

Fund used for new and established learning needs

This case study looks at how Rocklee Limited has used the Workforce Development Fund to develop and maintain the team's professional development for the ultimate benefit of its residents. Some of the work, particularly working with residents with personality disorders, can be challenging, so a skilled and qualified workforce is essential.

Background to the WDF

Skills for Care believes that all staff working in adult social care should be able to access and participate in learning and development, in order to carry out their roles effectively and deliver high quality care.

The WDF supports this ethos. It is a funding stream from the Department of Health and is distributed by Skills for Care. It is available to support employers to make an investment in learning and development that will benefit the organisation, its employees and those that are cared for and supported. The fund focuses on the achievement of qualification units and supports the ongoing professional development of staff across the adult social care sector within England.

Rocklee Limited

Rocklee Ltd is an established, privately owned care home that supports 11 residents with mental health issues, some of which have lived there for over twenty years. The small care home has been managed by owner, Jacqui Martin since 1988. She has over 30 years' experience in social care and is responsible for the overall management of the residents and supporting care team, consisting of nine staff. Two new apprentices will also join the team in the near future.

What they wanted to achieve

In the current economic climate, financial pressures were a key trigger behind Rocklee initially applying for the WDF. Jacqui felt it necessary to secure additional funding for her team's ongoing training and development programme, so that it could continue to provide best practice care.

"Being open and transparent is absolutely key to the running of the home, so training is a very big tool for us. I believe that everybody should be given the same opportunity. My ultimate aim is for the staff to give me absolute confidence that they are competent in their jobs and can deliver a quality service."

What was done

Training has always been at the heart of the organisation, so Jacqui wanted to maintain the high standards of the care home through this avenue. Up to 2011, staff turnover at the home was around every 15 years, but due to staff retiring

and moving on, Jacqui felt that there was now a real need to bring in and train new employees. She takes a holistic approach to recruitment, learning and development. Her initial interview process for staff includes involvement from the team and residents, who will ultimately be cared for by them. Being a small organisation means that it's important for everyone to understand everybody else's roles. Jacqui has therefore found that the social care commitment is important in relation to training and workforce development.

To access the WDF, Rocklee worked closely with Care Match, part of Staffordshire County Council that also works in association with Stafford College. The relationship with this employer-led partnership has gone from strength to strength, with ongoing support being on hand towards the care home's workforce development needs. Rocklee has also worked with other local colleges to access a range of courses that are relevant to the learning needs of staff and of the care home. These include infection control, dignity and care to professional cooking skills that have been rolled out across the team.

What was achieved

Rocklee has used the fund for new and established learning needs and to motivate new staff that are particularly unfamiliar with a learning environment. Jacqui has found an increased level of staff commitment to learning as a direct result of the WDF. It has incentivised team members to develop further and subsequently provide greater support and care for residents.

Each staff member has their own method of learning, so Rocklee provides the tools to support them. The WDF has funded the learning units and helped her to achieve a greater understanding of what's expected in her role and within the social care sector.

90% of the team has completed the infection control module of the Level 2 Diploma in Health and Social Care. Without the fund, this wouldn't have been possible. The entire team has also completed the end-of-life module for Levels 2 and 3. Jacqui has recently explored the chance of applying for funding for a Level 5 diploma for one of her team.

For the staff, the key benefits deriving from the WDF have been increased confidence and being given the opportunity to develop their skills through relevant training modules.

"Personally, since the age of 18, I have appreciated the importance of learning, as it supports your staff to become more independent. I'm instilling that culture here at Rocklee. What we're achieving today through the WDF is supporting my personal ambition to get the best out of my team. It's especially great when you hear positive feedback about our training from employees who might not have necessarily had the one-to-one personal development support before."

What was learnt

Jacqui believes that the organisation has benefited greatly from the WDF in a number of ways, including lowering the risk for residents by providing quality care to a standard that staff would accept for themselves. She feels that, ultimately, learning is all about staff developing themselves for their careers.

Rocklee has a limited training budget, so Jacqui has found that although getting the funding back has been slower than she would have liked; particularly for smaller businesses; it has proved highly beneficial over the longer-term.

"The only thing I would suggest is that there should be more regular meetings locally between other care organisations, so that we can share best practice and discuss the benefits of the WDF and really promote what a great tool it is."

“We use the Workforce Development Fund proactively to train and develop the team, whether they have admin, care or management roles. It's about constant progression and them taking on more responsibility. Even when the staff leave to move into specialist roles elsewhere, I feel that Rocklee has still made a contribution towards their learning which will benefit the social care sector. I see this as a positive.”

Skills for Care Recommends

Our website hosts a range of information about the Workforce Development fund and how to access it.

Workforce Development Fund

This page gives a general overview of the WDF including what it is, what it can be used for and who is eligible.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdf

Workforce Development Fund for grant holders

The information on this page is for grant holders who are responsible for the disbursement of the Workforce Development Fund (WDF).

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfgrantholders

Accessing the Workforce Development Fund

The information on this page provides an overview of how you can become eligible for WDF, how to make a claim for it and the terms employers will be bound by when accessing the fund.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accessingWDF

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP
telephone 0113 245 1716
email info@skillsforcare.org.uk
web www.skillsforcare.org.uk

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