

“we help  
create a  
trained and  
qualified  
workforce”

**apprenticeships, LeaRNS and career pathways e-tool  
briefings from Skills for Care for employers**



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## **briefings from Skills for Care for employers**

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# briefing 1 - apprenticeships

## introduction

To date, apprenticeship opportunities within social care have been slow to develop because government resources and promotion has been targeted at industries that have a long standing tradition of supporting apprenticeships.

Skills for Care has been asked by the Department of Health to rectify this situation by promoting apprenticeships and the opportunities and advantages they offer to social care employers.

The project has two priorities;

- To increase the number of apprenticeships in social care in the private, voluntary and independent sectors.
- To work with up to five Local Authorities in London to develop apprenticeship opportunities.

## what Skills for Care is doing

Skills for Care will develop a portfolio of resources to promote the apprenticeship programme to social care employers.

As part of the promotional activity, a new Accolades category has been created to identify the best apprenticeship placement. An apprentice will be identified through this process that can go forward and enter the Social Care Apprentice category at the National Apprenticeship Awards next year.

Care First, a new cross government initiative, will provide social care with the opportunity to expand apprenticeship take up. Care First will be allocating funding of £1,500 per head, to a maximum number of 50,000 individuals. The aim of it is to encourage unemployed people up to the age of 24 to work in care and this could lead on to an apprenticeship.

## apprenticeships in the private, voluntary and independent sectors

Skills for Care aims to provide a robust, targeted two-year development plan to win the hearts and minds of the social care employers by:

- Increasing the number of apprenticeship.
- Supporting employers to retain apprentices.
- Increase the number of apprentices completing the apprenticeship placement.

Skills for Care has an ambitious target of 1,100 new apprenticeships in each of the next two years. This is broken down below:

year	16-25 age group	25+ age group	total
2009/10	600	500	1100
2010/11	550	550	1100

Skills for Care will be targeting apprenticeship placements across all areas of social care and will be developing apprenticeship pilots in the following areas:

- Domiciliary care
- Personal assistants
- Male only pilots
- Converting from Train to Gain to apprenticeships
- Employees undertaking non social care roles and tasks within a social care environment.

### **apprenticeships in London local authorities**

The intention is to create opportunities for vulnerable young people. This is challenging as the apprenticeship programme requires the individual to have the ability to undertake the various components of the programme, as well as the having the aptitude and attitude to provide social care.

An invitation to tender has been circulated to all London Authorities inviting them to submit an apprenticeship development plan. Each participating local authority will be expected to recruit approximately 35 apprentices, with the placement taking place in older peoples services. The apprentices will be paid a waged subsidy throughout the programme.

The deadline for submission of development plans is 1 July 09. The start date for implementing the development plans is 1 August 09.

Skills for Care will assist the participating local authorities in setting up and operating their apprenticeship programmes, and provide expertise on all matters of quality and conformity towards the intent of the apprenticeship programme.

### **employers contribution**

Skills for Care acknowledges the crucial role employers have in supporting and taking forward the apprenticeship programme and in supporting current and future apprenticeship activity including promotion of new starts, retention and completions of apprenticeship programmes.

Skills for Care would like employers to promote this apprenticeship project to networks and stakeholders and encourages their involvement and cooperation.

Susan Smith is the Skills for Care lead on apprenticeships and can be contacted on 07814 972576 or via email [susan.smith@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:susan.smith@skillsforcare.org.uk)

## briefing 2 - LeaRNS

### background

LeaRNS is a national web-based information system supporting the professional development of social workers at pre and post-qualifying levels. LeaRNS has been developed by Skills for Care with employers of social workers and social work education providers. The initiative is funded by the Department of Health.

The LeaRNS system was piloted with five HEIs between November 2008 and April 2009; following this KPMG were commissioned by Skills for Care to evaluate the LeaRNS system's readiness for use by HEIs and their partners. ADASS Workforce Network members requested a briefing on the outcomes of the review.

### 1. Recommendations from the independent review of the LeaRNS pilots

The review report was based on discussions with pilot sites and interviews with key external and internal stakeholders including HEIs, local authorities, GSCC, JUC/SWEC, BASW and others. The following statements are extracted from the report:

"From the information we have gathered we understand that the LeaRNS system, as demonstrated by the LeaRNS pilot project, is fit for purpose as an operational system."

"The information we have gathered suggests to us that the LeaRNS system, as demonstrated by the LeaRNS pilot project, is likely to meet the needs of its intended users."

"The LeaRNS system, as demonstrated by the LeaRNS pilot project, is ready to be used in a live environment." KPMG May 2009

Recommendations from the independent review of the LeaRNS pilots	
headline recommendation	
1.	We recommend that the Skills for Care Board continue to support the implementation of LeaRNS and the system should go live on 8 June 2009.
strategic recommendations	
2.	We recommend that the business case for LeaRNS is revisited and the business objectives clarified and prioritised. All changes to business objectives should be subject to change control processes and endorsement by the relevant committee.
3.	Working together with HEIs, Skills for Care should undertake a targeted exercise to engage with local authority placement providers in order to drive take up of the LeaRNS.
4.	Skills for Care should seek to address the tension between HEI commercial interests and the need for more openness and transparency at a national level.

### 2. Recommendations made by Skills for Care's board for the further development of LeaRNS.

Skills for Care's board recognise that the development of LeaRNS to the initial specification is complete, and have agreed that the following steps should proceed simultaneously:

- The business case for LeaRNS will be reviewed and a thorough cost-benefit analysis will be carried out. This will include consultation with HEIs and local authorities.

- The LeaRNS team will work together with the system's developers to introduce LeaRNS within eight 'early adopter' HEIs (four of those HEIs having been involved in the pilot). There will be a gradual approach, starting with assessing the individual needs of each HEI and its partners, and emerging from this, the development and delivery of a programme of support and training to enable them to begin to use LeaRNS during the academic year 2009/10. This work will be subject to a thorough review, and discussed by the full Skills for Care board in November 2009.
- The LeaRNS team will enter into dialogue with the 36 HEIs and their partners that have expressed interest in LeaRNS to ensure that they understand what LeaRNS offers and the implications of introducing the system, so they may begin to prepare to adopt the system in the following (2010/11) academic year if they so wish.

### 3. Skills for Care's next steps with LeaRNS

#### Skills for Care's LeaRNS team

Skills for Care's regional teams and the National Social Work Team will have crucial part to play in the rollout of LeaRNS across the regions and will be supported by the LeaRNS team.

#### LeaRNS business case

The business case for LeaRNS will be reviewed and priorities refreshed in line with the outcome of the pilots and feedback from key stakeholders. This will be used to underpin further negotiations to secure funding for the sustained operation and development of LeaRNS after 2013.

#### Stakeholder engagement

One of the challenges of implementing LeaRNS is managing the diverse expectations and requirements of the system's stakeholders. Plans now in place include:

- HEIs:
  - Further engagement with key decision-makers within HEIs.
  - Engaging with HEIs and their partners who have expressed interest.
  - Targeting HEIs in London, which have currently not engaged.
  - Managing the commercial tensions identified by KPMG.
- General Social Care Council (GSCC):
  - Discussion to prepare joint Skills for Care/GSCC communications to encourage use of LeaRNS now and in the future.
  - Further discussion with GSCC and National Social Work Team about Quality Assurance of Practice Learning module.
- Local authorities as key users of LeaRNS alongside their HEI partners. Members please refer to section four of this briefing where proposals for a partnership approach to engaging with the local authorities on LeaRNS are presented.
- Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC):
  - discussions are underway to encourage CWDC's support for LeaRNS.
- The LeaRNS Interest Group will ensure that the system continues to reflect the diversity of users' needs.

**Early adopters**

HEIs and their partners identified as early adopters of LeaRNS will receive additional support, direction and training to help them prepare to successfully implement the system during 2009-10 academic year. This will ensure that Skills for Care understands how best to support organisations wishing to adopt LeaRNS in the future and will inform the continued development of the system.

**Social work workforce intelligence**

In the future, once there is a critical mass of LeaRNS users, Skills for Care's research team will provide workforce intelligence reports to inform future social work policy, investment and planning.

**Employer contribution**

Skills for Care welcome feedback in relation to LeaRNS. Thea Seville, Head of Strategic Workforce Intelligence, is the Skills for Care lead on LeaRNS and can be contacted on 07989 993297 or email [thea.seville@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:thea.seville@skillsforcare.org.uk).

## briefing 3 - I care... career pathways e-tool

### background

The career pathways tool has been developed as part of the Skills for Care CPD strategy. The CPD strategy identifies that employers can contribute to recruitment and retention in the sector by providing a range of opportunities to progress careers. People are more likely to be encouraged to develop a career in social care if they have opportunities to develop skills and qualifications that are transferable to other settings.

To improve recruitment into the sector people need to know how to enter the workforce, what type of jobs there are, how to progress and what experience or qualifications they need.

### what Skills for Care is doing

The career pathways e-tool is for people considering a career in social care and for those already working in the sector who are keen to see what career development opportunities there are.

The interactive career pathways matrix allows readers to identify their particular social care interest against job 'levels' to find what roles are at each level and see what range of qualifications are needed for those roles.

These new web pages outline 'what is social care?', 'starting in social care' and 'developing your career', as well as providing basic textual information and case studies (text and video). The pages also link to a variety of external web resources that include employers' sites with actual job vacancies as well as other information sites such as the Department of Health's [www.socialworkandcare.co.uk](http://www.socialworkandcare.co.uk).

There are still some elements to be added, including links from the upper echelons of the matrix to some senior career pathway profiles of commissioning and procurement roles that have been developed. However, the e-tool will be regularly updated to reflect developments, such as the move from NVQs to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (already anticipated in the matrix's 'entry- 8' levels).

The pages are accessible from the main Skills for Care website and were presented at a joint conference with Job Centre Plus on 18 June. At the event the career pathways tool was demonstrated to Job Centre Plus advisors and social care workforce developers as a resource to use in helping job seekers consider social care careers.

We have secured endorsement from a number of social care organisations including GSCC, ECCA, RNHA, NCF and VODG.

### employer contribution

Skills for Care is seeking the support of employers for this tool. If you are interested to see this in action, the pages are accessible from the Skills for Care web site [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk), in the developing skills section.