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Introduction

About this report

The Workforce Development Fund (WDF) has been subject to seven independent evaluations, together covering the 13-year period from 2011 to 2024. Each of these evaluations has reviewed . Six of the seven evaluations have also covered the Individual Employer (IE) funding component.

This report presents the results of a meta-analysis undertaken on the final reports of the seven previous WDF evaluations. In doing so, it provides a longer-term assessment of the outcomes and achievements of the WDF, including its economic contribution.

Definitions

The aim of the mainstream fund is to support the provision of high-quality care and the continuing professional development of staff in the adult social care sector by providing a contribution towards the cost of vocational learning. The fund is allocated via three routes:

- Employer-led partnerships
- Grant applications from large national employers
- Direct applications from employers in local authority areas not served by an employer-led partnership.

IE funding supports the learning and development of individual employers and their personal assistants (PAs). IE funding is paid in advance (before the training has taken place) and covers the full cost of the training. It can also be used to cover the cost of training-related travel, expenses and replacement PA cover.

IE funding is allocated via two routes:

- Direct applications from individual employers
- Applications from user-led organisations (ULOs), who then organise and/or deliver the training.

establishments registered
establishments that provide care and support services, e.g., domiciliary care
providers, residential care homes, etc95.2 841.92 reW* nBT/F2 12 Tf1 0 0 1 252.34 673.15 Tm0 g.

Methods

Table 1.1 shows the samples upon which the meta-analysis is based, i.e., the number of establishments and individual employers who participated in the WDF evaluations between 2011 and 2024. In total, the meta-analysis sample is 1,722 establishments and 228 individual employers¹.

Table 0.1: Establishment and individual employer survey samples



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Employers are more efficient

Skills and morale of the workforce

As demonstrated in Table 2.2, the findings related to the skills and morale of the workforce are overwhelmingly positive. Across all seven evaluations combined, nearly all the establishments said the mainstream fund had led to improvements in the skills/qualifications of their staff team, while more than 80% said it had gone some way towards addressing their most pressing skills gaps. Encouragingly high proportions also said that other skills gaps had been addressed and/or that they had observed improvements in staff morale which they could attribute directly to the mainstream fund.

Table 2.2: Skills and morale of the workforce

Outcome	% establishments
Improvements in the skills/qualifications of staff teams	93%

Reductions in the most pressing skills gaps within adult

85% said they were able to more effectively meet the specialist or personalised needs of people accessing care and support.

Workforce development

Summarised in Table 2.3, there are five outcomes in this category, all of which were reported by a majority of establishments. The proportions range from 63% (taking different approaches to training) to 71% (becoming more interested in staff development).

These are lower proportions than in the preceding sub-section, but that does not necessarily mean that the fund has performed less well against these outcomes. This is because the WDF evaluation reports have consistently shown that fewer establishments engage with the fund for the reasons listed in Table 2.3 than they do to improve staff skills or address skills gaps. In other words, while the percentages against these outcomes may be lower, the achievements, in relative terms, may be just as significant.

Table 2.3

Table 2.5: Summary of outcomes for establishments

Outcome	% establishments in the meta-analysis	Estimated no. establishments experiencing this outcome (2011-24)
Category: Skills and morale of the workforce		
Improvements in the skills/qualifications of staff teams	93%	36,270
Reductions in the most pressing skills gaps within adult social care employers	82%	31,980
Improvements in staff morale	79%	30,810
Category: Quality of care		
Improvements in quality of care	91%	35,490
Specialist/personalised needs of people accessing care and support are met more effectively	85%	33,150
Category: Workforce development		
Employers are more interested in staff development	71%	27,690

Individual Employer funding

Introduction

The surveys undertaken with individual employers for the WDF evaluations were shorter than those undertaken with registered establishments. This is reflected in the number of outcomes included in the meta-analysis. Grouped below into three categories, there are seven such outcomes (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Outcomes of Individual Employer Funding

Category: Skills, knowledge and morale
Improvements in the skills/knowledge of PAs
Improvements in the morale of PAs
Improvements in the skills/knowledge of individual employers
Category: Care and support
Improvements in how individual employers are supported by their PAs
Individual employers are supported in a way that is more relevant to their needs
Category: Other outcomes
Improvements in the retention of PAs
Training has become more affordable

Skills, knowledge and morale

The results here reflect very well on how IE funding has supported individual employers and their PAs over the past decade. As shown in Table 3.2, 90% of the individual employers participating in the evaluations agreed that the skills/knowledge of their PA(s) had improved, while 87% had observed higher levels of morale.

A smaller proportion (63%) said their own skills/knowledge had improved as a result of the funding. However, context is important here, as it was relatively uncommon for individual employers to say they had accessed the funding for that purpose. For example:

In the 2019-22 evaluation, 40% of the individual employers said they had accessed IE funding to improve their own skills/knowledge, but 50% said that had subsequently happened in practice.

In the 2022-24 evaluation, the corresponding figures were 23% and 50%.

Table 3.3: Other outcomes

Outcome	% individual employers
Training has become more affordable	83%
Improvements in the retention of PAs	71%

Source: WDF evaluation reports (2012-24)

In summary

Table 3.4 collates the seven outcomes discussed above and estimates the total number of individual employers in England that are likely to have experienced each one between 2012 and 2024. The approach is the same as that used for the corresponding table in Chapter 2, i.e., applying the proportions reported through the meta-analysis to the total number of individual employers supported over that period (c. 1,600).

Table 3.4: Summary of outcomes for individual employers

Outcome	% individual employers in the meta-analysis	Estimated no. individual employers experiencing this outcome (2012-24)
Category: Skills, knowledge and morale		
Improvements in the skills/knowledge of PAs	90%	1,440
Improvements in the morale of PAs	87%	1,392
Improvements in the skills/knowledge of individual employers	63%	1,008
Category: Care and support		
Improvements in how individual employers are supported by their PAs	87%	1,392
Individual employers are supported in a way that is more relevant to their needs	80%	1,280
Category: Other outcomes		
Training has become more affordable	83%	1,328

Outcome	% individual employers in the meta-analysis	Estimated no. individual employers experiencing this outcome (2012-24)
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The economic contribution of the mainstream fund

Introduction

The five most recent evaluations of the WDF (covering the period from 2013 to 2024) have estimated the economic contribution made by the mainstream fund. They have done this using a Net Present Value (NPV) approach. This involves multiplying the number of Level 2, 3 and 5 Health and Social Care Diplomas achieved via the funding by the estimated wage uplift of those qualifications over a seven-year period, minus the costs of delivering the qualifications. This methodology has its roots in in-house analysis undertaken by Skills for Care in advance of the 2013-15 evaluation.

The first two evaluations of the WDF 2011-12 and 2012-13 did not calculate the economic contribution of the fund. In order for those years to be included in the meta-analysis, and to give a holistic view across the life of the WDF, it has been assumed that the average return on investment observed between 2013 and 2024 would also apply to 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Table 4.1: NPVs by qualification and year

Year	Level 2 Diploma (NPV)	Level 3 Diploma (NPV)	Level 5 Diploma (NPV)
2013-14	£4,070	£17,260	£49,090
2014			

Results from the meta-analysis

The total NPV of the mainstream fund across the full period covered by the evaluation is very large. As shown in Table 4.3, it is approximately £1.5bn. The return on investment (i.e., the total NPV divided by the total WDF funding) is estimated at 13.5 : 1. That is, for each £1 of WDF funding, an estimated £13.50 has been generated through wage uplifts.

Table 4.3: Meta-analysis results (gross/unadjusted)

Evaluation period	Total NPV of qualifications	Total funding	Return on investment
2011-12	£108.4m*	£8.0m	13.6 : 1
2012-			

Estimating the amount by which it may be too high (if indeed at all) is difficult in the absence of a detailed conversation with a large number of establishments. The best that can be done is to apply a range, albeit an arbitrary one. Table 4.4 therefore incorporates:

The NPV and

