



**A practical guide for  
strategic workforce  
planning, shaping and  
commissioning**

January 2022



*A practical guide for workforce shaping, commissioning and planning, April 2021*

This guide is based on the Skills for Care Workforce shaping and commissioning for better outcomes 2017, Revised by Jeanette Cookson, Juliet Green and Lindsey Dawson.  
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# Introduction

The workforce makes up the biggest part of commissioners' costs, and how we commission our local workforce plays a major role in how successful our local outcomes are. Good commissioning facilitates the supply of a trained and valued workforce. Partnership is a key element of workforce commissioning.

Skills for Care's strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning resources provide a clear and simple set of interlinked tools that have been tried and tested with workforce leads over a number of years.

Workforce commissioning links service planning, financial planning and workforce planning together and sets out a simple process to support the delivery of the right workforce in the right place at the right time.

This guide is part of a broad range of workforce resources which can be found at [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforcecommissioning](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforcecommissioning).

## 10 reasons why strategic workforce shaping and commissioning is a 'must do' for leaders, commissioners and their teams

1. Enables shared decision making and leadership on integrated workforce issues.
2. Improves co-operation, partnership and integrates opportunities for working.
3. Designs and develops a workforce that can implement priorities to deliver good personalised care and support.
4. Raises workforce professionalism, capacity, productivity, competence and standards.
5. Supports people's choice, control and autonomy.
6. Contributes to the safety of both the people being supported and the workforce.
7. Engages and supports family, friends and other carers.
8. Makes effective use of and develops assets in neighbourhoods.
9. Stimulates the care markets in the local community.
10. Efficient and cost-effective use of resources.

### How to use this guide

This guide sets out the key steps and processes needed to commission the right workforce.

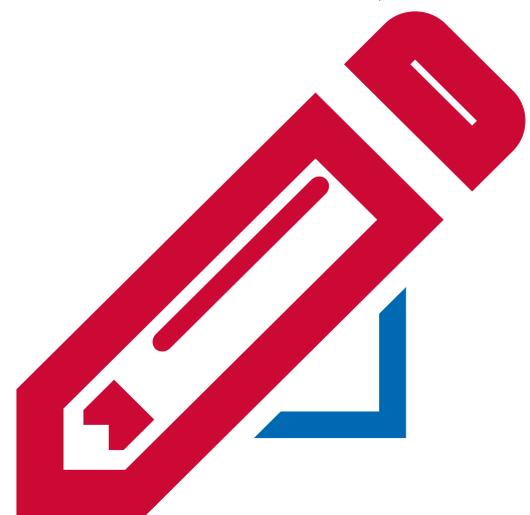
The guide has been designed for those with adult social care workforce market shaping, commissioning and planning responsibilities in local authorities, to use together with their partners in health, housing and local communities.

It focuses on bringing together service commissioners with these responsibilities and finance, in order to 'analyse, plan, implement and review' the workforce requirements required within your local area.

It provides prompts for discussion and can be adapted to local circumstances. It can be used for any workforce transformation, from short term redesign of a single service to developing long-term integrated services across a population.

## Key assumptions of effective strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning

- ✓ strong effective shared leadership at all levels with a focus on continuous improvement, quality and outcomes
- ✓ commitment, support, participation and collaboration from everyone involved in the process including leaders at all levels, the workforce, people being supported, families, carers, communities, adult care providers, commissioners and other professionals
- ✓ effective communication and information sharing with everyone, internally and externally, throughout the whole process is crucial to building open and honest working relationships
- ✓ shared responsibility and accountability for performance and achievement of goals
- ✓ positive appreciation for the contribution each party makes to the delivery of person-centred care and support.



# Strategic workforce shaping, commissioning and planning: What is it and why is it important?

Strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning helps you to predict the future demand for different types of workers. It matches the demand for workers with the supply of workers. To be effective, it must be well led and based upon a shared sense of the purpose, nature and direction of high quality services

As local authorities have moved from being providers to commissioners and enablers, their approach to strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning has had to evolve.

Workforce commissioning and workforce market shaping ensures that your workforce strategy is realised through outcomes that have the right people, with the right values, doing the right things at the right time and at the right cost.

## 1.1. How does workforce shaping and commissioning fit with market shaping and commissioning?

Local authorities are required to develop a market that delivers a wide range of sustainable high quality care and support services that will be available to their communities. When buying and enabling services, local authorities must consider how they might affect an individual's wellbeing and should consider working with a range of other partners to engage with communities and build community assets.

The tools for achieving the market shaping duty are the local authority's own strategic commissioning and contracting practices. It's recommended that local authorities publish a 'market position statement' to help them understand, facilitate and engage with the local care market and demonstrate that they are meeting this duty.

Commissioning care and support services that are both high quality and safe require consideration of both capacity and capability - when you commission a service you're also commissioning the workforce that implements it.

Workforce shaping and commissioning will help put in place a workforce that will deliver the right outcomes for people being supported.

## 1.2. How does strategic workforce shaping and commissioning fit with operational workforce planning, and procurement?

Workforce shaping and commissioning is a strategic function across an area that helps employers and other partners balance demand with supply.

Operational workforce planning is how employers, organisations and people who access services turn their business plans, care plans and aspirations into the practical reality of workers undertaking the roles and tasks they require.

<p><b>Workforce shaping and commissioning</b> describes the systems and processes that ensures leaders, managers and employers can articulate and understand the current and future workforce supply needs to meet local priorities.</p> <p>These systems and processes support investment and disinvestment decisions.</p>	<p><b>Workforce procurement</b> is how employers acquire the people they need to deliver the services.</p>
<p><b>Workforce planning</b> is the system and process used by employers (both people directly employing their own support workers, and organisations) to ensure they have the workforce to meet their business objectives and personal care plans.</p>	<p><b>Workforce redesign</b> is a process that follows on from the review of existing structures, and is intended to maximise the efficiency of staff deployment in light of service needs.</p>
<p><b>Workforce development</b> is the way that workers acquire the education, knowledge and skills to do their jobs competently and to aspire to career progression in social care. Workforce development should be part of commissioning and be undertaken in partnership with employers and learning providers. It should be part of the business planning of all employers.</p>	<p><b>Workforce integration</b> is about how different workforces work together to meet people’s needs and enable people supported needs to live in their community as independently as possible.</p>

The flowchart opposite sets out the process and outputs you should expect to see as part of your workforce shaping and commissioning.

## Processes

**Strategic workforce shaping and commissioning** is used by the directors of adult social services (DASS) working in partnership with people being supported, families, carers, social care providers, the voluntary sector, health and wellbeing boards, health, housing, leisure and others; to assess and predict the demand for the current and future workforce mapped against supply and the needs of the local population. It identifies priorities and plans and secures the workforce needed and regularly reviews requirements through workforce planning.

**Operational workforce planning** is the system and process used by everyone including leaders, owners, managers and people employing their own care and support, to ensure they have identified and planned for the workforce to meet their business objectives and personal care plans.

**Workforce development** is the mechanism to equip workers with the education, skills, values, knowledge and behaviours they need to effectively deliver and improve services, both now and in the future. It aims to support the service by providing workers with the right skills.

## Outputs

A **workforce strategy** sets out the long-term objectives, usually 3-5 years and how in broad terms, an organisation aims to accomplish those objectives. It gives the overview and vision.

A **workforce strategy implementation plan** sets out the actions that will need to be taken to implement the workforce strategy.

A **workforce plan** is where your plans are recorded and can be shared with everyone and then used for review and evaluation.

A **workforce learning and development plan** outlines annual learning and development needs across an organisation and how these will be delivered, who for and by whom.

### 1.3. Practical steps to effective workforce shaping, commissioning and planning

This guide is about practical steps to improve workforce shaping, commissioning and planning by ensuring that strategy takes account of both financial investment and disinvestment decisions and the implications for the whole workforce.

The model in the following section describes a systematic way of linking market shaping and commissioning of care with workforce commissioning and workforce market shaping, and financial strategy. It shows how to make the best use of workforce intelligence to facilitate this process.

This approach helps ensure that the right workforce is doing the right things at an achievable cost.

#### Processes

Taking a whole systems approach to workforce shaping, planning and commissioning combines the service and market shaping needs of the future with the workforce implications.



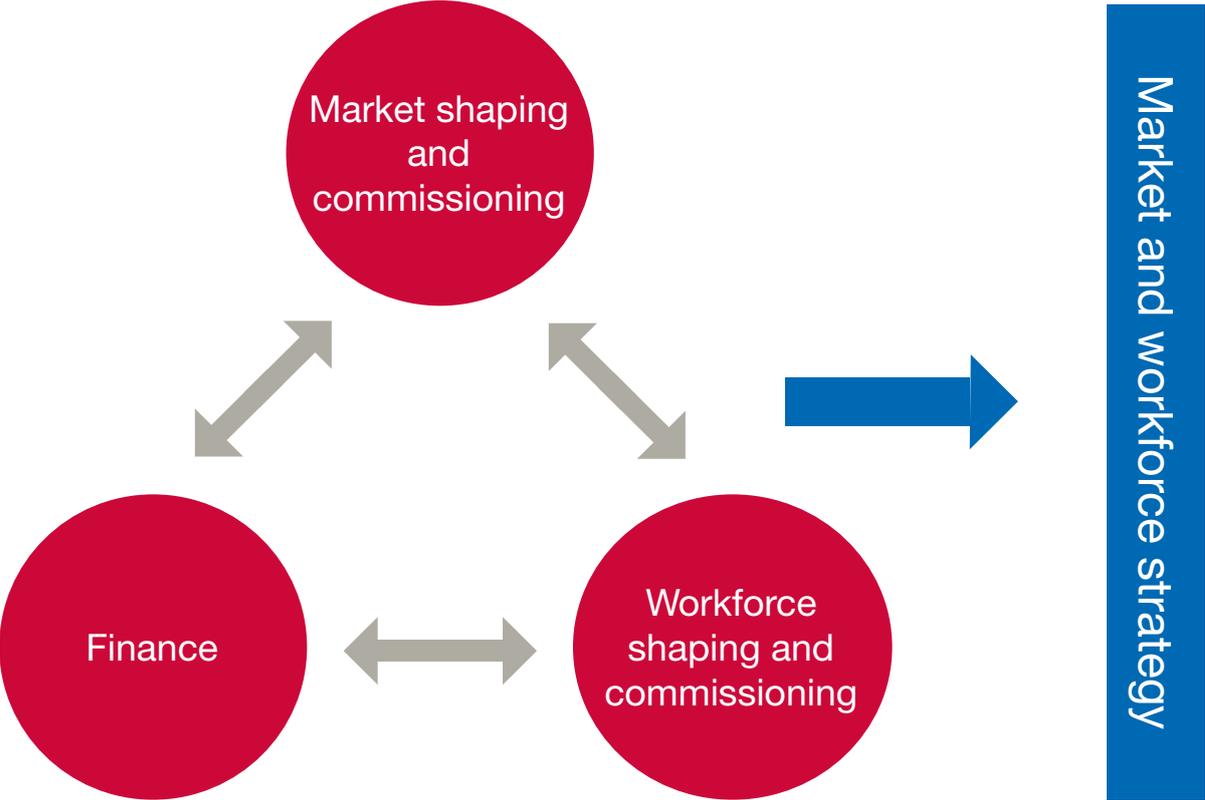
#### Outputs

A combined strategy that defines the long term plans for an area in terms of the market required and the size, quality, values, attributes and behaviours of the workforce required to deliver it.



# The future

Taking a whole systems approach to workforce shaping and commissioning.



## Strategic workforce shaping, commissioning and planning

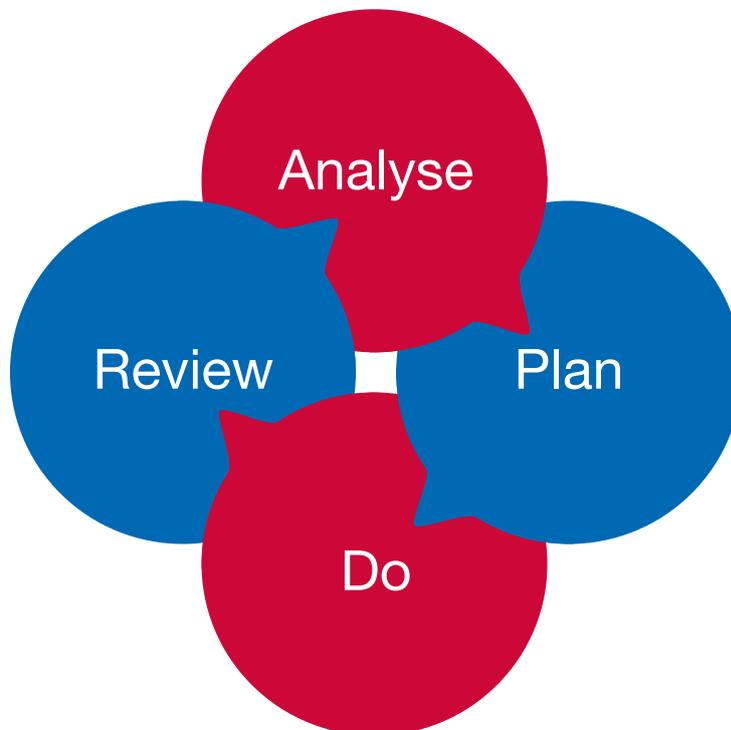
### About the model

The following model helps you strategically assess your local area needs with your key partners. Use this model to evaluate the information you have and fill in as many gaps as possible. You can then develop a coherent picture of how care and support outcomes will be achieved in your local area and the workforce required.

This section takes you through the key steps in the model and presents you with a practical way of handling complex workforce issues for each.

'*Analyse-Plan-Do-Review*' brings together all aspects of planning into a coherent, unified process.

- Analyse the what
- Plan the how
- Do the transformation
- Review the results



## 2.1 Analyse

### Understanding the national vision for care and support

Do you have an understanding of the legislation and government policy that will affect you in the future?

### Local policy and priorities

Do you have a clear understanding of the care and support policy and the priority needs of your local area? Do you have right people involved in the discussions around the development of an **integrated workforce strategy**? Are commissioners, care providers community and individuals groups involved in discussing workforce priorities? Is there a local health and wellbeing strategy or a joint strategic needs assessment?

### Data, information and intelligence

Do you have a clear understanding of the current and future care and support needs of your local population? Have you identified where the local workforce demographics can be obtained and analysed? What other complementary data sources are available?

### Analysing what this means for you

How does this information impact on your vision for the future? Are there changes you need to make? Do you have a clear picture of what your locality's current and future workforce should look like? What, attitudes, behaviours, skills, values, knowledge, capabilities and competences would be required to deliver the best outcomes for people?

### Recording where you are now

Do you have a clear framework and recorded understanding about where you are with workforce shaping, commissioning and planning?

## Analyse tips

### Understanding the national vision for care and support

- Consider the focus on improving health and wellbeing, prevention, integration, community, employment initiatives, the increasing use of technology in care etc.
- You might want to consider doing a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) analysis.
- Do you understand employment law legislation? Will this have an impact? What other government initiatives will affect the labour market? Consider which data sources there may be to ensure an appropriate supply of staff with the right skills, behaviour and attributes, e.g. Job Centre Plus, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Chambers of Commerce.

### Local policy and priorities

- Include people supported and their families and carers as experts – what are their strengths, talents, aspirations and needs? Have you accessed any information from local surveys? What feedback is there from your local Healthwatch, CQC representatives, carer organisations etc.
- Map local approaches to commissioning with other partners such as the health, housing, Think Local Act Personal ‘markers of progress’ in their *Making it Real* material – there is much common ground once language is unpacked ([www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal)).

### Data, information and intelligence

- Accessing data - Using data from the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS), Skills for Care publish a suite of visualisations and reports containing the latest sector and workforce information at a national, regional and local authority level.  
Topics covered include – workforce size, job roles, recruitment and retention, demographics, contract types, training and qualifications. These outputs are the ideal starting point for workforce planning and market shaping.  
You can access this information from:  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ASCWDS](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ASCWDS)
- Encouraging ASC-WDS completion - Consider ways in which the local authority can encourage completion of ASC-WDS and therefore the quality of the intelligence available in your area.  
For example, recommending ASC-WDS completion for the services you are commissioning.  
Details of the benefits of the service to employers can be found here:  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/ASC-WDS/Discover-the-Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data-Set.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/ASC-WDS/Discover-the-Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data-Set.aspx)

- Consider identifying someone who can lead on intelligence gathering and analysis. They might already provide information or guidance to citizens, families or the public, collect figures/statistics and analyse data, provide reports based on analysis of data or information or supporting the completion of Adult Social Care-Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS).
- Consider current research on key topic areas – take a look at the Skills for Care evidence and impact webpages: [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/evidenceandimpact](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/evidenceandimpact) and [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/research](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/research)

## Analysing what this means for you

- Consider doing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to highlight the current position and future opportunities.

## Process and mechanism

- Identify a senior strategic leader and project manager.
- You may find it useful to have a workforce board or other group of key partners to help steer the work (principle 4 (engage people in the process) of the *Principles of Workforce Redesign* may help you with this.
- The quality of the care and support offered by social care organisations is dependent upon the expertise, values and attitudes of the people who make up the workforce. The Principles of Workforce Redesign acknowledge the significant role that workers have in transforming services and can be a useful guide to help you with this. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workforce-planning/Workforce-change-and-transformation.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workforce-planning/Workforce-change-and-transformation.aspx)
- Recognise the business and innovative expertise of local employers and what they can contribute to the transformation of the workforce.
- Nurture champions, innovators and leaders (principle 3 of the *Principles of Workforce Redesign*).

## Recording where are you now

- Record what you have discovered so far.

## 2.2 Plan

### **What does your workforce need to look like in the future?**

What are you going to do differently? What new roles and new ways of working will be needed for the future? Will this include volunteers or the community? What impact will this have on your leaders, managers and staff? How are you involving everyone in planning to encourage ownership of the plan?

Is this financially viable? Are your proposed changes manageable? Which current services are going to be affected and what timescales do you want to achieve this by?

### **Are there any gaps?**

In order to deliver your services now and in the future, are there any gaps in numbers, knowledge, diversity, skills, values, behaviours and attitudes in your workforce? How might the local market and the workforce need to change?

### **Cost**

Do you know what the workforce costs are? Are there any ways in which the workforce could become more productive and cost-effective? Are rates of pay competitive in line with the National Minimum Wage, the Real Living Wage and the National Living Wage?

### **Risk**

Have you identified any risks within the changes you want to make? Have you considered ways you might mitigate these risks?

### **Measuring the achievements**

How will you know you've achieved what you set out to do? How will you measure, monitor, review and evaluate? You can use the Workforce transformation outcomes measurement framework to define the outcomes, actions and measurement of any workforce change programme. It will help you to measure the impact of workforce investment on the person-centred outcomes that services achieve.

### **Record the actions you are going to take**

What actions are you going to take and with whom? How are you going to do it? What will it cost? When are you going to achieve this by? How will this be communicated?

## Plan tips

### What does your workforce need to look like in the future?

- Take a 'whole systems approach' to organisational change – think about the use of other services, e.g. leisure, community, etc., (principle 1, the [Principles of Workforce Redesign](#)).
- A strengths and community based approach puts individuals at the heart of adult social care commissioning, to ensure that people can access the care and support that they want and need.

Our [Community, asset and strengths based guidance and tools](#) help you to implement these approaches in your commissioning practice.

- You may want to consider information from principle 7 of the [Principles of Workforce Redesign](#): develop workforce strategies that support transformation and recognise the shape of resources available in the local community.
- Use the [Practical Approaches to Workforce Planning guide](#) and complete the Workforce Planning and Development tool to help you analyse, plan and develop a workforce plan.
- [The Principles of Workforce Integration](#) will help you to think through what is meant by workforce integration and the contribution that workforce development can make. There is also practical guidance to help you when thinking about the learning and development needs of your workers.
- Consider the workforce development and human resource support required for individual employers and their personal assistants. What mechanisms have you in place to offer peer support? Skills for Care offers resources for individual employers and personal assistants at [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/IEPAhub](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/IEPAhub).

### Are there any gaps?

- The [Workforce Transformation Outcomes Measurement Framework](#) provides a simple way of realistically linking the impact and benefits of workforce interventions to measurable, person centred outcomes for people who receive care and support, organisations and the local community. It can be utilised to measure change in the short, medium and long term and for both simple and complex challenges.
- You may wish to consider leadership roles and opportunities for leadership by looking at the [Leadership Qualities Framework](#). This describes attitudes and behaviours needed for high quality leadership. Are these behaviours demonstrated currently? Are any of your workforce showing leadership potential? How can this be supported?
- Take a look at [leadership programmes](#) available for developing and enhancing the talent within your organisation.
- Remember to identify gaps across the full breadth of the workforce from entry level to strategic leaders and add the priorities to your workforce strategy and implementation plans.
- Our [Developing New Managers and Deputies guide](#) and development route for managers supports you with succession planning. These tools help you to recognise and develop talent and clear career pathways for your team.

- Consider leadership, co-production with people being supported, workforce redesign, recruitment and retention, skills development, partnership working, regulation, equality and diversity.

## Cost

- There will be many variables to consider when thinking about the costs of your strategic and operational workforce strategy and plan. These may be the cost of the workforce, of equipment and technology, of learning and development, consultancy, research etc
- Consider using the [ASC-WDS dashboards](#) to see rates of pay. You may also be interested in looking at the costs of our endorsed learning providers for a range of course provision to add to your workforce development plan.
- Take into consideration support for your VCSE community and neighbourhood assets when supporting individuals, for example, sourcing venues for workforce development or consultancy with the sector.

## Risk

- You may want to complete a risk log to identify what the risks are, why they might happen, what the impact might be if they happen, and what to do to mitigate them. You will want to decide who is responsible for the log and how often you review it.

## Measuring the achievements

- Develop a combined market and workforce strategy – you may want to develop an implementation plan from this to identify key priorities and who is responsible for delivering each area of the plan.
- Take a ‘SMART’ approach to approach to your priorities.

## Record the actions you are going to take

- Publish information about agreed strategy and outcomes to support transparency and accountability.

## 2.3 Do - implementation

### **Co-produce, develop and manage the implementation plan**

How will you coordinate the actions that everyone has planned and contributed to?  
How will you make them happen? What timescales have you given yourselves?

### **Market development**

How are you supporting service providers and communities to redesign and develop their workforces, to meet the health and wellbeing outcomes of the population?

### **Learning and development**

How are you supporting learning providers to work with employers to make the most of people's skills, knowledge, capabilities, attitudes and proficiency levels to meet the skills gaps?

### **Communicating and engaging with all those involved to ensure effective implementation**

How have you communicated the strategy? How are you continuing to communicate during the implementation of your strategy? How are your leaders, the workforce, people being supported, families, carers, communities, adult care providers, commissioners and other professionals kept involved and informed?

### **Monitor and review your plans**

Are you reviewing your implementation plan regularly with everyone it affects? Is it on target? Are there any issues? What surprises have emerged? Have any opportunities or barriers arisen that have come out of the review? Are they being addressed?

### **Adjust your plans if needed**

Does your monitoring indicate that you need to revise your implementation plan?

## Do - implementation tips

### Co-produce, develop and manage the implementation plan

- You may wish to develop detailed sub-plans for each area of activity coming out of your combined market and workforce strategy.
- Use recognised project/change management tools to do so.
- You may find content in the [Principles of Workforce Redesign](#).

### Market development

- Consider and communicate where this information sits so it is easy for providers, partners, the workforce and people who are being supported to access to inform their own planning.
- Remember your responsibilities for the whole market not just those with whom you have a contractual relationship.
- Develop a joint market and workforce statement to share publicly.

### Learning and development

- Principle 5 of the Principles of Workforce Redesign may be of use here: be aware of the way adults learn [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/powr](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/powr).
- Our [Person centred and community based resources](#) for providers and commissioners may be useful. Everyone brings their own skills, knowledge, experience and attributes – whether as people in need of care and support, as carers, or as care and support workers.
- Encourage employers to use Skills for Care’s guidance on finding the right learning provision for their workforces, see [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Choosing-a-learning-provider](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Choosing-a-learning-provider).
- The Skills for Care list of endorsed providers and their courses is now available online at [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/endorsement](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/endorsement).

### Communicating and engaging with all those involved to ensure effective implementation

- Work with the relevant people to develop a communications and marketing strategy – use leaders and champions to help convey messages.

### Monitor and review your plans

- Plan a schedule of regular meetings to monitor progress with all parties.

### Adjust your plans if needed

- Regularly review your strategy and associated implementation plans in light of any analysis, updates and activities that have taken place.



## 2.4 Review and evaluate

### Results and impact

Did the changes you implemented achieve the desired results to help meet your strategic priorities? Did the new ways of working and new roles help to meet your business plan priorities? What are the outcomes of the workforce changes and is there an impact on the people supported by your service?

What are the outcomes of the workforce changes and is their a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the local population?

### Key achievements and lessons learned

Have you gathered evidence to identify your key achievements, what you have learned and what you would do differently, if at all, next time?

### Report your findings

Have you shared your findings with your staff, leaders, all levels of management, the workforce, people being supported, families, carers, community, commissioners and other professionals?

### Celebrate success

How will you celebrate your achievements, reward where appropriate and put forward nominations for any local or national accolades and share your success with others?

### Rethink, refresh and redefine

To continuously improve the quality of services in your area, use what you have achieved and learning to rethink the process, taking into account the needs of people being supported.

# Review and evaluate tips

## Results and impact

- Did you consider your workforce outcomes? Have you considered using the Workforce Transformation Outcomes Measurement Framework - see [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workforce-planning/Workforce-change-and-transformation.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workforce-planning/Workforce-change-and-transformation.aspx).

## Key achievements and lessons learned

- Put feedback mechanisms in place – focus on impact and outcomes as well as outputs
- Consider the use of 360 degree feedback tools as well as customer and staff feedback.

## Report your findings

- Ensure information is easily accessible to meet everyone's needs.
- Consider how your findings measure against Think Local Act Personal 'Making it Real' markers at [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal/](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal/) and the National Voices 'I statements' [www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/narrative-person-centred-coordinated-care](http://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/narrative-person-centred-coordinated-care).

## Celebrate success

- Celebrating success by putting forward nominations for any local or national accolades and share your success with others.

## Rethink, refresh and redefine

- Start the process again - think long, medium and short term.

## Getting organised for strategic workforce shaping, commissioning and planning

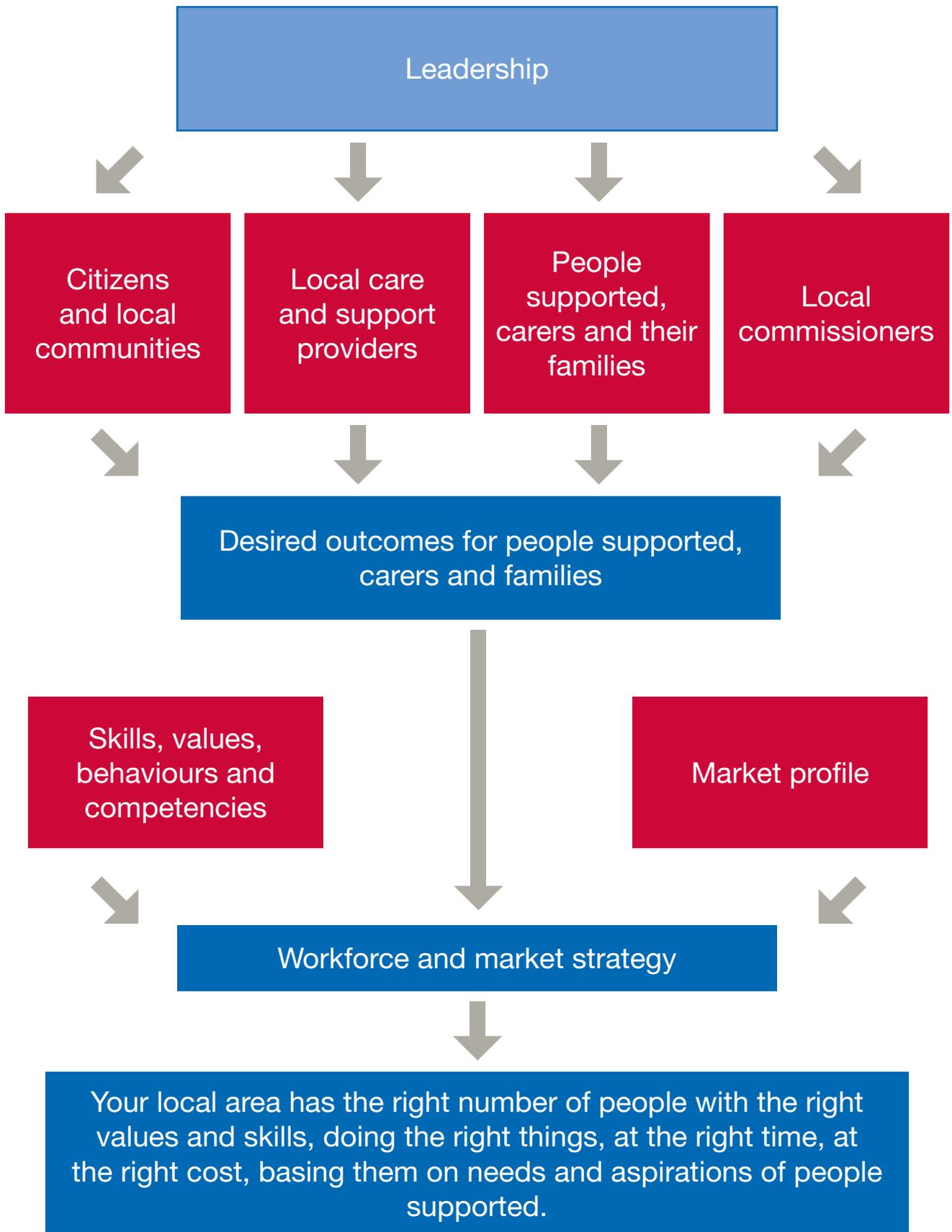
1. **Do you have a clear statement about the vision and purpose of local priorities that is widely understood? If not what can you do to develop one and when will this will be done?**  
Spend time working together with citizens, people with lived experience, communities and organisations who will support co-production of the strategy.
2. **Who is best placed to lead the development and implementation of the strategy?**  
Identification of a key lead to drive the priorities forward is essential to the success of this process.
3. **Identify who and how the strategic workforce commissioning and planning will be implemented.**  
How will strategic workforce commissioning, planning and implementation be funded?
4. **Identify how this will be funded - through a dedicated budget or by building into existing services and market shaping costs.**  
Will you give this a dedicated budget or will it be built into existing service and market shaping?
5. **Do you have a workforce group to help steer the work?**  
Having a dedicated group helps to focus on workforce challenges and priorities and unblock barriers.
6. **How will you keep all partners involved, keep the momentum going and monitor progress?**  
Developing a robust marketing and communications strategy as part of your planning will ensure key stakeholders are engaged and on board.
7. **What is your contingency plan if key people go on long term absence or if they leave?**  
Make sure everyone has a full understanding of the project with regular communication from the outset.

### Self-assessment

[Download the self-assessment questionnaire.](#)

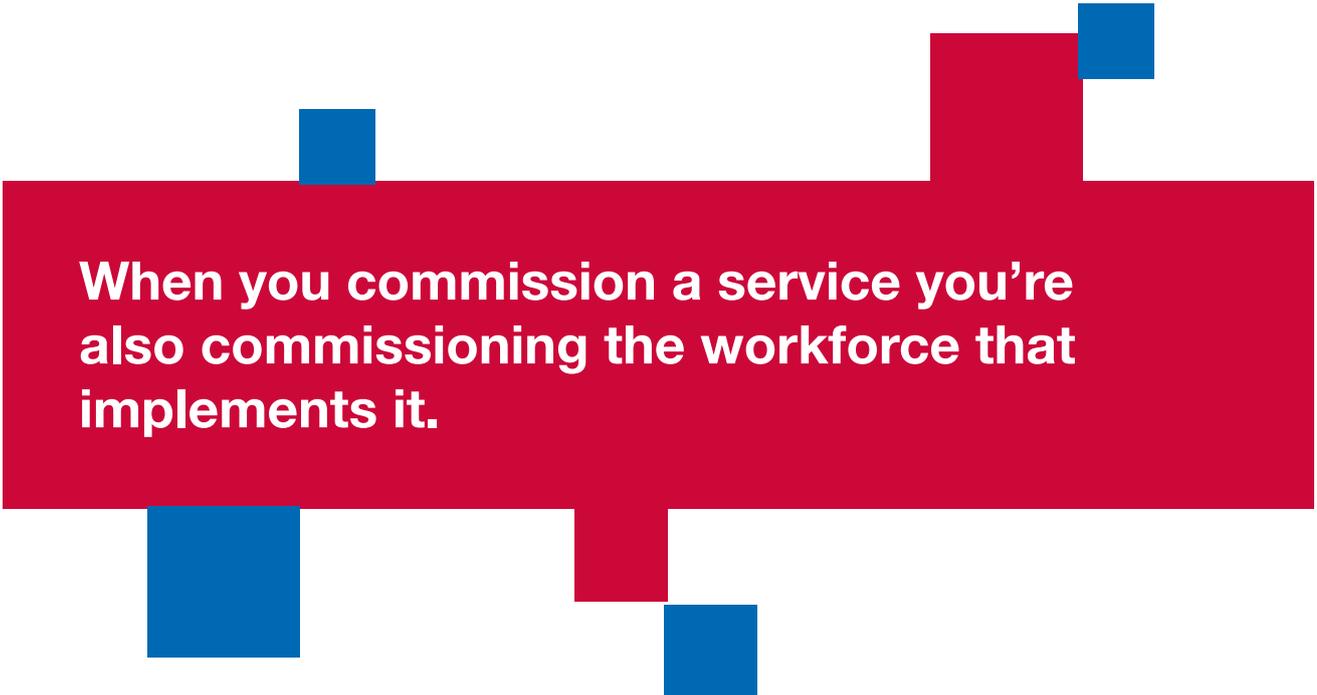
This can be used to begin the process and get started. It forms part of your analysis to identify the current position and helps you to think about which areas to prioritise to move forward.

Have you got the right people involved in every stage of the process?

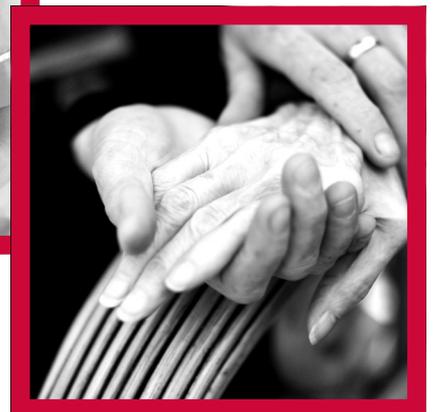


## 3.1 Strategic workforce commissioning, planning key points

- ‘Analyse–Plan–Do–Review’ is key to the shaping, commissioning and planning model and is simple to use.
- The relationship between market shaping, commissioning, planning and finance should show a wholly integrated picture of how adult social care priorities will be met in each local area.
- Effective shaping, commissioning and planning has its roots in thorough analysis of data and information as well as context and other drivers.
- Map strengths as well as needs—especially the skills and abilities of the people who are being supported, their carers, and of volunteers and local citizens.
- A strategy implementation plan should have priorities, clear actions and a group with an identified lead person to steer its progress.
- Approaches to project management can be applied to workforce shaping and commissioning.
- To review commissioning with workforce outcomes you need to be very clear about priorities that you set and involve all partners in evaluation.
- Future-proof your quality assurance system to ensure procedures, systems and people all contribute to continuous improvement.



**When you commission a service you're also commissioning the workforce that implements it.**





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