The Care Workforce Pathway – Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 14 September 2026

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

The Care Workforce Pathway

What is the Care Workforce Pathway?
The Care Workforce Pathway (the Pathway) is a universal career structure for the adult social care workforce that sets out the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours needed to work and progress in adult social care. The Pathway includes Suggested Learning Opportunities (SLOs) to help members of the workforce develop knowledge and skills within a role or within a specific area of practice.

What are the benefits of using the Pathway?
The Pathway will ensure the workforce is equipped with the right knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours vital to delivering fair, high-quality, personalised and accessible care. The Pathway sets out how people can develop across a long-term career in adult social care, with support and training to attract people to join and remain in the sector and support sustainable workforce growth.

How can adopting the Care Workforce Pathway address workforce challenges in my organisation?
The Pathway aims to enhance career development, professionalise the workforce, support recruitment and retention, and provide clear and consistent standards in the quality of care.

How can using the Pathway help my organisation?
Organisations that have used the Pathway report:

- more confident managers
- staff feeling more valued and clearer about development
- more consistent appraisals
- improved recruitment and retention
- reduced workforce churn

Is the Care Workforce Pathway mandatory?
No, there are no plans to mandate the Pathway. However, we encourage providers and the workforce to adopt the Pathway to support career development, including training and skill enhancement to deliver high-quality care and support.

How is the Pathway developed and updated?
Our ambition is to develop a truly universal career structure for the unregulated adult social care workforce, that covers the breadth and diversity of careers in the sector enabling people to navigate different career options within adult social care.

In July 2026, the Government, in partnership with Skills for Care, published a revised and expanded Pathway representing nearly 100% of the adult social care workforce. This most recent publication covers additional role categories including Care Technologist, Nominated Individual and Activity Co-ordinator. The Pathway now also recognises the contribution of the wider workforce, including people in corporate/middle-management and supporting roles.

The Pathway is developed collaboratively with the sector, using small, ongoing steps to test, refine and improve it. It is reviewed regularly to ensure it keeps pace with the evolving needs of adult social care and the wider health and care system.

How will the Pathway improve career development?
The Pathway sets out clear role categories that are recognised across the sector. This helps people understand where their role fits in their organisation and across adult social care, making it easier for them to see their next steps and plan their own career journey.

How can people progress using the Pathway?
Progression policies will look different in every organisation, but the Pathway gives everyone a shared structure. It helps managers use the same clear expectations in supervision, appraisals and development planning, making it easier for staff to understand how they can develop and what their next steps might be.

Are there tools for care workers to help them plan their career?
Yes. There are simple tools for workers to check their current skills, think about their career goals, and make development plans with their supervisor or manager. Some resources are available on the Skills for Care website, and organisations may create their own tools that suit their service, culture and ways of working. Care workers can find these tools here: Career and Development.

What support is available for line managers?
There is a growing set of national resources to help managers understand and use the Pathway, support development conversations, and build coaching skills. These are available on the Skills for Care website. Managers can find these tools here: Getting Started and Empowering Managers and Leaders.

How can I use the Care Workforce Pathway knowledge, behaviours, skills, and values in recruitment (e.g. job descriptions and interview)?
Adopting the Pathway in recruitment and onboarding can help set clear expectations of new employees through thorough job descriptions, clear expectations for the skills required and a development plan to agree and track progress. Using the Pathway can help boost recruitment by giving a realistic picture of day-to-day work in job adverts, supporting values-based application processes and by providing a more detailed picture on how someone can grow in a career within adult social care. More information on this can be found in the Adopting the Care Workforce Pathway how-to guide.

Learning and development

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

As adult social care providers vary in size and context, they are best placed to select training that meets their organisational needs, so the Pathway does not specify training providers or access routes. The intention is for the Pathway to be flexible, allowing providers to tailor training to their context, whilst still aligning to national standards.

Are there any mandatory training requirements in the Pathway?
No. The Pathway does not introduce any new mandatory training requirements, instead it brings together the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours needed to work in adult social care. This includes existing mandatory requirements, including the requirement introduced by the Health and Care Act 2022 that all CQC registered service providers must ensure their staff have training on learning disability and autism that is appropriate to their role. The Pathway includes Oliver's Training (previously referred to as Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism), which is the recommended training for health and social care staff to undertake.

How does the Care Workforce Pathway link to apprenticeship pathways?
We have developed the knowledge, skills, and behaviours in the Pathway to align with the relevant apprenticeship standards, where it is appropriate and helpful to do so. Apprenticeships are also included in the SLOs for each role category, to highlight options for career development and progression. However, apprenticeships are just one route available to care workers and employers to achieve the requirements of a particular Pathway role category. Other programmes of learning and qualifications are also available and referenced within the Pathway which may achieve the same result.

We recognise the importance of adult social care training and qualifications and are working closely with Skills England and the Department for Education to ensure the Pathway aligns and supports the Government's wider sector skills strategy, including the recently published Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper.

Role Categories

What types of roles aren't included in the Pathway and why?
The aim of the Pathway is to ensure people receive the highest quality of care, delivered by a professional workforce which has the right skills, expertise and values. However, the sector also comprises many supporting roles key to the delivery of effective services

Decisions on which role categories should be included in the Pathway must be driven by the contribution they make to the quality of care and support. All role categories must align with roles employed by providers of adult social care* and based on the direct or indirect impact of the role category on person-centred care, safety, well-being, and continuity of care (as measured by the CQC).

When it comes to organisations adopting the Pathway, the choice of which role categories are applicable and appropriate for your workforce is very much an individual one.

[* Where an Integrated Care Board or Local Authority is employing someone in a role on the Pathway, they are doing so in their capacity as a provider of care rather than as a commissioner.]

To make sure the Pathway captures the breadth and variation across the ASC workforce, we have agreed a tiered approach to inclusion of role categories:

- **Direct role categories:** roles that are directly involved in the provision of care and support (e.g. Care or Support Worker, Nominated Individual; Activity Co-ordinator)
- **Supporting role categories:** roles that do not provide direct care or support but are nevertheless integral to the delivery of safe, high-quality care and support (e.g. Corporate management, Learning and Development Practitioner roles, Domestic and Catering roles etc)

What is the difference between the direct and supporting role categories?
Direct role categories outline all the expected behaviours, knowledge and skills expected for someone to meet the standard to work at that level. In some instances, additional knowledge and skills may be required to work in a particular environment for example dementia care knowledge and skills when working in a dementia registered service.

Supporting role categories articulate the standard for people working in non-direct care roles. For these role categories the articulated behaviours, knowledge and skills are specific to working in an adult social care context. There may be additional knowledge and skills that are more general to the role that someone would need to know and do regardless of the environment in which they work. No SLOs have been included in the supporting role categories.

Regarding Enhanced Care Workers

How would introducing the enhanced care worker role benefit my workforce/organisation?
The enhanced care worker role category has been developed to recognise the increasingly complex nature of care and support, where care workers may be required to support people with one or more health conditions and/or provide more complex condition-specific care.

We want care workers to be recognised and rewarded as the professionals they are, and this role category provides clear expectations about the skills, knowledge and further training needed to support people with complex health and care needs.

We anticipate employers will use this role category to support workforce planning, including re-evaluation of job roles, skills mix and learning and development.

Is there funding for training and clinical supervision?
In November 2024, Skills for Care and DHSC updated the Guiding Principles on delegated healthcare activities. The updated resource provides guidance on the clinically safe and appropriate delegation of delegated healthcare activities.

The social care provider is responsible for the acceptance of the delegated healthcare activities by their workers and to have the necessary governance arrangements, insurance, policies and regulatory requirements in place. This includes the ability to demonstrate that their care workers have the right skills, training, and competence to carry out the activity, as well as ensuring there is sufficient support and supervision by the delegating regulated professional.

Local authority commissioners are responsible for defining and agreeing the delegated healthcare activities that are undertaken through local protocols, decision-making and agreement with the organisations and systems involved.

Will there be funding to support increased wages for enhanced care workers?
These interventions will not always need additional funding. However, in many areas, local health and social care commissioners are working together to ensure funding aligns with the care being given. The Government would like to see more local systems adopt similar approaches.

The Government expect care workers to be properly recognised and paid for the work they do. That is why the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for the adult social care sector is being introduced, backed by £500m funding to improve pay and conditions for the adult social care workforce.

The Government is making over £4.6 billion of additional funding available for adult social care in 2028-29 compared to 2025-26.

Regarding Care Technologists

What is a Care Technologist?
Care Technologist is a new and emerging role within adult social care focused on the provision of care technology to support independence and reduce reliance on “traditional” care interventions. Care Technologist support individuals and their loved ones to engage with care technology, assessing appropriate technology solutions, building trust in technology enabled care and ensuring that technology solutions continue to be effective in supporting long term independence.

Where can I find information on technology that can support technology enabled care? Is there a list available?
Due to the emerging and rapidly changing nature of care technology we don’t currently provide any information on technology that is available. We expect, as utilisation of this role grows and develops further, to see more systems (such as Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards) to start articulating what technology providers are available locally and what technology they might expect to see utilised within care.

Other common questions

What support is being provided to organisations interested in adopting the Pathway?
In order to support adoption Skills for Care has developed a suite of supporting resources for organisations and managers to help understand and use the Pathway. If you are considering adopting the Pathway, these resources are available on the Skills for Care website to support you to start adopting the Pathway (available here: Getting Started). These resources are free and available for all organisations across the adult social care sector to access and download for local use. These resources have been developed with reviews and feedback from Pathway adopter organisations and are intended for use by both leaders and line managers within organisations and systems.

Adoption is flexible, with each organisation defining to what extent they want to adopt the Pathway.

How has the Pathway been tested?
Development of the Pathway has been an ongoing, iterative process. Following initial launch of the Pathway in January 2024 each subsequent phase of development has included engagement and testing with the sector to ensure the content remains current and applicable within each role category.

Feedback and insights from sector testing and engagement are reflected in the Pathway via ongoing refinements to each role category.

The Department of Health and Social Care worked with Skills for Care in 2025/26 to deliver a programme supporting providers interested in adopting the Pathway. A similar programme is operating in 2026/2027, alongside activity to test the benefits of adoption at system level with three specific interconnected groups of organisations who are already operating together in localities.

Have the Government committed to resource the Pathway so providers can employ all these roles?
Because of the diversity of the sector, not every organisation will have or need roles aligning with every role category. For example, some smaller organisations may not have a deputy manager role. As you look to implement the Pathway in your organisation, you will map your organisation's job descriptions against the Pathway role categories, which will allow you to identify which role categories are present in your workforce.

Is there any incentive for pay increments on the Pathway?
We expect care workers to be properly recognised and paid for the work they do. The Government is making available up to £1.6 billion of additional funding for social care authorities in 2026-27, with the Government confirming over £4 billion of additional funding available for adult social care in 2028-29, compared to 2025-26.

How will the Fair Pay Agreement impact the Pathway?
It is too early at this time to assess how implementation of the first Fair Pay Agreement will impact the Pathway. Both the Department of Health and Social Care and Skills for Care are committed to ensuring the Pathway remains current and operates effectively within the wider Government policy landscape moving forwards.

Does CQC endorse the Pathway?
The Pathway is being developed to work alongside existing standards and competency frameworks. CQC will reference the Pathway in its new Assessment Framework and is developing sector-based guidance signposting providers to good practice, likely under the Safe Key Question and the new Quality Statement on Safe and Effective Staffing.

With the introduction of the Pathway, will CQC be changing its approach to inspecting the workforce?
No. CQC's expectations remain the same. CQC will still review induction, support and training using the new Assessment Framework, and may look for nationally recognised good practice such as the Pathway.

How does the Pathway align to providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales?
The Pathway applies **only to adult social care in England**.
Learning and insights may still be shared with devolved nations, but the Pathway itself is not adopted or implemented outside England.