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Skills and Innovation for Adult Social Care

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO THE RECOGNITION OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

LAPIS RESEARCH PROJECT
LEARNING FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE INNOVATIONS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Project no: 2020-1-UK01-KA202-078960

Introduction:

The exploration of the pressures within social care has made it clear that radical change is needed, care and support should uphold dignity and value human life. Recruitment and retention of staff is a critical issue in the social care sector. It is crucial to rethink attitudes towards care and support, to agree a shared vision along with a roadmap, and a commitment to action. It is clear there is important work to be done in the development of a long-term plan for workforce recruitment, development, and retention, with a considered balance of values, behaviours, and qualifications. The LAPIS project has developed evidence-based policy recommendations that can be implemented to address this crisis. By implementing these policy recommendations, Governments, commissioning and inspectorate bodies, and care organisations, can help to address the recruitment and retention crisis in the social care sector and ensure people receive the care they need from skilled and motivated workers.

Recommendations:

The LAPIS project has undertaken a series of workshops and interviews during 2022 with senior leaders and care managers across the adult social care sector, to identify barriers to the recognition of work-based learning in the social care sector, which impact on the workforce recruitment and retention crisis, and produced a range of recommendations to overcome these. Our recommendations cover the four interlinked areas of concern:

- Workforce development
- Public awareness
- Brand recognition
- Innovation

And are aimed towards:

- Government (at EU, National, Regional, and Local levels)
- Commissioning and inspectorate/Sector Bodies
- Care organisations

We recommend the following steps be taken:

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Workforce development:

Our research demonstrated there are several interlinked issues that directly impact the quality of care available, workforce shortages are engulfing the adult social care sector, and the staffing crisis and lack of access to training are intrinsically linked. The duplicative nature of the limited training programmes that are available means oftentimes staff are completing training that is irrelevant to their role, just to meet an arbitrary target, this contributes to staff feeling undervalued and unappreciated, and therefore, high rates of attrition. It is important to recognise the important role that adult social care workers play in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of society and to work towards addressing the systemic issues that contribute to the stigma around the profession.

Government

1. Establish a national training and development framework: The government should establish a national training and development framework for adult social care, which sets out minimum standards for training and development, and provides guidance for care organisations on best practice in training provision.
2. Improve training and development opportunities. Social care workers need access to specialist training and development opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge. Removing the duplicative nature of training and replacing this with access to specialist training programmes offering continued professional development through a suite of micro-qualifications, would lead to improved patient outcomes and improved staff retention rates. Governments can provide funding for training programs and create pathways for career advancement in the social care sector. Micro-credentials could be an innovative way to develop new training pathways through micro-qualifications linked to specialised areas. A new basis to the profession through a government mandate such as this could help improve the stigmatised public perception of the career, to an aspirational career in the way nursing is viewed.
3. Increase funding for training and development: The government should increase funding for adult social care training and development, including investment in workforce development programs, bursaries for students, and incentives for care

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organisations to provide high-quality training. Funding to social care providers should cover the costs of training, including course fees and staff time. This will make it easier for providers to release staff for training without compromising their budgets.

4. Encourage partnerships between care organisations and education institutions: The government should encourage partnerships between care organisations and education institutions, such as colleges and universities, to ensure that staff have access to high-quality training and development opportunities.
5. Introduce a professional registration scheme: The government should introduce a professional registration scheme for adult social care workers, which would provide a framework for the recognition of qualifications and professional development and promote the professionalisation of the sector.
6. Establish a workforce development task force: The government should establish a workforce development task force to identify key areas for improvement in adult social care training and development, and to work with stakeholders to develop solutions to address these issues.
7. Develop a comprehensive training plan with minimum training requirements: The government should work with social care providers to develop a comprehensive training plan that identifies the skills and knowledge that staff need to perform their jobs effectively. This will ensure that training is targeted and focused on the areas that are most important for social care staff. The government should set minimum training requirements for social care staff, based on the needs of the sector and the expectations of service users. This will ensure that all social care staff receive a basic level of training and that there is consistency across the sector.
8. Develop a flexible approach to training: The government should develop a flexible approach to training that takes into account the needs of individual social care providers and their staff. This could include online training, on-the-job training, and flexible scheduling to accommodate staff availability.
9. Provide incentives for training: The government could consider providing incentives for social care providers and their staff to undertake training. This could include

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recognition and rewards for staff who complete training, and funding incentives for providers who demonstrate a commitment to staff development.

10. Monitor the impact of training: The government should monitor the impact of training on social care staff and service users. This will help to ensure that training is effective and that it is delivering the desired outcomes for the sector and the wider community.

Commissioning and Inspectorate/Sector Bodies

1. Establish minimum standards for training and development: commissioning and inspectorate bodies should establish minimum standards for adult social care training and development, including mandatory training for all staff, beyond the current Care Certificate (UK). These standards should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in best practice and emerging needs.
2. Include training requirements in contracts: Commissioning bodies should include training requirements in their contracts with social care providers. This will ensure that providers are accountable for providing their staff with the necessary training and that they have the resources to do so.
3. Set clear expectations for training: Commissioning bodies should set clear expectations for the level and type of training that social care staff should receive. This will ensure that providers are aware of what is required, and that training is consistent across the sector.
4. Provide funding and resources for training: commissioning bodies should allocate funding specifically for training and development in adult social care and should work with provider organisations to ensure that resources are available for staff to access training and development opportunities. This should include funding for staff time to attend training, including subsidies for agency staff to enable employees to be released for training; materials and resources for training; and support for online learning.
5. Encourage partnerships between providers and education institutions.
Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should encourage provider organisations to partner with education institutions to offer high-quality training and development

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opportunities for staff. This could include partnerships with local colleges and universities, as well as collaboration with industry organisations and professional associations.

6. Support ongoing professional development: commissioning and inspectorate bodies should support ongoing professional development for adult social care workers, including developing opportunities for career progression and specialised training. This could include funding for staff to attend conferences and seminars, support for professional memberships and certifications, and opportunities for mentorship and coaching beyond the employing organisation.
7. Regularly monitor and evaluate training and development. Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of adult social care training and development, using data to identify areas for improvement and to ensure that standards are being met. This could include regular audits of training provision, surveys of staff satisfaction with training, and evaluations of the impact of training on the quality of care provided.

Care organisations:

1. Develop a comprehensive training and development strategy: Care organisations should develop a comprehensive strategy for training and development, which outlines the training needs of staff at all levels and provides a clear framework for the delivery of training. This strategy should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.
2. Provide a range of training and development opportunities: Care organisations should provide a range of training and development opportunities to meet the diverse needs of staff, including both mandatory and voluntary training. This could include classroom-based training, online learning, mentoring, coaching, and on-the-job training.
3. Support access to external training and qualifications: Care organisations should support staff in accessing external training and qualifications, such as vocational qualifications and professional certifications. This could include providing financial

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support for training fees, offering study leave, and providing support for staff to complete assignments and assessments.

4. Ensure that training is tailored to individual needs: Care organisations should ensure that training is tailored to the individual needs of staff, considering their experience, qualifications, and areas for development. This could involve developing individual training plans for staff and providing targeted training and support where needed. The need for functional skills training should also be considered, as some care workers have difficulties with reading, writing and basic mathematical skills.
5. Encourage ongoing learning and development: Care organisations should encourage ongoing learning and development among staff, including opportunities for career progression and continuous professional development. This could include offering career development pathways, providing access to conferences and seminars, and offering mentoring and coaching programs.
6. Prioritise staff development: Care organisations should prioritise staff development and make it a core part of their culture. This includes providing staff with regular opportunities for training and career development.
7. Allocate time and resources for training: Care organisations should allocate sufficient time and resources for staff to attend training sessions. This includes providing staff with paid time off to attend training courses and ensuring that staff have access to the necessary resources and equipment to complete their training.
8. Encourage staff to take up training opportunities: Care organisations should encourage staff to take up training opportunities and support them throughout the process. This includes providing staff with information about available training opportunities and assisting them with the application process.
9. Monitor training delivery: Care organisations should monitor the delivery of training to ensure that it is effective, and that staff are receiving the necessary training.
10. Evaluate the impact of training: Care organisations should evaluate the impact of training on staff and service users. This will help to ensure that training is effective and that it is delivering the desired outcomes for the sector and the wider community.

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By implementing these policy recommendations, Governments, commissioning and inspectorate bodies, and care organisations, can help to improve the quality of adult social care training and development, which will ultimately lead to better outcomes for those who rely on these services.

Public awareness:

Adult social care workers often work behind the scenes and may not receive the recognition or appreciation they deserve for the important work they do. This can contribute to the perception that the work is not valued by society or that it is somehow less important than other professions. Adult social care work can be demanding and emotionally challenging, and workers may be exposed to difficult and traumatic situations. This can lead to high levels of stress and burnout, which can be stigmatised, or not fully recognised by others. There are several reasons why adult social care workers may be undervalued by society. Adult social care is sometimes viewed as low-skilled, or menial labour, which can lead to a lack of respect and recognition for the important work which is done. This can contribute to a stigma around the profession and make it less attractive to potential workers. The stigma around adult social care workers can have a negative impact on the sector, including difficult in attracting and retaining staff, as well as a lack of recognition and resources.

Government

1. Increase public awareness: The government should launch a public awareness campaign to educate the public about the importance of adult social care, the work done by care workers, and the impact of social care on individuals, families, and communities.
2. Promote positive media coverage: The government should work with media outlets to promote positive coverage of adult social care, highlighting the achievements of care workers, the positive impact of social care, and the importance of investing in the sector.
3. Provide support for care workers: The government should provide support for care workers, including financial incentives, training and development opportunities, and

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recognition for their work. This will help to improve morale among care workers and encourage more people to consider a career in social care.

4. Establish a public inquiry: The government should establish a public inquiry into the state of adult social care in the country, which would examine the challenges facing the sector, the impact of social care on individuals and communities, and potential solutions to address these issues.
5. Involve service users and their families in policy making: The government should involve service users and their families in the development of policies and strategies related to adult social care. This will ensure that the voices of those who rely on social care are heard and their needs are reflected in policy decisions.
6. Address workload and working conditions: Social care workers often face high workloads and challenging working conditions, which can contribute to burnout and turnover. Governments can work with social care providers to ensure that workers have manageable workloads and safe working conditions.

Commissioning and Inspectorate/Sector Bodies

1. Develop a quality assurance framework: Commissioning bodies and inspectorates should develop a quality assurance framework for adult social care, which sets out minimum standards for care provision, and includes measures for assessing the quality of care services. This will help to improve public confidence in the sector and reduce concerns about the quality of care provided.
2. Encourage innovation: Commissioning bodies and inspectorates should encourage innovation in social care provision, supporting new approaches to care delivery that focus on the needs and preferences of service users. This will help to promote a positive image of social care as a dynamic and responsive sector.
3. Promote transparency and accountability: Commissioning bodies and inspectorates should promote transparency and accountability in social care provision, ensuring that care providers are held to account for the quality of care they provide. This will help to build public trust in the sector and reduce concerns about poor care.
4. Involve service users and their families in inspections: Commissioning bodies and inspectorates should involve service users and their families in the inspection

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process, seeking their feedback and views on the quality of care provided. This will help to ensure that the inspection process is responsive to the needs of service users and that their voices are heard.

5. Provide accessible information: Commissioning bodies and inspectorates should provide accessible information about social care provision, including information about care providers, the quality of care provided, and the rights and entitlements of service users. This will help to promote informed decision-making among service users and their families and reduce concerns about the quality of care provided.

Care organisations:

1. Promote positive messaging: Care organisations should promote positive messaging about adult social care, highlighting the important role that care workers play in supporting individuals and communities. This can include sharing positive stories about the impact of social care and celebrating the achievements of care workers.
2. Encourage staff development: Care organisations should invest in the training and development of their staff, providing opportunities for career development and promoting the professionalisation of the sector. This will help to improve the quality of care provided and promote a positive image of care workers as skilled and dedicated professionals.
3. Foster a person-centred approach: Care organisations should adopt a person-centred approach to care provision, focusing on the needs and preferences of service users and promoting their autonomy and independence. This will help to promote a positive image of social care as a sector that supports individuals to live fulfilling and meaningful lives.
4. Involve service users and their families: Care organisations should involve service users and their families in the development of care plans and in the delivery of care, seeking their feedback and views on the quality of care provided. This will help to promote trust and confidence in the care provided and reduce concerns about poor care.
5. Establish partnerships with the community: Care organisations should establish partnerships with the community, promoting a sense of social responsibility and

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demonstrating their commitment to supporting the needs of local people. This can include engaging with local schools, community groups, and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of social care and the role of care workers.

By implementing these policy recommendations, Governments, commissioning and inspectorate bodies, and care organisations, can help to improve public perception of adult social care, reduce stigma attached to it, and ensure that the sector is valued and supported by society.

Brand recognition:

Brand recognition can have a significant impact on public perceptions of adult social care. When people recognise a brand associated with adult social care, it can provide reassurance and a sense of trust, particularly if the brand has a positive reputation. For example, a well-known brand associated with high-quality adult social care can signal to the public that the care provided by that brand is reliable, effective, and safe. This can lead to greater confidence in the care system and a more positive perception of adult social care. On the other hand, if a brand associated with adult social care has a negative reputation, it can harm public perceptions of the entire care system. Negative news stories, reports of abuse or neglect, or poor ratings can all contribute to a negative perception of adult social care. Ultimately, the significance of brand recognition on public perceptions of adult social care will depend on the extent to which people are aware of and familiar with the brands associated with adult social care, as well as the reputation of those brands. Positive branding can contribute to greater trust and confidence in the care system, while negative branding can harm public perceptions and erode trust.

Government

1. Invest in marketing and advertising: Government should invest in marketing and advertising campaigns to promote the adult social care sector and raise public awareness of the services provided. This could include targeted campaigns on social media, TV and radio, and other relevant channels.

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2. Partner with the media: Government should partner with the media to promote positive stories about the adult social care sector and highlight the important role that care workers play in supporting individuals and communities. This could include providing journalists with access to care workers and service users and working with media outlets to develop positive editorial content.
3. Develop a national awards scheme: Government should develop a national awards scheme to celebrate the achievements of care workers and care organisations, promoting excellence and professionalism in the sector. This could include categories for individual care workers, care organisations, and service users.
4. Establish a national social care day: Government should establish a national social care day to raise awareness of the sector and celebrate the contribution of care workers to society. This could include events and activities across the country, including open days at care homes, public lectures, and exhibitions.

Commissioning and Inspectorate/Sector Bodies

1. Develop quality standards for branding: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should develop quality standards for branding within the adult social care sector. This could include guidelines on branding and messaging, as well as requirements for compliance with these standards.
2. Promote best practice: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should promote best practice in branding and marketing within the adult social care sector. This could include sharing case studies and examples of effective branding and marketing campaigns and providing training and support to care organisations.
3. Monitor compliance: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should monitor compliance with branding and marketing standards within the adult social care sector and act where necessary to ensure that care organisations are meeting the required standards.
4. Develop a rating system for branding and marketing: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies could develop a rating system for branding and marketing within the adult social care sector, like the existing rating systems for care quality. This

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would provide an incentive for care organisations to invest in effective branding and marketing and would help to improve overall brand recognition for the sector.

5. Work with government and other stakeholders: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies should work closely with government and other stakeholders to develop a coordinated approach to branding and marketing within the adult social care sector. This could include joint campaigns and initiatives to promote the sector, as well as collaboration on research and data analysis.

Care organisations:

1. Invest in marketing and advertising: Care organisations should invest in marketing and advertising campaigns to promote their services and raise awareness of the adult social care sector. This could include targeted campaigns on social media, local newspapers and radio, and other relevant channels.
2. Provide high-quality care and service: Care organisations should focus on providing high-quality care and service to their clients, which can serve as a powerful marketing tool. Satisfied clients are more likely to recommend a care organisation to others, which can help to improve its reputation and brand recognition.
3. Develop a strong online presence: Care organisations should develop a strong online presence, including a professional website and active social media accounts. This can help to improve their visibility online and can serve as a powerful marketing tool for attracting new clients and employees.
4. Engage with the community: Care organisations should engage with the local community, including participating in community events and activities, and collaborating with other organisations and stakeholders. This can help to build goodwill and positive relationships and can improve brand recognition and reputation.

By implementing these policy recommendations, Governments, commissioning and inspectorate bodies, and care organisations, can help to improve brand recognition of adult social care, raising awareness of the important role that care workers play in supporting individuals and communities, and ensuring that the sector is valued and supported by

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society, and is able to attract new clients and high-quality employees, improve their reputation and impact within the community.

Innovation:

Innovation is crucial for the improvement and development of adult social care services. However, our research has shown a limited understanding of innovation can lead to stagnation of skills and practices within the sector. One of the reasons for this limited understanding is the perception of innovation as solely related to technological advancements. While technology can certainly facilitate innovation in adult social care, innovation can also involve new ways of working, different models of care, and improved processes. Another reason is the lack of investment in innovation within the sector. Care organisations and the government are often focused on meeting immediate needs and addressing existing challenges, leaving little time and resources for innovation. Furthermore, the lack of sharing and dissemination of innovative practices and ideas can also contribute to a limited understanding of innovation. Without opportunities to learn from one another and share best practices, care organisations may be unaware of innovative approaches and solutions that could benefit their services. To address these issues and promote innovation in adult social care, there are several policy recommendations that could be implemented.

Government

1. Funding and support for research and development specifically for the care sector, rather than in competition with other sectors: The government can provide funding for research and development in adult social care. This funding could be used to explore new models of care, technologies, and approaches to service delivery. The government could also provide support for care organisations to develop and implement innovative practices.
2. Creating innovation-focused initiatives: The government can create initiatives that specifically focus on promoting innovation in adult social care. These initiatives could include innovation challenges, hackathons, and other events that encourage the development of new ideas and solutions.

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3. Encouraging collaboration: The government can encourage collaboration between care organisations, academia, and industry to promote innovation in adult social care. This can be achieved by funding and supporting research collaborations, promoting networking opportunities, and creating platforms for sharing best practices.
4. Developing innovation-friendly regulations: The government can develop regulations that support innovation in adult social care. These regulations could include streamlined approval processes for innovative technologies, and frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of innovative practices.
5. Investing in the digital infrastructure: The government can invest in the digital infrastructure of adult social care services. This can include providing funding for the development of digital systems and tools to support care delivery, such as electronic health records, remote monitoring technologies, and telehealth solutions.
6. Encouraging and rewarding innovative practices: The government can incentivise care organisations to adopt and implement innovative practices. This can be achieved through funding schemes, awards and recognition programs, and regulatory frameworks that prioritise innovative practices.

Commissioning and Inspectorate/Sector Bodies

1. Promoting innovation in commissioning: Commissioning bodies can promote innovation by introducing innovation-friendly procurement processes, such as pre-commercial procurement, that allow care organisations to test and develop new ideas.
2. Encouraging experimentation: Commissioning bodies can encourage care organisations to experiment with new models of care and service delivery. This can be achieved by providing funding and support for pilot projects, and by creating frameworks for evaluating their success.
3. Supporting knowledge sharing: Commissioning bodies can support knowledge sharing between care organisations, by facilitating networks and communities of practice, and by providing opportunities for sharing best practices and learning from each other.

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4. Providing regulatory support: Inspectorate bodies can provide regulatory support for innovation in adult social care by developing frameworks that encourage the adoption of innovative practices, and by providing guidance on how to implement new technologies and models of care.
5. Encouraging collaboration: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies can encourage collaboration between care organisations, academia, and industry to promote innovation in adult social care. This can be achieved by funding and supporting research collaborations, promoting networking opportunities, and creating platforms for sharing best practices.
6. Fostering a culture of innovation: Commissioning and inspectorate bodies can foster a culture of innovation in adult social care by providing training and support for care organisations on innovation, and by creating incentives and recognition programs that encourage innovative practices.

Care organisations:

1. Foster a culture of innovation: Care organisations can foster a culture of innovation by encouraging staff to generate and share new ideas, providing opportunities for training and development, and celebrating and rewarding innovative practices.
2. Develop partnerships: Care organisations can develop partnerships with academia, industry, and other care organisations to share knowledge and resources, and collaborate on innovation initiatives.
3. Use technology to support innovation: Care organisations can use technology to support innovation in adult social care. This can include the use of digital tools for monitoring and assessment, telehealth and telecare solutions, and electronic health records.
4. Invest in research and development: Care organisations can invest in research and development to explore new models of care, technologies, and approaches to service delivery. This can include funding and supporting pilot projects and evaluation studies.
5. Promote experimentation: Care organisations can promote experimentation by creating a safe space for staff to test new ideas and approaches, and by providing support for trial projects and initiatives.

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6. Share best practices: Care organisations can share best practices and learn from each other through networking opportunities, sharing case studies and success stories, and participating in knowledge-sharing events.

By taking these policy actions, Governments, commissioning and inspectorate bodies, and care organisations, can create an environment that promotes innovation in adult social care. This can lead to the development of new and improved services that better meet the needs of service users, and ultimately improve the quality of care in the sector.

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