



Rayne
Foundation

Better Careers for Better Care

First Year Learning Report 2025



Foreword



I am delighted to share the Rayne Foundation’s first learning and evaluation report for *Better Careers for Better Care*.

We are just over one year into the three-year grants programme and feel privileged to be able to join and support the innovative and impactful work being led by our colleagues in adult social care. I am also personally very grateful to my team at the Foundation for driving the grants programme forward, in particular Deputy Director, Susan O’Sullivan, and Programme Development Lead, Holly Baine.

When we launched this programme, our conviction was that providing better career and professional development opportunities for people working in care would ultimately result in better care for those in later life who need it most. This belief sits within the wider purpose of the Rayne Foundation - to effect and promote positive social change. The *Better Careers for Better Care* programme embodies this approach as a proactive initiative, designed in consultation with care workers and sector leaders, and shaped by collaboration at every stage. Our evaluation shows that the funding acts as a catalyst to enable new activities, boost capacity, and give projects the credibility to influence more widely.

This report shows the programme’s first year of progress and begins to evidence how investment in new approaches can create change on several levels: *changing lives* for people working in care, *changing practices* within providers, and *changing thinking* across the care system. These are essential if we are to find sustainable solutions to the long-standing challenges of recruitment, retention and recognition in social care.

We are proud of what has been achieved so far and grateful to the organisations we are working with across England, Wales and Scotland. It is their dedication and creativity that is enabling the changes we report on their behalf. For example, this report shows that our partners have already supported at least **480** care professionals, working with more than **122** care providers. With new skills developed, clearer progression routes and stronger peer and provider networks, care workers report feeling more valued, supported, and confident, and have a louder voice in the sector. Early evidence points to more inclusive opportunities offered, better retention, changed practices and culture, and stronger focus on leadership across the adult social care sector.

The journey to a more sustainable and valued care workforce is only just beginning. The energy and commitment we have seen to date give us confidence that a fairer adult social care sector, and the positive social change it underpins, are possible.

Crispin Truman OBE

Director, The Rayne Foundation

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“Strengthening careers in care is fundamental if we are to secure dignity and quality for all people drawing on care and support.”

Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger DBE
Trustee, The Rayne Foundation

Social Care Sector Reflections



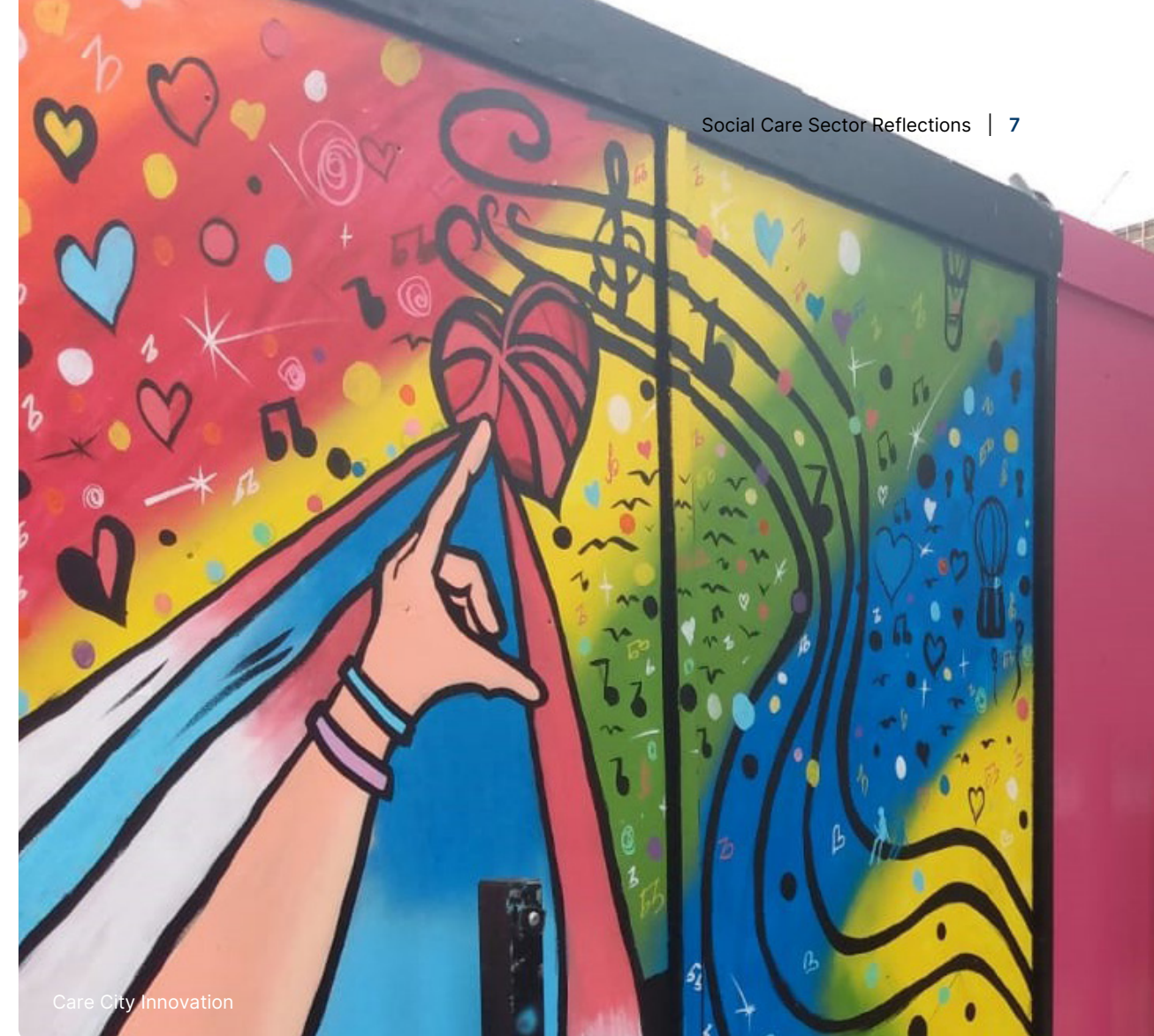
Adult social care is at a critical point. The sector employs around 1.6 million people in England & Wales, yet around 1 in 10 posts is vacant and staff turnover remains stubbornly high, at around 28% a year¹. This instability directly impacts the quality and continuity of care. And it is deeply distressing for people drawing on care and support.

I am so proud that the Rayne Foundation's *Better Careers for Better Care* programme is trying to address the challenge of how to create stable, rewarding and sustainable careers in social care. By funding new approaches and innovative partnerships, and by focusing on skills, job quality and progression, the Foundation is responding to the longer-term need to ensure that care is valued and sustainable for the public purse, the public at large, and most of all for the people who draw on care and support services.

Evidence from the King's Fund and Nuffield Trust suggests that by 2035 an additional half a million care workers will be needed to meet the needs of an ageing population². Yet today's workforce is already disproportionately older than average, as well as being largely female, with attendant caring responsibilities being more likely, and with a significant proportion from ethnic minority backgrounds, all of which makes it clear that inclusive, accessible pathways into caring careers are essential. For all possible future staff, we need a 'new deal' with real possibilities for a meaningful and rewarding career, opportunities for career progression and leadership development.

Through consultation with leaders in adult social care, the Rayne Foundation identified some key priorities: the need to recognise, acknowledge and champion the value and skills of care workers, the need for sustainable recruitment and accessible career progression opportunities across the social care workforce, and the need to develop social care leaders and recognise their contribution to an integrated health and care system. We need serious co-production of workforce solutions, and to establish inclusive learning cultures in social care, whilst connecting care provision with the wider community. Findings from the Department of Health and Social Care's 2025 Workforce Survey³ echo this, with stress, limited progression and perceived unsupportive management among the top reasons staff leave. Addressing these issues is as vital as tackling vacancies that exist now and in the future.

This programme is gaining traction at a pivotal moment. It is helping to test and share approaches that can shape a stronger and more resilient workforce. Recent policy changes, such as the closure of overseas recruitment routes for care workers last summer and the Casey Commission currently examining the future of adult social care, have emphasised the importance of developing domestic pathways, skills and support in social care careers.



We know our Partners are working in an increasingly constrained environment. Ongoing cuts to local authority budgets, rising costs and wider structural uncertainty, including changes within Integrated Care Boards and shifting political leadership, are placing immense pressure on the care system. Some of England's largest councils are already warning of deep reductions in funding over the next three years⁴. At the same time, national negotiations around a Fair Pay Agreement for social care, while welcome in principle, risk excluding some council and NHS-contracted staff, raising real concerns about fairness and fragmentation⁵. Yet within this challenging landscape our partners are showing determination, collaboration and imagination in improving the experience of people who work in, and draw on, care.

Strengthening careers in care is fundamental if we are to secure dignity and quality for all people drawing on care and support. We hope that the learning from our funding will contribute to improved quality of later life and will support older people, and those caring for them, to live 'gloriously ordinary lives'⁶.

Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger DBE
Trustee, The Rayne Foundation

References: ¹Skills for Care (2024) *The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England – Executive summary 2024*. ²King's Fund and Nuffield Trust (2024) *The state of social care in England and the case for a comprehensive social care strategy*. ³Adult social care workforce survey: April 2025 report. ⁴The Carer August 21, 2025. ⁵Skills for Care (2025) *The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England 2025*. ⁶*Social Care Future – A Movement for Gloriously Ordinary Lives* Department of Health and Social Care (2025). King's Fund (2025) *Health and care outlook 2025*.

Funded Projects

The Rayne Foundation has funded ten *Better Careers for Better Care* projects in England, Scotland and Wales so far. This report draws on the data and evidence from the eight projects that have completed at least one year of delivery.



ADASS NATIONAL

Changing the Story of Adult Social Care

This project focuses on co-creating a training programme and networks that empower ADASS members (Directors of Adult Social Services, Deputy Directors and Principal Social Workers) and their teams to share a common language to describe the impact and value they have every day on the people they support, and the wider impact that it has in their community. It aims to empower these social care leaders with the tools to communicate about social care in a way that will change the narrative on social care in communities and across the country.



Care Workers' Charity NATIONAL

Championing Care Worker Voice

Through the CWC's Care Worker Advisory Board and Champion network which represents frontline care workers, participants are receiving training in influencing, media, and generating peer support. By amplifying care worker voices, this project aims to reshape public narratives, inform policy, and increase sector esteem. The long-term goal is systemic change in how care workers are valued, paid, and supported - driven by those with lived experience.

#ProudToCareBarnsley

Proud to Care Barnsley

This programme scales up a multi-agency, integrated recruitment and workforce development programme across health and social care partners, helping to grow a vibrant and sustainable care market. Projects include the development of targeted leadership training, career pathways, growing communities of interest, values-based recruitment, and a shared learning culture. Building on an already successful local campaign, the programme aims to attract, retain and progress staff through joined-up pathways creating a replicable, place-based approach to workforce sustainability.



North London Councils

Social Care Workforce Programme

The Leadership and Integration programme develops social care leaders with the confidence, skills, and relationships to participate in the Integrated Care System. Working across the 5 boroughs of North London, this programme focuses on developing emerging and established social care leaders via My Home Life training, co-designed innovative apprenticeships, and a support framework for senior carers to become team leaders on the programme. It also encourages the update of the Student Nurse Associate (SNA) pathway which will enable people to train as Nurses of the future and builds capacity for Nursing Homes.



Social Care Wales

Building Positive Cultures

The Foundation's funding will support a three-year programme of work with Social Care Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. They will be working in partnership to develop and test practical support to help providers nurture positive cultures and better wellbeing outcomes for people drawing on care and support, their workforce, and the community. The work will provide valuable learning on how infrastructure and regulatory bodies can effectively partner with adult social care providers and others in the system to build and sustain positive culture.

Social Care Wales and University of Stirling are new grant partners and had not yet completed one full year of delivery at the time of writing.



Stirling University

Changing the Narrative on Adult Social Care in Scotland

The 17-month University of Stirling project aims to build a more constructive public narrative about adult social care in Scotland: one that supports better careers, stronger recruitment and wider public understanding of the sector's value. Building on a project by IMPACT, the UK Centre for Implementing Evidence in Adult Social Care, Stirling University will work with a wider cohort of organisations and networks in Scotland to test and apply framing approaches to social care, enabling partners to contribute to a more hopeful and meaningful public conversation.



BelleVie

Self-Managing Homecare Teams

BelleVie is developing an outcomes-based commissioning model as an alternative to time and task care, building on the Dutch Buurtzorg approach. The goal is to create innovative, affordable solutions that demonstrate how trust-based teams can enhance workforce wellbeing and deliver better, more integrated care across the country. The project evaluates its impact on the wellbeing of people both giving and receiving care. In partnership with Northumberland Council, BelleVie is optimising rotas, exploring NHS savings via delegated healthcare tasks, and piloting an electric vehicle to assess cost effectiveness.



Leeds Health & Care Academy

Developing the team around the person

This programme strengthens integrated neighbourhood care by building the team around the person. Through clinical skills development, collaborative apprenticeships, and rotational opportunities, staff gain skills, confidence, and the ability to work across disciplines. Leadership development nurtures talent, supports career growth, and fosters a compassionate, connected culture, ensuring high-quality, person-centred care and a skilled, adaptable workforce ready to deliver joined-up support across health and social care.



Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council

This initiative supports the external social care sector in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire through a central website hub offering career guidance, training, updates, and the local workforce strategy. The programme includes a pilot Leadership Programme, for a group of existing and emerging social care leaders. Designed to test and learn, it delivers interactive sessions to build leadership skills and peer networks. Insights from the pilot will shape future training opportunities and support sector-wide development.



Care City

Enhanced Roles in Social Care

Care City aims to deliver a scaled-up model of enhanced roles and qualified professional pathways within social care by embedding Nursing Associates and AHP Assistants into social care settings. The partnership is testing scalable training, governance and funding approaches that could be adopted across the UK to enhance career and development opportunities within the care sector.

Summary

The *Better Careers for Better Care* programme aims to improve careers in adult social care, addressing challenges like high staff turnover, recruitment gaps, and limited career progression. In its first year, the programme has engaged over 480 care workers and 120 care providers across England delivering training, leadership development, and innovative career pathways.

Key Achievements

1. Changing Lives for Care Workers:

- 480 care workers accessed training in leadership, clinical skills, and advocacy.
- 27 apprenticeships launched, creating new career pathways.
- Care workers reported increased confidence, wellbeing, and job satisfaction.

2. Changing Practices for Providers:

- 122 care providers have been engaged through pilots, recruitment events and leadership forums
- Piloted new recruitment models, leadership training, and person-centred care approaches. 82 people have been recruited or joined an entry pathway into care.
- The Leeds' delegated healthcare model saved 780 hours of nursing time, improving care consistency.
- 92% of Proud to Care North London's leadership trainees learnt how to improve the culture of care and their management and leadership skills.
- 88% of trained ADASS leaders have committed to applying the learnt narrative in their organisations to change the way social care is perceived.

3. Changing the Care System:

- Strengthened partnerships between health and social care, with integrated roles and shared learning. For example, Proud to Care Barnsley developing a joint commissioning plan.
- Care workers' voices, supported by the Care Worker's Charity have influenced national discussion and policy, including ethical AI use in social care.
- Early signs of improved care quality, with people drawing on care reporting greater satisfaction, connection, independence and dignity resulting from the work of partners like BelleVie, the Leeds Partnership and Proud to Care Barnsley.



BelleVie

Future Plans:

- Support programme delivery in the devolved nations.
- Launch a new funding call in 2026 to create and embed cultures of collaboration.
- Share learnings through webinars and policy discussions.
- Continue supporting innovation, leadership, and workforce development.

Shared Benefits and Challenges for Partners

Reported Benefits

Partners tell us that being part of the *Better Careers for Better Care* community of practice is generating positive benefits in addition to the project delivery itself.

Being part of a national cohort has allowed them to share ideas, test new approaches and gain validation for their own work, while also strengthening collaboration, credibility and strategic thinking across the sector. A summary of additional benefits as described by partners are:

 More inspiration & motivation	 Better collaboration	 Increased focus on need for the sector as a whole	 Improved credibility & visibility
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“Through the partner network we’ve gained significant insight into projects nationwide. We are already planning to draw on Leeds’ delegated healthcare model as we develop our own.”

Proud to Care Barnsley

“The programme has opened up conversations across councils and providers. Being part of a collective movement is energising, and strengthens our ability to influence.”

North London Councils

“Working alongside other partners has validated our own plans and encouraged us to take a more strategic approach to workforce development.”

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICS

“The opportunity to share and compare approaches with other innovators has been invaluable, it gives us confidence we are moving in the right direction and helps avoid duplication.”

BelleVie

Partners’ Challenges

Our Partners report operating within an increasingly challenging and fast-changing landscape, commissioning and system restructuring and workforce shortages continue to affect capacity and pace.

Partners remain united in their commitment to this project and testing new approaches, narratives and solutions, although projects have been shaped by the realities of evolving Integrated Care Board (ICB) structures, local authority budget restraints and the practical barriers faced in releasing staff and developing new roles required to make our joint ambitions a reality.

“Our work has taken place against a backdrop of change — the transition to the ICB has affected how decisions are made and slowed progress in some areas, but it has also opened doors to new conversations about integration.”

North London Councils

“The timescales of wider commissioning changes have inevitably affected momentum. There is a need for alignment between system reform and programme delivery to ensure learning is embedded rather than lost.”

Leeds Partnership

“Recruitment and retention pressures are worsening locally due to the wider funding environment. Providers are struggling to balance pay expectations with limited budgets, and this affects their capacity to engage in workforce development.”

Proud to Care Barnsley

“Local authority budget pressures and turnover in elected members continue to influence the pace of workforce initiatives and the ability to sustain momentum.”

Nottinghamshire County Council

“Directors are operating under significant financial and political pressure, with funding uncertainty shaping the choices they can make about innovation.”

ADASS



Our Approach to Funding

As an independent funder, the Rayne Foundation aims to help organisations respond to neglected issues, develop and share solutions and create a fairer society. Our grant-making is guided by values of trust, collaboration, creativity and rigour and by a commitment to bring people together, support innovation and share learning.

We have funded organisations supporting care for people in later life and their carers since its founding in 1965. In 2023, in response to the increasingly complex and systemic challenges facing the adult social care sector, we developed a proactive funding programme focused on workforce development within social care – *Better Careers for Better Care*.

This marks an evolution in how we direct our funding, with a more strategic and collaborative approach. The programme has been shaped by conversations with leaders across adult social care exploring how the Foundation's resources could be used to have the greatest positive impact on the quality of life for older people and their carers. While there is no shortage of good ideas, many organisations face barriers to developing and testing them. The sector landscape is complex and dominated by local authorities, statutory funding and private providers, which may deter philanthropic investments. And where grant funding is available, application processes are reported to feel burdensome, with smaller providers put off from applying for projects that could influence the wider system.

In response we introduced a lighter-touch Expression of Interest stage, encouraged partnership bids, and made ourselves available to meet with potential applicants. We also adapted guidance during the process to respond to questions posed to us. We appointed a dedicated programme manager to design and deliver the programme, support partners and champion shared learning. These steps were designed to widen access and focus on projects with the potential to create impact beyond their immediate setting. We initially designated £2 million to launch the programme in England, with a further £400,000 now committed to projects in Wales and Scotland.

There are ten delivery partners, bringing together the perspectives of care workers, commissioners, providers and academic researchers. This breadth of coverage, representing the complex social care sector itself, is deliberate.

- National commissioning and leadership bodies such as ADASS, Social Care Wales and IMPACT at the University of Stirling are building shared narratives, leadership skills and policy influence.
- Local councils and supporting organisations including Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, Leeds City Council, North Central London Councils and Care City Innovation are testing new training models, apprenticeships and leadership pipelines within local systems.
- The Care Workers' Charity is amplifying the voice of frontline care workers, while independent organisations like BelleVie are trialling innovative commissioning frameworks to enable their award-winning model of care to be delivered with Local Authority funding.
- All partners are utilising system design expertise and robust evaluation, helping translate learning into scalable practice.

A lively and engaged quarterly Community of Practice brings our partners together to share progress and challenges. Working groups have explored themes across the grants programme, including healthcare delegation, outcomes-focused commissioning, increasing value and recognition of social care, and leadership. Insights developed on these themes will be shared more widely through a series of webinars..

Learning from this Community of Practice has informed the development of a further open call to be launched in early 2026. We hope to fund a further five organisations with a focus on creating and embedding cultures of collaboration within adult social care.

While this report looks at our grant-making through *Better Careers for Better Care*, the programme sits within a broader portfolio of grants improving the quality of life for people in later life and their carers in the UK. Through our open grants programme, more than twenty additional partner organisations have received funding to deliver work focused on the social care workforce, many with the ambition of embedding creative approaches within care and support.

Our Approach to Learning and Evaluation

From the outset, learning and evaluation has been central to *Better Careers for Better Care*, with the intention not only to support individual projects, but to build an evidence base about what works in strengthening careers in care.

To achieve this, Bean Research was commissioned as an independent learning and evaluation partner, working alongside the Rayne Foundation and its partners to frame outcomes, capture impact, and share learnings across the sector.

A key part of this work was the development of a shared impact framework, co-developed with our delivery partners. It maps how activities funded through the programme - such as training, mentoring, progression pathways, and leadership development - are expected to lead to stronger, more sustainable careers in care. Short-term outcomes include enhanced skills and confidence. Medium-term outcomes include clearer progression pathways, stronger sector leadership and improved workplace cultures. Longer-term impact would see a more stable, skilled and valued workforce delivering high quality care. The framework seeks to underpin how progress is assessed and ensures all our partners are working towards common goals.

The evaluation approach was developed to reflect best practice in funding and evaluation, being proportionate and supportive, and offering practical tools and guidance rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model. Bean embedded its [LEARN model](#) to ensure learning from partners informs the programme as it develops, creating opportunities for peer learning, shared reflection and to inform future policy and practice on how careers in care can be strengthened.

Better Careers for Better Care: Our Impact Framework



BETTER CAREERS: Changing Lives

1.6 million people work in adult social care in England, with **1 in 10 posts** unfilled (Skills for Care, 2024).

By **2035**, an additional **500,000** care workers may be needed (King's Fund and Nuffield Trust, 2024).

82% female; 1/4 from minority ethnic backgrounds; workforce older than average (Skills for Care, 2025).

Top reasons for leaving: Stress, limited career development, perceived unsupportive management (DHSC, 2025)

Through the work of its eight active partners this year, the Rayne Foundation has invested in strengthening the capability, wellbeing and progression of people working in adult social care.



Access to opportunities for care workers

In this first year of the programme, partners report delivering a wide range of opportunities, designed to upskill, test new ideas, create new pathways and provide support to at least **480** care workers.

480 Care Professionals Engaged

151 Developed Skills in Leadership & Voice

ADASS trained **58** ASC leaders in narrative framing
NCL supported **43** leaders through My Home Life
Nottinghamshire ran a Skills for Care programme for **20** managers
CWC trained **30** Champions in advocacy

197 Trained in Care Practice & Clinical Skills

65 staff in delegated clinical tasks
BelleVue engaged **15** staff in outcomes evaluation
Barnsley trained **117** care professionals

27 Apprenticeships

Leeds launched **16** apprenticeships
NCL created **6** apprenticeships
Care City recruited **3** apprentices
BelleVue & Barnsley added new routes into care with **2** apprenticeships

82 into Recruitment & Entry Pathways

Recruitment events & job placements (Barnsley)
New pathways and entry points (Care City, Leeds)

23 directly Engaged in Workforce Innovation

BelleVue piloted rota optimisation and EV transport (**23** staff involved)
Care City co-designed recruitment/role pathways with NHS partners
Barnsley developing a training directory & career pathway resources

Wellbeing & Peer Support

BelleVue involved **41** staff in workforce surveys
CWC surveyed **2,000+** care workers about wellbeing & built a Champions/Advisory Board peer network
NCL launched a Care Leaders Forum, **50+** peers to collaborate

Partners are also trialling new approaches to reduce barriers and widen access to careers in care:

BelleVue has piloted electric vehicle pools, ensuring staff without personal transport can access care roles. Care City Innovation has demonstrated how apprenticeships can provide a more accessible route into the profession, by removing barriers like tuition costs, and the need for prior credentials. Proud to Care North London provided training to a highly diverse group of social care leaders. Graduates of the Advanced Care Leaders programme subsequently contributed to an Integrated Care System (ICS) Health Equity event.

Care workers feel valued, equipped and supported

There is growing evidence that care workers are beginning to feel more valued, better supported and more confident in their roles, because of investment in training, leadership and creation of peer networks. Some examples of the outcomes that have already emerged include:

Care workers involved in the Care Workers' Charity's new Advisory Board and Champions Group all felt more valued and appreciated as a result, and 92% reported increased wellbeing, 96% have greater pride and belonging in the care worker community and 88% feel better equipped with skills and knowledge to perform their role.

Similarly, in North London Councils, those completing the My Home Life leadership programme described greater confidence, improved communication and leadership skills and reduced stress.

In Leeds, delegated task and specialist nurse-led training has upskilled 65 care workers, leading to greater confidence and autonomy in their care decisions, and fairer work contracts.



Geoffrey, Proud to Care North London - Advanced Leaders Programme

Geoffrey began his career in diplomacy before finding his vocation in care in 2004. After 15 years as a registered manager, he joined the My Home Life England Advanced Leaders Programme, in 2024. Through monthly action learning sets, Geoffrey and his cohort addressed issues affecting social care such as complex placements, hospital discharges, recruitment, and workforce development. Geoffrey credits the programme for significantly enhancing professional development, reigniting his passion for the industry and helping leaders to find their voices as Health and Care Providers.

"In February 2025, I completed the Advanced Leaders Programme, a transformative journey that redefined my professional identity. I moved from thinking of myself as an employee in Health and Social care to a decisive influencer and trusted partner, igniting my progression from Home Manager to Operations Manager (a role that allows me to support more services). I remain committed to collective leadership that improves social care outcomes for those we serve."



"Really privileged to be part of CWC. I felt important, heard and seen for first time in my life."

CWC Advisory Board Member

People progress in the care profession

New pathways in adult social care are being created through a combination of apprenticeships, recruitment programmes and new approaches.

Funding has allowed Barnsley to grow its Proud to Care hub offer and develop a strategic approach bringing recruitment and retention together with training.

As a result, five people have been recruited into care roles; four moved into education and training and 73 others are receiving continued employability support. The programme has also recruited one pharmacy apprentice and has created a range of recruitment and support for overseas workers.



Henry, Proud to Care Barnsley

Henry had been unemployed for over eight years when he enrolled on the Proud to Care course at Barnsley Adult Skills and Community Learning Centre. Shaped by Health and Social Care providers and NHS professionals, the course was designed to give people an accessible introduction to care, build confidence, and connect learners with employers.

On completing the course, Henry attended the Get Hired session, where he secured an interview with a local care home and, thanks to the knowledge he had developed, was offered a role immediately.

“Before I joined the course, I felt nervous, but the team gave me advice, encouragement, and support whenever I needed it. The course gave me better knowledge of health and social care, possible career paths, and how to tailor my approach to different service users. I was sent jobs weekly and had a work coach who helped build my CV. I am extremely thankful to the whole team for helping me achieve my goal and begin my future.”

Apprenticeships in social care have historically faced challenges – from low starts and high drop-out rates, to levy funding that is hard for employers to access, and standards that don’t always align with real care roles.

These projects are looking to change this:

- The Leeds Partnership has established apprenticeship routes, including Community Health and Wellbeing Workers, Occupational Team Leads and Nurse Associates. Alongside care worker training and extensive engagement of care providers, the integrated approach by the Leeds Partnership has contributed to reduced staff turnover in the pilot area: 1.94% compared with 9.7% city-wide.
- The Proud to Care North London programme includes six apprenticeships leading to progression roles.
- Care City Innovation recruited three apprentices into new integrated roles.

“A third incoming apprentice noted that while his current care provider had begun to recognise his skills, it was the apprenticeship that created a genuine opportunity to progress towards becoming an Occupational Therapist, an avenue that would not otherwise have been available.”

Care City Innovation

- BelleVue gives every Wellbeing Support Worker the opportunity to enrol on an apprenticeship, making professional development an integral part of the outcomes focused model.

Social care perceived as a career of choice

One of the long-term goals of the *Better Careers for Better Care* programme is to contribute to a better perception of social care as a career of choice, which is crucial to attract and retain more talent. With the help of partners, shifts are also taking place at national level.

ADASS has trained senior social care leaders to reframe how they talk about the sector, and to clearly communicate the value of care to society, developing and testing the messaging. Feedback suggests these leaders are already focusing more on presenting adult social care as a professional, rewarding career. And that in itself is also being seen by these directors as reinforcing their own pride in sector roles.

The Care Workers’ Charity has amplified frontline voices, supporting Champions to contribute to multiple round tables, conferences and conversations including the Department of Health and Social Care’s *Make Care Your Career* campaigns. Again, this has also had the result of improving frontline care workers’ perceptions of themselves, as they were able to offer valuable insights to shape policy and practice.



Dylan Brown, The Care Workers Charity

“Before becoming involved with The Care Workers’ Charity, I often felt undervalued in my role as a care worker. While I have always been proud of the care I provide, the emotional and physical demands of the job can take a toll especially when it feels like that hard work goes unseen or unrecognised. There were times I questioned whether I could continue in the role I had once been so passionate about.

Everything began to change when I got involved with The CWC and The Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions Project. For the first time, I was in a space surrounded by others who truly understood the realities of care work, people who listened, shared openly, and supported one another. Everything we have done has reminded me that I am not on my own, and that my experiences and voice matter. Being part of those conversations gave me a renewed sense of connection and confidence.

Joining The Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions Project has been even more impactful. Through this project, I have had the opportunity to not only share my perspective but to be part of shaping real change for care workers across the country. It has been empowering to know that my voice contributes to something bigger than myself, something that helps others in the sector feel seen, heard, and supported.

This involvement has made me feel valued both as a care worker and as a person. It has reminded me why I started in care, and more importantly, it has helped me stay in my role during times when I felt like giving up. The support, recognition, and shared purpose I have found through The Care Workers Charity has been a lifeline, and I am proud to be involved in this project.”

BETTER CARE PROVIDERS: Changing Practices

82% of jobs in adult social care are in the independent sector
(Skills for Care, 2024).

Around **17,900** organisations deliver adult social care in England across **38,800** establishments
(Skills for Care, 2025).

More than **830,000** people work in domiciliary care, reflecting the importance of community-based support
(Skills for Care, 2024).

Funding has already enabled seven partners to directly engage **122** care providers through pilots, recruitment events and leadership forums.

As hoped, there is emerging evidence that these initiatives are not only changing practice within individual providers but also shaping the structures and recruitment models that define social care at regional and national levels. Three partners have already delivered leadership training to 121 care professionals, building vital skills and collaborative networks for stronger sector leadership.

Changed practices and learning cultures

New ways of working have already delivered some positive outcomes:

The **Leeds Partnership** is using funding to pilot a community wellbeing model that moves away from task-and-time care towards holistic, person-centred practice. Two providers have already transformed delivery, with frontline staff now taking on delegated healthcare. At the same time, providers are building teams around the individual and opening clearer career pathways, creating a more sustainable workforce model. A strong learning culture underpins this work: providers are co-designing resources, engaging in one-to-one discussions and city-wide events, and lessons have been shared at a convention of 100 providers, encouraging adoption of proven pilot practices.

As a care provider, **BelleVie** has tested and embedded an outcomes-based care model using **ASCOT** in reviews and care planning and has also developed new policies and procedures through the Electric Vehicle pilot. Resulting learnings have been shared with other providers through forums, conferences, communities of practice and reports, with a drive to develop an economically viable model for wider adoption.



Delegating Care, Building Confidence: A New Model in Leeds

Funded by the Rayne Foundation, Saoirse Magnier-Gibson, Clinical Manager, has been employed to work with two providers and NHS colleagues to safely manage referrals from the community nursing team to trained and competent care staff. In six months, working on a limited number of tasks, the pilot delegated more than 2700 hours of visits saving the team 780 hours. Care worker feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with staff having more visits to add to their run and feeling more confident in their role thanks to enhanced training and clinical supervision. Patients have welcomed the change, highlighting more consistent visit times and seeing a familiar face every day.

"It's been a steep learning curve introducing new ways of working and ensuring the right governance, clinical oversight and communications are all in place to make it a success. I've built strong relationships with Care Workers and am impressed by their enthusiasm to take on new responsibilities. We've had a lot of interest nationally in the pilot and hope to demonstrate more positive outcomes over the year ahead". Saoirse Magnier-Gibson

Barnsley's Proud to Care hub has supported 10 providers to implement new recruitment models, for example guaranteeing next-day interviews to prevent candidates being lost to other roles outside the care sector, while Care City Innovation are changing pathways by embedding Nursing Associates and AHP Assistants into social care settings, breaking down barriers between health and social care, and supporting employers and applicants through the process. Two providers now have higher-level apprenticeships for the first time, demonstrating that shifts in recruitment practices are possible when supported through collective learning and innovation.

Funding for The Care Workers Charity contributed to producing 'Centring Care Workers, A Guide' and the '2025 Wellbeing Survey Report' which support care providers to embed co-production and wellbeing practices into their workplaces. Feedback shows providers are beginning to adapt practice as a result and, there is interest in developing a new framework. This has opened the door for discussions on an accreditation scheme for care workers providing a sector wide benchmark of good practice.

Stronger leaders

Across the programme, leaders are reporting greater clarity about their role in the system and stronger confidence in their direction, through building knowledge and networks via training programmes and forums, which bring peers together to collaborate, share and support.

The programme funded **Proud to Care North London's** leadership training courses for 43 care professionals, provided them with knowledge and skills to build their capacity as sector leaders. All leaders reported that training improved their confidence as professionals, 92% said they had a significant increase in their understanding of how to improve the culture of care, and that the quality of their management and leadership had improved. One of the biggest achievements of the programme has been the initiation of the NCL Care Leaders Forum by the course graduates. The Forum supports social care leadership development and collaborative working across the Integrated Care System in North Central London.



Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council have commenced its pilot training programme 'Skills for Care Leadership' with 20 care provider managers. Insights from the pilot will shape future training in leadership skills and development of peer networks, across the sector. This leadership support is directly contributing to influencing practice through applied learning.

ADASS, working with Directors of Adult Social Services within local authorities, has equipped 58 senior and middle leaders with the skills to frame adult social care more effectively through its training, with 88% of these leaders committed to applying narrative training in their organisations to change the way social care is perceived.



Sarah and Jess - ADASS Training Changing Language

A key outcome from the ADASS framing training has been the shift in language used by leaders across the sector.

Sarah Spence, Programme Director for Transformation and Improvement at Kingston upon Thames and Chair of the Staff Carers Network, described how the ADASS training has influenced her leadership and communications approach and has driven improvements in how language is used internally and externally, aligning with national social care messaging.

“Since the training, I’ve presented back an overview to the rest of our senior management team. The framing training is absolutely key to how we make sure our comms is well designed and really gets the story of what we do and what we can achieve across to people.”

Sarah Spence

ADASS President Jess McGregor has embraced the metaphor of ‘glue’ to describe the role of social care. Testing strongly in peer focus groups it captures the complexity of adult social care in a relatable way, helping people understand how care holds lives and communities together. Since attending a training session, Jess has included the language in her speeches, interviews, and work with her own team at Camden Council.

“For me, social care is the glue that helps us assemble all of that into our own perfect collage of a life. It holds lives together. It holds communities together. It connects people to the lives they want. It fills gaps. But when that glue is spread too thinly, lives start to come apart.”

ADASS President Jess McGregor, Keynote address Spring Seminar, April 2025

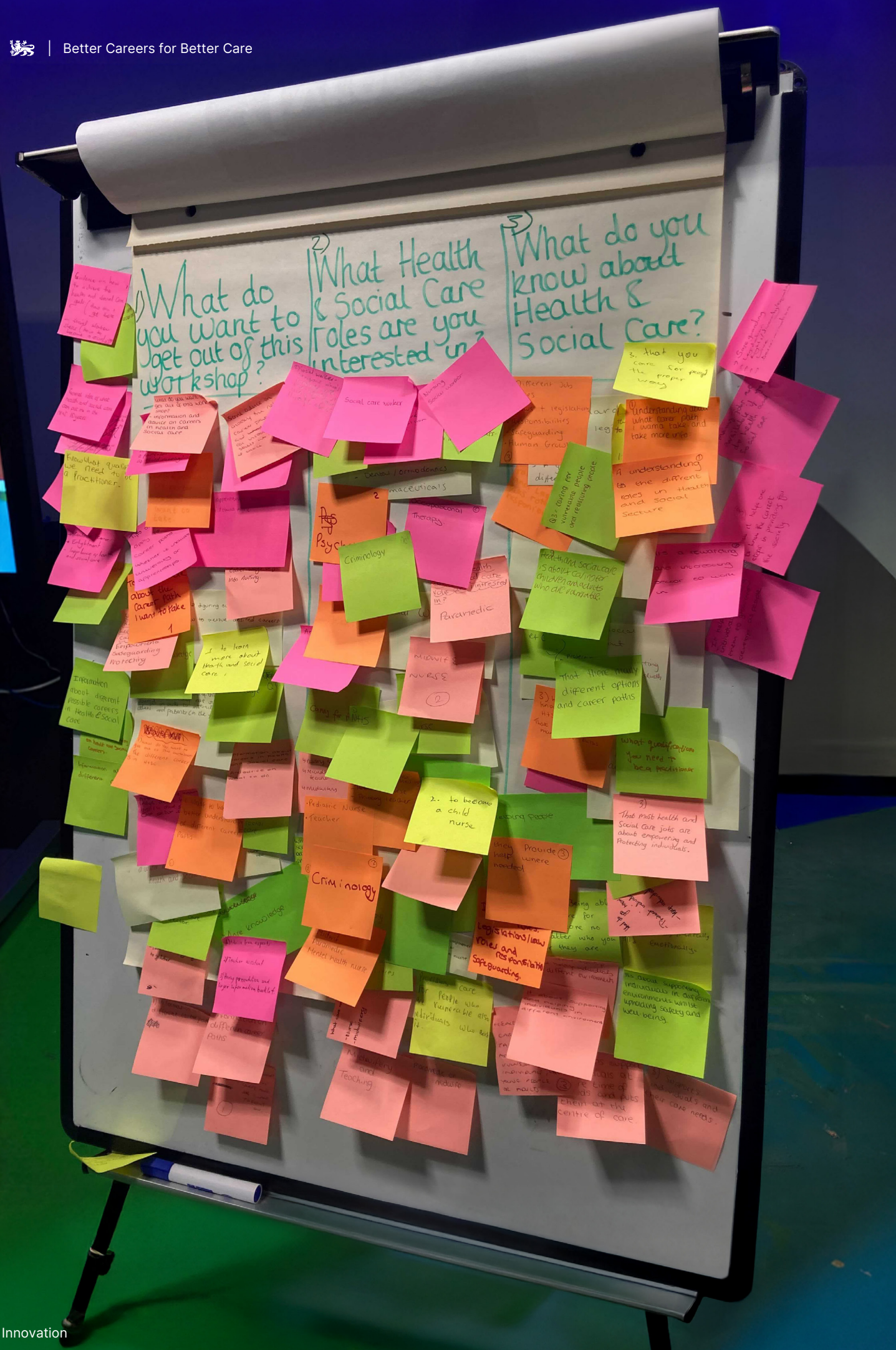
Perhaps most significantly, the programme has generated new leadership networks that will sustain progress beyond training and project timelines. Examples include The Care Leaders Forum (Proud to Care North London), Nottingham and Nottinghamshire’s leadership cohort, a developing ADASS alumni network and a peer network for commissioners testing locality-based homecare models, in Leeds. These networks are in early stages, but already building a stronger, more confident group of social care leaders who are connected, collaborative and better equipped to influence the future of the sector.

Care provision as an equal partner to health

A key ambition of the *Better Careers for Better Care* programme is for adult social care to be recognised as an equal partner to health, and to promote local collaboration. Although this is a long-term goal, there is already some progress.

Client feedback to the **Leeds Partnership** has reported integration between care providers, GPs and community health teams, with delegated tasks reducing GP visits and enabling more personalised care.





Care City Innovation has created new pathways for NHS providers to offer clinical supervision and mentoring to social care apprentices, placing Adult Social Care staff alongside health colleagues. **Proud to Care North London** has given providers a stronger voice at Integrated Care System level through its Social Care Leaders Forum, while **Proud to Care Barnsley** is supporting a task group to develop delegated health care bringing staff from health and care closer together.

Care City Innovation - Enhanced Roles are Transforming Health & Social Care

"This work by Care City Innovation marks a real step forward in integrating our health and care workforce across North East London. As we launch the North East London People and Workforce Strategy, initiatives like this show how we can create new career pathways, develop skills within social care, and build a workforce that is truly fit for the future. The enthusiasm from across our system—from District Nurses to AHPs—demonstrates the appetite for change, and I look forward to seeing these new roles in action in Newham and Redbridge, with the ambition to scale across all seven Boroughs."

Gareth Noble, Deputy Director of Workforce Programmes, North East London

BETTER CARE SECTOR: Changing the Care System

The social care sector contributes **£55.7 billion** a year to the economy

(Skills for Care, 2024).

Around **490,000** people live in UK care homes, ranging from small family-run homes to large national groups

(Nuffield Trust, 2024).

Age UK has found that **2 million** older people in England are now living with some unmet need for social care

(2024).

The *Better Careers for Better Care* programme has ambitions to shape change across the wider system of adult social care, understanding that new innovations, different partnerships, engaged commissioners and leadership networks are all required to ultimately improve the lives of those individuals drawing on care and support. Collectively, partners have mobilised influence across all levels of the care system and are beginning to create wider ripple effects that extend beyond the projects.

Stronger partnerships and shared understanding across health and care

Partners have contributed to improved knowledge and understanding across health and care, building improved local partnerships and informing commissioning.

- **BelleVue** has actively shared its learnings widely across the sector, including at the London Care Show and a Digital Care Hub webinar, reaching commissioners, providers and policymakers with insights into their operating model, training and technology.
- The Rayne Foundation-funded clinical manager in the **Leeds Partnership** has used fortnightly case management calls to enhance understanding of commissioning across health and care, supporting faster referral and professional advice-sharing.
- The **North Central London** Social Care Leaders Forum has become more integrated with ICB colleagues, collaborating in multiple areas and encouraging more leaders to start leadership training.
- **Proud to Care Barnsley** has developed a joint commissioning plan across adult social care, children's services, public health and the ICB.
- The **Care Workers' Charity's** training and campaigning have enabled care workers to speak directly at national round tables, including working with the Department of Health and Social Care, Care Quality Commission, and Oxford Sheffield University's Centre for Care, ensuring care worker perspectives influence national policy, research priorities and sector reform.



AI in Social Care Summit 2025

CWC - Oxford AI Summit on Ethical Use of Generative AI in Adult Social Care

The Care Worker Advisory Board and Champions Project ensured care worker voices were heard in sector-wide debates at the AI summit in Oxford. Representatives actively contributed to shaping Oxford University's guidance on the ethical use of AI in the sector and participated in several panel discussions and interactive sessions, offering insights rooted in lived experience.

"As a migrant healthcare worker, I never imagined I'd find myself on a panel at the University of Oxford...yet there I was, sharing my perspective on AI in social care."
Advisory Board member Nwamaka

Following the summit, care workers have continued to collaborate with Oxford University on a White Paper setting out guidance for the ethical use of AI in adult social care, directly shaping how technology is introduced in the sector.

Projects replicated and scaled with models for sustainable investment

Partners including **Proud to Care Barnsley** and **Proud to Care North London** are planning the roll out of further training and other local authorities have enquired about replicating successful approaches. **Care City Innovation's** integrated apprenticeship model has secured match-funding and is looking to prove the value of joint health and care investment. **ADASS** is adapting its training for local authority communications teams and elected members.

Individuals' lives improved through better care

At the outset, measurement of the programme's success has weighed heavily on changes for care workers, providers and the broader sector, acknowledging better care for individuals in later life would be more difficult to attribute directly to the funded programmes. However, partners have already reported cases of improved experience for people drawing on care, which have direct links to the changes made in care worker skills and care provider practice.

BelleVie's outcomes data shows clear improvements in people's quality of life, with those they support feeling more respected, more connected to others, and better able to live independently at home.

As a result of the nurse-led training funded by the programme, the **Leeds Partnership** reported 2,700 delegated healthcare visits, to 18 patients, in place of the district nursing team. Clients reported high satisfaction, valuing the continuity and trusted relationships with consistent care workers. **Proud to Care Barnsley's** Adult Social Care Survey results placed it 4th highest in Yorkshire and Humber for satisfaction with care and support received (71.2%) and top for their services delivering improved quality of life (94.3%).



Better Care for Lily - BelleVie

Supported person, Lily, was one of the first to trial ASCOT questions in her review with Wellbeing Support Worker Christine. Lily offered: "It would be lovely if I could get to see a show or an event that I'd be interested in if this would be possible." With the new system enabling Christine to be creative to support people to live their best lives, Christine arranged rota changes with her team so that she could take Lily out for a longer visit.

"Lily enjoying fish and chips at North Shields Fish Quay, followed by a walk along the quayside, and for the finale - a lush ninety-nine sugar cone. Lily hadn't done this for so long. It brought lots of happy memories back to her, and she thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. It's moments like this that make it all worthwhile." Christine

What's Next?



Consolidate and share learning

This report will be published alongside a series of webinars to share successes, challenges and learning.

Our hope is that as the programme progresses, partners and the wider sector can adopt and adapt proven practice.

We will share our findings with colleagues from across the social care and funding sectors. We will also contribute to policy and practice discussions as helpful and appropriate.



Deepen the programme across the UK

Due to the devolved nature of health and social care, the 2024 open call was only open to organisations working in England. However, as a UK funder, it was always our ambition to also fund in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In March 2025, a grant was made to Social Care Wales to support their work to embed positive cultures within adult social care, in partnership with Care Inspectorate Wales.

In June 2025, we made a grant to the University of Stirling in partnership with the IMPACT Centre. Building on a 12-month 'Demonstrator' project that brought together strategic partners across Scotland, the Stirling team will now move into an implementation phase, with the aim of shifting the narrative at a systems level. 2026 will see these projects in action, contributing to our programme ambition.



New open call: cultures of collaboration

In early 2026 we will launch an open call focused on creating and embedding cultures of collaboration that enable career opportunities for care workers. We hope to make a further five grants; all new partners will join the Community of Practice and the shared evaluation.



Convene for system change

We will expand our role as a convener bringing together providers, commissioners, worker voice, academics and funders to build common understanding, unlock practical solutions, and encourage increased investment in the care workforce.



Keep the programme flexible and enabling.

We aim to deliver a supportive and flexible funding approach, maintaining an ongoing and open dialogue, so partners can respond to local realities while contributing to the shared outcomes of *Better Careers for Better Care*.



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