

Report on Desk Based Investigations into the Provision of Apprenticeship Standards for Learning Disability Support Workers

1. Aims of Investigation

The aims of this investigation were to:

- explore the source of demand for the Learning Disability (LD) Support Worker Apprenticeship
- explore the scope of the role of an 'LD Support Worker'
- conclude whether the LD Support Worker role is provided for by an existing Standard(s) or whether there are gaps which would drive new Apprenticeship Standard development and
- explore in detail whether the L3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker Standard core content is appropriate for LD support workers should additional development be required

2. Background

Health Education England has asked Skills for Health to consider the need to develop an additional option for Learning Disability Support Workers within the level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship Standard as part of a wider scheme of work to support employers to develop Apprenticeship standards during 2016-7.

2.1 Learning Disabilities

A learning disability affects the way a person understands information and how they communicate. Around 1.5m people in the UK have one. This means they can have difficulty:

- understanding new or complex information
- learning new skills
- coping independently

It is thought that up to 350,000 people have severe learning disabilities. A learning disability can be mild, moderate or severe. Some people with a mild learning disability can talk easily and look after themselves, but take a bit longer than usual to learn new skills. Others may not be able to communicate at all and have more than one disability. A learning disability is not the same as a learning difficulty or mental illness. Some children with learning disabilities grow up to be quite independent, while others need help with everyday tasks, such as washing or getting dressed, for their whole lives.



2.2 Transforming Care

In December 2012 the Department of Health published 'Transforming Care: A national response to Winterbourne View Hospital'. The report laid out 'clear, timetabled actions for health and local authority commissioners working together to transform care and support for people with learning disabilities'. The key aims of the Transforming Care programme are to achieve:

1. A better community infrastructure resulting in a substantial reduction in the number of children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, placed in inpatient settings
2. Prevention of people living in inpatient services and a reduction in length of stay for those people admitted to an inpatient facility
3. Better quality of care and support for children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviours that challenge
4. Better quality of life for children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviours that challenge.

As a result of the Transforming Care programme, many individuals with learning disabilities were moved out of hospitals to community-based support and many large hospitals that had individuals with learning disabilities as inpatients, were closed.

2.3 Learning Disability Support Worker-Scope of Role

Support Workers engage with people with learning disabilities in a variety of settings. The most common of these are clinics, day care or drop-in centres. They may also be asked to help out with people in hospitals or to visit individuals in their homes. School visits designed to enable disabled children to access learning can also be involved.

The duties of a Learning Disability Support Worker break down into two main areas:

- promoting health and
- promoting well-being

The former may involve working with individuals to ensure they can eat well and get enough exercise, as well as helping them to deal with hygiene issues. The latter may involve advocacy, and Support Workers must be able to identify barriers that can stop individuals leading fulfilling lives, as well as ensuring that, wherever possible, such barriers are removed.

Personal attributes required by LD Support Workers include patience, a caring nature, the ability to connect emotionally even with people who think very differently. They need to be able to calm situations and



individuals who get upset and to know when to step back from difficult situations. They also need to have sufficient strength of character to stand up for clients who face discrimination.

Although a Support Worker will generally be under the supervision of others, they need to be able to make decisions independently when individuals need immediate help, and they will need to make the effort to get to know them as people so a relationship of trust can be built.

The focus of an LD Support Worker role is on responding to the individual's needs, treating them with respect and helping them to live as independently as possible.

(Text adapted from https://www.randstad.co.uk/job-seeker/career-hub/archives/what-does-a-support-worker-for-learning-disabilities-do_314/ accessed on 18/10/2106).

2.4 Support for Transforming Care and Development of Transferable Role Templates

To support the Government's Transforming Care Programme, Health Education England commissioned Skills for Health in 2016 to identify the components required for the Health workforce to deliver effective support to people with learning disabilities in a community setting.

As part of this work, and to assist commissioners and providers who are developing these new and different services, Health Education England worked in partnership with Skills for Health to devise a suite of generic role templates at five levels of the career framework, from level 3 (Support Worker) to level 7 (Advanced Practitioner). Health Education England subsequently produced guidance for commissioners and service providers on the use of the role templates, *'Using Generic Role Templates for the Delivery of Learning Disability Services in a Community Setting- A How-to Guide for Commissioners and Service Providers'* Health Education England 2016.

To inform the development of the role templates, Health Education England and Skills for Health reviewed a number of initiatives and publications including:

- *The National Plan for Implementation of the Transforming Care Programme, "Building the Right Support", and Service Model for Commissioners of Health and Social Care Services* produced by NHS England (October 2015) and used as the basis for the development of the generic role templates.
- *Leading Change, Adding Value: A Framework for Nursing, Midwifery and Care Staff-* published by NHS England (May 2016)
- *Generic Service Interventions Pathway for Learning Disabilities-* a competency framework produced by Health Education England (2015) following extensive work with a large multi-disciplinary expert reference group in the West Midlands. The framework was produced to support development of the



Learning Disability workforce and was mapped to National Occupational Standards. The key outcomes for people with learning disabilities that are described in the Generic Service Interventions Pathway, and the activities undertaken by the workforce, are included within the role template framework as Facets (see below).

- *Delivering Effective Specialist Community Learning Disabilities Health Team Support to People with Learning Disabilities and their Families or Carers*- produced by the National Learning Disabilities Professional Senate (March 2015) described the key functions of a multi-disciplinary team and was used as the basis for a functional mapping exercise which went on to form the basis of the role templates.
- The *Employability Skills Matrix for Health*-produced by Skills for Health

The role templates were designed to enable a common understanding of a role and provide consistency of approach in defining the skills and competences needed to fulfil the role requirements. The same role templates were designed to be used to create job descriptions of all of the roles required in a service at a particular career framework level.

The level 3 role template for a 'Learning Disability Community Teams Support Worker' consists of:

- a mandatory list of competences/National Occupational Standards (NOS) common to all roles at level 3
- a specific list of competences, all required for people at level 3 in the learning disability community team
- a number of 'facets', associated with activities relevant to the team, from within each list the appropriate competences/National Occupational Standards should be selected relative to the requirements of the team for this role

The facets are:

- access and care coordination skills
- assessment formulation and treatment planning skills
- enabling health intervention skills
- therapeutic intervention skills
- role support intervention skills
- family/ carer intervention skills
- accommodation and welfare skills
- monitoring and measurement skills
- team skills
- leadership and management skills



3. Methodology

To carry out this investigation telephone discussions and e mail exchanges were held with stakeholders including the Apprenticeship Lead for Health Education England, the Transforming Care Programme Lead for Health Education England, Training and Development leads, members of the Healthcare Support Worker Trailblazer Group and employers of Learning Disability Support Workers.

Employers were canvassed for their views on whether they thought there was a need for a separate Apprenticeship Standard at level 3 for Learning Disability Support Workers, or whether they consider existing Standards meet their needs. Existing standards that employers were asked to review included:

- Healthcare Support Worker (level 2)
- Senior Healthcare Support Worker (level 3)
- Adult Care Worker (level 2)
- Senior Adult Care Worker (level 3)

Employers were asked if they could provide example job descriptions for Learning Disability Support Workers operating in a health context. Unfortunately these were not available during the investigation period. However, extensive research and consultation with employers was previously undertaken to inform creation of the 'Transferable Role Template Career Framework level 3- Learning Disability Community Teams Support Worker' role template and this was used for mapping purposes within this investigation.

The role template was mapped against the Senior Healthcare Support Worker and Senior Adult Care Worker Standards. These two standards were chosen for the mapping as they were thought to most closely match the level 3 role template. (See Appendix 1).

4. Findings:

4.1 Stakeholder Feedback

Of the stakeholders spoken to, all supported the idea of using of Apprenticeships to develop Learning Disability Support Workers. When asked whether existing Apprenticeship Standards meet the needs of Learning Disability Support Workers one mentioned that they thought existing Standards *'already closely match'* and that they *'couldn't see any significant changes needed'*.

Another agreed that they *'couldn't see too much difference'* between the existing standards and the role of the Learning Disability Support Worker. When asked specifically about whether there should be an additional option within the level 3 Healthcare Support Worker Standard one employer said they thought that the existing *'pathways could be applied to working with adults and children and young people with learning disabilities'*.



None of the stakeholders contacted expressed a view that they thought there was currently a gap in provision in terms of suitable Apprenticeship Standards for Learning Disability Support Worker and it remains unclear where the original demand for a Learning Disability Support Worker Apprenticeship option within the Healthcare Support Worker Standard had arisen.

4.2 Mapping Findings

See Appendix 1-Learning Disability Support Worker Mapping

The level 3 role template for a 'Learning Disability Community Teams Support Worker' was used for mapping purposes for this investigation. The level 3 role template outlines the scope of the role in terms of competences which are:

- Core-mandatory and common to all roles at level 3
- Specific-required for all at level 3 in a Learning Disability community team and
- Related to facets (skills which are relative to the requirements of different teams)

Only the mandatory core and specific competences required for all at level 3 in the 'Learning Disability community team' were mapped across to existing Apprenticeship Standards since the facets would vary from role to role and so would not be included within a Standard appropriate to all Learning Disability Support Workers.

There was a good level of cross over between the level 3 role template and the core of the level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker. Only a very small amount of content within the level 3 role template is not covered within the Senior Healthcare Support Worker core/options (see Appendix 1) e.g. the competence 'Assist in the transfer of individuals between agencies and services'.

The level 3 Lead Adult Care Worker Standard also maps well across to the level 3 role template, although there are some subtle differences (i.e. reference or otherwise to a healthcare setting) and a small number of gaps e.g. the competences 'Store and retrieve information using a filing system', 'Assist in the transfer of individuals between agencies and services' and 'Contribute to the discharge of an individual into the care of another service'.

In each case the gaps in competences identified could be covered by continuing professional development workplace based training and assessed as part of the usual process of monitoring competence in the workplace.

5. Conclusion:





Feedback from stakeholders engaged in this investigative work is that existing Standards are highly likely to provide for the needs of Learning Disability Support Workers.

The mapping carried out between existing level 3 Standards-Lead Adult Care Worker and Senior Healthcare Support Worker and the level 3 role template for a 'Learning Disability Community Teams Support Worker' indicates that the majority of the core of the role is already covered in existing Standards. Where there are 'gaps' these might be filled by continual professional development workplace based training and assessed as part of the usual process of monitoring competence in the workplace.

Employer demand required to take forward the development of another option within the Senior Healthcare Support Worker Standard is not currently evident.

The recommendation following this investigation would be to use the Apprenticeship Standards that already exist for Adult Care Workers and Healthcare Support Workers to train Learning Disability Support Workers as Apprentices unless further evidence is forthcoming from employers in the near future.



6. Contacts

See Appendix 2-Learning Disability Support Contact List

Name	Job Title	Organisation
Vicky Yearsley	Senior Manager	Skills for Health Ltd
Jill Elsworthy	National Programme Manager Talent for Care (Apprenticeships)	Health Education England
Teresa Hewitt-Moran	Transforming Care Programme Lead – Health Education England Head of Specialist Programmes; Mental Health & Learning Disability, Urgent and Acute Care & Widening Participation –West Midlands	Health Education England-West Midlands
Annette Connor	Vocational Training and Development Manager	Training Academy- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
Sarah Appleby	Programme Manager Mental Health and Learning Disability West Midlands	Health Education England, West Midlands
Jonathan Beebee	On RCN LD Forum Steering Committee	PBS4
Marie Lancett	Workforce Specialist Transforming Care programme- South	Health Education England
Jennifer Halse	Special Projects Lead	London South Bank University
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