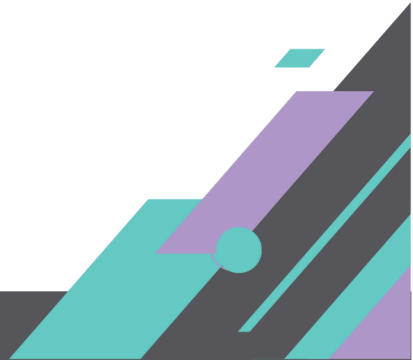




CARE DEVELOPMENT EAST



Care Development East 3-Year Strategic Plan 2025 to 2028



Care Development East 3 Year Strategic Plan – 2025 to 2028

Care Development East is an independent not for profit organisation whose purpose is:

To further develop an excellent health & social care workforce across the East of England to enhance the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Our purpose focuses on the quality of care received by service users from care providers as this will enable us to assess the true impact of our services across the region. Our success will be judged on our ability to develop the knowledge and skills of the existing health & social care workforce whilst attracting individuals to careers in the sector.

Our independence means that we are uniquely placed to address the challenges currently facing health & social care providers in attracting, recruiting, and retaining a skilled workforce. Meeting these challenges ensures that there is sufficient capacity in the system and that the quality-of-care service users receive is of the highest level.

Care Development East has a vital support role in the market and were the services that we offer not available to providers, many would struggle to retain a skilled workforce.

Our Values & Principles

Care Development East's activities are driven by our values and principles as follows.

- **To promote equality of opportunity and inclusivity within the health & social care workforce: We work to ensure that all individuals can access opportunities in the sector.**
- **To Innovate & Create: We believe in continuous improvement and creative solutions to meet the evolving needs of the workforce we represent.**
- **To adapt to change, respond and deliver: We embrace change and respond effectively to ensure we consistently deliver high-quality services.**
- **To be recognised as a trustworthy partner: We uphold the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in all our interactions and partnerships.**
- **To listen and respond to the voice of stakeholders: We listen to our partners and providers to ensure our services directly meet their needs.**

These values and principles will be realised by adopting behaviours in the organisation that support them.

Our Previous Aims

When we developed our aims in 2021/22, we did so with the intention of meeting the identified needs at the time of local health and social care providers. We also looked at regional and national data e.g. Skills for Care, NHS England to ensure that our services were in line with the requirements of partners and stakeholders.

At the time of publication, we identified seven key aims.

1. To focus on raising standards of care
2. Ensure access to funding for providers looking to develop and grow.
3. To support Registered Care Managers and develop the managers of the future.
4. To recognise, promote and showcase excellence in health & social care.
5. To widen career choices for young people by promoting career pathways in health & social care
6. To ensure access to learning & development providers with a proven track record of success
7. To be a trusted source of Information, Advice and Guidance

Over the last three years, Care Development has taken steps to address these aims by developing projects and training interventions that have helped to attract, recruit, and retain a skilled workforce. These interventions have included the Kick Start Programme, Complete Care Training Hub, and the Next Generation project which we undertook in partnership with SNEE ICS. Our work has given us a strong foundation to build on and generated an extensive base of stakeholders who we are able to work with.

Now as we look ahead to the next three-year period, we have taken the opportunity to revisit the aims and examine to what extent these are still relevant and what new challenges and opportunities have arisen that we need to take account of. These are summarised below.

Assessment of Challenges Facing Health and Social Care in the East of England

As awareness of health issues grows, the public will continue to have high expectations for the accessibility and quality of care, requiring health and social care systems to adapt continuously.

As of March 2023, according to Skills for Care, there were approximately 152,000 vacancies in adult social care in England. This represented a slight decrease from the previous year but remained a significant challenge for the sector.

Whilst the figure is specific to England, the fluctuation in vacancy rate over time due to various factors, including economic conditions, workforce demographics, and government policies is something that the East of England is also subject to. Focussing in on Suffolk, CDE's main operating area, there are some specific factors that need to be considered. With a population of 776,442 residents (mid-year 2023), Suffolk has a mix of urban and rural areas, with some significant towns including the county town of Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds, Lowestoft, and Newmarket. However, only 55% of the population of Suffolk live in the largest ten towns.

Although the high rural population of Suffolk can bring physical and mental health benefits for many, it also presents challenges. For example, those who live in small villages may find accessing services more complicated than those living in large towns, where public transport is more available, and they may also feel more isolation and loneliness. The rurality of the county can also make it more difficult to recruit to the care market workforce.

Suffolk has a smaller population of people living in greatest deprivation compared to the English average (it is the 53rd least deprived of the 151 upper tier authorities in England). However, 10.5% of residents still live in deprivation in the county. Healthy life expectancy is lower for those who are born in areas that are more deprived. Although the situation is better compared to the national average, there is some evidence that this is declining.

An increasingly ageing population may also increase the risk of more health inequalities to residents – and lead to more pressure on services.

The health and social care sector in the region as a whole face a complex array of challenges, mirroring many of the broader issues impacting the sector nationally. In rural and coastal areas many of the following challenges are exacerbated by poor transport links and lack of digital infrastructure. Key challenges include:

1. Workforce Shortages and Retention

- **Staffing Crisis:** A significant shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural areas where there are poor transport links.
- **Retention Issues:** High turnover rates due to factors like workload, pay, and career progression.
- **Skills Gaps:** A mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the needs of the population. At recent consultation events on the Suffolk Care Market Strategy (November 2024) providers highlighted needs in learning disabilities & autism, mental health and delegated health tasks.

2. Aging Population and Increasing Demand

- **Rising Care Needs:** An aging population with complex health conditions is driving increased demand for care services.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Limited capacity within the system to meet growing demand.
- **Integration Challenges:** Difficulty in coordinating care between health and social care services. Following the COVID 19 pandemic, a 'silo' mentality has crept back in which can stifle opportunities for collaboration.

3. Financial Pressures

- **Underfunding:** Chronic underfunding of both health and social care services.
- **Rising Costs:** Increasing costs of providing care, including wages, medication, and equipment.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** Questions about the long-term financial viability of the sector.

4. Health Inequalities

- **Disparities in Access:** Unequal access to healthcare and social care services across the region. This is a particular issue in rural, coastal, and marginalised communities.
- **Wider Determinants of Health:** The impact of factors like poverty, education, employment, and environment on health outcomes.
- **Health Inequalities Persist:** Ongoing challenges in reducing health disparities.

5. Digital Transformation

- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to technology and digital services among stakeholders and the public. Lack of superfast connections in rural communities is still an issue.
- **Data Sharing Challenges:** Difficulties in sharing data between health and social care organisations.
- **Cybersecurity Risks:** Increased vulnerability to cyberattacks.

6. Rural and Coastal Challenges

- **Accessibility Issues:** Geographic isolation and limited transportation options. This is a particular challenge for providers of domiciliary care.
- **Workforce Shortages:** Particular challenges in recruiting and retaining staff in rural areas.
- **Limited Services:** Reduced availability of specialist services compared to urban areas.
- **Social Exclusion:** Isolation and limited access to and awareness of health and other community services.

The Local Government Association (LGA) has highlighted the need for immediate action to address many of these workforce challenges. A survey* revealed an estimated 63,370 full-time equivalent adult social care staff working in local councils across England as of October 2023 with 10,060 vacant posts—a vacancy rate of 16%. The LGA is advocating for a fully fund workforce strategy to attract and retain skilled professionals in the sector.

The challenges highlighted above are interconnected and require a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address. Fortunately, Care Development East has well established partnerships in place that it can utilise to help address these challenges.

How Care Development East Can Address the Challenges in the East of England

Care Development East can play a pivotal role in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the health and social care sector in the East of England by focusing on the following key areas:

1. Workforce Development and Retention

- **Targeted Training:** Develop and deliver tailored training programs that address specific skills gaps identified in the workforce assessment and the Local Authority's Care Market Strategy.
- **Apprenticeship and Traineeship Expansion:** Increase opportunities for young people to enter the sector through apprenticeships and traineeships. Care Development East has considerable experience in this area and with the development of its Unlocking Opportunities brand, CDE hopes to build on this.
- **Retention Strategies:** Implement initiatives to improve staff retention, such as flexible working arrangements, mentoring programs, and recognition schemes.
- **Career Pathways:** Create clear career progression routes for care workers, providing opportunities for advancement and promotion.

**Skills for Care Workforce Supply & Demand Trends 2023/24*

2. Addressing Aging Population and Increasing Demand

- **Capacity Building:** Support care providers in increasing their capacity to meet growing demand, potentially through partnerships and collaborative initiatives.
- **Integration of Services:** Promote better coordination between health and social care services to ensure seamless care delivery.
- **Technology Adoption:** Explore the use of technology to enhance care delivery, such as telehealth and remote monitoring.

3. Mitigating Financial Pressures

- **Cost-Effective Practices:** Support care providers in implementing cost-effective practices, such as energy efficiency measures and waste reduction.
- **Funding Advocacy:** Advocate for increased funding for health and social care services at both local and national levels.

4. Tackling Health Inequalities

- **Equitable Access:** Promote equitable access to healthcare and social care services, especially in underserved areas and for marginalised groups such as people living with dementia and informal carers.
- **Social Determinants of Health:** Address the social determinants of health, such as education and access to employment, to improve overall health outcomes for those working in social care.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster partnerships with community organisations to address local health needs and disparities in support for those who need it e.g. needs such as access to oral health services.

5. Embracing Digital Transformation

- **Digital Literacy:** Provide training and support to stakeholders. All stakeholders in digital literacy and the use of technology across the sector including cybersecurity and AI.
- **Data Sharing:** Promote cyber secure and efficient data sharing between health and social care organisations e.g. through work supporting digital care and electronic records.

6. Addressing Rural and Coastal Challenges

- **Workforce Retention:** Work with partners to attract and retain staff in these areas, such as supporting programmes offering looking at flexible working and effective staff benefits.
- **Community-Based Care:** Support community-based care models both rural and coastal.

**Draft Three-Year Strategic Plan for Care Development East (2025-2028)
Activities and Impact Measures & Outputs**

Year 1: Foundation and Assessment (2025)	Impact Measures & Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Workforce Assessment: Conduct a detailed analysis of the local workforce, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and with a consideration of inequalities experienced by the workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive report based on survey findings, face to face provider feedback and links to partner data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Engagement: Build strong partnerships with care providers to understand their workforce needs and challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of provider contacts and greater engagement evidenced through participation in learning and development activities e.g. workshops, conferences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Gap Analysis: Identify specific skills gaps and develop targeted training programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased take up of training services, particularly in specialist areas of complex care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Pathways: Develop clear career progression routes for care workers, emphasising opportunities for growth and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact on staff retention. Evidenced by provider feedback.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing and Support: Implement initiatives to improve staff wellbeing and reduce turnover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact on health and wellbeing evidenced through provider survey.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities: Undertake desktop research into the health inequalities experienced by social care clients and workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities report describing inequalities experienced by care clients and workforce.

Year 2: Implementation and Growth (2026)	Impact Measures & Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development Programs: Launch targeted training programs to address identified skills gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio of services that map directly to skills gaps identified by Skills for Care, SCC and SNEE ICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Expand apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to attract new talent and young people experiencing inequalities in employment chances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased take up of apprenticeships in health & social care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention Strategies: Implement strategies to improve staff retention, such as mentoring programs, flexible working options, and recognition schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New services in place directly aligned to stated programs including flexible working and recognition/incentive schemes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Support: Provide ongoing support to care providers in recruitment, training, and staff development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio of services that meet the challenges facing the health & social care workforce. Evidenced on website, newsletters, and marketing materials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and Evaluation: Collect and analyse data to measure the impact of workforce development initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Provider Survey analysing impact of CDE's WFD initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing and Support: Implement initiatives to address inequalities in staff wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact on health and wellbeing evidenced through provider survey.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities: Develop and implement Health Inequalities Action Plan to address key health inequalities experienced by social care clients and workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Inequalities Action Plan identifies actions that can feasibly be taken by CDE on inequalities experienced by care clients and staff. • Evidence of working with key partners such as ICS and SCC on implementation of community care models.

Year 3: Consolidation and Expansion (2027)	Impact Measures & Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Sustainability: Develop a long-term workforce plan to ensure a sustainable supply of skilled workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan developed in partnerships with Skills for Care, SCC and SNEE ICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and Technology: Explore the use of technology to enhance care delivery and support the workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New technology initiatives made available to providers in Suffolk and Northeast Essex
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Development: Invest in leadership development programs to build capacity within the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New leadership services implemented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector-Wide Collaboration: Strengthen partnerships with other organisations to improve workforce outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDE will have a key role at regional Workforce Forums e.g. ICS Ageing Well Domain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Measurement: Evaluate the overall impact of the three-year plan on the adult social care workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-year survey conducted to determine CDE's effectiveness in implementing services to address challenges.

Delivery Timeline

		Year One				Year Two				Year Three			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Foundation & Assessment	Comprehensive Workforce Assessment: Conduct a detailed analysis of the local workforce, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and with a consideration of inequalities experienced by the workforce.												
	Employer Engagement: Build strong partnerships with care providers to understand their workforce needs and challenges.												
	Skills Gap Analysis: Identify specific skills gaps and develop targeted training programs.												
	Career Pathways: Develop clear career progression routes for care workers, emphasising opportunities for growth and development.												
	Wellbeing and Support: Implement initiatives to improve staff wellbeing and reduce turnover.												
Implementation & Growth	Health Inequalities: Undertake desktop research into the health inequalities experienced by social care clients and workforce												
	Workforce Development Programs: Launch targeted training programs to address identified skills gaps.												
	Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Expand apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to attract new talent and young people experiencing inequalities in employment chances.												
	Retention Strategies: Implement strategies to improve staff retention, such as mentoring programs, flexible working options, and recognition schemes.												
	Employer Support: Provide ongoing support to care providers in recruitment, training, and staff development.												
	Data and Evaluation: Collect and analyse data to measure the impact of workforce development initiatives.												
	Wellbeing and Support: Implement initiatives to address inequalities in staff wellbeing												
Consolidation & Expansion	Health Inequalities: Develop and implement Health Inequalities Action Plan to address key health inequalities experienced by social care clients and workforce												
	Workforce Sustainability: Develop a long-term workforce plan to ensure a sustainable supply of skilled workers.												
	Innovation and Technology: Explore the use of technology to enhance care delivery and support the workforce.												
	Leadership Development: Invest in leadership development programs to build capacity within the sector.												
	Sector-Wide Collaboration: Strengthen partnerships with other organisations to improve workforce outcomes.												
Impact Measurement: Evaluate the overall impact of the three-year plan on the adult social care workforce.													

Key Focus Areas:

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Develop innovative recruitment strategies, such as targeted campaigns and employer branding. Invest in retention initiatives to create a positive work environment.
- **Training and Development:** Provide a range of training opportunities, including apprenticeships, qualifications, and upskilling programs. Focus on developing leadership and management skills.
- **Wellbeing and Support:** Prioritise staff wellbeing through initiatives such as mental health support, employee assistance programs, and work-life balance initiatives.
- **Career Progression:** Create clear career pathways for care workers, with opportunities for advancement and promotion.
- **Employer Engagement:** Build strong partnerships with care providers to support their workforce needs and ensure the sustainability of the sector.
- **Health Inequalities:** Identifying actions CDE can take to help mitigate inequalities experienced by both social care clients and staff through expanding CDE's training offer and working in partnership.

Summary of our Approach

- Align the plan with local and national workforce strategies.
- Consider the impact of funding and resources on the plan's implementation.
- Regularly review and adapt the plan based on emerging challenges and opportunities.

By focusing on the development of a skilled workforce and building a solid foundation for the future, Care Development East can play a vital role in improving the quality of care for individuals in the region.

Abbreviations

WFD - Work Force Development
SCC - Suffolk County Council
SNEE - Suffolk and North East Essex
ICS - Integrated Care System
CDE - Care Development East
LGA - Local Government Association

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