

Case study:

How Nellsar Care Homes utilise operational workforce planning



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Nellsar Care Homes

- **Size:** Large provider with approximately 870 employees
- **Services:** Residential and nursing care
- **Care homes:** 13 homes across Kent (9), Greater London/Kent borders – Bexley (1), Bromley (1), Essex (1) and Surrey (1), supporting 600 people
- **Workforce:** Predominantly female, diverse workforce including internationally recruited nurses and senior carers

Nellsar Care Homes is at the early stages of embedding operational workforce planning. Their approach reflects growing alignment with Skills for Care's 'Analyse, Plan, Do, Review' model, with a strong emphasis on nursing capability, retention, leadership development, and future service transformation.

This case study has been gathered from Luminita Mandache, a delegate of Skills for Care's operational workforce planning seminars. Luminita has given consent for this information to be shared.





Current workforce profile

- **Total workforce:** Approximately 870 employees
- **Nursing workforce:** 85 registered nurses
- **Gender:** Predominantly female. Male: 25.5%; Female: 74.5%.
- **Age:**

	16-20	21-39	40-54	55-64	Over 65
Male	0.20%	12.20%	9.20%	3.10%	0.80%
Female	1.40%	32.60%	23.50%	13.50%	3.60%
Total	1.60%	44.80%	32.70%	16.60%	4.40%

- **Sponsored workforce:** 17%
- **Roles:** Mix of residential, nursing, senior carers, nursing associates, physiotherapists and leadership roles
- **International workforce:** Significant proportion of nurses, senior carers and carers recruited internationally

Nellsar has historically invested in structured induction and support for overseas staff, including transition packs, assimilation support, and buddy schemes.

Why Nellsar started its operational workforce planning journey

Nellsar began its workforce planning journey in August 2025, following early conversations about workforce pressures, service sustainability, and future care delivery models. In September 2025, Luminita attended a free Skills for Care webinar called 'Workforce planning: free resources for providers'. The seminar provided an initial introduction to structured workforce planning approaches. This learning prompted her to attend the Skills for Care 'Operational workforce planning seminar' in December 2025.

At this stage, the organisation was seeking guidance and direction on how to approach workforce planning, alongside a clearer understanding of its internal workforce needs and risks. There was also a strong desire for a practical care workforce pathway framework to support workforce transformation, particularly in relation to nursing roles. Engagement with the seminars and associated resources helped shift workforce planning from a largely reactive activity to a more structured and strategic approach.

Key achievements to date

Nurses Capability and Development Framework (NCDF)

A key outcome of the workforce planning work has been the creation of the Nurses Capability and Development Framework, finalised in December 2025. The framework:



- enabled a full assessment of all nurses across the organisation
- informed a comprehensive pay benchmarking exercise, using job adverts and ASCWDS data
- supported a cultural shift from routine annual pay reviews to capability-led progression structures.

The framework sets out progressive nursing levels, with responsibilities increasing as staff progress, supporting retention, succession planning, and quality.

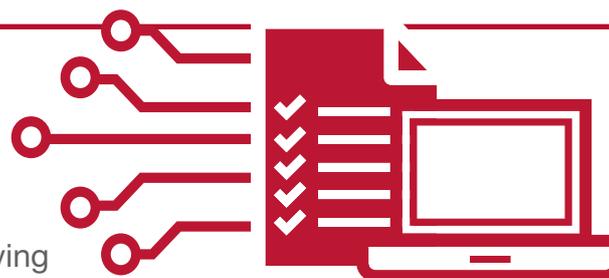
Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and preceptorship support



- An OSCE support programme provides dedicated support for three to four cohorts per year.
- A preceptorship programme, developed at the end of 2025, is being implemented across the organisation.
- Preceptors are supported by a dedicated Registered Nurse Development Lead, strengthening consistency and oversight.

Retention, recruitment and workforce insight

Retention and recruitment remain key priorities under development. Several approaches have been taken.



- A monthly retention reporting, identifying staff leaving within the first 3–6 months (produced via an external service and shared at executive level).
- A refer a friend scheme, which is performing well, with payments varying by role.
- Recruitment via LinkedIn and Indeed, as well as carehome.co.uk, the GOV.UK 'Find a job' website, and the Nellsar website. Nellsar has links with local job centres and uses a number of recruitment agencies.
- Ongoing investment in retaining existing nurses, particularly in response to concerns about national policy changes affecting overseas recruitment.
- Team appreciation days and celebratory events recognising team members who reach significant length-of-service milestones, including 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25+ years with Nellsar.

Nellsar has identified the need to further strengthen recruitment and retention data to support more informed workforce planning decisions.

Challenges and barriers

Key challenges identified include:

- limited access to specific recruitment and retention data
- increasing complexity of residents' needs, requiring higher levels of staff capability
- concerns about the longterm impact of government changes affecting internationally recruited staff.

As with many providers, workforce planning must compete with daytoday operational pressures, particularly during periods of organisational change.

Focus areas for Nellsar's workforce plan

- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), including a project planned for summer 2026.
- Training and development opportunities, including a learning and development strategy relaunch planned for spring 2026.
- Leadership and management support, following on from structured support introduced in summer 2025.
- An ongoing workforce wellbeing and resilience strategy.
- Career progression pathways. This has been established for nursing roles and is under development for other roles.
- Communication and engagement within teams.
- Use of technology and digital tools as part of a digital transformation which has been underway since 2023.
- Data and insight for workforce planning.

Next steps

- Formalise a single overarching workforce plan using Skills for Care resources.
- Complete workforce risk analysis and prioritisation.
- Strengthen recruitment and retention data analysis.
- Extend career development pathways beyond nursing roles.
- Continue embedding digital systems to support workforce planning.

Alignment with Skills for Care's approach to workforce planning

Nellsar's approach aligns with Skills for Care's framework in the following ways.

- Analyse: Workforce assessments, pay benchmarking, Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASCWDS) data.
- Plan: Nursing framework, leadership support, wellbeing strategies.
- Do: Implementation of NCDF, OSCE and preceptorship programmes.
- Review: Ongoing monitoring of retention, progression and workforce stability.

Conclusion

Nellsar Care Homes demonstrates how a large provider at an early stage of operational workforce planning can achieve meaningful progress. By focusing on nursing capability, leadership support, and datainformed decisionmaking, the organisation has established strong foundations for workforce sustainability and future service transformation.

