Specification for a Learning Disabilities & Autism (LD&A) Workforce Review

Project Scope

This Learning Disabilities and Autism Workforce Review will inform and support the work currently underway with Health Education England (HEE) by assisting the development and delivery of a Regional (East of England) Learning Disability and Autism (LD&A) Workforce Strategy. The scope for this project is to focus specifically on the LD&A Workforce requirements across Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System (SNEE ICS), linking in with the regional work which will support the development of a strategy and plan for the LD&A Workforce across SNEE ICS over the next 5 years.

Delivery of the work will be overseen by the SNEE ICS Workforce Transformation Team, linking in with the SNEE ICS LD&A Transformation Steering Group with regular updates as required to the wider Suffolk Mental Health Alliance Implementation Group, People Board and other Boards/Groups as required.

Project Overview and Purpose

The LD&A Workforce Review will provide a detailed assessment of the LD&A Workforce as part of the broader health and care workforce in the SNEE ICS. The review will be indicative of what the workforce in LD&A Services looks like, the opportunities that exist, the issues faced within the sector and recommendations including short, medium and longer term ambitions. This will help set the future direction, improve co-ordination between the existing workforce and drive future health and care career pathways across sectors and encourage integration of workforce solutions.

Context

The Learning Disability and Autism workforce is facing significant challenges with Learning Disability Nursing experiencing the highest vacancy rate of all nursing groups. There are high turnover rates across all occupational groups within the LD&A workforce. Applications to study Learning Disability Nursing have fallen by almost 50% since 2016 with some Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) withdrawing their education provision. Clearly, action is required. Therefore, across the East of England, HEE are working on a comprehensive workforce strategy for Learning Disabilities and Autism which will focus on establishing sustainable supply routes and capitalise opportunities through developing the unregistered workforce with a multi-professional skill set, advanced practice and dual qualified practitioners to support both specialised and integrated care of people with Learning Disabilities and Autism. This strategy begins to set out the journey of transforming the LD&A workforce based on the current data available and feedback from relevant specialist Boards and Groups.

Review Deliverables

The development of a regional Strategy must engage local system leads and service providers to ensure the regional plans reflect local priorities across health and care. Therefore, the purpose of this review will be to support the regional ambition as well as addressing the local issues by:

- producing a comprehensive assessment of the SNEE ICS LD&A workforce
- reviewing the existing career pathways within the LD&A workforce and offer recommendations
- promoting rollout of training and transformation opportunities identified nationally to ensure timely communications of these to service providers
- supporting regional collaboration to promote innovation and marketing of LD&A supply routes, career pathway and widening participation
- exploring opportunities such as apprenticeships and other new roles
- exploring opportunities for leadership development and organisational development

The emphasis on this review is the LD&A workforce across health and care to ensure the focus is on integrated care across all sectors including health, social care, private and independent sector, primary care and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Case for Change

Transforming Care is the main national programme aimed at the development of community services and the closure of inpatient services for people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges. Learning Disability Services require significant ongoing changes not only to reshape services but also to the supporting workforce. Traditional services and therefore the role(s) of workers will need to change to ensure choice and control, with increasing autonomy for people with learning disabilities is realised. This is about fitting services around individuals not fitting people into what already exists and enabling access to mainstream services.

The NHS Long-Term Plan sets out the aims to improve people's health with learning disabilities and autism by making sure they receive timely and appropriate health checks, while improving the level of awareness and understanding across the NHS of how best to support them as patients. In particular, NHS staff will be supported to make the changes needed (reasonable adjustments) to make sure people with learning difficulties and autism get equal access to, experience of and outcomes from care and treatment. The plan will also ensure that the whole NHS has an awareness of the needs of people with a learning disability and autistic people, working together to improve the way it cares, supports, listens to, works with and improves the health and wellbeing of them and their families. However, the emphasis with this review is across health and care.

The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021 to 2026 (updated July 2021) has identified that far too many people with autism still struggle in childhood, both with getting a diagnosis and with support following a diagnosis, including at school, and find it hard to get a job when they reach adulthood. New challenges have also emerged; the number of people identified as being autistic in inpatient services has increased, the life expectancy gap for people with autism is approximately 16 years compared to the general population.

In addition, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on people with autism and their families. The pandemic exacerbated many of the inequalities people with autism already faced e.g. loneliness, anxiety and exclusion from public spaces, as well as creating new challenges e.g. shopping and understanding social distancing measures. The pandemic also risks making it harder for people with autism to get into work due to wider challenges in the labour market.

Learning Disability Mortality (death) Review Programme

The new LeDeR policy aims to set out for the first time for the NHS the core aims and values of the LeDeR programme and the expectations placed on different parts of the health and social care system in delivering the programme from June 2021. It will serve as a guide to professionals working in all parts of the health and social care system on their roles in delivering LeDeR. Evidence from the reviews includes service improvement actions and upskilling. This can often be quite simple changes put in place by health and social care providers e.g. ensuring proper communication between family members and carers and between carers and hospital staff, making sure that people's care plans are followed. In addition, that annual health check health plans are followed or there is greater use of reasonable adjustments in health and care services for people with a learning disability and autism.

NHS People Plan

The NHS People Plan sets out the workforce strategy for delivering the long-Term Plan, now and into the future. The NHS needs more people, working differently, in a compassionate and inclusive culture. More people in training and education and recruited to ensure services are appropriately staffed. Services need to work differently by embracing new ways of working in teams, across organisations and sectors, and supported by technology. We need to look after and value our people, create a sense of belonging and promote a more inclusive service and workplace so that our people will want to stay.

In summary, the whole workforce has a role to play in improving services for people with learning difficulties and autism. This means upskilling the existing workforce to understand reasonable adjustments, learning from LeDeR reviews and subsequent training that may be required, sharing best practice and working with people with lived experience and carers and families.

People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform

In December 2021, the government set out the commitment to reforming adult social care with the white paper, People at the Heart of Care, setting out an ambitious 10-year vision for transforming support and care in England. The vision revolves around 3 objectives:

1. People have choice, control and support to live independent lives.
2. People can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support.
3. People find adult social care fair and accessible.

The White Paper also proposes over the next 3 years, investment to begin to transform the support to and for the social care workforce. This dedicated investment in knowledge, skills, health and wellbeing, and recruitment policies will improve social care as a long-term career choice.

Workforce Development Review Requirements

The Workforce Review will be staged:

Stage 1 - The initially focus will be the workforce profile (across health, social care and VCSE) to assess and obtain a baseline of the current workforce such as:

- location of workforce (Suffolk and/or North East Essex)

- demographics of workforce (full-time/part-time, gender, age, ethnicity and other protective characteristics etc)
- learning and development needs (now and into the future)
- aligning service transformation and workforce
- workforce challenges/issues: attraction, recruitment and retention and recommendations
- system level oversight of non-medical Learning Disabilities student training numbers, attrition and clinical learning practice placement capacity
- current workforce challenges

Stage 2 – by obtaining the baseline, the scope will move towards future scenarios for workforce transformation including recommendations. Areas to involve (but not exclusive):

- where are we?
- where do we need to be?
- recommendations for how to achieve that?

*The successful provider will be supported with the above by the SNEE ICS Workforce Transformation Team, notably the Workforce Intelligence Lead(s)

Contractual Arrangements

Up to £30,000 is available to support delivery of this project. The successful contractor will need to demonstrate in their proposal:

- a good understanding of LD&A Services (health, care and VCSE) across SNEE ICS
- a good understanding of the LD&A Workforce
- value for money in delivery of the project
- ability to work effectively across a diverse range of partners
- understanding of the broader context for the development of Integrated Care Systems
- working collaboratively with other ICS partners to contribute towards the development of an ICS LD&A workforce plan
- setting out how they will approach the project and review requirements including timelines
- previous experience of working on related projects

The chosen provider will be held accountable by the SNEE ICS People Board and SNEE ICS Director of Workforce.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be drawn up between SNEE ICS and the successful provider to confirm all parties consent to working within the parameters outlined as above. As part of the contract, a Data Sharing Agreement will outline expectations around how the data is collected, who the data can be shared with, and the process for dealing with requests from individual organisations to access the information that has been collected.

The designated contact for this workforce review will be: Rachael Beard; Head of Workforce (Mental Health) - rachael.beard@suffolk.nhs.uk

Future Phase/Next Steps

On completion of this review the next phase is intended to set out the LD&A Workforce Strategy and aspirations for the future within the SNEE ICS to include:

- the development a local LD&A Workforce Delivery Plan integrating existing plans identified under the Transforming Care programme

- co-ordinate and support access to regional and national learning opportunities (inc. continued professional development)
- promote innovation and marketing of LD&A supply routes, career pathway and widening participation
- support wider workforce awareness training of LD&A

Timescales and Milestones

Milestone	Deadline
Issue proposal to potential providers/contractors	Monday 24th January 2022
Clarification meeting	Tuesday 1st February 2022
Proposal deadline	Monday 7th February 2022
Award proposal	Monday 14th February 2022
Commence review	Monday 21st February 2022
Final documentation produced	Wednesday 30th November 2022

Next Steps

There will be an opportunity for potential providers/contractors to ask questions of clarification at a meeting with the SNEE ICS Workforce Programme Leads on **Tuesday 1st February 2022; 1pm-2pm**. Please contact: rachael.beard@suffolk.nhs.uk to request the meeting link.

Proposals to deliver the project should be sent to: rachael.beard@suffolk.nhs.uk **by 5pm on the 7th February 2022.** The proposals should be 1000 words maximum which sets out how the potential provider/contractor will achieve the points in the section – contractual arrangements (above)