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## Skills and Innovation for Adult Social Care

### DEVELOPING WORK-BASED LEARNING IN THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE SECTOR: GUIDE FOR CARE MANAGERS

WORK -BASED LEARNING PLANNING TOOLS AND TEMPLATE FOR  
DEVELOPING WORK-BASED LEARNING

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



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## Introduction:

Governments across Europe recognise the importance of Work-based learning (WBL) as a way of supporting lifelong employability. The adult social care sector was particularly hard hit by Covid-19, as they tried to cope with keeping patients safe, higher costs, shortages of PPE, and difficulties recruiting staff. Participation in WBL has increased across Europe, with new policies focussing on forms of WBL and targets being set in many countries, as a response to the need for a highly trained and mobile workforce.

At European Level there are a number of strategies which particularly focus on WBL

- [Europe 2020 Growth Strategy](#): focusses on the potential of lifelong education as a tool for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth
- [ET 2020 Strategic Framework](#): is a policy initiative, which sets goals for the reform of Vocational Education and Training, particularly aiming to improve apprenticeships.
- [Agenda for New Skills and Jobs](#): is a scheme to involve employers more directly in the development and delivery of education for work, aiming to achieve the goal of 75% of people aged 20-64 being in employment
- [European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(EaFA\)](#): established in 2013, with the aim of developing initiatives to encourage youth employment especially in high-quality apprenticeships.

Within EU countries there are a range of approaches to WBL. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland have been promoting WBL for many years, and there are long-established partnerships between employers and educators. WBL is becoming more prevalent in other countries, but is not well-established, with Ireland and France developing new policies and schemes, while in some EU countries WBL is still in its infancy. In many countries WBL is seen as a formal process, mainly embedded in VET although increasingly universities are taking an interest in the design and delivery of WBL and incorporating it into academic programmes, especially in areas of business, creative sector, medicine, and teaching. However, WBL can more usefully be understood as any learning which takes place in the workplace, which may not be formal learning, but which may be unplanned, or serendipitous (Lester and Costly, 2010).

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## What is work-based Learning?

*'The term 'work-based learning' (WBL) logically refers to all and any learning that is situated in the workplace or arises directly out of workplace concerns' (Lester and Costley, 2010, p.562). WBL covers formal and (mainly) informal learning in the workplace and contains elements of experiential learning and continuous professional and personal development (CPPD). WBL is often 'unplanned, informal, retrospective and serendipitous, though it may also be planned and organised by the individual learner, the employer, or a third party such as an educational institution, professional or trade body, or trade union' (Lester and Costley, 2010, p.562); good quality WBL has been found to offer extensive benefits for both the employer and the learner (Garnett, 2007; Costley & Armsby, 2007; Nixon et al, 2008). Thus, WBL is learning that is developed through critical reflection in response to workplace issues and may be the most effective type of learning in terms of providing a vehicle for personal development and future employability (Eraut et al, 2000, 2005; Felstead et al, 2005; and Eraut & Hirsh, 2007). Through offering opportunities for negotiation of learning and development, WBL also has benefits for the employer in focussing attention on their relationship with each employee, ensuring staff become effective employees.*

Scholars have found the most effective WBL is linked to individual learning needs (Nixon et al, 2008) recognising the worker as an autonomous learner within their role but also should include elements of learning in partnership with external agencies. This type of learning is recognised to encourage learners to develop awareness of the synergies and reciprocity between knowing and doing (Dewey, 1938) as a 'spiral of activity' (Schon, 1987) and enables learning through developing a collaborative and interactive model of learning.

## Why Introduce work-based Learning in my organisation?

**Work-based Learning** can equip employers, managers, and workers with skills of planning, undertaking, and revisiting their own professional development. It helps people develop as a reflective manager/practitioner in the workplace. It assists staff in building on their strengths and offers routes to identifying and improving areas where skills need building. It supports independent and critical thinking and independent learning.

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## What is a self-reliant worker?

The **Self-Reliant worker** uses their general and specialist knowledge to be aware of the changing world of work and is equipped to take forward his or her own career and personal development throughout a working life. Self-reliance skills include *process skills* not just *functional skills*.

- **Self-awareness** – Ability to identify skills, values, interests, and other personal attributes, highlighting those of interest to an employer. Ability to highlight core strengths and "differentiating factors". Seeking feedback from others or learning how to give constructive feedback and reflecting upon individual and group performance in the workplace in order to develop new skills, improve performance, or respond to changing demands or needs are all skills of self-awareness which can be developed through WBL.
- **Self-promotion** – Enabling staff to develop, describe and advance their own career agenda and use strategies to identify "customer needs".
- **Exploring and creating opportunities** – Ability of staff to spot, make, explore, and take opportunities for innovation is developed through WBL. Enabling staff to develop research skills will help with opportunities creation.
- **Action planning** – Do your staff know how to plan a course of action for their own and the organisations development? This would set out such things as: Where am I now? Where do I want to be? How do I get there? Who can help me? What must I do first?
- **Coping with uncertainty** – This is a critically important skill which WBL can support. It can make sure staff are ready to change or adjust their way of working in response to new challenges, such as Covid-19, and can readily adjust goals as circumstances change.
- **Development focus** – Organisations and staff need to be really committed to lifelong learning. It helps if staff know how they prefer to learn and then are enabled to seek out opportunities to learn.
- **Transfer skills** – Learn to apply your skills in new contexts and to state *HOW* your skills are transferable.

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### Aims of the LAPIS programme:

- To make explicit for the managers how the workplace can be a site and source of learning
- To support managers in identifying learning needs of their staff and in planning a programme of WBL
- To support managers in their development as leaders of learning in professional contexts, and where appropriate, to understand and evaluate their role as a source of learning in the workplace.
- To enable managers to critically evaluate their workplace as a 'learning organisation'
- Enable managers to demonstrate awareness of methods and approaches to learning used in a work-based context
- Support managers in designing and managing a programme of WBL which meets staff, employer and wider stakeholder needs.
- Identify priorities and plan for Continuous Professional and Personal Development (CPPD).

### Initial steps in implementing WBL:

Organisations can do this alone, or they can work with a local, regional, or national training body. In some countries there are sets of agreed training standards which can be a helpful starting place. Agreed standards may have been set by government, a qualifications awarding body, an umbrella organisation (in the UK standards on some aspects of adult social care have been set by the voluntary organisation, [Dignity in Care](#)), or by a trades union. It is also possible to create a set of training standards specific to your own organisation. This can be done with the support of a vocational education and training (VET) establishment who will be able to offer support in getting your training standards mapped onto existing qualifications to allow them to be externally validated and assessed.

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## Training Needs Analysis:

A training needs analysis is a useful tool for establishing specific training needs of staff. It asks a series of questions covering soft and hard skills. It is important to remember that individuals own assessment of their knowledge can be flawed (either overstated, or understated), so managers should design their training needs questionnaire taking care to check the questions used are clear and unambiguous, to reduce the problem of inaccuracies in the questionnaire. Strategies which are helpful for this include, adding questions that require an example to be given of when/how a task was last completed and to provide scales to enable individuals to measure their level of knowledge and confidence in applying that knowledge in a practical situation.

## What is a learning agreement?

The learning agreement is a useful framework for learning in the workplace. It involves the learner, the employer, and any external verifier of learning. This means there is significant scope for the learning agreement to be tailored to a wide range of settings and needs. This document will set out both basic information about the learner and their needs, and the requirements of the employer, as well as stating timescales for learning, and how any learning will be assessed or verified.

## What goes into a learning agreement?

This should set out learning objectives, provide details of how and where the learning will take place and agree assessment methods. Learning can be formal (training course, online learning, visiting trainer, seminar), and informal (one-to-one session with manager, shadowing a colleague, community of practice).

We have completed an example below:

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## Example work-based learning agreement:

### Employee details:

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| Name of Employee | Joe Brown      |
| Employee Number  | 19002883       |
| Employee Contact | +447948 334747 |

### Employer details:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Company/organisation Name | The Caring Hands Home                           |
| Company Address           | 14 Meditation Lane, Greater Caring, WM3<br>4AD. |
| Manager/trainer details   | Mr Steven Holland                               |

### Details of proposed learning:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Learning Objective(s):</b><br/><i>Usually no more than three or four per topic being learned.</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate knowledge and use clinical reasoning skills in accomplishing care management of a patient.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Training or Learning activity:</b><br/><i>Describe any formal or informal but expected learning in the workplace you are likely to experience in achieving your learning objectives and how this will create long-term benefit for development and employability.</i></p> | <p>Gathering of subjective and objective information about the patient to understand the relevant medical and medication history and clinical status of the patient.</p> <p>Subjective and objective information may be collected through patient interviews, medical record reviews, pharmacy profile reviews, and communication with other members of the health care team.</p> <p>Assessment of the information collected and analysis of clinical effects of therapy in the context of the patient's overall health goals in order to identify and prioritise problems and achieve optimal care.</p> <p>Development of an individualised, patient-centred care plan in collaboration with other health care professionals and the patient.</p> |
| <p><b>Validation of learning:</b></p>   | <p><b>Measurement:</b><br/>Improved ability to succinctly communicate with other health care team members and</p>  |

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*Set out how you will know the learning outcomes have been achieved (measurement, evaluation/assessment).*

the patient throughout the patient care process.  
Discussion with team members surrounding specific therapeutic approaches for individual patients based on scientifically and logically validated assessment of patient's health care needs and an ethical consideration of the patient's health care goals and desires.  
Implementation: implementation of care plan in collaboration with other health care professionals and the patient.

**Evaluation:**  
Implementation will accomplish addressing of medication and health related problems; preventative care; medication therapy initiated, modified, discontinued, or administered as authorised; scheduling of follow-up care as needed to achieve goals of therapy.

**Assessment:**  
Preparation of a written care plan that is well-organised, logical, complete, appropriate, and evidence based.

Signatures:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Date of learning agreement                          | 16/02/2023 |
| Date learning agreement is expected to be completed | 23/03/2023 |
| Signature of learner                                | J.Brown    |
| Signature of trainer/mentor/assessor                | S.Holland  |

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## Work-based learning agreement template:

### Employee details:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Name of Employee |  |
| Employee Number  |  |
| Employee Contact |  |

### Employer details:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Company/organisation Name |  |
| Company Address           |  |
| Manager/trainer details   |  |

### Details of proposed learning:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Learning Objective(s):</b><br/><i>Usually no more than three or four per topic being learned.</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Training or Learning activity:</b><br/><i>Describe any formal or informal but expected learning in the workplace you are likely to experience in achieving your learning objectives and how this will create long-term benefit for development and employability.</i></p> |  |
| <p><b>Validation of learning:</b><br/><i>Set out how you will know the learning outcomes have been achieved (measurement, evaluation/assessment).</i></p>   |  |

### Signatures:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Date of learning agreement                          |  |
| Date learning agreement is expected to be completed |  |
| Signature of learner                                |  |
| Signature of trainer/mentor/assessor                |  |

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## Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

This can also be known as Continuous Professional and Personal Development (CPPD). The process of learning does not end once you leave full-time or formal education; it is a lifelong process that is essential to ensure skills and knowledge are updated and enable workers to develop sufficient flexibility to understand how their skills are transferable to a range of settings. CPD is sometimes used as a term to cover a training or development plan, but in fact it is a far wider concept than formal, job-related training. The key feature of CPD is that a *systematic process* of recording and reflecting on learning and development takes place, and that this is not a routine, tick-box checklist but is detailed enough to provide a record (with examples of evidence) of progression from basic skills to competence to complex understanding of a process or procedure.

## Key features of CPD:

- It must be a documented process, although there is no set format for documentation
- It must be self-directed: driven by the staff member, not the employer, even though the employer may be the route through which CPD is accessed
- It is critical that it allows staff to learn from experience, offers opportunities for reflective learning and includes a review of learning
- CPD is critical as a tool in setting self-development goals and objectives
- A CPD record should include both formal and informal learning

## CPD and Career Development:

Many professional bodies require a record of CPD as a condition of membership; some also require reflective practice journals. Setting up a system to enable staff to record their CPD is important. The CPD record can help managers identify strengths and spot talents and skills that are transferable into new areas of work. A CPD record is also a means of noting and addressing gaps in skills and capabilities and deciding how to overcome these.



## Identification of how and where learning can (and does) take place:

Learning in the workplace often occurs informally. Managers should conduct a review of working practices to identify learning opportunities and make use of these in planning their programme of WBL. For example, providing opportunities for staff to shadow colleagues can become a learning opportunity if staff are encouraged to reflect on what they have observed. Giving staff opportunities to speak to each other about HOW they manage their work, the steps they take to complete a task and so on, can offer a learning opportunity, especially if staff are encouraged to share good practices or to ask for advice on solving problems. One-to-one meetings for staff development or review are also good learning opportunities, they enable knowledge to be shared.

## How to plan a programme of work-based learning:

The recent growth in work-based learning opportunities has been driven in part by employers' recognition of the role work-based learning can play in addressing the skills gap and developing a diverse workforce, expanding access to work-based learning opportunities is a critical step towards ensuring your workforce are highly skilled and can help your business to thrive.

There are several principles behind effective work-based learning models to ensure it strengthens the talent pipeline by increasing the number of individuals who successfully access and complete work-based learning programmes to acquire skills and knowledge valued by employers.

- Support entry and advancement in a career pathway
- Provide meaningful job tasks that build career skills and knowledge
- Identify target skills and how gains will be validated
- Reward skill development
- Provide comprehensive participant support

Together, these principles encourage the design of work-based learning models that increase access to work-based learning for all, provide participants with key training and work experience opportunities, and help employers meet their needs for a skilled workforce.

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### Support entry and development into a career pathway:

Effective work-based learning incorporates career navigation structures to help participants make informed choices about their careers. Effective models of work-based learning provide an opportunity to build knowledge, develop skills, and advance in a specific career path.

Work-based learning supports the development of both industry-specific technical skills and professional skills that are valued by employers, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities.

### Provide meaningful job tasks that build career skills and knowledge:

Participants in work-based learning programmes must have opportunities to engage in appropriately complex and relevant tasks aligned with their career goals. Work-based learning should take place in environments that support learning by providing appropriate mentoring and supervision, and this should continue over a sustained period of time to give participants adequate opportunities to practice and develop the skills they have been learning by performing meaningful job tasks. Ensuring work-based learning is meaningful requires preparation on the part of both the participant, and the employer. Employers should create an infrastructure that supports meaningful work-based learning experiences, including taking an active role in preparing and engaging mentors and supervisors so they are prepared to encourage continued growth in participants' skills and knowledge. In addition, employers should develop job descriptions for work-based learning participants that reflect the goal of engagement with the job tasks in which they will have opportunities to build knowledge, professional skills, and technical competence.

### Identify target skills and how gains will be validated:

Work-based learning programmes can promote educational persistence and completion because they reinforce classroom/online learning in a practical manner, contextualising learning and aiding memory retention and skill development. Mutual understanding of the skills to be attained through work-based learning increase its value to both participants and employers. Effective approaches to articulating and validating skills include reflective practices that lead to continuous learning and ensure integration with larger learning goals and formal assessments through which participants can demonstrate mastery of job

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competencies. Individual learning plans that are co-created with the workforce and their supervisors also provide an opportunity to articulate the skills to be attained and to reflect on progress.

Work-based learning programmes are more valuable to both participants and employers when everyone has a clear understanding of the skills that participants are expected to attain, and when there are clear guidelines for verifying that participants have mastered those skills. Conducting a staff training needs analysis can be an efficient route to uncovering the skills that require development within your workforce. Effective approaches to validating skills include reflective practices that lead to continuous learning and ensure integration with training goals, as well as formal assessments in which participants have an opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

#### Reward skill development:

Effective work-based learning models reinforce learning by rewarding skills development through mechanisms such as increases in wages and benefits, or opportunities to transition to permanent employment and promotions for incumbent workers. If a participant has been successful in their initial development through work-based learning, they should be given further opportunities to continue to grow through taking on greater responsibility and more challenging tasks.

#### Provide comprehensive participant support:

Challenges related to access threaten to limit the potential of work-based learning to respond to the needs of an employer. A permanent infrastructure is needed to support work-based learning and ensure that participants progress is not slowed or stopped by challenges such as a lack of transportation or childcare. Other supports needed may include peer cohorts who provide access to mentors in workplace settings; flexible schedules to accommodate individual needs; and access to financial aid and other benefits and resources, such as transportation, childcare, and emergency assistance. In addition, effective programmes offer support to help participants deal with circumstances that may



make participation difficult, for example childcare services may be available for those participants who are parents.

### Useful reading:

Cunningham, I.; Dawes, G.; and Bennett, B. (2004). *The handbook of work-based learning*. Routledge.

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