

# Improving skills and care standards in the support workforce for older people: a realist synthesis of workforce development interventions

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## Plain English summary

### Improving skills and care standards in the support workforce

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## Plain English summary

As people are living longer, a higher number of older people will need care from NHS or social care services. Participants in this study have emphasised the importance of the need to ensure that care delivery in the future is of the highest quality. Support workers (the staff who provide most of the direct care for those who require it, but who are not on a professional register) will be key to this; therefore, helping them in their work through education, training and support is vital.

In this study, evidence about workforce development for support workers was reviewed to find out what might work, how, why and in what contexts. Engaging with stakeholders throughout, we developed an initial 'theory' or idea about how workforce development should work. This idea was then tested and refined through a structured search for evidence. We tested out the findings of this review through interviewing people who employ and manage support workers.

The findings from the study indicate that the design and delivery of workforce development should consider and include a number of starting points. These include personal factors about the support worker, the specific requirements of workforce development and the fit with broader organisational strategy and goals. Successful planning of staff development should pay attention to personal factors about the support worker, such as their existing skills and experience; the specific workforce development needs, for example clinical or organisational; and the fit of workforce development with the strategy and goals of the organisation more generally.

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