

Practical approaches to operational workforce planning

A guide for adult social care providers

December 2021



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Practical approaches to operational workforce planning - A guide for adult social care providers

Skills for Care 2021

www.skillsforcare.org.uk

This guide is based on a revision of the Skills for Care Practical approaches to workforce planning – November 2015. It was originally developed and tested in partnership with employers. Skills for Care would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the provider organisations who worked alongside us to develop the guide.

Introduction

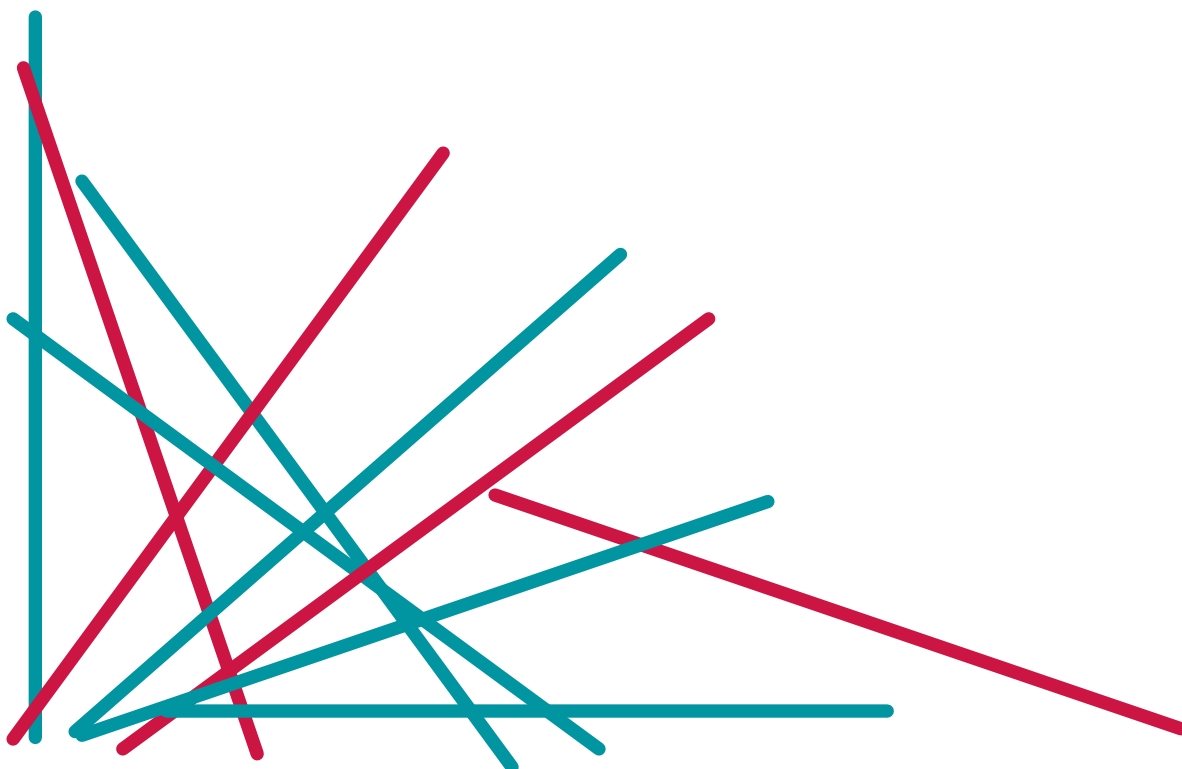
Operational workforce planning is an essential part of ensuring that you have the right people with the right attitudes, behaviours, values, skills and experience providing the personalised care and support your organisation offers.

There are constant changes taking place within adult social care that affect the way we need to work both now and in the future. It's therefore more important than ever for organisations of all sizes to plan ahead for their future workforce needs.

Truly successful organisations recognise that their workforce is their most important asset. Motivated, skilled and knowledgeable workers support people to lead their lives in a way that supports their wishes, needs and aspirations and will help your business thrive.

Workforce planning ensures that your workforce will make your business plan a reality, and that any changes you need to make, either now or in the future, take your entire workforce into account.

This guide and associated templates are intended to support providers of all sizes and is part of Skills for Care's workforce planning, shaping and commissioning offer. They will support you with a clear way to develop your workforce plan and help you to anticipate how your workforce needs to change to meet future demands and as new business opportunities present themselves.



Operational workforce planning: what is it and why is it important?

What is a workforce plan?

A workforce plan sets out your future workforce needs to meet the objectives in your business plan.

Why workforce plan?

Effective workforce planning ensures that you have a workforce of the right size with the right attitudes, values, behaviours and skills doing the right thing, in the right places within the available budget. This underpins the delivery of quality, personalised and safe services meeting the wishes, needs and aspirations of the people you support.

What are the key assumptions of operational workforce planning?

This approach to workforce planning is underpinned by some key assumptions to help create the right conditions to achieve success.

- There must be commitment, support, participation and collaboration from everyone involved in the process; including leaders, all levels of management, the workforce, people supported, families, carers, communities, commissioners and other professionals.
- Effective communication with everyone internally and externally is crucial and should be on going throughout the process.
- Strong effective, shared leadership at all levels with a focus on continuous improvement, quality and outcomes.
- 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.

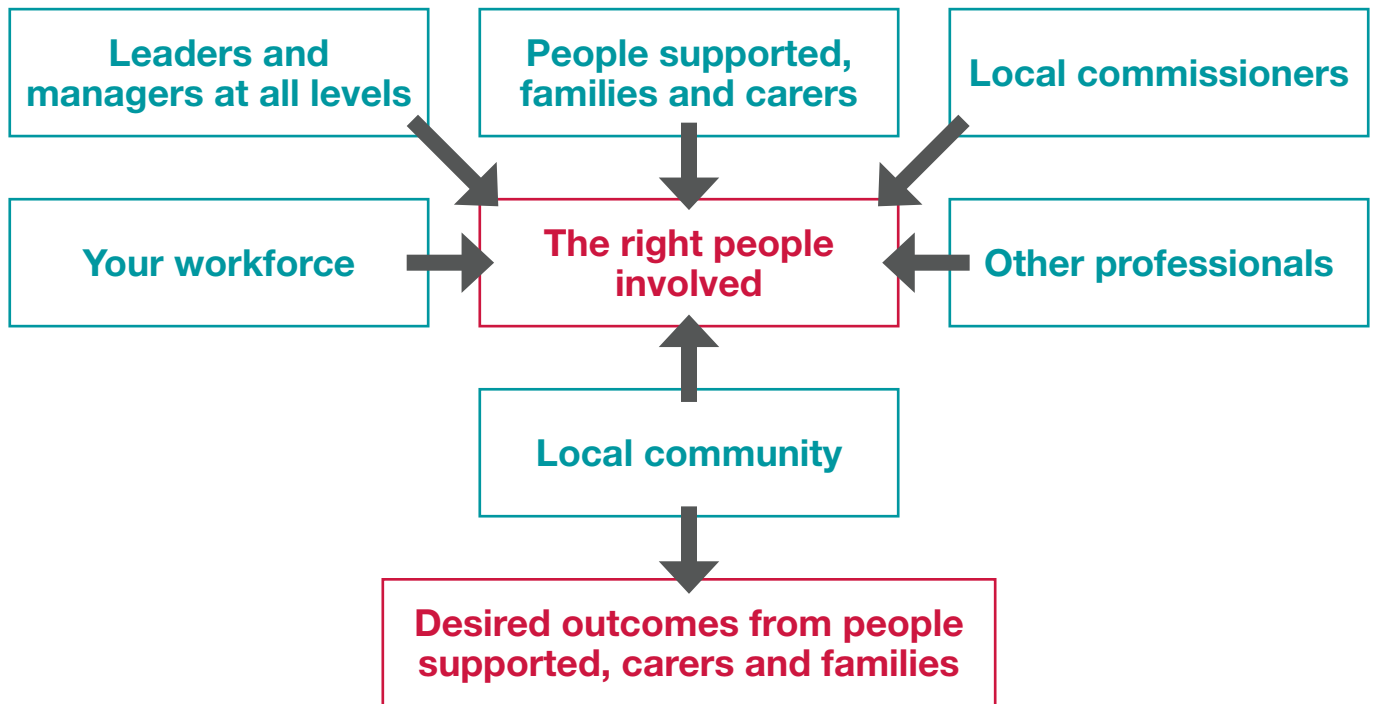


This guide and associated tools enabled the director to begin to plot and plan for the future delivery of services across Rochdale, providing a firm base in which to develop thinking and subsequent plans. Workforce planning and investing in your team is a critical component of success. By keeping the development of our teams at the forefront of our thinking, we create a positive learning culture that gently takes people out of their comfort zone as they begin to feel the art of can really be achieved when teams learn together.

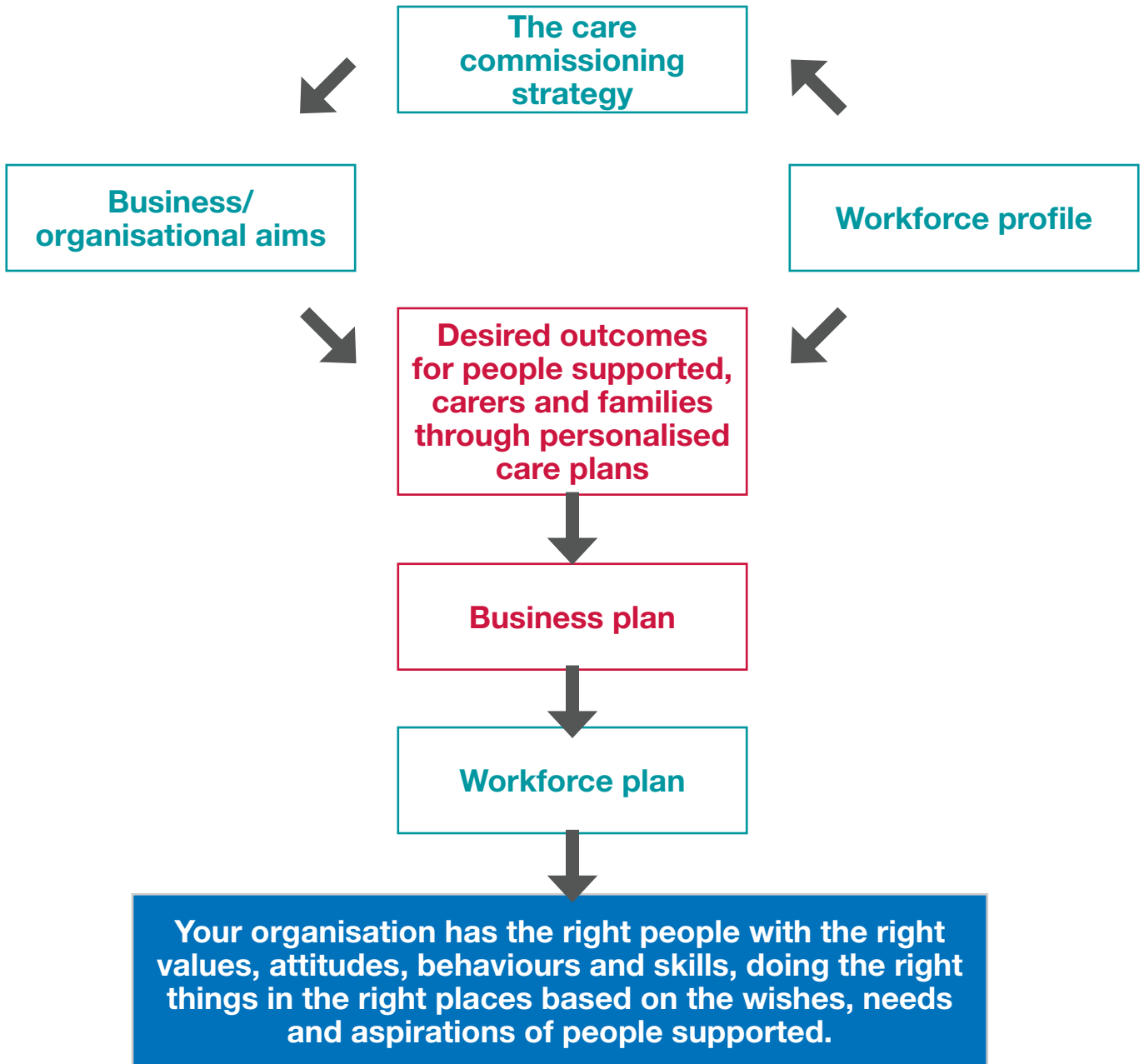
Workforce planning is the difference between being just about ok to a truly forward thinking innovative team who take ownership and always deliver on their objectives.

Carol Toner, Head of Business Development, Alternative Futures Group

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



The workforce planning process



At Muscliff Nursing Home, we found that workforce planning has numerous benefits to the business. It's helped us to ensure that we have the right number of people in place and that they have the right skills to deliver a high standard of care. It also helps us to improve communications and makes staff feel closer to the decision making process. It's also helped us to prepare and plan for changes within our sector. We really feel that good workforce planning gives us a competitive advantage over other care providers.

Dedrey Charles, Manager, Muscliff Nursing Home, Bournemouth

Using the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) to understand your workforce

The ASC-WDS is a data collection service, commissioned and funded by the Department of Health and Social Care. It is the leading source of intelligence for the adult social care workforce and helps providers to manage their teams, while also providing crucial information to key decision makers across the sector.

To help with workforce planning at a national and local level, Skills for Care anonymise the data that social care employers' input into the service and use it to better understand the issues affecting the sector. The government applies this analysis to develop policy to help address the challenges faced by adult social care providers.

Workforce leads, local authorities and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) use the data to gain insight on the local labour market, future demand for care and support services in their areas, and trends and patterns in workforce issues such as turnover and pay rates.

ASC-WDS is used by approximately 20,000 care providers and managers to store and access key information about staff in one place, access the Workforce Development Fund (WDF), record training and qualifications data and understand how their business is performing.

[Find out more](#) 

How can ASC-WDS help with workforce planning?

The ASC-WDS can help you to understand who makes up your workforce and what it will need to look like to support future business plans. It provides key evidence required to make informed decisions regarding your workforce plan.

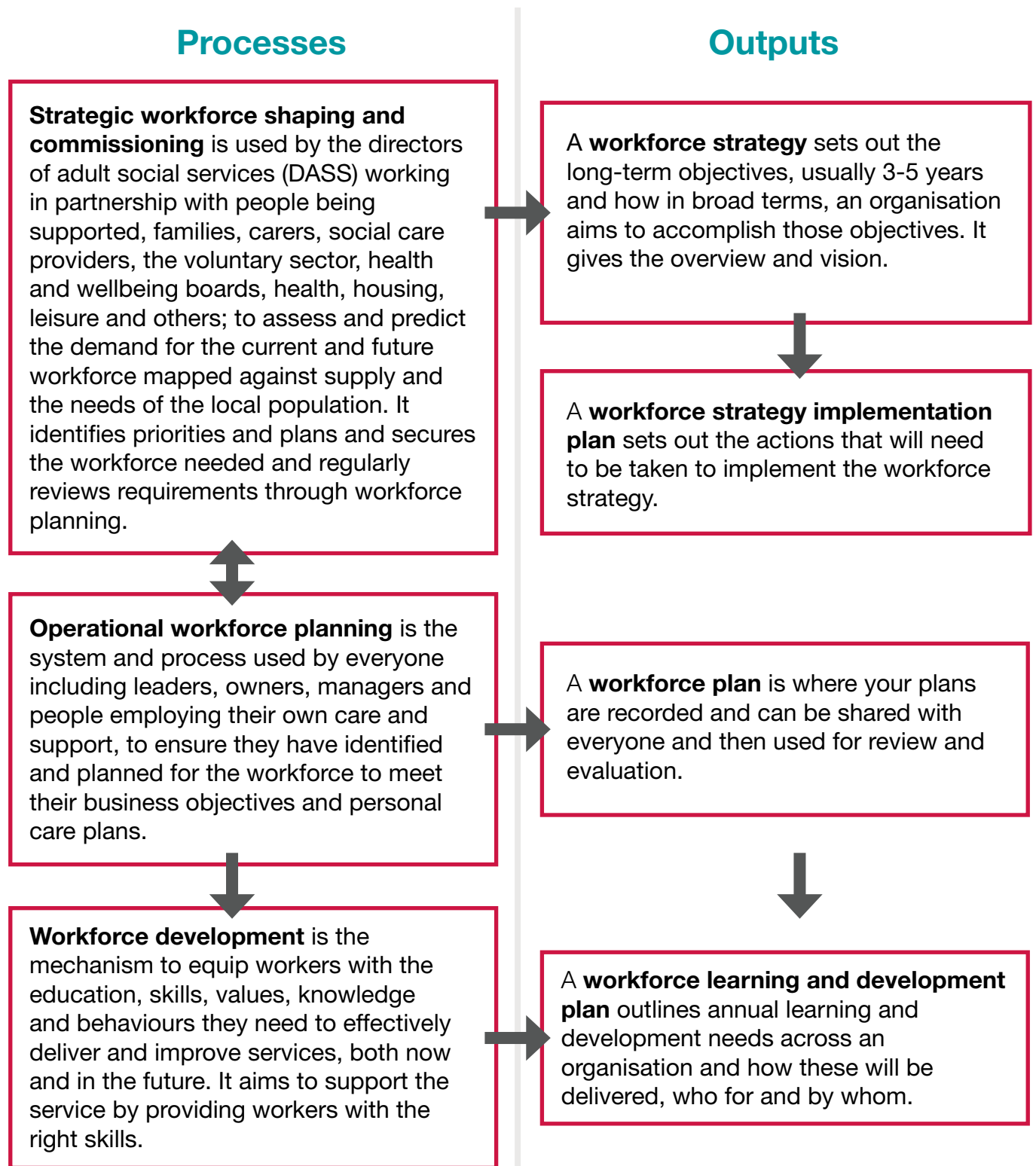
It also allows you to collate all your staff training and qualification records into a 'Training report'. The report identifies, at a glance, which staff need training or have training that may soon expire. You can set which training is mandatory for each job role, so the records are customised to your needs. This helps you to identify any current or potential skills gaps in your workforce which is vital when looking to develop staff or consider succession planning.

Skills for Care's workforce intelligence can also help if you're looking for information to help with future business and workforce planning. Reports and interactive visualisations provide a detailed analysis on a national, regional or local basis. They cover topics including the size and structure of the workforce, types of employment, recruitment and retention issues, workforce demographics, pay rates and the prevalence of qualifications and training.

Sophie Chester-Glynn, Managing Director of Manor Community shares her thoughts in this [short video](#) on their use of ASC-WDS to inform their workforce planning.



How does operational workforce planning fit with strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning?



What does a good workforce plan need to be?

A good workforce plan needs to be:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Timely

A good workforce plan helps you effectively find, keep and develop workers and:

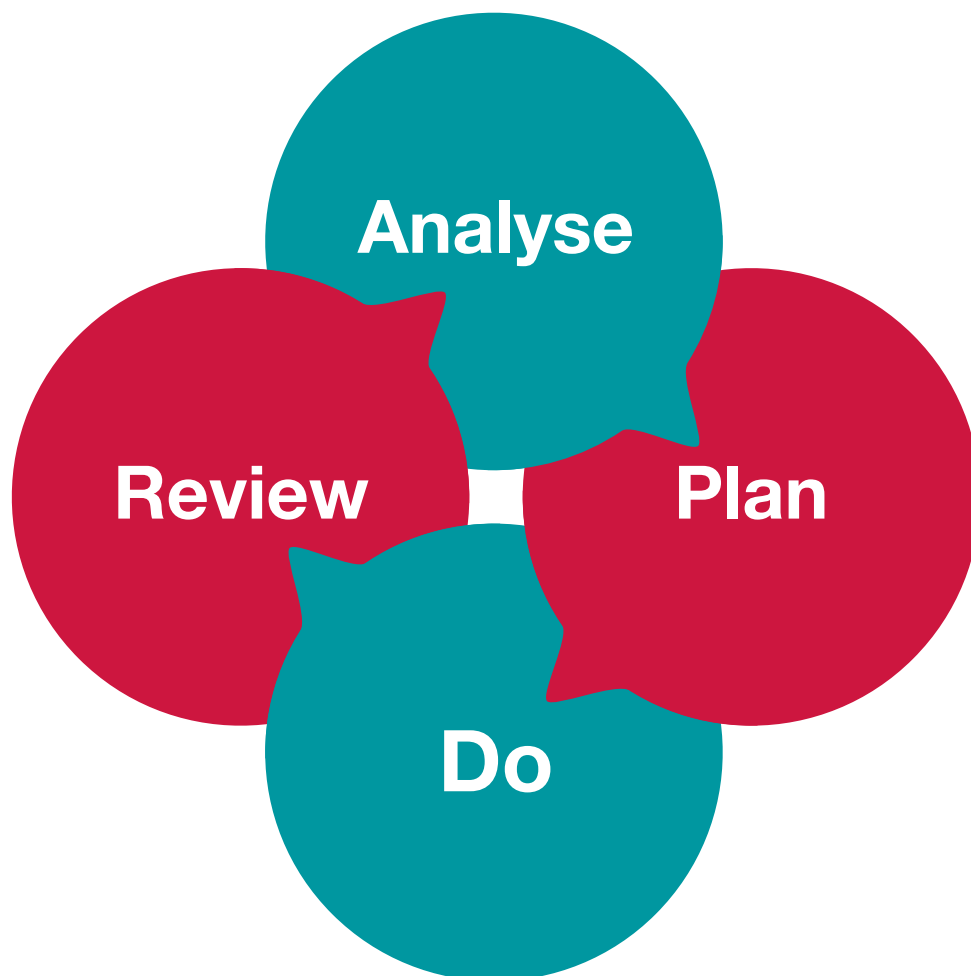
- ensures you are doing what you need to do to stay in business and that the future is affordable
- is informed by your Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS)
- demonstrates resources invested in staff development
- takes account of Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards, the law, regulation and requirements of commissioners (where appropriate).

The process of operational workforce planning – how do you do it?

This guide features useful hints and tips with recognised business tools and templates to take you through a practical approach to operational workforce planning.

By answering the following questions and using the templates, you can create your own workforce plan. This can be either informal notes or a more formal plan depending on your organisation's requirements.

This guide uses the practical **Analyse-Plan-Do-Review** approach to workforce planning. This is in line with our '[A practical guide to strategic workforce planning, shaping and commissioning guidance](#)' which focuses on bringing service commissioners together to 'analyse, plan, do and review' the workforce requirements across a local area to produce a joint workforce strategy, or market and workforce position statement.









Analyse

Understanding the national vision for adult social care, integrated care services, employment initiatives and legislation

Do you know and understand the latest government thinking on adult social care and integrated care and support services?

How will government trends and legislation affect you in the future?

- **To find out more about the vision for social care visit:**
 - [Skills for Care](#) 
 - [Department of Health and Social Care](#) 
 - [National Voices](#) 
 - [Think Local Act Personal \(TLAP\)](#) 
 - [Kings Fund](#) 
- **Also consider the Care Act 2014, Integrated Care Systems, the drive for apprenticeships, employment law changes, immigration and employment initiatives.**
- **You might want to consider doing a 'PESTLE analysis' - see [Resource 1](#) **

Organisation/business priorities

Have you considered your current business plans and identified your vision, values and priorities?


What are the significant internal and external opportunities and challenges that will affect your business in both the short and long term?

How would your organisation deal with the changing expectations of people you support, their family, carers and employees?

How would your organisation deal with increasing demand for support as the population ages, and as care moves closer to home, becomes more integrated, and new models emerge?

How will changes in technology enabled care, artificial intelligence and robotics impact on the way health, care and support is delivered?

What does this mean for the digital leadership and skills of your workforce?

- **You may wish to revisit your business plan to think about the answers to these questions.**
- [Find out more about digital technology, skills and leadership](#) 

Local policy and priorities

Do you have a clear idea of the social care policy and the priority needs of your local area?

Are you engaged with your local commissioners and the production of a local area integrated workforce strategy, other employers and community groups in discussing workforce priorities?

Is there a local health and wellbeing strategy and joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA)?

Are you engaged with local employer networks and integration initiatives?


- **Visit your local authority website for information on local priorities, identified needs, financial planning and policy for self-funders. You may also want to research your local market position statements, joint strategic needs assessments (JSNA) and health and wellbeing strategy.**
- **Visit [Healthwatch](#) the consumer champion for both health and social care, which exists in two distinct forms: local Healthwatch at a local level, and Healthwatch England.**
- **Visit your local health and wellbeing board website – these boards bring together health and social care commissioners, delivery partners and the voluntary sector to develop a shared understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of the community.**
- **Visit your local integrated care website to find out what their priorities are when considering the delivery of services in your local area.**
- **Visit [Kings Fund](#) for an overview of the current picture of health and social care in England.**
- **Contact your [Skills for Care locality manager](#) to find out about local employer engagement networks.**

Data, information and intelligence

Have you used the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) to record your current workforce information and benchmark your organisation?

Have you looked at the workforce intelligence reports Skills for Care has available on our website?

Are you aware of other data sources that might be useful when looking at the future needs of your organisation, for example population projections datasets such as POPPI and PANSI?


- **[Find out more about the benefits of ASC-WDS](#) **
- **Visit [ASC-WDS login page](#) if you already have an account or to register for one.**
- **Access useful [intelligence reports and data](#) about your local area.**

Analysing what this means for you

How does this information impact on your current business planning?

What changes do you need to make?

What attitudes, behaviours, skills, values and knowledge might they bring to the quality of your service?

- You could use a 'SWOT analysis' to do this – see [Resource 2](#) 

Recording where you are now

You may wish to record what you have discovered so far.

- Use the 'Analysis recording template' to record where you are now - see [Resource 3](#) 

Plan

What is it you need to consider?

Are you clear about where you would like to position your organisation to meet your identified needs?

Is this in your business 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?

- **Following your analysis, you may wish to revise your business plan, taking account of costs including workforce costs. This plan can be short, medium or long term.**

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?


Do you have a clear picture of what your organisation looks like currently and what the future functions and workforce should look like?

Will this include volunteers or freelance workers? What impact will this have on your current staff?

How are you involving your staff to encourage ownership of the plan?

Do you have the right culture to take this forward?



Use the 'Analysis recording template' to add the information you've gathered - see [Resource 3](#) 

- [See our examples of support for integrated ways of working](#) 
- Access our [Culture toolkit](#) that explains what workplace culture is and how you can develop a positive one in your organisation.
- For more information on the nursing associate role, a new role created to bridge the skills gap between care workers and registered nurses visit our [nursing associates section](#) of the website.

Are there any gaps?

To deliver your services now and in the future, are there any gaps to ensure you have the right number of people in the right place, at the right time with the right skills, attitudes, values and behaviours?

How might your organisation and your workforce need to change?

- Take a look at our workforce productivity and quality model which includes a range of practical resources to support inclusive leadership and culture, engaging and valuing the workforce and learning and development.
- 'Identify priorities, gaps and areas of workforce redesign' - see [Resource 4](#) 
- Record the 'Functions gap analysis' of your future workforce - see [Resource 5](#) 

Cost

Do you know what your workforce costs?


Are there any ways in which your workforce could become more productive and cost effective?

- Consider the cost of recruitment, staffing, learning and development using our '[Calculating the cost of recruitment template](#)' to help you identify what recruitment activities are working well and invest time and resources in getting it right or reduce activity where it isn't working so well.
- Take a look at some '[worked examples](#)' to explain the skills and knowledge of a workforce built around an individual and the cost of learning and development.
- Visit [ASC-WDS](#) to set up an account and benchmark your pay rates against other similar organisations in your local area.

Risk

Have you identified any risks in the changes you want to make?


Have you considered ways you might mitigate these risks?

- Resources 4 and 5 will have identified some of your risks. You may wish to use the 'Risk log' to record, prioritise and monitor risk areas - see [Resource 6](#) 

Measuring the achievements

How will you know that you've achieved what you set out in your plan?

How will you measure, monitor, review and evaluate your plan?

- It will help to have a clear workforce plan at this point, saying what you plan to do in the short, medium and longer term.
- When you implement your plan and monitor progress along the way, it will be clear to everyone involved what you have achieved and what still needs to happen.
- You may wish to use the 'Workforce plan template' – see [Resource 7](#) 

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?

How will you monitor progress?

- This is still part of your workforce planning process and gives you an overview of what you want to do.
- You can build on the detail in your 'Workforce plan template' – see [Resource 7](#) 

Resources

What resources do you have available?

What additional resources will you need?

- Resources could include internal expertise and support from within or you may find specialised external support organisations or interested experts and volunteers.
- You may be able to apply for money, such as the [Workforce Development Fund](#) to help towards the costs of vocational learning.
- Skills for Care has other resources you may find helpful.
- You can use the '[workforce transformation outcomes measurement framework](#)' - to define the outcomes, actions and measurement of any workforce change programme.
- 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.
- To help organisations who are undergoing any form of organisational restructure or transformation, we've developed the '[principles of workforce redesign](#)' that set out the key things you need to take account of when changing the way your staff work.

Do


Develop and manage the workforce action plan

How will you coordinate the actions that everyone has planned and contributed to?

How will you make them happen?

Who will lead the actions?

What timescales have you given yourself?

- **You may wish to develop more detailed sub-plans against each of your priority areas. Record the ways you plan to make the actions happen.**
- **You may wish to use the ‘Workforce plan action and monitoring template’ to write this down (use the headings in Resource 5 – ‘Functions gap analysis’ or choose your own) – see [Resource 8](#) **

Communicating and engaging with all those involved to ensure effective implementation

How have you communicated the plan?

How are you continuing to communicate during the implementation of your plan?

How are your leaders, all levels of management, the workforce, people supported, families, carers, communities, commissioners and other professionals kept involved and informed?

Have you incorporated into your plans opportunities to support individuals in developing the confidence, skills and expertise they need to work in redesigned services?

Have you considered having champions for change - people from across the organisation who will support the process?

- **Make sure your leaders/managers and the people your plans affect understand the rationale for any actions and are kept informed and support your actions throughout the process.**
- **To help organisations who are undergoing any form of organisational restructure or transformation, we’ve developed the ‘[principles of workforce redesign](#)’. It sets out some of the key things to consider when making changes.**

Monitor and review your plans

Are you reviewing your workforce action plan regularly with everyone it affects?


Is it on target?

What surprises have emerged?

Have any opportunities or barriers arisen from the review?



Are there any issues arising?

How are they being addressed?

- **Regularly review your achievements and communicate the progress to the appropriate people.**
- **It can be helpful to schedule regular monitoring meetings.**
- **You may wish to use the ‘Workforce action plan monitoring template’ – see [Resource 9](#) **

Adjust your plans if needed

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

- **You may wish to pay attention to and re-prioritise some areas if they are not on target. This could be due to policy changes, financial issues, a change in service direction, or your action is not meeting the needs of the people you support.**
- **Regularly update your ‘Action plan and monitoring template’- see [Resource 8](#) **
‘Risk log’ - see [Resource 6](#) 


Review

Results and impact

Did the changes you implemented achieve the desired results?

Did the new ways of working and new roles and skills 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?

- You can revisit the outcomes and measurement of any workforce change programme from the 'plan' stage by going back to the '[workforce transformation outcomes measurement framework](#)'.
- You may wish to use the 'Review and evaluation record' to demonstrate your achievements – see [Resource 9](#) 

Key achievements and lessons learned

Have you gathered evidence to identify your key achievements?

Have you understood what went well and what you would do differently next time?

- You could use feedback from leaders, all levels of management, the workforce, people supported, families, carers, community, commissioners and other professionals, as well as other productivity measures or quality assessments.

Report your findings

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

- Keeping people up to date with your progress and any challenges and setbacks will enable you to gain people's trust and keep them feeling part of the process. Use different formats and ways to communicate to ensure you meet everyone's needs.

Celebrate success

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

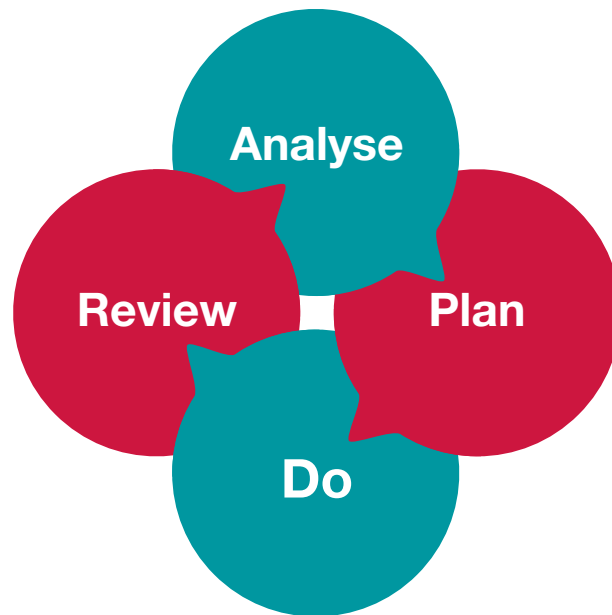
- **Hold your own celebrations or enter local or national care awards.**

Rethink, refresh and redefine




To continuously improve the quality of your service and sustain your organisation, use what you have achieved and learned and return to the analyse stage of the workforce planning process to rethink, refresh and redefine your plans.

Resources for Analyse-Plan-Do-Review

Use the questions and templates to follow the analyse-plan-do-review process to start the process, create and implement your workforce plan.



Analyse

1. [PESTLE analysis template](#) 
2. [SWOT analysis template](#) 
3. [Analysis recording template](#) 

Plan

4. [Identify priorities, gaps and areas of workforce redesign template](#) 
5. [Functions gap analysis template](#) 
6. [Risk log template](#) 
7. [Workforce plan template](#) 

Do

8. [Workforce action plan and monitoring template](#) 

Review

9. [Review and evaluation record](#) 

Rethink, refresh and redefine

Remember that operational workforce planning isn't linear and is a dynamic, iterative process and you need to continually rethink, refresh and redefine your plan. This may mean starting the process again as a continuous cycle.