



In the know

Safer Medicines, Stronger Care

How BLMK ICB transformed medication training across their adult social care providers - and how you can too.

This month's Cut Out and Keep is brought to you by the Care Home Medicines Optimisation Team at Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB). Their tiered medication training programme has become a benchmark for improving safety, confidence, and competence in adult social care. It recently won a PrescQIPP Innovation and Best Practice Award 2025. Here's how they did it - and how you can apply their lessons to your own setting.

The journey so far

The problem

In 2020, BLMK ICB identified a widespread issue: medication training across adult social care was fragmented, inconsistent, and often inadequate. Staff were relying on short, generic eLearning modules - some as brief as 30-minutes - which failed to equip them with the depth of knowledge needed to manage medicines safely.

"There was huge variation across the sector. Two courses named the same thing were different. No one had a real grip on what was going on," said Courtenay Amos, who led the initiative from the Care Home Medicines Optimisation Team.

This inconsistency posed serious risks. Errors in prescribing and administration were common, especially in care homes where residents often had complex medication regimes. In domiciliary and supported living settings, staff worked in isolation with little oversight. Regulatory compliance was also a concern, with poor training linked to breaches of CQC Regulation 18.

The response

Courtenay and the team, consisting of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, undertook a comprehensive mapping exercise, comparing existing training against NICE guidance and CQC standards. “I mapped national and local training resources... pulled out topics from CQC regulations and NICE guidance to get the main themes around medication,” she explained.

The findings were stark: no single course met all the necessary criteria, and many providers lacked access to clinically robust training. In response, the team developed a three-tiered training model:

- **Tier 1:** Free, structured eLearning via PrescQIPP, covering safe administration, legal frameworks, and record-keeping. Each module lasts 3–5 hours and includes certification.
- **Tier 2:** Bi-monthly webinars addressing complex topics like PRN medication, covert administration, and homely remedies, often with an emphasis on our local guidance. These attract up to 400 participants.
- **Tier 3:** Full-day, face-to-face training for nominated Medication Champions, using interactive group work to follow a resident’s journey and embed best practice.

“We wanted to develop and implement a high-quality, accessible and streamlined medication training programme for all adult social care staff... which was standardised and transferable,” Courtenay said.

Scaling up

Initially delivered via Microsoft Teams meetings, the programme quickly outgrew its format. “It became a real nightmare when there were 350 people unmuting themselves... so we switched to the MS Teams webinar function,” Courtenay recalled. Eventbrite was introduced to automate registration, reminders, and certificate distribution.

Funding was secured to make Tier 1 training free for all adult social care staff. Internal expertise and free venues kept costs low, ensuring equitable access and sustainability. “The only real cost is our time really,” Courtenay noted.

Stakeholder engagement

Central Bedfordshire Council played a pivotal role in early adoption, lending credibility and encouraging other councils to follow suit. “Having them on board has been instrumental... when providers get an email from the Council, they are going to read it,” Courtenay explained.

Medication Champions became key stakeholders within care homes, promoting best practice and acting as liaisons with healthcare professionals. Quarterly forums provided a space for feedback and peer learning.

Impact

Since launch, the programme has delivered measurable improvements:

- 2,400+ Tier 1 courses completed
- 3,500+ webinar attendees
- 113 Medication Champions trained

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. In Tier 2 sessions, 90% of attendees rated the training as “extremely useful,” and 85% of Champions strongly agreed it would improve their practice.

“The numbers are really impressive... 2,446 courses completed and webinar attendance has ramped up significantly,” Courtenay shared.

The programme is now referenced in CQC action plans and local improvement frameworks, demonstrating its value in regulatory compliance and workforce development.

Recommendations for other medication training programmes

Whether you’re starting from scratch or refining an existing offer, the BLMK ICB experience provides a practical template. Here are key recommendations to help you build a safer, stronger medication training programme.

1. Map before you build

Start with a detailed mapping exercise. Compare your current training provision against NICE guidance and CQC regulations. Identify gaps in content, delivery, and accessibility.

Top Tip: Whether you are working with your ICB, other adult social care providers or just focusing on your own organisation, medication safety risks vary by roles and context, and training must reflect this.

2. Adopt a tiered model

A tiered structure supports progressive learning and builds staff confidence over time.

- **Tier 1:** Foundation eLearning or practical training for all staff
- **Tier 2:** Interactive webinars or more detailed practical training for deeper learning
- **Tier 3:** Advanced face-to-face training for Medication Champions

“We designed the tier system to gatekeep the more labour-intensive resources like face-to-face training... making sure people did the foundation learning first,” Courtenay explained.

3. Use technology to scale across bigger services or working with other providers

Digital tools are essential for managing logistics, tracking progress, and maintaining engagement.

- Use webinar platforms (e.g., MS Teams) for structured delivery
- Automate registration and reminders with tools like Eventbrite
- Choose eLearning platforms with secure access, progress tracking, and certification

“Technology was a learning point throughout... we had to use it to our advantage,” Courtenay said.

4. Embed Governance and feedback loops

Governance isn't just about oversight - it's about shared ownership. Introduce Medication Champions to embed expertise and create regular forums for feedback and learning.

Top Tip: Monitor attendance, completion rates, and feedback to refine content and demonstrate impact.

5. Build for sustainability

Design your programme to be lean, scalable, and responsive. Use internal expertise and digital tools to keep costs low and delivery efficient.

Top Tip: Track outcomes and share success stories to secure ongoing investment. Regulators and funders respond to evidence.

6. Create progression pathways

Training should support career development as well as competence. Champion roles offer leadership opportunities and help retain skilled staff.

Top Tip: Explore formal accreditation pathways to enhance workforce mobility and recognition.

7. Align with strategic priorities

Ensure your training supports wider goals - such as integrated care, workforce development, and regulatory compliance.

Top Tip: Reference training in action plans and improvement frameworks. This embeds it into local systems and reinforces its value.

Final thoughts

BLMK ICB's medication training programme shows what's possible when training is structured, accessible, and aligned with real-world needs. By investing in people, embracing technology, and fostering collaboration, they've created a model that improves care and strengthens the workforce.

Whether you're a commissioner, provider, or educator, the lessons are clear: start with the gaps, build progressively, and never underestimate the power of a well-trained team. live and useful.

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