Summary: the principles of workforce integration

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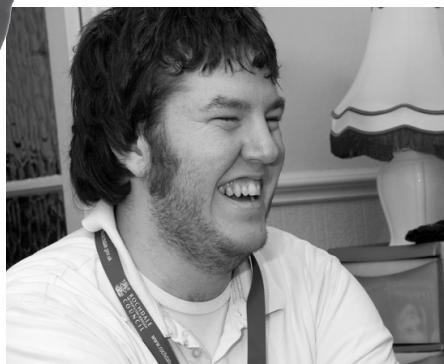
Better care and support

People with care and support needs want care provided in ways that make sense to them, that reflects their lives, their needs and their wishes. This is best achieved through integrated working, with practitioners working together to support individuals, their families and carers.

These principles have been developed to support practitioners, managers and organisations to think through what is meant by integration, and in particular, how workforce development can contribute to its introduction and implementation and sustainability.

What is workforce integration?

Workforce integration is about working together to meet people's needs and enabling people with care and support needs to live as independently as possible. Its purpose is to improve the quality of care and support by keeping the individual, not the organisation or particular profession, as the driving force behind care and support. Adopting an integrated approach enables workers to understand each other's roles and contributions, and to build support networks around individuals. At a strategic level, integration creates a more seamless experience for individuals.

Who are the principles of workforce integration for?

Like all effective workforce development, these principles assume that supporting, nurturing and valuing the workforce will give workers the confidence, knowledge capability, motivation and enthusiasm to deliver the best care and support.
The principles will be of use to anyone interested in promoting integration for better care and support. This might include those working in social care, health and wellbeing (including individually commissioned services such as counselling and complementary therapies), or housing in any role, for example managers, front line workers including PAs and individual employers of PAs. They may also be helpful to family members and carers, and can also be used more widely by others whose work interacts with care and support, for example leisure, transport, police, voluntary interest groups, or retail.

How can the principles help to develop integrated care and support?

As well as helping in thinking about and discussing integration, these principles address some specific workforce related questions:

- How can workers who are being asked to work in a team with people from different professional backgrounds be supported to deliver real change?

- What is the role of workforce development in developing strategies to steer the path to workforce integration?

- How can workforce development opportunities be shaped to ensure that the goal of integrated care and support with people at its heart is paramount?

- What is the role of workforce development in ensuring that resources are identified, developed and used to their maximum benefit in achieving value for money alongside excellence in care and support?

- How can managers at all levels ensure that workers are involved, engaged and listened to, and create opportunities for learning and sharing across boundaries as well as within teams?

- How can individual workers best be supported to equip themselves to grow as practitioners so that they become confident, knowledgeable and capable of contributing to and delivering high quality integrated services and co-produced care?
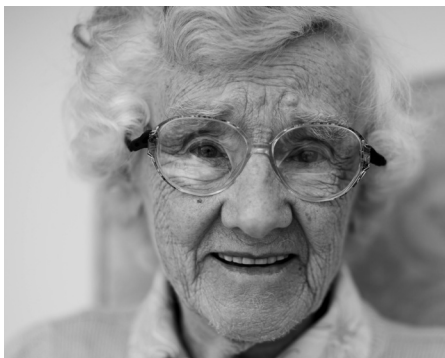
1. The principles

Principle 1   Successful workforce integration focuses on better outcomes for people with care and support needs.

Developing a common goal around better outcomes for people with care and support needs creates a single vision to underpin transformation.

It is easy to lose direction or get pulled by competing priorities, but continually refocusing on the purpose of the care and support being provided brings everyone back together.

Integrating the workforce, including the range of different practitioner skills, around the needs of each individual being supported will result in better use of resources, and support that is tailored to that person's needs.

The views and experiences of people with care and support needs, and of family or friends carers, are an integral part of developing new ways of working.

Creating person-centred provision is not just about workforce reconfiguration. It is about how the team operates around the individual, working together to achieve best outcomes.

Principle 2:   Workforce integration involves the whole system.

Bringing together frontline workers without integrating all of the systems that support and enable those workers is not sustainable. It will create conflict and practical difficulties, and make the workers feel unsupported.

Integrating resources, responsibilities and control creates a clear message that each organisation is committed to the transformation.

Integrating resources will minimise duplication, and help ensure that every part of the system is working effectively.

Bringing in new service arrangements will disrupt some long established informal networks; building new ones should be viewed as a priority.

The system should be viewed in a non-hierarchical way, each person in the system carries some responsibilities, and all are mutually dependent upon each other for success.

Principle 3   To achieve genuine workforce integration, people need to acknowledge and overcome resistance to change and transition. There needs to be an acknowledgement of how integration will affect people's roles and professional identities.

Change and transition can be debilitating if it is perceived to be threatening. Workers need to feel safe, valued and supported. Their anxieties should be freely aired and responded to.

Where job roles change, workers can feel de-skilled. Identifying and meeting learning needs should be part of any strategy employed.

Safe environments enable people to innovate, take risks, build new models and ways of working, and share learning to enhance practice.

A balance needs to be struck so that workers can maintain their sense of professional identity at the same time as working across boundaries that are increasingly blurred. To achieve this, roles, responsibilities and accountability need to be clearly described.

Workers who feel their perspectives and skills are recognised and valued by their colleagues and across organisations are more likely to feel confident, motivated and engaged with the changes.

Professional supervision and the opportunity to manage continuing professional development need to be incorporated into any new arrangements.

Principle 4:   A confident, engaged, motivated, knowledgeable and properly skilled workforce supporting active and engaged communities is at the heart of workforce integration.

The most valuable resource in any organisation is the workforce. Attending to workforce issues, identifying learning needs, addressing issues of professional identity and recognising infrastructure issues such as employment arrangements, gives a clear message about the value placed upon workers.

Successful implementation of integration depends upon workforce issues being addressed from the beginning. Workforce issues cannot be added at the end, they need to influence discussion and decision-making, and need to be included in the process of resource allocation.

An environment in which workers feel safe and confident to raise questions, express concerns, talk about their experiences and make suggestions for service improvement based on their experience and relationships with people they support will create trust and help them and colleagues to feel supported.

Acknowledging and valuing the expertise that workers bring to their changing workplace environment will make them feel valued and listened to.

Creating a learning environment that draws on the experiences of workers will maximise innovation and appropriate risk-taking, and support the development of new models and ways of working.

People learn in different ways and at different paces, and are affected by change to varying degrees. The design and implementation of integrated strategies needs to reflect this, so that things are paced appropriately, with individual workers' needs identified and met in a range of ways.

'Champions' play an important role in the implementation of any transformation. Having champions at every level will help in implementation. Motivated and enthusiastic workers should be identified, nurtured and encouraged to take on this role.

Principle 5: Process matters—it gives messages, creates opportunities, and demonstrates the way in which the workforce is valued.

Give attention to the process, it is by getting this right that ownership, commitment and trust will be developed and the likelihood of sustained success will be increased.

Good communication, keeping everyone informed and appropriately involved in decision-making, is the foundation of an effective strategy.

Begin by looking for the resources and experiences that are already there, as building on these demonstrates that individuals' contributions are valued. Create opportunities for people to learn from each other.

The ways in which senior workers behave and act should mirror the co-operative, open and motivated approaches that will be expected of frontline workers.

Principle 6 Successful workforce integration creates new relationships, networks and ways of working. Integrated workforce commissioning strategies give each of these attention, creating the circumstances in which all can thrive.

Informal networks are critical to workers, providing them with information, support, ideas and quick responses. Reconfiguring services will interrupt existing networks.

Opportunities need to be created to ensure that new relationships can thrive.

The ways in which different professional groups and organisations relate to each other will change with integration. This can feel threatening and create insecurity.

The needs of each professional group need to be attended to, to enable a continued sense of professional identity and to ensure continuing professional development. At the same time, members of newly created teams and services should have the opportunity to share understandings, perspectives, priorities and limitations so that everyone feels comfortable in their role, and with the roles of others.

The new ways of working that emerge with integration may create specific learning needs to enable individuals to work effectively. These need to be identified and attended to.

There is richness in the diversity created within integrated teams and organisations; facilitated opportunities should be created to exploit this, so that people can learn together as new approaches evolve.

Tell us what you think

The Principles of Workforce Integration aim to open a discussion on what we mean by workforce integration and help us to think through and act to make workforce integration happen.

The principles are the result of an exploration of the existing evidence, an ongoing dialogue between partners, and listening to people and organisations doing workforce integration now.

The principles are about integration in any context. For example: between adult social care and health, or housing or children's services, between organisations, departments or professionals, family carers and people with care and support needs.

The principles embrace 'Making it Real, Markers for Change' and how the Markers for Change can be applied in the context of workforce integration.

- Information and Advice. Having the information I need, when I need it,
- Active and supportive communities. Keeping friends, family and place,
- Flexible integrated care and support. My support my own way,
- Workforce. My support staff,
- Risk enablement. Feeling in control and safe,
- Personal budgets and self-funding. My money.

A more detailed version of the principles of workforce integration is available from
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/powi

Thanks to Melissa Balman for drafting this version of the principles.