



CabinetOffice

Learning and Skills in Adult Social Care: Executive Summary

**A Report to the Public Services Forum's
Learning and Skills Task Group**

Commissioned by the Cabinet Office and produced by the IPA

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

This report has been commissioned by the Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Public Services Forum Learning and Skills Task Group and has been developed in partnership with Skills for Care, Department of Health, the Learning and Skills Council, Cabinet Office and the Trades Union Congress. This project has been jointly funded by Cabinet Office and the Learning and Skills Council.

The Public Services Forum was established in 2003 to improve dialogue between Government, trade unions and public service employers on public service workforce issues with the objective of delivering excellent public services for all.

The Forum's Task Group on Learning and Skills has brought together key employer and trade union colleagues to progress a shared ambition for improved skills in public services, focusing on practical routes to success and on priority areas for public services. The Learning and Skills Task Group started its programme of work in 2006.

In June 2008, the Cabinet Office commissioned the IPA to undertake research into learning and skills in the adult social care sector, with a view to informing the Task Group's final recommendations (due to be published in December 2008).

ABOUT THE IPA

The IPA is Britain's leading organisation delivering partnership, consultation and employee engagement in the workplace. We work with clients in the public, private and third sectors to help managers and employees develop new ways of working, based on trust and collaboration that deliver better workplaces and better outcomes - increased productivity and improved services.



1. Executive summary

The Public Services Forum's Task Group on Learning and Skills commissioned the IPA to assess the appropriateness and practicability of its draft recommendations for improving workforce skills in a single sector - adult social care – through several months of evidence gathering, analysis and dialogue.

It is hoped that the work of the Task Group will enhance and support skills and career progression for a significant section of the UK workforce - providing an opportunity to make a real impact on the achievement of progress on skills at a national level across all sectors.

The Task Group will deliver its final set of recommendations and set out a future campaign for public service skills in Autumn 2008. It is then the intention that employers and trade unions will ensure action on these themes through their own networks in the context of public service improvement.

Some key messages for learning and skills in adult social care have emerged from this study, and the Task Group is making a number of recommendations arising from these.

1.1 Access to funding for skills and the use of Train to Gain in the sector

Accessing funding for training adult social care staff is a complex process as there are a significant number of separate funding streams. Some funding streams are national whereas others have regional priorities that are not necessarily replicated in each English region.

There has been a substantial uptake of Train to Gain in adult social care and employers and employees value the training that it has funded. Organisations have seen benefits in terms of lower staff turnover and better quality service delivery. There are some concerns within the sector about the Train to

Gain brokerage service, and eligibility for funding.

Funding streams and processes

The fieldwork revealed that some employers were unclear about what provision is available for them to access and which individuals were eligible for support through Train to Gain. This was also an issue across other funding streams.

We suggest that eligibility criteria – about organisations and individuals - need to be clear and consistent and stated in an accessible format in order to improve understanding and use of this valuable support mechanism for employers. This should apply to other funding streams including the Train to Gain service.

Some form of “map” may help employers navigate their way through the funding architecture and other service offers. This may help to dismantle the reported perception from some that Train to Gain was “bureaucratic”.

Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) single funding stream from 2009 will be a useful step forward in simplifying funding streams.

Other parts of public services may find a clear and comprehensive policy statement on eligibility of organisations and individual workers for Train to Gain helpful. Clarification of whether individual Train to Gain eligibility is determined by job need or by other factors would also be helpful.

Brokerage

Brokerage is an integral part of the Train to Gain service. Our research found varying degrees of success and appetite to use Train to Gain brokers. Some of those interviewed said there was a need for brokers to better understand the adult social care sector.

A possible way forward that would not involve changing current Train to Gain architecture

would be to develop some standard learning briefings to help brokers better understand the particular needs and priorities for the sector. These should be part of the Sector Skills Compact and should be renewed and reissued on a regular basis to ensure they are fresh and up to date. In tandem, LSC and Skills for Care may wish to consider developing some real life case studies about how brokers have added value to adult social care providers. This could help to articulate to employers and trade unions where and how a broker could provide support to their service/business, and help to clarify where employers can reasonably expect to receive support from brokers.

The proposal to introduce regional lead skills brokers for adult social care as part of the sector's compact is already a step forward, and those colleagues should take a leading role should any of the suggestions set out here be taken forward. In addition, it should be noted that Skills for Care are already funding joint working on a sector specific brokerage with Train to Gain, which will help to further improve clarity.

Quality

LSC's 'Employers Guide' to Good Training will be a welcome innovation for employers in adult social care and no doubt to other parts of public services. The Guide will provide an access point for employers looking for information on training providers in their area. The Guide will highlight those providers offering specialist training, those whom have been assessed by Ofsted or have been assessed against other standards, for example the Training Quality Standard. Getting the message out about this new guidance to those colleagues using Train to Gain in their organisations/sectors will be important.

1.2 Skills Pledge

Organisations want to see evidence that the Pledge adds value. There is a sense that the employers who are signing the Pledge are already committed to training and that the Pledge is not reaching organisations who need to do more. Hands-on help for these employers, including funding for training and backfill, may be needed.

Reach

Our research suggests that the Skills Pledge needs to extend its reach beyond those organisations that are already committed to training and development of their organisation, to those who need to do more.

LSC and Skills for Care may wish to consider how the Skills Pledge could reach those workforces most in need. In particular, there may be a case for building upon existing work across relevant colleagues (including trade unions) to target institutions with a poor CSCI report. One of the local authorities interviewed had built this form of targeted support into their workforce development strategy.

Joint commitment

There should be a joint commitment to deliver the Skills Pledge to all organisations delivering publicly-funded services, whether public, private or voluntary sector, while ensuring that the Pledge is always meaningful. There is a danger that the Skills Pledge will become discredited if organisations sign it purely as a result of external pressure to do so, rather than because it meets their needs and they intend to implement it.

Demonstrating value

Employers said that "positive peer experiences about the value it adds and financial support" would encourage them to sign the Skills Pledge.

The development of additional case studies to supplement those already available and specifically articulating how organisations

have been supported to achieve the Skills Pledge through the external support of Train to Gain may help to increase its profile within the sector. In particular, any messages about the long-term benefits that have been experienced as a result of signing the Skills Pledge would help. This could help to create bottom-up demand for the Skills Pledge and Train to Gain, rather than relying on top-down pressure.

More generally, we suggest this needs to go hand-in-hand with information about the additional financial support that exists for small organisations. This is particularly important for adult social care where many organisations are small-scale and where additional financial support could help to deliver positive change in the workplace.

In the wider public sector, the Skills Pledge needs to make a real connection with employers' needs on the ground. It needs to be seen to add value – any communications should seek to pull out a strong narrative around the value for the employer organisation and their workforce.

Investors in people

Although the Investors in People (IiP) standard is a separate to the Skills Pledge, some colleagues interviewed felt that they “preferred” to invest efforts into IiP as an *alternative* to the Skills Pledge.

It may, therefore, be worthwhile for LSC to extend its work with IiP UK to better communicate the complementary relationship between IiP and the Skills Pledge to employers in the sector. At a national level across public services, DIUS and LSC may also wish to consider strengthening the messaging around the relationship between the Skills Pledge and IiP, to better cross-promote both.

1.3 Apprenticeships and skills pathways

The small minority of adult social care employers who employ apprenticeships value

them highly, but many either do not know that Apprenticeships in adult social care exist, or do not see the added value of investing in an Apprentice.

Long-term benefits

We suggest that there needs to be a stronger articulation of the long-term benefits of Apprenticeships both for employers and individuals, and of the different benefits and opportunities. For example, an apprentice should have a more rounded skill set that can be applied to different parts of an organisation – particularly important should an employer diversify their service offering. Better articulation of these differences could help employers to make an informed decision about what is the right choice for their service or organisation at that time as part of a continuum of different options.

Increasing awareness

The study has highlighted a lack of awareness in the sector about the rules governing whether under-19s can provide adult social care. In addition, there was also a reported lack of general awareness about new Apprenticeship frameworks in the sector (with some interviewed not knowing they existed).

Relevant bodies should consider an awareness raising programme in the sector to jointly promote these issues. This may reap benefits in terms of (i) generating employer demand for Apprenticeships more generally; (ii) opening up career opportunities for young people in the sector. Although out of scope in terms of this report's analysis, it is recommended that any such campaign should explicitly state that adult learners are also eligible for Apprenticeships so as to diversify career pathways for existing (adult) workers as well as new, younger workers.

In particular, it is suggested that Job Centre Plus (JCP) colleagues might benefit from refreshed, new briefing outlining potential opportunities and career pathways available in adult social care, so JCP advisors can

provide accurate advice to their clients in turn.

In the public sector as whole Apprenticeship communications and marketing should make clear to employers that there is no age limit to Apprenticeships for most parts of public services – improving opportunities for existing, older public service workers as well as young people who have recently left full time education.

Care Ambassadors

The sector should continue to support and recognise the good work of the Care Ambassador scheme in attracting young people into adult social care

Where other parts of public services wish to increase the diversity of their age profile and attract more young people, they should consider what value a model such as “Care Ambassadors” might provide.

1.4 Trade unions

Trade unions are playing an important role in supporting skills development in the sector. They do this at both national and local levels. Their usual approach to supporting skills development is through Union Learning Reps, but as these are generally found in large organisations throughout the economy, and adult social care is provided mostly by small independent organisations, which in turn are less likely to recognise unions, they have had to think again.

Union Learning Representatives in the adult social care workplace

ULR’s should continue their good work in supporting individual learners in the workplace, which is widely regarded as a positive workplace contribution. Unions and unionlearn may wish to consider how to build the expertise and capacity of the adult social care ULR network to help build long-term workforce strategies in individual workplaces and to expand their support to reach out beyond basic skills.

In particular we suggest that adult social care trade unions could work together with employers, learning providers and Skills for Care to improve the success of training courses provided by local authorities for their regions/ areas, e.g. by encouraging learners to take up and commit to training opportunities.

Promoting Apprenticeships and skills

Trade unions should take a more proactive role in the sector in promoting Apprenticeships and skills investment (including through the use of Train to Gain and the promotion of the Skills Pledge), by encouraging employers to consider Apprenticeships and supporting employers in implementing the Skills Pledge.

Strategic role

Trade union expertise and support should be used more strategically at a national and local level to help employers and Skills for Care in their efforts to deliver better quality of care, building on the Memorandum of Understanding with Skills for Care. The trade union movement may consider where similar Memorandums of Understanding with sector skills councils could add particular value in other public services.

1.5 Personalisation

The personalisation of services is an important strand of the Government's approach to public service reform and should help to improve the services people receive so they are better suited to their individual needs.

Workforce implications

There are some important workforce implications that go in tandem with this, which need to be planned for and supported in order to ensure long-term value and benefits for those using services and the workforce. This should be a joint endeavour between Government, employers and trade unions.

Involving service users

The adult social care sector has made positive strides involving people who use services and carers in the design and delivery of training for its workforces.

Key, relevant colleagues in the adult social care sector might further encourage the involvement of people who use services and carers in the design and delivery of training across employers and providers, building on the good practice that already exists within the sector.

Other parts of public services could also consider how they may adapt this approach in their sectors, in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of their training schemes, learning from colleagues in adult social care – particularly in those services where the model of provision is moving in a similar direction to adult social care.

1.6 Data collection

Currently central skills data is collected for "health and social care" or social care covering both children and adults utilising Standard Industry Classification (SIC) Codes. Access to more specific data sets might enable the sector to better target its response to improve workforce skills. Skills for Care and Department of Health

may wish to work together with Learning and Skills Council and DIUS to explore how the quality of intelligence for the adult social care could be improved.