

Moving beyond organisational boundaries in Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS is building an ICS Academy to support the health and social care workforce. Its targeted programme of education, learning and development will help them move towards their strategic objective of 'one workforce'.

The Academy model hopes to allow greater cross-system working beyond organisational and professional boundaries; liberating and maximising on the talent already in the workforce and ultimately improving outcomes for people using health and care services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The structure of the Academy – which brings together groups and people from across the system – means that everything is geared towards breaking away from traditional hierarchies and siloes. Adult social care is a core part of the Academy and has been involved throughout the planning of what the Academy will look like and what it can achieve.

While ultimately aiming to build a robust system for cross-sector working, the development of the Academy model has already fostered more connections and relationship-building between different teams, organisations and individuals.

Further information about what the ICS Academy looks like now and in the future is available by contacting Vanessa Roberts, ICS Academy Programme Lead, vanessaroberts1@nhs.net or Kim Sales, ICS Academy Director, kim.sales3@nhs.net.

Some core principles underpin its development and have already helped to meaningfully engage different parts of the system in cross-organisational working.

Focus on skills and development

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS Academy is strongly focused on maximising and bolstering skills that exist across the two counties within health and social care.

The makeup of the Academy includes workforce development and education 'faculties' that are at the absolute core of their Academy model. The seven faculties are medical, pharmacy, healthcare science, nursing and midwifery, Allied Health Professionals, Social Care and VCSE. Underpinning them is a series of 'enabling functions' which work across all seven faculties. These 'enabling functions' include: ICS Talent Management and Leadership Development (including Culture, EDI and System Thinking and Practice Development); Strategic Workforce Planning and Development; Knowledge and Research School; and Digital Upskilling.

Each faculty is responsible for mapping the supply, education and any skills needs or gaps of their current workforce group. Activities can then be deployed through the 'enabling functions' to address these gaps and ensure training is of a consistently high standard, while meeting the right needs across the system.

Some issues will apply to only one faculty and interventions will be targeted as such. However, there will always be things that pose difficulties across multiple parts of the system, no matter the sector, organisation, place or team. The faculty insights are therefore designed to highlight where there are common themes across different faculties that can be met with system-level initiatives. This results in a more democratically agreed process behind investment decisions. It also allows for investments in economies of scale, referred to as 'better done together' interventions.

There will also be issues which relate to all faculties, as determined by the initial mapping exercise. For example, the ICS have identified the need to establish a system-wide Trainee Education Supervision Expansion Programme, Trainee Placements and Maximising Integrated Education Estate.

As an example, Herefordshire and Worcestershire identified that managers in the 'medical' faculty shared some of the same pressures with care home managers that made supervision training difficult for new trainee nurses – particularly time and staffing levels. The vision to establish an ICS Trainee Education Supervision Expansion Programme will therefore be developed and tailored to allow managers and clinical leads in settings to provide best practice levels of supervision for new trainees while balancing their other pressures.

The social care faculty membership also identified a core need to address nursing recruitment, including international recruitment, disparities in allocation of trainee nurses in care home placements, and investment in nurse associates in social care. These agendas will now be taken up by the ICS nursing and midwifery faculty. This means social care partners feel that these key workforce issues are being pragmatically tackled by the right group in the right place. This also supports the notion that adult social care is a core part of the ICS planning system.

By working in this way, social care providers are part of a wider system of support and development, rather than being left to establish multiple individual ways of doing things. It is extremely positive that social care has been recognised as an equal partner in the Academy model with their health sector colleagues.

Retention, retention, retention

Rather than focusing on saying 'we don't have enough staff', Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS have made an active move to change the conversation to, 'we need to see the existing talent, and develop, upskill, support and retain the people we already have'. The Academy model encourages this approach, supporting organisations to think more strategically about maximising the skills that exist among their current staff.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS have invested in an ICS Retention Lead role across health and social care, as they recognise that bolstering retention of staff is crucial to building a stable and sustainable care sector able to engage with the planning and delivery of new initiatives for integrated care.

The one-to-one conversations that the Retention Lead is having with providers in social care has generated a number of direct insights which will be embedded within their system-wide ICS Retention Delivery Plan and linked activities. This includes what is working well, what motivates and inspires people and what are the key challenges to mitigate. As well as meeting direct social care retention issues, this direct engagement is helping to break down sector barriers and build trust between different entities in the system.

The ICS Talent Management and Development Framework supports a system-wide focus on targeted development for maximising potential, career progression and leadership development. Every health and social care organisation is encouraged to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that they will adopt the Framework. In turn, they will receive access to a range of talent and leadership tools, training, and other development offers.

Accessible, free resources are crucial to ensuring people are able to engage in meaningful career development. Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS continues to explore ways to

more easily share free NHS training and learning resources with social care staff who will not have an NHS email addresses. Recording events and sessions, and building a variety of resources from different sources, also supports this aim – as well as building the connections and channels to reach more people, more regularly with personal development opportunities.

The Academy model allows for a more streamlined approach to looking at career pathways and succession planning for people in frontline care delivery roles. It's based on an understanding that these workforce issues cannot be solved in isolation, but are part of the wider workforce development agenda across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

'Better done together' values

Four core values underpin the work of the ICS Academy in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. These are:



The ICS Academy leads do not advance any decision, investment or project unless they meet the principle that they are 'better done together' through these four values. The values also help to bring to life the vision that the Academy is promoting – both for people involved in the delivery of day-to-day care, and ICS leads who may be less familiar with non-health focused parts of the system.

The ICS Academy Director is setting a best practice example by living these values in her day-to-day role – including attending registered managers' network meetings in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This is unusual for an ICS Director and has been greatly welcomed by those engaged in the system. Putting a face to the plans and changes has helped to build trust. It is also a tangible demonstration that registered managers and other social care leaders, and the teams they represent, are valued partners in the development of integrated care.

Through the targeted skills development programme, and through physical presence at meetings and direct conversations, an element of trust is being built across the system. Social care voices are increasingly feeling that they are part of the planning, rather than just recipients of a change programme. This is crucial when 'change fatigue' is a common barrier to engagement for those who have worked in the sector throughout the changes to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and Primary Care Trusts.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS therefore recognises at the highest levels that decisions will be better informed when social care partners feel they have the ability, and confidence, to contribute, co-design and co-produce plans. These decisions will be made based on what truly matters to people directly involved in care, and supported and facilitated by ICS leads working collaboratively.

“Without working together we can't achieve great quality service for people. Ultimately we need to remember that the reason we are doing this is because there are people who need our support.”