

System workforce planning

Health Education England (HEE) in the West Midlands has partnered with Skills for Health to develop a new approach to system workforce planning. The work supports the creation of a long-term vision for integrated services within the sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) of the West Midlands.

This summary document gives you an at-a-glance overview of the processes, outcomes and learnings of the programme of work. It pulls together the learning from work undertaken in Dudley, Shropshire, Birmingham and Solihull, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, Coventry and Warwickshire.

It is accompanied by a toolkit of resources designed to support healthcare economies either developing system-wide workforce plans for the first time or seeking to enhance and improve existing plans. This methodology can be adapted to meet these different needs. This toolkit is available together with other resources

in the HEE Recipe for Workforce Planning.

Read on to discover more about the approach taken by HEE, with support from Skills for Health, and how you could carry out similar work in your area.

Drivers for change

Changing patient needs and Government priorities, including the Five-Year Forward View and the requirement for STPs, are driving the need for greater integration both nationally and locally within health and social care.

Broader drivers for change come from many sources, including an ageing population, funding, public expectations and healthcare innovation. The West Midlands faces some common workforce development themes – in particular:

- improving the individual experience of care,
- improving the health of populations,
- reducing the per capita cost of healthcare, and
- improving the experience of providing care.

When HEE and Skills for Health started their programme of work in September 2015, there were no system-wide workforce plans in place in the West Midlands, and no agreed process or model for how to best manage integrated system workforce planning in the future.

What is system workforce planning?

System workforce planning is an innovative approach that enables the planning of appropriate skill mix combinations to deliver a coherent, personalised service for the local population. Its aim is to help develop a workforce that can provide health and care on a whole system basis rather than in silos.

System workforce planning was identified as a priority workstream for the Integrated Care Programme, one of HEE's five transformation themes in the West Midlands.

What are the benefits?

System workforce planning is a requirement in the development of STPs – enabling workforce risks, challenges and priorities in delivering effective integrated care to be addressed at an early stage.

Developing a robust system workforce plan can also help to identify priorities for investment in workforce development, which supports the implementation of the vision for services.

Developing a system workforce plan

HEE and Skills for Health wanted to test and develop a process and model for future system workforce planning in the West Midlands, including the development of workforce plans.

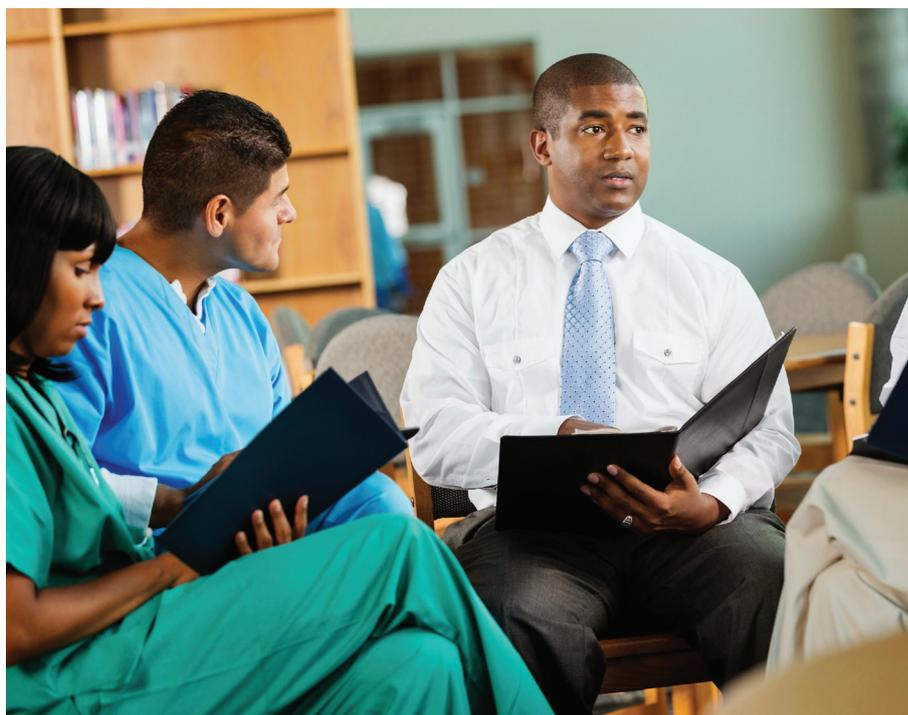
The intention was to discover what worked and what could be done to make improvements in future years. The methodology adopted a robust approach to scenario planning, working within the established six-step approach to workforce planning.

By combining these innovative approaches, the outputs from the process were consistent and reliable. There were challenges at different stages of the process, benefiting from input from a variety of different perspectives.

Described opposite is a practical application to system workforce planning, which can be found in the Recipe website.

Adapting the development process

In the case of system workforce planning, all representatives have ownership of and responsibility for the process. This differs from other types of planning where organisations act according to their priorities, with often limited reference to outside stakeholders.



A system-wide approach to workforce planning requires engagement and equal involvement from stakeholders across health and care, making full use of the expertise and experience available, as follows.

Six-step approach

A system workforce planning approach was developed to be piloted in the West Midlands, based on Skills for Health's tried-and-tested six-step methodology.

Using a three-phase methodology in the West Midlands

The three-phase methodology is a practical application of the approach to system workforce planning which can be found in HEE's Recipe for workforce planning.

The adapted methodology favoured an emphasis on scenario sessions. These are helpful in creating a strategic workforce direction in geographic localities.

Each phase can be completed in approximately four weeks, given the right levels of organisation, leadership and stakeholder support.

Before you start Phase 1 you need to be clear on the scope (e.g. pathway or local health economy) and governance of your system workforce plan.

Three phase methodology



Phase 1

involves the development of a series of rapid reviews outlining the demand for health and care and initiatives for five systems within the West Midlands.

- Health and population context
- Strategy and response, including new models of care
- Workforce data and intelligence

The reports which resulted from this phase were then used as scene setting documents for phase 2. These provided a baseline understanding for people within the system and were a catalyst for discussion.

Phase 2

consists of a series of scenario sessions with representatives from across the system.

- The three scenarios describe plausible, credible and challenging visions of the healthcare future, which

are used for discussion, analysis and the development of priorities by consensus. They represent futures with challenges and difficulties as well as positive and attractive elements.

Phase 3

draws the outputs from phases 1 and 2 together in order to create a high level system-wide workforce development plan. This involves focusing on the key workforce implications identified by the scenario planning, exploring the detail and engaging with stakeholders in a further workshop event. It also involves stress-testing a wide range of integrated planning workforce development options.

Some of the key questions to address at this stage include:

Check and challenge key themes

- Future context and key drivers
- Future service characteristics
- Future workforce implications

Stress testing workforce solutions

- Impact
- Cost
- Barriers
- Timescale
- Feasibility

What now – a clear set of outcomes and priorities for each system

- What are major challenges/barriers?
- What needs to be in place to support workforce changes identified?
- What should workforce planning roles and responsibilities look like?

Implementation in your area

The system workforce planning approach carried out in the West Midlands is easily repeatable in other areas. We recommend you should plan for a three-month process, from start to finish.

If you wish to carry out a similar programme of work, we suggest you consider the following before starting.

1. Are you able to appoint someone to manage the work programme, oversee the process and take responsibility for it? Defining the area of focus at this stage will help you to identify the right stakeholders.

2. What do you want to achieve as outputs and what are your longer-term outcomes? You can tailor the process to meet your identified needs.

3. Do you have a governance structure in place to manage and oversee the programme? The exercise requires ownership and engagement to be successful.

Asking these questions will help you to prepare for the challenges of engaging with the right people in each system and gaining support at senior level as well as local knowledge.

The system workforce planning model functions best when there is clarity on preferred future models of care. So identifying people with the right skills, as well as the right information, is key to ensuring credible and challenging conversations around system workforce planning.

If you are carrying out workforce planning in a system rather than within one organisation, we recommend you establish hybrid teams working across the footprint that the system covers. In support of this, STP representatives and workforce planners should work closely with HR directors and the Local Workforce Action Board to support the development of system workforce planning capacity and capability.

There is now a significant level of expertise in delivering this approach to system workforce planning, as well as a range of resources available.

What to include in a system workforce plan

Workforce development planning process

We successfully developed a model for the development of current and future system workforce plans, based on evidence-led priorities. This resulted in the production of five system-wide workforce development plans, each covering:

Locality context

Overview of the key contextual issues impacting on the locality covering a range of drivers including:

- Strategic policy
- Financial
- Current challenges

Locality demographic summary

Highlighting the key current and future characteristics of the local population likely to impact on service need covering a range of areas including:

- Age profile
- Disease prevalence
- Population growth
- Levels of deprivation

Locality workforce summary

A high level summary highlighting a range of issues in the health and social care workforce, alongside implications, across the locality including:

- Age profile
- Workforce supply/availability
- Roles and structures
- Challenges/'hot spots'

Key service changes

Setting out the key characteristics likely to inform the future of service delivery within the locality, highlighting those areas with the potential for impact on the workforce.

Future workforce themes

A detailed review of key future workforce characteristics, identified as required in order to meet the future context for service delivery in the locality, covering:

- New or amended roles
- Skills and knowledge requirements
- Education and training implications

Summary and recommendations

An overview of the key findings, priorities and a series of recommendations for future workforce development and design in the locality.

"The workforce planning process has added huge value to our system and supported the development of our sustainability and transformation plan."

Victoria Maher

Workforce Director and STP Workforce Lead, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

Learning and top tips

We adopted an evidence-based, collaborative approach in the West Midlands to address the common barriers to change – cultural resistance, financial and resource pressures, communication issues and finding consensus.

By presenting clear, quantifiable evidence supporting the need for change alongside practical support in making robust, evidence-based decisions, we helped each area to identify new solutions to their problems, and have confidence in planning for the future.

We believe the success of the approach was due to a grassroots 'ground-up' methodology – which is driven by locally specific evidence and research where possible, and garnering cooperation and input from staff.

Agreeing the focus of each session and core questions was key to success. We asked people to step back from day-to-day delivery and commit to sharing

innovative ideas. We encouraged open communication, which in turn promoted trust in the process.

Effective workforce planning: key considerations

For workforce planning to be successful, higher level sponsorship is crucial in driving action and implementation. During the process, HEE and Skills for Health identified a number of key considerations for effective and successful workforce planning.

- **Begin at a system level** – involve the right stakeholders.
- **Take the long view** – great workforce planning does not

culminate in a single event, report or set of priorities. It is an ongoing, regularly refreshed conversation.

- **Build resilience** – find advocates who will commit to establishing the long view.
- **Emphasise 'transformational' rather than 'transactional' workforce planning** – encourage people to think bigger than business as usual.
- **Skills and knowledge** – ensure system leaders in workforce change have the appropriate knowledge and skills to do so.
- **Roles and responsibilities** – be clear on the expected roles and responsibilities across your organisation and within it.



Learning from the West Midlands

1. Values, culture and vision are important – it's worth taking the time to understand each other and be clear on the desired outcomes of any change.
2. Legal and financial considerations – these inform the shape and form of any new plans, and should be part of early conversations.
3. Leadership – changes were best driven and led by senior leads in each of the areas we worked in.
4. Planning is key to success – the workshops work best when there is a broad mix of people attending, with different views, backgrounds.
5. Engagement and communication – from the start, having clear, consistent messages about the reasons for change and plans improved engagement.
6. Resources – dedicating enough time, people and financial resources to the change plans was key to success.
7. Data – having clear, readily available workforce data allows a greater focus on specific details, in support of strategic/policy context and population health needs.

Integrated workforce planning

Birmingham and Solihull case study

The challenges facing health and social care within the Birmingham and Solihull area include rising demand for services, financial pressures and workforce issues. A more coordinated approach to providing care and support was needed.

In partnership with Skills for Health, HEE produced a forward-looking strategic report covering an eight-year period. Scenario planning was used to highlight key demographic changes and workforce challenges likely to impact on services, alongside predicted cultural, technological, and political changes.

This resulted in a series of workforce development options for health and social care, with a particular focus on integrated working and planning.

Local pressures

The health and social care system in Birmingham and Solihull is complex.

It has within its footprint a number of specialist healthcare providers and services, which means that pressure comes from service demand from residents and from demand across the country. The locality faces a number of health and care challenges, linked to deprivation, which means commissioners and providers must account for this when considering service provision and workforce skills and competencies.

Using the six-step process, partners were encouraged to think in new ways about their own organisational and workforce challenges within the wider political and social context. Those that participated in the workshops shared best practice in areas such as talent management and leadership development – ideas that could be adopted and scaled across the wider system.



Enabling success

Key to the success of the process was a sustained investment of time and energy in discussing and formulating the strategy with partners. Crucially in Birmingham and Solihull there was representation from across health and social care, education providers and the voluntary sector. It was important to secure commitment from the right people early in the development process and set realistic timeframes for delivery.



Positive benefits

The benefits and outcomes of the process in Birmingham and Solihull included recommendations that integrated easily into the STP submission, and that framed the workforce priorities linked to the broader service transformation objectives. The process has since informed emerging workstreams within the Local Workforce Action Board (LWAB). Those leading the LWAB see this as a repeatable exercise to support the ongoing shaping of the STP workforce strategy through further refinement of the action plan and continued testing against different scenarios.

“This process was critical in supporting us to develop some agreed solutions to our workforce challenges and formed the foundation of our workforce strategy in Birmingham and Solihull. Developing integrated workforce solutions across health and social care are crucial if the objectives of the Five Year Forward View are to be met.”

Stuart Baird

Workforce Development Specialist,
Health Education England, West
Midlands local team

Resources available

Health Education England Resources for Workforce Planning within a System

This provides a practical and easy to use four step process to workforce planning within a system, including tools and techniques to guide you through each of the four steps with a worked through example. The resource is aimed at anyone involved in Workforce Planning within a system at both a strategic and operational level.

STPs, Work stream leads and Commissioners can use this resource to help identify the purpose and objectives of the system as well as the boundaries and pathways that they need to focus on. At an operational level, activities, competences, activity and productivity data, roles and location can then be determined using an activity analysis, which builds an action plan and workforce plan for the system.

<http://recipeforworkforceplanning.hee.nhs.uk/Cookbooks>

Skills for Health resources

As leading experts in workforce planning and workforce development Skills for Health can provide a wide range of services and support to employers, further detail can be found on our website.

www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/workforceplanning

Find out more

For more information on developing integrated system workforce planning in your area, please contact Skills for Health.

contactus@skillsforhealth.org.uk

skillsforhealth.org.uk/contact

To discuss the HEE West Midlands programme in more detail, please get in touch using the email address below.

workforce.returns.wm@hee.nhs.uk

