but they continued taking breaks at the usual time and were unaware of the disruption. This highlighted the need for explicit guidance.
- **Supporting resilience through change** – Staff prepare apprentices for transitions, recognising that even small changes can trigger anxiety. Rather than avoiding change, the Trust coaches apprentices to adapt.
- **Evolving learning formats** – Classroom-based sessions felt too much like school for early cohorts. The Trust shifted to hands-on, experiential learning to better suit young people's preferences.
- **Nurturing career progression** – Visual career maps and mid-point guidance sessions help apprentices plan confidently. Many progress to Level 3 or nursing, while others leave with valuable life skills and renewed purpose.
- **Fostering a culture of respect** – Staff and residents recognise apprentices as learners first, not just workers. This culture builds ambition, resilience and belonging, with apprentices often feeling valued for the first time.

“I got into care after finishing my GCSEs. Someone suggested an apprenticeship instead of going to college, and I knew it would suit me better because I learn more by doing things hands-on than sitting in a classroom. The apprenticeship at St Monica’s was exactly what I needed – it started with six weeks of practical training, followed by real experience in the care home. I enjoyed the clear communication, the supportive team, and the chance to build confidence through shadowing and feedback. Learning on the job helped me understand the role deeply and made me feel part of something meaningful from the very beginning.”

Leah Brophy, Apprentice Care Assistant, St Monica Trust

What’s been achieved for people and the community

- **Strengthening intergenerational relationships** – Young apprentices bring energy, empathy and fresh perspectives, forming bonds with residents that foster companionship, trust and mutual respect.
- **Celebrating shared milestones** – Apprentice achievements are marked through events involving residents and staff, reinforcing pride and belonging across the care community.
- **Improving continuity of care** – Reduced reliance on agency staff has led to more consistent, person-centred care. Permanent team members trained in-house provide familiar faces and stable routines, supporting emotional wellbeing.
- **Deepening local engagement** – Recruitment partnerships with schools, colleges and virtual schools create accessible career pathways for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Collaboration with HOPE Virtual School extends the programme’s impact into education and social mobility.
- **Fostering mutual learning** – Intergenerational exchanges benefit both groups: apprentices gain empathy and insight, while residents experience renewed engagement. Small gestures – like making birthday cards or singing together – reflect the emotional depth of these connections.
- **Building an inclusive care environment** – Though some outcomes are hard to quantify, the programme has created a more connected and compassionate setting where young people and older adults learn from and support each other.

“I enjoy getting to know residents, hearing about their past, and making them laugh. It’s rewarding to bring joy and brighten someone’s day through simple interactions.”

Ruby Hann, Apprentice Care Assistant, St Monica Trust

Measuring what matters

- **Values-led and outcome-focused approach** – Impact measurement prioritises personal development, cultural change, and sustainability over traditional metrics alone.
- **Retention as a key indicator** – The first cohort of 18 apprentices achieved a 50% completion rate – significant given that many had complex needs – compared to an estimated 10% without tailored support. All completers were offered permanent roles, with some progressing to further education or returning as bank staff.
- **Acknowledging data limitations and evolution** – Early cohort data is limited; later cohorts are still completing. The shift from cohort-based to rolling intake requires new tracking methods.
- **Improving systems for accountability** – Plans include monthly progress reviews, structured feedback loops and closer collaboration with training providers to enable early intervention and maintain accountability.
- **Qualitative feedback as a development driver** – Regular check-ins, supervision meetings, and informal conversations provide insight into apprentices’ experiences. Staff engagement in mentoring and support roles signals cultural change.
- **Tracking inclusive practices** – Uptake of sensory resources, wellness plans and flexible adjustments is monitored to embed support for neurodiverse and care-experienced apprentices into everyday operations.
- **Community and partnership impact** – Local recruitment figures, educational partnerships, and external stakeholder engagement reflect wider community benefits.
- **Depth over scale** – Emphasis is on meaningful change for individuals, teams and culture rather than volume, ensuring alignment with long-term strategic goals.

Building momentum towards lasting change

“Everyone providing care has a different way of doing things depending on age. I find younger people more stimulating. They like to tell you about their social life and it’s interesting. They bring the outside world into St Monica’s.”

Sylvia, Resident, St Monica Trust

- **From initiative to strategic framework** – What began as a recruitment project has evolved into a broader approach to inclusive workforce development, grounded in reflection, learning and continuous improvement.
- **Embedding inclusive practices** – Support for neurodiverse and care-experienced apprentices is now part of everyday practice, signalling a cultural shift rather than a temporary measure.
- **Redesigning recruitment and onboarding** – Lessons from early cohorts led to a rolling intake model, reducing operational strain and enabling more personalised support for apprentices and teams.
- **Creating a talent pipeline** – Clear progression routes now link apprenticeships to senior roles, supporting succession planning and strengthening organisational resilience.
- **Normalising continuous improvement** – Monthly reviews, feedback loops and cohort evaluations ensure the programme adapts to emerging needs, fostering a culture of learning and innovation.
- **Shaping professional identity** – Supporting apprentices is no longer seen as an add-on; managers are trained in coaching, safeguarding and trauma-informed practice, embedding empathy and flexibility into everyday leadership.
- **Acknowledging the journey ahead** – The Trust acknowledges that meaningful change is a gradual process. While the programme is in a strong position now, there is a clear expectation that it will continue to improve over time. This ongoing commitment to refinement ensures the approach remains relevant and impactful.

A vision for sector-wide collaboration

- **Embedding apprenticeships sector-wide** – St Monica Trust aims to integrate apprenticeship programmes across adult social care through collaborative, regional models that address systemic workforce challenges like recruitment, retention and succession planning.
- **Phased implementation starting in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES)** – Initial efforts focus on B&NES, leveraging strong local partnerships to pilot and refine the model before expanding to Bristol and North Somerset.
- **Creating a formalised academy model** – The academy will act as a hub for learning, mentoring and professional development, supporting internal staff and external partners with structured progression, co-designed training and integrated pastoral care.
- **Accessible pathways for young people** – The academy will provide recruitment, onboarding, training and wellbeing support to help individuals build confidence and skills, regardless of whether they join St Monica Trust or another provider.
- **Collaborative ethos** – Partnerships with organisations like HOPE Virtual School and the King’s Trust will extend support beyond the workplace, promoting equity, inclusion and long-term success.
- **Sector-wide impact and scalability** – Through initiatives like this toolkit, the Trust seeks to share learning, inspire replication and influence practice, making adult social care more collaborative, inclusive and future-ready.





Key learning

“We were very willing, but a little naive in understanding the complexities of taking children in care and young people from communities facing barriers to employment. We jumped in with both feet and then found it was more challenging than expected.

“What was never in question was that we’d walk away from our apprentices. It wasn’t ever on the cards – we were committed to this. So, the question was: how do we resolve the challenges?”

Sara Naylor-Wild, Director of Care, St Monica Trust

St Monica Trust’s apprenticeship programme shows that inclusive, age-responsive support can transform workforce development – but success depends on continual learning and adaptability.

- **Expect challenges with early cohorts** – The first intake of 18 young people, many with complex needs and limited work experience, highlighted the pressures of onboarding large groups.
- **Prepare managers thoroughly** – Training in youth development and safeguarding is essential to build confidence and resilience in teams.
- **Choose providers carefully** – Partnerships should offer flexibility and trauma-informed approaches to meet diverse learner needs.
- **Allow more time for onboarding** – Initial timelines proved too short; staggered starts and extended support help apprentices settle successfully.
- **Embed inclusion from the outset** – Tailored communication, emotional support systems and accessible learning environments are critical.
- **View apprenticeships as long-term investment** – They are not just a recruitment tool but a way to shape culture, strengthen care quality and build future leadership.
- **Keep learning continuous** – The programme continues to evolve through reflection and feedback, reinforcing a commitment to improvement for every new apprentice.



“Doing the apprenticeship has changed me so much from who I was a year ago. I’m working, earning my own money, treated like everybody else here as a carer. I’ve already recommended to my friends going through apprenticeships. It’s just such a rewarding thing to do.”

Caitlin-Mae Toogood, Apprentice, St Monica Trust

Recommendations

Access a checklist of practical recommendations inspired by St Monica Trust’s approach via Skills for Care’s website.

