Workforce development in social care and assistive technology

Summer 2012 Briefing

Welcome to the second assisted living technology and workforce bulletin. As someone who has expressed an interest in our work in this area, we hope you will find this bulletin a useful way of keeping in touch with Skills for Care’s work in this area.

Definition; what Skills for Care mean by ‘assistive technology’

The term ‘assistive technology’ is defined in different ways by those who develop, commission or use it. Skills for Care has put in place a definition of what we mean by this area of work. The definition is informed by technology that is presently being used as well as the aspirations there are for technologies’ that are emerging. We also make a distinction between assisted living technology (ALT) and assisted living services (ALS). This is to focus clearly on the services that support the implementation of the technologies, it is here that the social care workforce are to be found. Skills for Care has a fundamental role to play in the skills and knowledge of this workforce around Assistive Living Technologies.

The vision for the social care workforce is for capable, confident and skilled staff who are able to support self direction, promote dignity, independence and choice and enable as many people as possible to stay healthy and actively involved in their communities, while making sure those who need support have maximum control over the services they receive (SfC 2011). Having the skills and knowledge to use ALTs are an important part of this.

ALTs include:
- **Telecare** and **telehealth**: delivery of cost effective social and health care using technology in the homes of those needing support to enable them to live longer at home and in their communities. This may include returning home after a period of illness.
- **Digital participation services**: to educate, entertain and stimulate social interaction to enrich the lives of people in need of social support living at home
- **Wellness services**: to encourage people to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, to help prevent or delay the need for support.

We refer to this collection of services as assisted living services (ALSs).

Work undertaken so far

As reported in the previous bulletin, last year Skills for Care undertook a ‘landscape’ survey aimed at finding out the current approaches and policies in the field of ALT and workforce issues. Following the recommendations of this report, we commissioned CIRCLE (University of Leeds) to undertake an in-depth study across a range of Local Authority settings, to further understand the range of roles involved in the delivery of ALS and the implications this has for workforce development. This work is now complete and available to view on our web site ([www.skillsforcare.org.uk/assistivetechnology](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/assistivetechnology)) will inform the development phase.
Development phase - Stage 1
We are pleased to be able to report that we have now appointed two contractors to take forward the development phase which will be in two stages.
Stage 1 is being led by CPEA with After Ruby Ltd and runs from now until September 2012, which aims to:

1. Map the broad areas of work that make up ALS’s (e.g. referrals, initial assessment, core assessment, installation, review etc.) and identify key tasks for each area of work in ALS (e.g. core tasks in initial assessment, etc).
2. Using information from the scoping study (see above) to enable these tasks to be mapped against existing qualifications, frameworks and standards both specific to ALT and more general qualifications available which include ALT.
3. Identify gaps in existing qualifications, frameworks and standards for workforce development in this area using the information gathered.
4. Production of a draft learning and development framework.

Work is now underway to design the workflow tool that will pin down the skills and knowledge those undertaking certain tasks within ALS may require. This will be ‘checked back’ with a number of contacts to ensure they are correct and reflective of practice in the field. If you wish to be part of this ‘checking’ group, please contact diane.buddery@skillsforcare.org.uk

To further inform this stage, Skills for Care is working with partners across the UK to conduct an in-depth on-line survey about delivery of support using Assisted Living Technology. This survey is part of the EIF project: Supporting Employers with the Workforce Implications of Assistive Technology (see below). We are seeking to gather information from a wide range of employers and others who are involved in delivering/supporting ALT including telecare, telehealth, digital participation and wellness services.

The survey will enable us to gain an insight into areas such as:
- The extent of services using ALT that are being delivered across different areas in the UK.
- The range of tasks associated with ALT, such as referral, assessment, installation, monitoring and response.
- The types of workforce development, support and qualifications available for those working with ALT, and any gaps in this provision.

To complete the survey please visit: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SfCALT it closes on 22 July 2012.

The results will be made available to view through the Skills for Care website and will help us to produce products that best reflect employers needs as we head towards phase 2 of our project in England.
Development phase - Stage 2
Stage 2 will take place between September 2012 to March 2013 and will be led by Virtual College with After Ruby Ltd.
The objective is to build the practical way ahead for strengthening the social care workforce in this area through:
1. Finalisation of the draft learning and development framework
2. Development of associated learning resources which will help translate the framework into practical and useful tools for employers (these may be online resources)
3. Development and testing these resources out with a range of employers and partners
4. Recommendations of areas for further development to support the framework and resources.

Throughout the development phase we will be engaging and developing the products and processes with end users and other stakeholders.

UK wide approach; Supporting Employers with the Workforce Implications of Assistive Technology
Skills for Care will be working with colleagues from Skills for Care and Development on a new two year programme of work to look at how assistive technologies are used across the UK and what the workforce implications are. This work is supported by UKCES through the Employer Investment Fund. Skills for Care and Development have a UK wide brief for the social care workforce (including Children and Young People’s services) and work through their sector skills partners in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and in England (Skills for Care).

The purpose of the project is to design and test a UK-wide workforce development strategy relating specifically to assistive technology. A central part of the strategy will be a suite of ‘knowledge and skills sets’ that set out what’s needed to support assistive technology. An implementation plan will set out how this work will be shared across the sector.

There will be many opportunities for employers to get involved in this project. These include:
- Completing the online survey about assistive technology, how it is used and supported at the moment and how this affects the workforce. (see above for the link to this)
- Joining a network of assistive technology ‘champions’ across the UK. These champions will play a crucial role in shaping the work of the project throughout its life and will help to raise the profile of assistive technologies within the sector (July 2012 to March 2014).
- Taking part in a series of workshops to test the strategy, with its knowledge and skills sets, once these have been drafted (June to September 2013).

Any further questions or feedback?
We always welcome comment or feedback on our projects. There are varying ways to become involved in the project, for example through reference group or by becoming an employer champion. If you wish to get in touch, or be further involved in our project, please email Diane Buddery, Project Manager at diane.buddery@skillsforcare.org.uk or call on 07909 873231.