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Development of a workforce competency framework for older people with complex needs

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Health and social services are challenged to meet the care needs of increasing numbers of older people who are highly dependent and have complex multi-morbidities. Providing quality care for older people requires a highly competent workforce. Researchers have reported that currently, the workforce is not adequately proficient. A multi-disciplinary, multi-sector Pathways of Care team was set up to identify competencies required for a skilled workforce. The team commissioned this study to develop understanding of required competencies of the workforce caring for older people, develop a workforce competency framework for Enhanced Care for Older people with Complex Needs (EnCOP) and develop understanding of priority areas for development by mapping staff against the EnCOP framework. A mixed methods study was undertaken. Thematic analysis of focus groups with staff working in health, social and voluntary sector services informed understanding of the required competencies. This, together with analyses of existing workforce competency research literature and discussions with the Pathways of Care team informed development of the EnCOP framework. Statistical analysis of surveys and practice observations and qualitative thematic analysis of stakeholder focus groups and workshops informed a competency gap analysis. A standardized, integrated competency framework working across sectors and professions is required. Gap analyses found competency development is required in teaching, learning and support across organizational and sector boundaries, if competency in clinical care is to be successfully developed. Agreement and support across all sectors, organizations and professions for adoption of an integrated competency framework is required.

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