

**November 2021**

# **Digital learning hub for social care**

**Adult Social Care  
Digital technology and skills review**

Ipsos MORI, Institute of Public Care and Skills for Care



**Ipsos MORI**





# Digital learning hub for social care

This case study supports a review of technology and digital skills in adult social care, undertaken by Ipsos MORI, the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University and Skills for Care on behalf of NHSX. Further information is available on the [study webpage](#).

## Problem to be solved

During the COVID-19 pandemic the adult social care sector in the Royal Borough of Kingston (RBK) was severely hit by staff shortages due to infection and self-isolating. In February 2021 the local authority received funding from the national Workforce Capacity Fund<sup>1</sup> to help address the impact of the pandemic on adult social care workforce capacity and resilience.

RBK used the fund to create something of lasting benefit to current and future care workers. Staff at the local authority felt that improving learning and development opportunities, and making wellbeing resources more readily available to the Borough's care providers and their staff, would strengthen workforce capacity by increasing retention and reducing the amount of sickness absence.

## The project

The condition that the grant money needed to be spent by the end of March 2021 necessitated choosing a project feasible within the time available. The local authority approached the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) who suggested a digital learning hub, offering funded SCIE e-learning courses and signposting to other resources.

**“We wanted to make sure the hub speaks to care workers ... that’s why we’ve engaged with providers throughout the course of the project”** Project manager, Royal Borough of Kingston

The hub was developed in close consultation with care providers. Discussions via a joint provider working group and findings from a survey of care providers helped to identify gaps in specialisms, including in digital skills. Further investigation into digital skills revealed that English as a second language presented a barrier for some frontline care staff to using digital tools, for example for case recording and helping people with care and support needs to access online resources. Local authority staff were also aware of the increased stress levels of care workers, and at the end of 2020 created a wellbeing package of support, which included mental health first aid training and a set of relaxation recordings for care workers. The project team also worked with RBK's social care quality assurance team to address current quality issues, for example around moving and handling. All of these subjects were incorporated into the hub either in the form of SCIE e-learning courses or as links to other useful materials.

## Implementation

The hub is hosted on the SCIE website<sup>2</sup> and is accessible to adult social care staff working in RBK. Good communication and a joint commitment to the project enabled the local authority and SCIE to implement the basic hub by the original deadline, and further developments to the hub are planned.

The main method of communicating the hub to local care providers and care workers was directly emailing care provider managers who then directed their staff to the site. Because there was no

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<sup>1</sup> See gov.uk for further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-capacity-fund-for-adult-social-care/workforce-capacity-fund-for-adult-social-care>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.scie.org.uk/kingston> is the front page. The full website is only available to staff working in the borough.

comprehensive list of local care provider staff, additional communication methods were employed: a poster campaign in care provider offices, asking care provider managers to disseminate the hub through their social media groups, engaging with the local authority's network of 'on the ground' general champions for the care workforce, promoting the hub in newsletters, and getting in touch with different local community and faith groups. As individuals registered on the hub, they were also added to the mailing list.

## Outcomes and impact

**“The Kingston [Care] Learning Hub has been a godsend in helping our caregivers improve their knowledge base during a time when face-to-face learning was challenged due to the pandemic. As a company it has helped us onboard a trained workforce more swiftly without incurring additional costs, which was important at an early stage in our company development”** Care provider, Royal Borough of Kingston

The hub means that care providers and care workers in RBK have a single place they can go to for training, development, knowledge and support to do their job.

Each month SCIE produces hub traffic statistics and reports usage in terms of role, organisation, number of individuals, course enrolments and course completions. At the beginning of the project each marketing push resulted in a spike of interest which then fell away but there is recent evidence of more long-term engagement from some organisations.

One unforeseen positive consequence of developing the hub was that conversations surrounding it spawned other conversations. For example, learning from care providers about the English language needs of some of their staff has led the local authority to work with their adult education provider to devise an English language programme for care workers.

## Lessons learned

- Ensuring there are suitable communications and marketing to promote platforms such as the hub is essential, and creative solutions such as online advertising to reach particular audiences could help with this.
- There is also a need to maintain interest and engagement, and keep reminding people about new and useful digital products. It can take time for new platforms to gain traction so strategies for engagement are important.
- A key lesson from this project is that badging resources so they appeal to the intended audience is important for success.

To find out more about this project, please contact Ben Gladstone, Royal Borough of Kingston [ben.gladstone@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:ben.gladstone@kingston.gov.uk), and see <https://www.scie.org.uk/kingston>

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