

Fund helps a large organisation to improve the quality of care provided

This case study looks at how Creative Support has used the WDF to develop its national workforce that has experienced phenomenal growth over the last few years. The ongoing professional development of staff is pivotal to this growth, whilst maintaining quality is essential to the outcomes of people who need care and support.

Skills for Care WDF

Skills for Care believes that all staff working in adult social care should be able to access and participate in learning and development, in order to carry out their roles effectively and deliver high quality care.

The WDF supports this ethos. It is a funding stream from the Department of Health and is distributed by Skills for Care. It is available to support employers to make an investment in learning and development that will benefit the organisation, its employees and those that are cared for and supported. The fund focuses on the achievement of qualification units and supports the ongoing professional development of staff across the adult social care sector within England.

Creative Support WDF

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Creative Support is a high quality provider of person-centred social care services for adults with learning disabilities, mental health and other needs like autism and elderly care, across the UK. The not-for-profit organisation offers the people it supports a range of short-term services to regain their independence, and supports those with complex needs through intensive support to enjoy a good quality of life. Services include supported living and housing, residential care, community and home support, coaching support, extra-care and day services.

Ray Corry WDF

Ray Corry is Creative Support's Head of Training and Development. He oversees the workforce development of over 5000 staff that manage the care needs of over 6000 people. The organisation has developed its National Occupational Standards to cover the knowledge requirements for the Diplomas in Health and Social Care for the Generic, Learning Disability and Older People/ Dementia Pathways at Levels 2 and 3.

At Creative Support, the WDF is specifically used to cover the cost of staff training towards the Diplomas in Health and Social Care, with a

particular focus on Levels 2, 3 and 5.

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Creative Support has accessed the WDF for over five years and was involved in many of the regional employer-led partnership meetings with Skills for Care in the early stages of the fund. As a large national organisation, Creative Support has been able to access the fund directly from Skills for Care and it is controlled, administered and managed by Ray at Creative Support's head of office in Manchester.

All training is delivered internally, with a team of 15 assessors working around the country to deliver qualifications to allocated groups of staff. Each assessor has a maximum of 35 learners at any one time, so that quality can be maintained. With a substantial ongoing recruitment process and a lower than average attrition rate of over 80%, there is a significant framework of training underway across all regions. Standardising and managing this extensive training programme across the UK falls under Ray's remit.

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At Creative Support, about 430 staff are working on a training programme at any given time, with around 350 qualifications being delivered annually. During 2013-14, around 17,500 people were involved in one or more training sessions across the organisation.

"The amount of WDF funding that is claimed is around 5% of the overall training budget, so that indicates how much we focus and spend on staff development. This funding is highly valued across our regions because it helps to support what we deliver to our service users."

"As an employer, the fund gives us flexibility in the qualifications that we deliver and the way that we deliver them. The savings, over the longer-term, enable us to be more diverse and to employ more assessors and trainers to deliver better quality training to more staff."

A team of 11 directors is responsible for a group of services within a region, dependent on their professional backgrounds. Everything is centralised at head of office. 12 permanent trainers work from head of office and in each region the practitioner-led senior managers manage inductions for their own staff. Freelance trainers are also used for more specialist training, so strong links are forged with learning providers across the country.

"The main achievement from the fund has been improving the quality of the care we provide to service users. Being able to access the WDF enables us to deliver more learning to our staff."

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Creative Support has found the process of accessing the fund directly from Skills for Care to be highly efficient and effective. The WDF has become an integral part of Creative Support's training budget and has led to better professional development opportunities for its workforce. Ray believes that there would be little that would be done differently.

Creative Support is heavily involved with Skills for Care and attends its national employer forums. It is also a representative on various panels and is a member of the National Skills Academy for Social Care, involved in shaping national policy. Networking at this level has given the organisation a better understanding of sector and training developments and other product and service information that supports workforce development.

"We've always been forward-thinking with our training and have maintained good links with Skills for Care. We invest a huge amount of time and finance into our staff training programmes. Because we're a charity, anything we can access to support our spending ultimately helps our service users. When we found out about the Workforce Development Fund, we knew that it could support our training provision across England."

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