

# Examining the skills gap:

## Inspiring young people to take up careers in health and social care

A report by The Health Sector Advisory Group in partnership with The Careers & Enterprise Company

2025

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# Introduction

## The Health Sector Advisory Group

**We are 13 National Health Service (NHS) employers, unifying our voice and joining forces to address shared skills gaps across the health and social care sector.**

Our core belief is that a thriving NHS, underpinned by a skilled, diverse, and motivated workforce, is the foundation of a healthy, productive society. To achieve this, we need to overcome [persistent skills gaps](#) across health and social care which are creating workforce pressures and impact on patient care and organisational efficiency.

The careers education system - coordinated by [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#) (CEC), led by local economic partners and embedded within regional skills frameworks - can help close these skills gaps by strengthening the connection between education and employment.

This report marks our commitment to developing and implementing action plans in partnership with CEC's national network of [Careers Hubs](#) in England, to find local solutions to workforce challenges in our organisations.

While this report, and the group, focuses on NHS employers, we recognise the inherent connections and overlap across the wider health and social care sector. For clarity, references to health and social care sector employers in this report should be understood as referring primarily to those within the NHS.

Our goal is to use our collective effort - in collaboration with our partners across the health and social care sector - to ensure young people are aware of, enthused about, and able to take up pathways and careers in our brilliant and much-needed health service.

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# Foreword from Shajeda Ahmed



**Shajeda Ahmed**

**MA FCIPD**

**Chief People Officer at  
Black Country Integrated  
Care Board**

## Chair of The Health Sector Advisory Group

I am pleased to introduce this inaugural report from a new and forward-thinking partnership between The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC), the national body for careers education, and senior leaders from NHS Trusts and [Integrated Care Boards](#) (ICB). Convened through the Health Sector Advisory Group, this collaboration brings together 13 NHS employers representing over 200,000 staff working across all regions of England.

The NHS, as one of the largest employers in the world, faces well-documented and significant workforce challenges. The [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) and the subsequent [10-year strategy](#) outline the scale and urgency of what lies ahead. Solutions will require national coordination and sustained investment, but they also demand innovation and leadership at a local level. One area where we can and must act now is in how we engage young people and support them to consider, prepare for, and progress into health and care careers.

Too often, young people who express an interest in working in health and social care are unsure about what pathways are available or feel uncertain about whether they are “the right fit.” Outdated assumptions, limited exposure to real-life experiences, and a lack of personalised guidance all play a role in dampening aspirations or narrowing choices. As a result, too many promising futures are lost before they have the chance to begin.

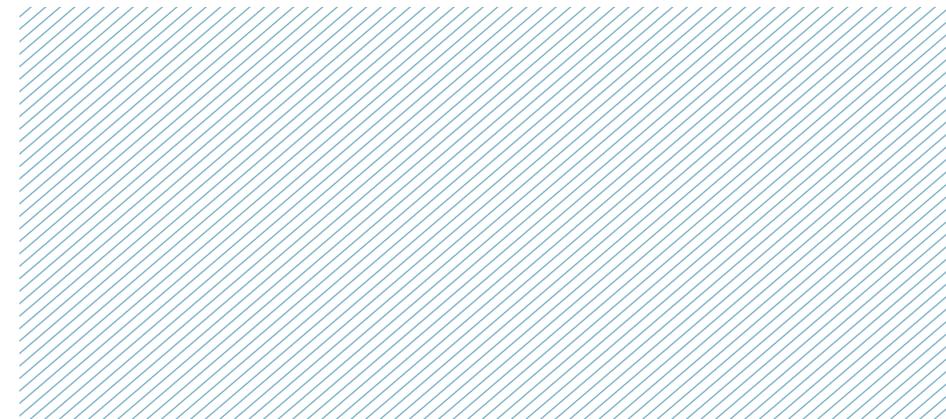
This report explores how high-quality, timely, and relevant careers education can make a real difference. It looks at how employers working in collaboration with schools, colleges, careers leaders and local partners can help open minds, build confidence, and offer the practical insights that allow young people to take the next best step toward a rewarding future in health and social care.

## **This report aims to do three things:**

1. **Understand the context and analyse** the factors determining why young people, despite their interest, do not always progress into health and social care careers.
2. **Demonstrate how nationally-coordinated, locally-led and tailored careers education** can unblock impediments to meaningful engagement and successful pathways into health and social care careers and address localised skills gaps.
3. **Distil lessons and practical recommendations** for NHS employers and colleagues across the health and social care sector in their pursuit of world class talent, matched to a world class health service.

This work represents only the beginning of a broader commitment to better align education and employment in health and social care. We believe there is significant potential to scale and sustain this approach, and we hope this report provides both evidence and encouragement to those seeking to make a positive impact in their local systems.

By working together across sectors and settings, this group can help ensure more young people are supported into meaningful careers, and that our health and social care system is equipped with the diverse, skilled, and motivated workforce it needs for the future.



## Section 1:

# Context – the skills gap conundrum

**Skills shortages persist in all parts of the NHS, despite high interest among young people in health and social care professions, and the willingness of NHS employers to engage.**

The NHS, the world's fourth-largest employer, is [facing significant skills shortages](#), with over 121,000 vacancies as of February 2024. The health and adult social care sectors accounts for the [highest proportion](#) of vacancies (41%) and represents the largest demand for workers. Without focused and strategic interventions, the [shortfall in NHS workers could rise](#) to 360,000 by 2036/37, leading to increased strain on local services and healthcare delivery.

“With demand for healthcare services growing, workforce capacity has inevitably been strained, clinical and non-clinical skills gaps have continued to emerge at both a local and national level.

Resolving the mismatch between skills supply and service demand requires long-term, joined up thinking in order to accelerate skills development that is aligned with the aims and objectives of strategic workforce planning.

The CEC and this group of NHS employers are rising to this challenge through early outreach which trains a laser focus on what it takes to enable a more inclusive and future-ready NHS workforce.”

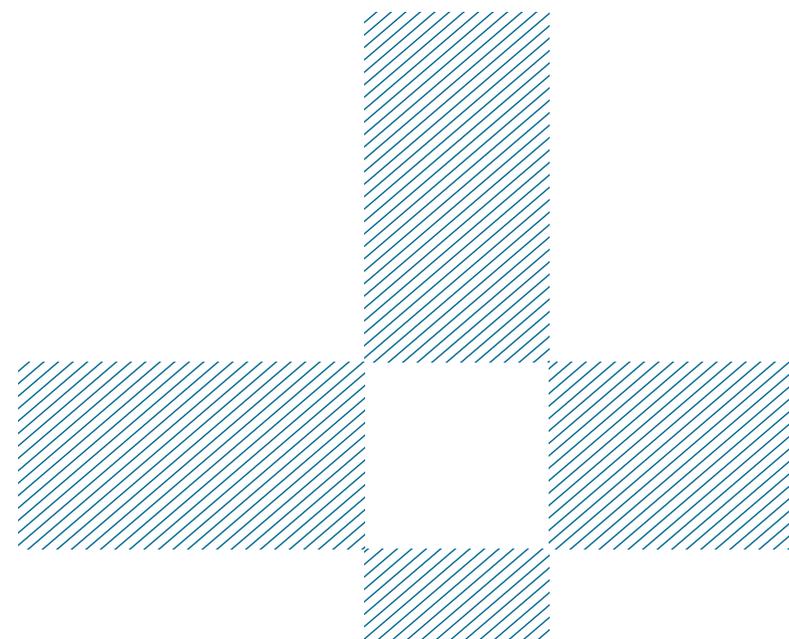
**John Rogers, Chief Executive at Skills for Health**

## 1. Young people are increasingly interested in health and social care careers ...but interest varies by region

During the 2023/24 academic year, an unprecedented 230,000 secondary students across England completed the CEC's [Future Skills Questionnaire](#) (FSQ). The data reveals health and social care as one of the [most popular career sector](#) choices among Year 11 students. Interest for health and social care has grown steadily in recent years, up 3%pts since 2022/23.

Health professions not only feature as a chosen career option for teenagers, the NHS is also upheld as a [highly desirable](#) organisation to work for – ranking first, ahead of global businesses such as Apple, Google and NASA. Young people's industry interests also increasingly align with the [Government's Industrial Strategy](#) and high-need sectors such as healthcare, identified by [Skills England](#).

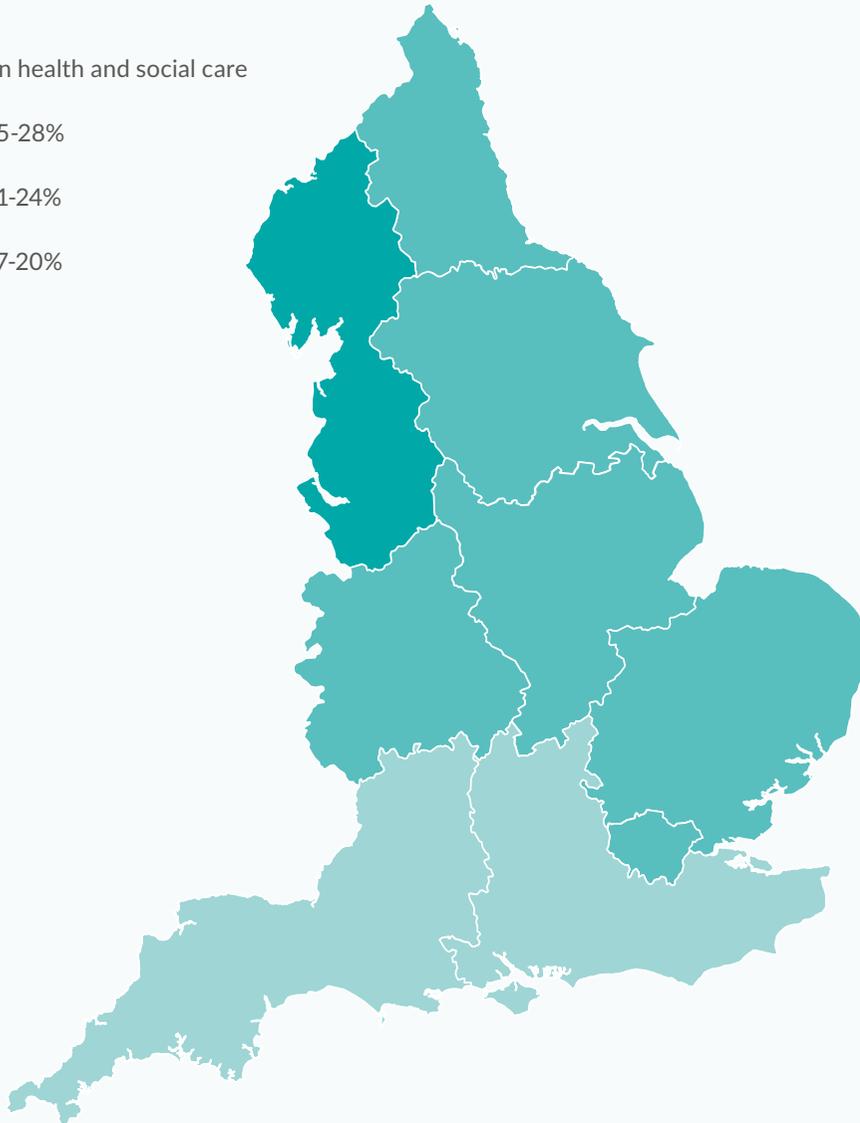
However, viewed regionally, students' interest in health and social care remains inconsistent, with [variability across the country](#). For instance, only 19% of students in the South-East express interest in a career in the sector, compared to 25% in the North-West. Data becomes important in understanding levels of interest overlaid by incidence of vacancies. Gender bias is also evident, with female students [3.5%pts more likely](#) than males to consider a career in healthcare. Figure 1 indicates areas of interest and where to target and intensify efforts.



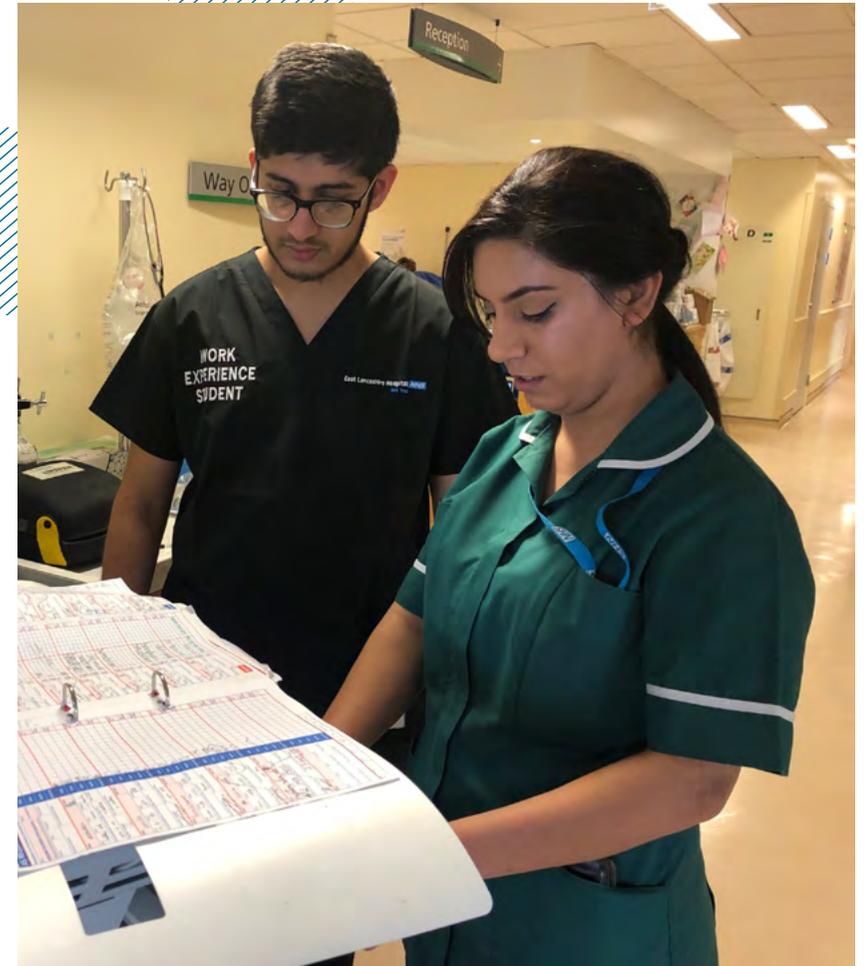
**Fig. 1: Health and social care interests of Year 11 students vary by region**

Interest in health and social care

- 25-28%
- 21-24%
- 17-20%



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2023/24 academic year (Year 11, N=20,114)



## 2. Depth of awareness of healthcare careers remains shallow

There are over [350 commonly reported career pathways](#) available across the health and social care sector. Dentistry, occupational therapy, as well as key non-clinical roles, are highlighted among the plethora of roles where the NHS needs to fill vital skills gaps. Crucially, the [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) underscores the need to raise awareness of emerging roles that support the shift to prevention and care in the community, such as community workers, pharmacy technicians, and social prescribing link workers. These reside alongside roles that remain persistently hard to fill, including general practitioners and mental health professionals.

[General information](#) is available about roles across the NHS, but awareness of the full [breadth of roles remains limited and uneven](#). When [surveyed](#), young people are often unable to recall career options available within the NHS beyond more traditional and highly visible roles. This underlines the vital importance of high-quality careers education to enable students, from a young age, to broaden awareness and then deepen understanding of careers available. It is also key to transforming initial interest into actual pursuit of a healthcare career.

In Section 2 we explore how [modern work experience](#) can offer young people, from all backgrounds, multiple and varied exposure to different occupations and the pathways into them. In addition, we look at the skills young people need to develop to be successful with their applications and selection processes.

## 3. Good outreach exists but doesn't always lead to intake

The social value requirement in NHS procurement has created strong incentives for healthcare providers to drive education engagement as part of their careers outreach. Of the leading employers that the CEC partners with, over 200 are health and social care organisations. Data from the CEC's [Employer Standards](#) tool shows [healthcare employers](#) perform 8%pts above the average for all employers in raising awareness of pathways into work, which positively impacts skills gaps in the sector.

However, employers and young people alike recognise that further action is needed to better prepare students for intake. Helping young people understand and prepare for the full range of application processes offers the most scope for improvement. The CEC's [evidence](#) shows that just over half (54%) of Year 11 students said they knew about different types of recruitment and selection processes. By age 16, young people feel confident in most work-related skills but rate themselves lower on "human skills" [vital for health and social care careers](#) like leadership, listening, speaking and teamwork.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are also less confident talking about their skills when applying for courses or jobs. They have career ambitions but are less sure footed when engaging independently with future employers. As [one example](#), only 5% of entrants to medical school are from the lowest socio-economic groups.

Young people feel more career ready through their school journey. However, girls receiving Free School Meals (FSM) start off at a particular disadvantage, and this continues during their time at school.



"The Dental Schools Council fully supports this important work to improve awareness and access to careers in health and social care. We recognise the power of early engagement and are dedicated to working collaboratively to ensure young people - especially those from underrepresented communities - can see a future for themselves in dentistry."

**Professor Ewen McColl,**

**Chair of Dental Schools Council and Head of Peninsula Dental School**

## Section 2:

# Taking action

**The Health Sector Advisory Group has identified and initiated action plans to address barriers locally, using the national careers education system.**

The group has committed to taking action, using a CEC [diagnostic framework](#) to identify barriers that hinder access to opportunities in health and social care, and then develop plans in partnership with their local Careers Hub to find long term, locally embedded solutions. Plans have been activated around three targeted areas to close skills gaps.

“The skills gaps across the NHS are not only a drain on our economy, but also a challenge for the well being of our communities.

This national collaboration, driven by Careers Hubs and the CEC, ensures local Trusts and their ICBs are supported to engage in an efficient and impactful way, laying the foundations for long-term growth in this vital sector, and responding to our regional growth and skills ambitions.”

**Cllr. Marion Atkinson,  
Leader Sefton Council and Liverpool City  
Region Combined Authority Cabinet Member  
for Education and Skills**

## 1. Use workplace experiences to deepen young people's interest in health and social care

A priority for careers education is converting young people's interest in health and social care into clear pathways.

A good example of this happening is in **Doncaster & Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital (DBTH)**, a [Cornerstone Employer](#) in the region. '[We Care into the Future](#)' is a careers event introducing a wide range of career opportunities across health and social care for every Year 8 student in the region. Week-long work placements are then offered to young people who have followed up their interest, and this can lead to pathway entry for T-level students and apprentices, as well as other higher-level routes.

**Lincolnshire Community & Hospital NHS Group** and the **Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital** also offer immersive local programmes aimed at raising awareness of hidden roles and apprenticeship pathways.

Employers across all sectors are seeking ways to make [work experience more accessible](#). Traditional work experience models of two-week block placements have [often lacked the flexibility](#) for employers and students alike to engage. Many young people only receive brief, observational experiences rather than immersive opportunities that build skills and deepen understanding. As a result, they often struggle to connect their aspirations with the range of [career pathways](#) available in sectors like health.

In response, **Derby & Derbyshire ICB** and **Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent ICS** are delivering a blend of [virtual](#) and in-person work experience to inspire young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Due to ongoing challenges in providing hospital-based work experience, such as limited clinical and non-clinical capacity and inadequate funding - **Lancashire & South Cumbria ICB** is partnering with Pendleside Hospice to pilot scalable work experience models that integrate primary and social care.

To support all employers to do this, the CEC has developed a new [Modern Work Experience model](#) (delivering on the Government's work experience commitment), to enable multiple, varied and immersive workplace experiences for all young people. [The West Midlands Combined Authority](#) and [Liverpool City Region](#) are partnering with local NHS employers using this model to reshape their approaches to workplace experiences.

These pilots ensure that all young people have access to the skills and knowledge needed by the NHS as part of a flexible work experience offer totalling 10 days. The approach aims to build career knowledge and readiness, whilst matching students' interests to the health and social care sector's long-term workforce needs. Workplace experiences can also help to build confidence and demystify the working environment for young people including [perceived fear of](#) working in large organisations and buildings.

To deliver meaningful and sustainable experiences, it is essential to align work placement expectations with the operational realities of NHS organisations. Clinical teams are primarily focused on patient care and often have limited capacity to support non-clinical activities. Age restrictions in clinical areas also constrain where students can be placed. By recognising and addressing these challenges, NHS employers and partners can design workplace experiences that are both impactful for young people and practical for service providers.

## Modern work experience pilot at Wolverhampton City Council

The West Midlands Combined Authority Careers Hub (WMCA) is collaborating with schools in Wolverhampton, to ensure all young people can access opportunities in some of the region's key sectors. A key focus of WMCA's strategy is supporting young people at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). By expanding targeted opportunities, this initiative aligns with the NHS's broader ambition to build a diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves. Black Country ICB are partnering with the Careers Hub and Wolverhampton City Council to deliver meaningful experiences as part of the pilot.

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust delivers a range of immersive experiences for young people - for example, insight days for different specialities, including live streams from operating theatres and hands-on activities in their bespoke training centre. These activities feature birthing simulation equipment, interactive manikins, and laparoscopic surgery demonstrations. Through these experiences, students gain real-world exposure to the health and care sector, develop early awareness of a variety of NHS careers, and build relevant career readiness skills.

## 2. Embedding careers awareness about health and social care within the curriculum

Engagement with NHS employers and Careers Hubs has shown there are opportunities to align better with local economic and skills plans. [Embedding](#) local Labour Market Information (LMI) into the local curriculum and supporting employers to deliver high-quality interventions gives students a clearer understanding of the competencies required for roles in health and social care, alongside opportunities to develop these skills.

Schools and colleges are [increasingly linking curriculum teaching to career-related learning](#), with 80% of institutions now fully delivering against [Gatsby Benchmark 4](#), thereby scaling up the number of young people accessing LMI.

The Inclusive Careers Project, delivered in partnership by **Humber & North Yorkshire ICB** and the **Hull & East Yorkshire Careers Hub**, is a good example of embedding careers education into the curriculum. It provides tailored guidance for young people interested in health and care careers, including those in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision settings, while upskilling key influencers such as teachers, careers leaders, and parents. The project culminates in an immersive workplace experience, helping to connect classroom learning with real-world opportunities.

**Devon Partnership NHS Trust and University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust** are also developing a structured delivery plan to scale engagement, aligning with local economic and skills strategies.

Strengthening these interventions and expanding connectivity through Careers Hubs will ensure more young people can access meaningful NHS career pathways.

Hubs play a vital role in coordinating efforts in areas of most need, addressing the [disparate regional vacancy picture](#) (the NHS vacancy rate varies from 11.5% in London to 6.2% in the South West).

## Creating Careers a Step Ahead – broadening access to health and care careers

Creating Careers a Step Ahead is a trailblazing health and social care careers programme co-designed by NHS England North West, Liverpool City Region Careers Hub, and partners across the North West.

In 2023, it delivered England's largest in-person healthcare modern work experience week, engaging around 200 students and involving around 100 professionals. The initiative provides immersive activities including career insight days, workplace safaris, and mentoring, highlighting both clinical and non-clinical roles.

With a growing focus on social care and primary care, the programme is actively supporting the sector's shift towards more community-based careers. It is developing new pathways into care, including spotlighting apprenticeships in social care that many young people are unaware of.

The programme also supports embedding health and social care careers awareness within the curriculum, helping educators integrate real-world insights into classroom learning. Under its [Creating Careers Live](#) brand, the programme will continue to expand meaningful workplace experiences, especially in areas facing the greatest workforce need.

### 3. Empowering teachers to help inform students about careers in health and social care

Teachers play a vital role in guiding students toward career opportunities. However, they [often have limited first-hand knowledge of the diverse technical and apprenticeship pathways](#) available including those in health and social care. The [CEC data](#) shows that a third of teachers have never worked outside of education.

Conversations about these pathways remain inconsistent across schools, leading to missed opportunities for young people to follow up on their interest and pursue careers in health and social care. Variability also exists across regions and there is a lack of interventions which target specific skills gaps in key roles such as mental health professionals.

Recognising this, **Humber and North Yorkshire ICB** are offering Teacher Encounters that showcase behind-the-scenes careers such as technology and laboratory science.

The South Yorkshire Careers Hub and **Doncaster & Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals**, in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Sheffield, and local NHS hospitals, are delivering targeted Teacher Encounters. The programme aims to support up to 100 teachers by enhancing their knowledge and confidence in guiding students toward careers in health and care.

A nationally-coordinated, locally-led programme of [Teacher Encounters](#) has given educators first-hand experience in health and social care settings. [Insights from the programme](#) revealed 91% of teachers reported improved confidence in career-related conversations and 96% enhanced their ability to support students and link subjects to careers. Expanding the teacher encounters programme across all NHS employers, would ensure that all teachers, regardless of location, have access to industry insights and local pathway information about health and social care.

#### Empowering educators to shape healthcare career pathways at Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust recognises that, while many young people are interested in healthcare careers, setting them on the right path can be challenging. To bridge this gap, the Trust engages directly with teachers and careers leaders – key influencers guiding students from the classroom into the workplace.

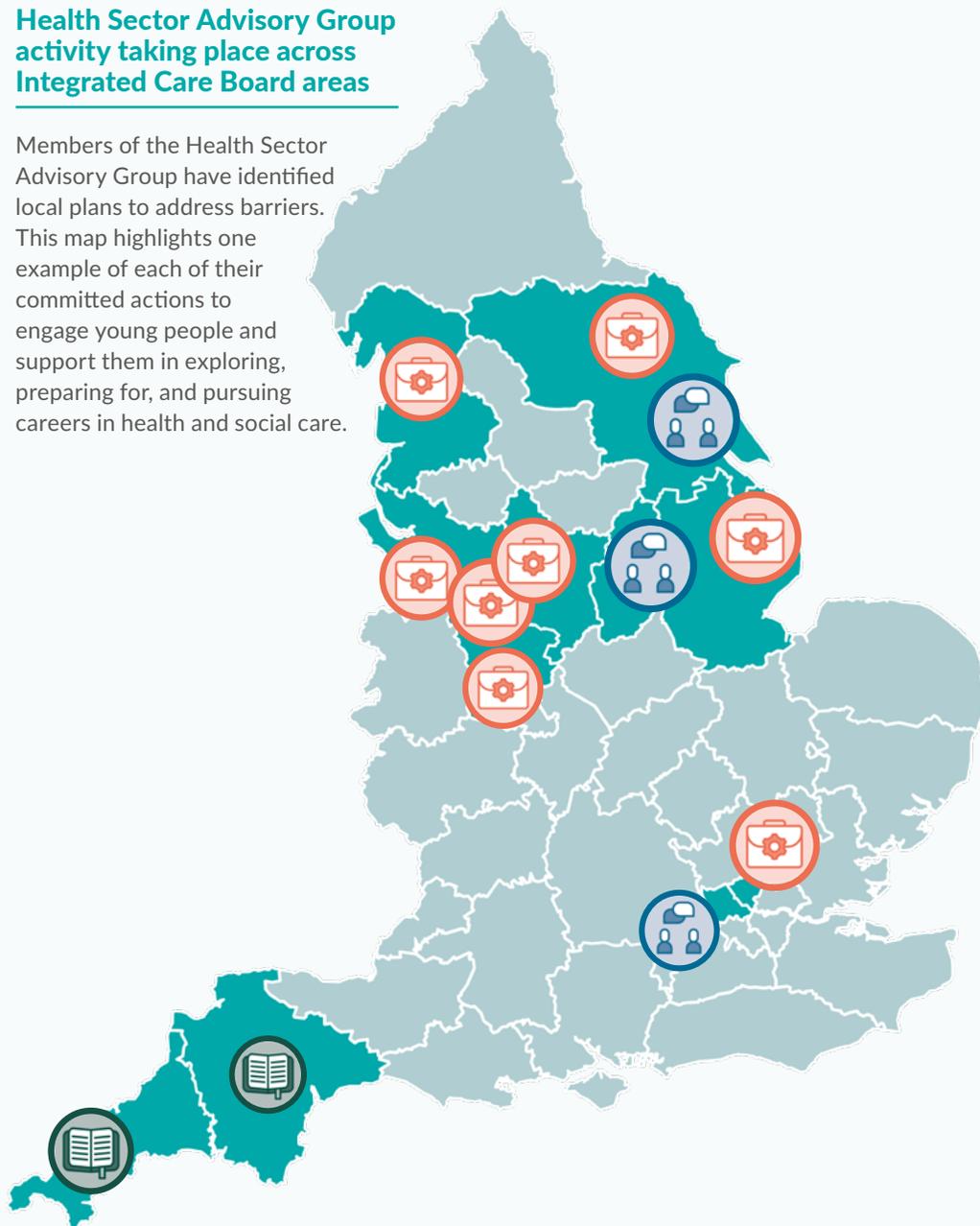
As part of its BrighT futures @BHT early talent attraction strategy, the Trust works closely with over 40 local secondary schools and further education (FE) colleges. The Teacher Encounters programme, supported by the CEC and Buckinghamshire Careers Hub, has been instrumental. Giving teachers firsthand experience of the healthcare workplace enables them to integrate skills development and career pathway knowledge directly into the curriculum. The initiative has fostered lasting relationships with schools through follow-up activities including interactive careers workshops led by clinicians, a termly programme of after-school careers talks, and work experience opportunities – all helping to strengthen students' career readiness.

This engagement is driving recruitment and retention at the Trust, ensuring the right people are attracted to the right jobs and targeting key workforce gaps. Young people such as Rebecca are offered a range of support including 1:1 careers coaching and interview practice, enabling her to fulfil her dream position as a physiotherapy assistant at their National Spinal Injuries Centre.



## Health Sector Advisory Group activity taking place across Integrated Care Board areas

Members of the Health Sector Advisory Group have identified local plans to address barriers. This map highlights one example of each of their committed actions to engage young people and support them in exploring, preparing for, and pursuing careers in health and social care.



### Modern Work Experience

#### Derby & Derbyshire ICB

East Midlands Combined County Authority Careers Hub

#### Humber & North Yorkshire ICB

Hull & East Yorkshire Careers Hub

#### Lancashire & South Cumbria ICB

Lancashire Careers Hub

#### Lincolnshire Community & Hospitals NHS Group

Greater Lincolnshire Careers Hub

#### NHS England (North West)

Liverpool City Region Careers Hub

#### Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital

West London Careers Hub

#### Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent ICS

#### University Hospitals of North Midlands

Stoke & Staffordshire Careers Hub

#### The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

West Midlands Combined Authority Careers Hub



### Careers in the Curriculum

#### Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Careers Hub

#### Devon Partnership NHS Trust

#### University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

Devon, Plymouth & Torbay Careers Hub



### Teacher Encounters

#### Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Buckinghamshire Careers Hub

#### Doncaster & Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals

South Yorkshire Combined Authority Careers Hub

#### Humber & North Yorkshire ICB

York & North Yorkshire Careers Hub

### Section 3:

## Sharing ideas – 10 lessons learnt

**The Health Sector Advisory Group's endeavour is a modest but hopefully important contribution to an overarching national strategic approach to addressing the workforce challenges faced by the NHS and the wider health and social care sector.**

We are seeking to incorporate 10 practical lessons into our education outreach. We are keen to share insights with all colleagues involved in policy and practice across the health and social care sector.

“The Medical Schools Council strongly supports efforts to address the health sector's skills gap through meaningful outreach and careers education. As highlighted in our Fostering Potential report, early, equitable engagement is vital. We are committed to working alongside partners to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals from all backgrounds.”

**Katie Petty-Saphon MBE, Chief Executive of the Medical Schools Council**

1. **Start early** – research shows that [by the age of six](#), children have often formed stereotypes that restrict their career aspirations. Primary careers education enables children to explore diverse career options and challenge traditional biases. [Insight](#) shows that with the right career-related learning, girls express interest in non-gender-stereotyped jobs, along with improved understanding of careers beyond those of their family.
2. **Connect through Careers Hubs** – employers engaging with [Careers Hubs](#) report school careers support is becoming more connected and responsive to sector skills and local economic needs ([74% compared to 53% for those not engaging with a Hub](#)). Anchored locally, Careers Hubs enable employers to engage purposefully with local schools and colleges, aligning with local labour markets and sector priorities. Teachers can also get closer to industries to grow their knowledge and support continuous improvement.
3. **Offer meaningful work experience opportunities** – framed within [the Gatsby Benchmarks](#), standards for world class careers education. Experiences should offer the opportunity to explore what skills are valued in the workplace, understand application processes and learn what it takes to be successful. Young people should have the opportunity to meet a wide range of people from the workplace, with feedback on real tasks, followed by time to reflect on the insights learnt. Experiences should also encourage [variation and flexibility](#) in how education institutions and employers work with young people, underpinned by appropriate learning outcomes, to build a rich picture of a work environment.
4. **Offer teachers workplace experience** – Teachers [play a key role in students' career guidance and decisions](#). Increasing exposure to workplace environments enables them to see first-hand how businesses work and increases confidence to have well-informed careers conversations with students including about employment pathways, such as apprenticeships. Employers benefit through learning more about schools and how to work with them effectively. [More than nine in ten](#) employers (97%) offering teacher encounters say it's helped them explain to teachers and young people their future skills needs.
5. **Engage parents** – greater engagement with parents benefits both businesses and students. Employers that engage parents and carers in careers activities are more likely to say their engagement is leading to business benefits across the board. They are [19%pts more likely to report their education outreach is helping them close skills gaps](#) than those not engaging parents. The CEC's [parental engagement CPD](#) supports parents to have constructive careers and educational conversations with educators.
6. **Measure and evaluate impact** - to ensure your activities are having the intended impact and adapt where needed. Healthcare employers can use [Employer Standards](#) to self-assess the quality of their education outreach. [Of those using the tool](#), 80% of Healthcare employers said that outreach is helping to improve the diversity of their workforce. 92% said their outreach is encouraging young people to apply for roles in their business.

7. **Lead by example as a local anchor employer** – studies have shown that [80% of health outcomes are determined by non-health related inputs](#) – for example education and employment. Be a focal point for careers outreach as part of your work by developing skills and widening access to quality work for local young people and driving social value as part of procurement. Collaborate with your local Careers Hub and partners to maximise impact.
8. **Remove barriers to apprenticeship uptake** – the ambition to introduce [pre-health registered apprenticeships](#), medical degree apprenticeships and increase technical pathways into the NHS overall requires a locally-embedded approach. This will not only raise awareness and enthusiasm for taking up opportunities but also provide access to training options and pathways. The CEC's [ATE Transitions Framework](#) can help NHS employers to take a localised, evidence-led approach to identify and address barriers that stop young people from transitioning into technical and vocational pathways.
9. **Outreach to intake** – assembly talks and taster days alone won't convert student interest to workforce recruitment. Once young people understand pathways into a career choice, they need support to navigate the [assessment process and support to build their confidence about talking about their skills in an interview](#). The [Employer Skills Survey](#) shows that 36% of vacancies in health and adult social care are hard to fill due to skill shortages. Resources such as [employer toolkits](#) and [mentoring schemes](#) can provide practical help at this stage.
10. **Partner with the CEC** – join the CEC's network of 450 [Cornerstone Employers](#) to lead outreach and create opportunities for young people. Collaborate with the CEC on [partner programmes](#) to help remove barriers related to transition for disadvantage. To get involved contact [health@careersandenterprise.co.uk](mailto:health@careersandenterprise.co.uk).



A shared commitment to the future workforce:  
Perspective from The King's Trust:

“Inspiring and supporting young people early into Health and Social Care roles is vital to secure the sector's future workforce, where demand for its services is increasing.

This report chimes with our experience at The King's Trust. Since 2019 we have supported over 19,000 young people to engage in our Health and Social Care employability programmes, with over 6,000 young people in sustained jobs.

We know that guidance and work experience to steer young people through the range of career opportunities, combined with dedicated support to secure interviews and job offers transforms young people's confidence and ability to pursue a career in the health and social care sector.

We are committed to taking forward the report's recommendations and working with ICBs and NHS Trusts long into the future.”

**Jonathan Townsend, Chief Executive  
of the Kings Trust**

## Section 4:

# Final word: A collective commitment to inspire, prepare and sustain future talent

### We are a determined coalition of health employers, and our cause is urgent.

A third of our workforce is reaching retirement age, and there is much at stake if we do not act. Without a consistent and energised approach from all NHS regions, we risk untapped potential and a widening gap between workforce demand and supply which will only exacerbate the recruitment and retention pressures we already face. Workforce shortages will inevitably [undermine service delivery](#) and patient care, leading to increased waiting times, staff burnout, and a decline in the overall quality of health care across the country.

The upcoming review of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, with its accompanying 10-Year Health Plan, will no doubt amplify the growing workforce challenges facing our health and social care system, and a need for place-based action. We see this as an opportunity not to miss - to herald generational change in what it will take to attract and incentivise young talent into much needed roles across the NHS.

Resources will continue to be tight. However, a key learning from our group is that dedicated attention to education outreach, backed by leadership and utilising our people, offers strategic focus, efficiency and sustained effort in how we recruit and retain future workforce. We have a panoply of many brilliant, relatable role models across the NHS to call upon as part of that inspiration effort. Done well, inspiration begets interest which incentivises meaningful work experience and then pursuit into intake. Retention is strengthened because of the quality of the recruit's career education journey, to inform a confident career choice.

In doing so, we must ensure that the quality of outreach including work experience is maintained. We hope this report's learning alongside existing NHS [quality standards for work experience](#) can offer all NHS employers a quality framework to engage with real purpose.

We will share this report with all our partners across the NHS, with strong optimism in the power of collective voice. Please join our movement.

**Anne Lloyd**  
Director of Workforce Transformation  
NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board



## Section 5:

## Summary of commitments

Health Sector Advisory Group	Activity	Targeted impact	
Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities	<b>Derby &amp; Derbyshire ICB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide over 660 hours of meaningful workplace experience through a blend of virtual and inperson opportunities</li> <li>• Offer ongoing support and access to resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness and inspiration among young people of often-overlooked roles such as Healthcare Scientist, Estates and Facilities, and Administrative Support</li> <li>• Empower young people to take informed next steps towards health and care careers</li> </ul>
	<b>Lancashire &amp; South Cumbria ICB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with NHS Lancashire &amp; South Cumbria ICB and Pendleside Hospice to explore scalable work experience models that integrate primary and social care</li> <li>• Enhance young people's understanding of key roles—particularly in Allied Health Professions, Pharmacy, and Pathology—by partnering with 29 schools and aiming to engage 110 students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide students with insight into diverse career paths across health and social care, beyond hospital settings</li> <li>• Assess scalability of work experience models</li> </ul>
	<b>Lincolnshire Community &amp; Hospitals NHS Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Lincolnshire Health and Care Careers Event</li> <li>• Hands-on workshops in fields like medicine, nursing, and social care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire and inform students about health and care career pathways</li> <li>• Develop a sustainable regional approach to health careers</li> </ul>
	<b>NHS England (North West)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Equalex Pilot</li> <li>• Deliver insight days and immersive experiences (e.g. nursing insight days, Liverpool Women's mentoring programme, Walton Centre workplace safari)</li> <li>• Engage with over 250 schools through Creating Careers, a regional programme delivering bespoke resources, newsletters, and guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve equity of access to health and care careers</li> <li>• Provide real-world exposure to various career paths</li> </ul>
	<b>Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver Teacher Encounters programme and at least 180 workplace experiences for young people</li> <li>• Promote apprenticeship pathways through Tik Tok campaign and parent webinars (focusing on Pre Reg-Pharmacy Technician, Occupational Therapists, Research Facilitator roles)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of breadth of opportunities and hidden roles such as Occupational Therapy and Pharmacy Technicians with a focus on ATE pathways and application processes</li> </ul>
	<b>Staffordshire &amp; Stoke-on-Trent ICS / University Hospitals of North Midlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At a system level equitable delivery of educational engagement resources: Virtual Work Experience and Careers Booklet</li> <li>• Deliver 4 interactive Health and Care Careers Roadshow events at a system level, hosted by FE Colleges, targeted KS4 students and incumbent college students</li> <li>• UHNM are providing around 350 local students each year ad-hoc work experience</li> <li>• UHNM are hosting Careers Observation days with hands-on activities to inform students about potential career pathways</li> <li>• UHNM are leading a 5-day programme for Year 9 and 10 pupils on FSM/ Pupil Premium as a part of Healthcare Careers Week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing younger students with opportunities to explore a variety of health careers in a safe and supportive environment</li> <li>• Expanding access for young people who have no existing connections to the NHS, offering them real-world exposure to careers in health and social care</li> <li>• Increase awareness of local health and care career opportunities</li> <li>• Expand access to remote virtual workplace experiences</li> <li>• Deliver a sustainable, system approach to health and care careers, avoiding duplication; widening access and participation</li> </ul>
	<b>The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver hands-on programmes for Year 10+ students featuring interactive manikins, laparoscopic surgery and birthing simulators, patient handling practice, and a hospital tour at our dedicated training centre</li> <li>• Host specialty insight days covering Health Care Science, AHPs, Nursing and Midwifery, Medicine, and MPCE, with workshops and live theatre streams (e.g. during Medicine Day)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing younger students with opportunities to explore a variety of health careers in a safe and supportive environment</li> <li>• Expanding access for young people who have no existing connections to the NHS, offering them real-world exposure to careers in health and social care</li> </ul>

Health Sector Advisory Group		Activity	Targeted impact
Skills match requirements for the next step	<b>Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot NHS Ambassador careers programme with a focus on Key Stage 3 and link to the 'Developing Experts' science curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness of NHS careers and ATE pathways</li> <li>Equip teachers and parents to support students in exploring and applying for careers in health and social care</li> </ul>
	<b>Devon Partnership NHS Trust / University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and train NHS Ambassadors, focusing on priority roles such as Mental Health and Learning Disability and Nursing</li> <li>Deliver outreach via Project 40 Apprentice Ambassadors framework through partnership between 8-10 schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower Ambassadors to raise awareness of diverse NHS roles</li> <li>Equip educators to effectively promote NHS careers</li> </ul>
	<b>Humber &amp; North Yorkshire ICB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive Careers Project</li> <li>Promote NHS professions with apprenticeship pathways (e.g. pharmacy, nursing, midwifery)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight diverse healthcare roles, including behind-the-scenes careers like engineers and lab scientists</li> </ul>
Conversion of interest to take up	<b>Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host termly cross-site Teacher Encounter visits</li> <li>Offer a wide range of workplace experiences, from individual shadowing to clinical skills development days</li> <li>BHT Careers Ambassadors support local community school events, including the annual Bucks Skills Show</li> <li>Deliver after-school careers talk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness of diverse NHS roles – particularly areas with a workforce shortage</li> <li>Prioritise support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> <li>Increase staff engagement by enabling them to inspire the next generation</li> </ul>
	<b>Doncaster &amp; Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners such as South Yorkshire Careers Hub and University of Sheffield hosting Teacher Encounters leading up to We Care into the Future event for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve teacher knowledge and increase student interests</li> <li>Support up to 100 teachers and over 2000 young people</li> </ul>
	<b>Humber &amp; North Yorkshire ICB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver Experience of the workplace for Year 12 at Scarborough Teaching Hospital (including talks with pharmacy, healthcare science, children's therapy)</li> <li>Deliver Teacher Encounters programme (focusing on non-clinical roles) leading to curriculum resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight diverse healthcare roles, including behind-the-scenes careers like technology and science</li> <li>Improve educators knowledge and confidence linked to curriculum subjects and targeting teachers in science, engineering, IT and biology</li> </ul>

# THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Our Impact

Our Evidence

In partnership with:

