

Evaluation of the national graduate management programme for adult social care

Cohort 7 & 8

January 2020

Written by Jenny Swift
Published by Skills for Care

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Published by Skills for Care, West Gate, 6 Grace Street, Leeds LS1 2RP www.skillsforcare.org.uk

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Reference no. WP18016a/ NT/831

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Skills for Care is the employer-led strategic body for workforce development in social care for adults in England. It is part of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development.

This work was researched and compiled by Jenny Swift of Skills for Care.

Executive summary

Background

The adult social care sector in England requires an effective talent pipeline to deliver quality, safe and compassionate care. Skills for Care's national Graduate Management Programme aims to:

- develop and support a cohort of the next generation of aspiring leaders
- provide integrated health and social care leadership development
- contribute to the growth of a skilled and capable management workforce
- create a sustainable, financially secure and integrated programme suitable for expansion in future cohorts.

This evaluation of the seventh and eighth cohorts of the Graduate Programme explored programme effectiveness, participant satisfaction, value for money, lessons learned, outcomes and additionality.

Findings

The evaluation found that:

- All three targets set by the Department of Health and Social Care were met:
 - Up to 15 high-calibre graduates recruited in Cohort 7; 20 in Cohort 8
 - At least 80% to complete the programme.
 - A sustainable, financially secure and integrated programme suitable for scaling up in future cohorts.
- Placement hosts were satisfied with the process of recruitment and matching and most felt that their graduate learners had the right passion, values, conduct and attitude to excel and succeed as a senior manager in social care.
- Placement supervisors were also generally satisfied with the performance management process and the support they received from Skills for Care.
- Graduate learners valued the on-the-job learning and experience most, of the programme elements; placement hosts most valued the fresh perspective the graduate learners brought. A high proportion of graduate learners and hosts would recommend the programme to others.
- Graduate learners demonstrated improved knowledge, skills, confidence and behaviours across all eight measures selected by the evaluation. The area of highest impact was in relation to applied knowledge of systems leadership.

- Half of all graduate learners across the two cohorts were offered a job either at their host or placement organisation, and at least sixty percent of Cohort 7 graduate learners are still working in social care or in an integrated role.

Areas for improvement

Skills for Care responded to suggestions for improvements following a Cohort 7 evaluation report, including modifications to the learning programme. The main area for improvement remaining after Cohort 8 is in relation to ensuring the consistency and quality of placements, which was raised by several graduates.

Potential mitigating actions suggested by graduates and placement hosts included:

- more screening of hosts
- more work with placement hosts at application stage to develop proposals based on best practice
- more and earlier conversations between Skills for Care, graduates and hosts.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation has identified that the graduate programme is performing well. The programme has achieved all its targets set by DHSC, has high satisfaction ratings and repeat business, and demonstrates strong learning and employment outcomes for participants.

Over the two cohorts, the programme has successfully reduced unit cost and increased income generation, putting it on a more sustainable financial footing. Programme managers should review the areas for improvement and explore financially viable solutions. It is also likely that further unit cost reductions could be achieved by upscaling to realise economies of scale.

Finally, it may be useful to expand the evaluation to include the views of secondment hosts during the Cohort 9 evaluation.

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone: 0113 245 1716
Email: info@skillsforcare.org.uk
Web: www.skillsforcare.org.uk