

The Care Workforce Pathway – Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 7 April 2025

This document will be reviewed regularly and updated. Any fundamental changes will be communicated through our usual networks.

The Care Workforce Pathway

What is the Care Workforce Pathway?

The Care Workforce Pathway is a universal career structure for the adult social care workforce that sets out the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours needed to work in adult social care. The Pathway includes suggested learning opportunities to help members of the workforce develop knowledge and skills within a role or within a specific area of practice.

What are the benefits of adopting the Care Workforce Pathway?

The Pathway will ensure the workforce is equipped with the right skills, knowledge, values, and behaviours, which is vital to delivering outstanding, high-quality care, which is fair, personalised, and accessible. The Pathway will set out how people can develop across a long-term career in adult social care with support and training; attracting people to join and remain in the sector and supporting sustainable workforce growth.

Will the Care Workforce Pathway be mandatory?

No, the Care Workforce Pathway will not be mandated, but we encourage providers and the workforce to adopt the Pathway to support career development and the upskilling of the workforce.

Learning and Development

What does the Pathway recommend for learning and development?

Contained within each role category is a defined set of behaviours, knowledge and skills expected of someone to work at that level. The Pathway also demonstrates how someone can develop within each role category and suggests learning and development opportunities to build on their knowledge and skills to provide the best possible care to people who receive their support.

Any training that may be specific to an area of specialism is also listed under suggested learning opportunities as a guide, however an organisation may define such learning which the individual should check before planning learning with their line manager.

Are there any mandatory learning requirements within the Pathway?

The Pathway does not introduce any new mandatory training requirements, instead it brings together the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours needed to work in adult social care. This includes [existing mandatory requirements](#), including the requirement introduced by the Health and Care Act 2022 that all CQC registered service providers must ensure their staff have training on learning disability and autism that is appropriate to their role. The Pathway includes the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism, which is the recommended training for health and social care staff to undertake.

Does the Care Workforce Pathway replace existing standards or competency frameworks that providers use?

No. The Care Workforce Pathway is being developed to work in conjunction with existing standards and competency frameworks. For example, the Care Certificate standards are reflected within the Pathway, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will be working to reference the Care Workforce Pathway in their new Single Assessment Framework, most likely under Safe Key Question and new Quality Statement on Safe and Effective Staffing

CQC will signpost providers to any available good practice guidance or resources to help them understand what the Care Workforce Pathway is and how they might consider using it to support their service and staff. Links to best practice guidance will be added to the CQC website under the most relevant quality statements, in this case, Safe and Effective Staffing.

Are organisations expected to use the Level 2 Care Certificate Qualification?

The [Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification](#) is an accredited qualification designed to provide a baseline standard to care, reduce the need for repeat training and give recognition to our care workforce. It builds on the knowledge and skills gained through induction or completion of the care certificate standards, to offer greater reassurance.

The Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification provides the key knowledge and skills required for the 'New to Care' role in the Care Workforce Pathway. Employers may therefore decide it is appropriate for a new care worker to complete the qualification alongside employer specific induction and mandatory training however, the qualification is not mandatory or a necessity for adopting the Pathway. Funding is available for the Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate qualification through the [Learning and Development Support Scheme](#).

Using the Pathway to support career development

How with the Care Workforce Pathway improve career development in adult social care?

The Pathway establishes role categories that are recognisable and consistent across the sector. This allows individuals to understand their position in their current organisation and across the sector, allowing them to plan for their next steps in a career in adult social care.

How can people progress using the Pathway?

Each organisation will have its own policy for promotion and progression. The Pathway provides a structured set of knowledge, skills and behaviours that can inform a variety of career goals supported by development plans, as agreed with the line manager.

For example, one way staff may progress is to begin as 'new to care' during the first few months of their career, as they complete their induction, the Care Certificate, and any organisation-specific training. Then, they continue to become a 'care or support worker', in which they continue to develop their technical expertise and show signs of moving towards a leader, with growing evidence to support their Level 3 qualification or diploma.

Following the achievement of these knowledge and skills, they can then be promoted to become a 'supervisor or leader', to focus on managing others and complete the Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care.

The individual might have some people management responsibilities and be considering their future career options: to develop practice (i.e., moving into 'practice leader') or to go into management (i.e., moving into 'deputy manager'). The latter would include completing a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Adult Care, before becoming a 'registered manager'.

How can the Pathway benefit those who are not looking to progress to a new role?

Not everyone who works in adult social care will be seeking promotion, however most people are motivated to be highly skilled and provide high quality care. The Pathway and related skill self-assessments illustrate the range of knowledge and skills across each role category and provide opportunities for in-role growth and development, which can be the basis for setting career goals and development plans.

What support is available for line managers to manage and develop their team?

We have a list of [resources for line managers](#) designed to guide them on understanding the Pathway. As well as this, there is a dedicated set of resources for developing coaching skills and to support managers to prepare for career planning conversations.

What support is available to support care workers to develop their careers?

We have a [list of resources](#) designed to guide individuals through self-assessing current skills against the Pathway, that can inform career goals and plan, working with the line manager throughout.

How can I use the Care Workforce Pathway knowledge, behaviours, skills, and values in recruitment (e.g. job descriptions and interview)?

Adopting the Pathway and using this in your recruitment and onboarding can help to set clear expectations of new employees, through thorough job descriptions, and a set plan of what skills need to be developed. Using the Pathway can help to boost recruitment through painting a realistic picture of day-to-day work in your job adverts, to using values-based interview questions.

Adopting the Pathway

What was the Early Adopter testing?

Alongside the development of the new role categories we also launched a period of testing in June 2024 to rigorously examine how applicable, relevant and comprehensive the language and content of the Pathway are across different settings; to understand how the Pathway can be practically adopted and used by social care providers; and to explore the positive impact adopting the Pathway can have on care workers themselves as well as organisational outcomes. To enable this, we established a cohort of Early Adopters, a group of 30 adult social care providers selected to represent the diversity of the social care provider market in England.

How do I adopt the Care Workforce Pathway in my organisation?

If you are considering adopting the Pathway, we have a [suite of resources](#) to support you available. These resources are for all organisations across the social care sector to access and download to use locally. These resources have been developed with reviews and feedback from the Pathway Early Adopter care organisations.

The Pathway is designed to be a flexible framework for organisations to adopt. When considering how your organisation will adopt the Pathway, consider the specific workforce challenge(s) you wish to address and the impact you want to create.

How can adopting the Care Workforce Pathway address workforce challenges in my organisation?

The Pathway aims to enhance career development, professionalise the workforce, support recruitment and retention and provide clear and consistent standards in quality of care.

The organisations that took part in the Early Adopter testing of the Care Workforce Pathway reported positive outcomes from implementing the Pathway, including:

- growing manager capability and confidence in motivating their teams
- employees reporting feeling more valued and aware of how they can develop in their role or progress to other roles within an organisation.
- A more consistent approach to appraising staff and a stronger understanding of the skills and areas for development across the organisation, supporting recruitment and retention.

Do I have to adopt all aspects of the Care Workforce Pathway?

No, Pathway adoption is flexible and there is no one 'right way' to adopt the Pathway. This can range from adopting some aspects (light touch) to wholesale adoption (full adoption). Each level of adoption builds on the previous level. The Pathway is for all adult social care organisations, regardless of size or services provided.

We encourage organisations to move towards full adoption over time, with local flexibility for you to align with your organisational goals and objectives. The most important thing is that your organisation feels the areas of the Pathway you are adopting will address your workforce challenges, such as improving recruitment and retention, standardising skills, knowledge, and behaviours internally, or succession planning for progression or future skills.

The resources available on this site allow you to explore and plan for which aspects of the Pathway you wish to adopt.

My organisation does not have roles in every role category, does this mean I cannot adopt the Pathway?

No, because of the diversity of the sector, not every organisation will have roles in every role category. For example, some smaller organisations may not have a deputy manager role. As you look to implement the Pathway in your organisation, you will map your organisation's job descriptions against the Pathway role categories, which will allow you to identify which role categories are present in your workforce.

How long does it take to adopt the Pathway?

This can vary, as it will be down to the organisation to decide how they would like to plan for Pathway adoption. The critical aspect to adoption is ensuring the leadership of the organisation is bought into the Pathway for ongoing governance, and that there is continuous feedback from employees on the experience of using the Pathway for career planning and development.

The experience of the providers who took part in the Early Adopter testing of the Pathway is that it takes at least 12 to 18 months to adopt and embed the Pathway fully.

What support is available to organisations adopting the Pathway?

We have a suite of [Pathway resources](#) or all organisations across the social care sector to access and download to use locally. These resources have been developed with reviews and feedback from a group of Pathway Early Adopter care organisations.

The resources will guide on getting started with the Pathway from deciding to adopt, through to planning and adopting the Pathway.

What support is available to smaller providers to adopt the Pathway?

The resources referenced above are for all organisation, however smaller organisations may find the [Care Workforce Pathway adoption planning template](#) particularly helpful as it includes advice and suggestions for how smaller organisations can adapt the way in which they implement the Pathway to best suit them.

My organisation already has a career / development pathway. How will this connect with the Care Workforce Pathway?

We recognise that the Care Workforce Pathway may be utilised by different organisations in different ways. You may wish to explore how your existing structures align with the Pathway role categories and if there are any gaps in your organisational structures or job roles, making changes to these to align to the Pathway. You might also consider the universal values included in the Pathway, and how your organisational values align to these.

The [supporting resources](#) available can help you to explore how you might use the Pathway to guide conversations about careers, development and progression.

The government and Skills for Care will continue to build on the Pathway, developing resources to enable people across the sector to use it effectively.

With the introduction of the Pathway, will CQC be changing its approach to inspecting the workforce?

No, what CQC expects to see and explore remains the same. They will look at a provider's approach to staff induction, support and training using the key lines of enquiry and will continue to do this in a range of ways. Using nationally recognised good practice, such as the Care Workforce Pathway, is a good way to help show this to them.

How does the Pathway align to providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales?

The Care Workforce Pathway applies only to England's Adult Social Care sector; however, we will continue to share learning and good practice with our counterparts in devolved nations.

Regarding the enhanced care worker role category:

How would introducing the enhanced care worker role benefit my workforce/organisation?

The enhanced care worker role category has been developed to recognise the increasingly complex nature of care and support, where care workers may be required to support people with one or more health conditions and/or provide more complex condition-specific care. We want care workers to be recognised and rewarded as the professionals they are, and this role category will provide everyone who works in or accesses adult social care with clear expectations about the skills, knowledge and further training required to support people with complex health and care needs. We have worked closely with organisations who have already developed similar enhanced roles, and we anticipate employers will use this role category to support workforce planning, including re-evaluation of job roles, skills mix and learning and development.

Will there be funding to support training and ongoing clinical supervision and oversight for delegation?

These interventions will not always need additional funding. However, in many areas, local health and social care commissioners are working together to ensure funding follows the care being given. We would like to see more local systems adopt similar approaches.

It is important that where care workers are providing more complex, condition-specific care and support, including undertaking activities that have been delegated by the local community health or district nursing teams, that they are properly valued and supported. This includes receiving the right training, timely clinical supervision, competence assurance and pay/renumeration.

We have included a specific role category within the Pathway for social care staff undertaking more advanced or complex interventions, including delegated healthcare and condition-specific care. In many settings these roles attract higher pay, and we hope this role category will help to formalise this, where appropriate.

Will there be funding to support increased wages for enhanced care workers?

These interventions will not always need additional funding. However, in many areas, local health and social care commissioners are working together to ensure funding follows the care being given. We would like to see more local systems adopt similar approaches.

We expect care workers to be properly recognised and paid for the work they do. The Government is making available up to £3.7 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2025-26, which includes an £880 million increase in the Social Care Grant.

And we are delivering the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for the adult social care sector, with the Care Workforce Pathway supporting a national career structure which will recognise and reward care workers for the professionals they are.

Regarding Registered managers/Deputy managers

What is the difference between the registered manager and deputy manager role categories?

The registered manager role category can be described as people who lead services, and the deputy manager role category as people who support the leaders of services.

Those in registered manager role category roles will likely be focused on ensuring the service meets all its regulatory and legal requirements and is providing safe and effective person-centred care and support. They will be responsible for ensuring your staff are effectively trained to deliver high quality care whilst ensuring they are supported, recognised, and valued.

Those in deputy manager role category roles will be working closely with the registered manager to support them in the effective running of the service, supporting with key decision making and acting as manager in their absence

Regarding Personal Assistants

Can personal assistants and individual employers use the Care Workforce Pathway?

Yes, our ambition is for the Pathway to be used across the whole sector, and included in the second part of the Pathway is a personal assistant role category. We are currently working with personal assistants and their employers to explore how they can get the maximum benefit from adopting the Pathway.