

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION:



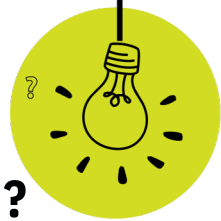
REVOLUTIONARY PRACTICE

FOR THE FUTURE
SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE



EVENT SUMMARY

A white paper summarising a Cohesion & Care Character hosted roundtable and webinar exploring the transformative strategies shaping the landscape of social care recruitment.



DID YOU KNOW?

The top reason for leaving after personal reasons cited by frontline care and support teams is relationship with manager / management style

(Source: Cohesion Exit Interviews).

Where ARE WE NOW?

57%

of people are recruited from within sector

131,000

vacancies across Adult Social Care

24%

turnover rate across Adult Social Care

8%

under 25 years of age

79%

female employees

13%

youth unemployment

What action is required?

Attraction & Engagement

SHORT TERM

- **Review your attraction strategy**
- **Positive pass through**

Review your strategy for attracting talent. Use strategic budgeting and targeted advertising for hard-to-fill areas instead of constant job postings, which can harm reputation. Programmatic advertising and geofencing can be costly but is proving to deliver good ROI for some.

Welcome “passing through” workers in social care - offering stepping-stone roles to young people can benefit both the workers and the sector. Target young people with emotional maturity and lived experience of caring for others. Take a look at Jenni Mack’s book: ‘When I grow up I want to be a Carer’ - and share a copy with your local schools.

MEDIUM TERM

- **Targeted programmes**
- **Flexible contracts**

Robust work experience schemes offering the support required for young people are likely to have better outcomes where active across schools and colleges.

Flexibility doesn’t just mean bank contracts! Annualised contracts including fixed-term options are proving successful in pockets of social care. Some providers are welcoming students in term-time only, or offer a mix of full and part time roles that compliment study patterns.

LONG TERM

- **Shared talent pools**
- **Collaborate with other care providers**

Could you join forces and offer rotational tasters across multiple local care organisations? An example includes 9 providers in one county, who offer placements in 6-monthly rotations, guaranteeing a senior position after 4 years.

Could we collaborate for better advertising bargaining power? Neil Eastwood (Saving Social Care and Care Friends) made this suggestion, which would see providers joining together for collective agreements with the major job boards.

What action is required?

Future of Values Based Recruitment

SHORT TERM

- **Your Values Based Recruitment**
- **Targeted Values Based Recruitment**

Embed your own values into every stage of the process – job descriptions, adverts, screening, interviews and so on. Go beyond the recruitment process – are you delivering values based onboarding, training, and ongoing support once someone is hired?

Know who make up your communities and how to get in front of them. Neil Eastwood shared the benefits of targeting family carers as a source of great talent. Partner with a local hospice, and ask candidates if they have cared for a loved one - often it is never added to a CV.

MEDIUM TERM

- **Portfolio Careers**
- **Look at key recruitment and retention metrics**

More people are choosing portfolio careers, balancing multiple jobs or roles that may include paid work, voluntary positions, or a mix of full-time and part-time commitments. While this trend is often associated with Gen Z, it's gaining momentum across all age groups.

Look at key recruitment and retention metrics – who needs support and what does that look like?

LONG TERM

- **Interview Skills**
- **Future generations considerations**

Values-based recruitment is often championed at a central or top level, but managers locally may struggle to prioritise values due to service demands, team dynamics, or varying levels of recruitment expertise. Take a close look at interview skills and the tools available within your organisation.

Think about the type of candidates you want to engage and what the future workforce will look like. Younger generations often prioritise working for organisations whose values align with their own - consider sustainability, equity, and social justice. Future candidates are likely to place even greater emphasis on work-life balance, inclusivity, and mental health support.

What action is required?

Technology

SHORT TERM

- **Technology audit**
- **Applicant Tracking System**

Start with a technology audit. An ATS provides valuable insights into real-time data: How long are processes taking? Are you actually struggling with applications? Are processes being followed consistently? The data will tell you.

An ATS improves communication via engaging videos and consistent documentation, as well as helping with processes such as digital right-to-work checks. Technology doesn't replace face-to-face interactions, but it can enhance communication.

MEDIUM TERM

- **Look at your data**
- **Invest in the right tools**

Look at the data - explore successful outcomes. Those with better retention – what was their journey, background and source? What can we learn from trends for early leavers? Does a particular source lead to more turnover?

Utilise technology to track when and why people are leaving. Phone-based exit and retention interviews via an independent third party tend to deliver better results and uptake, and allows better probing techniques - rather than static online surveys.

Psychometric assessments such as Care Character (carecharacter.com) can identify the right values and engage candidates and new starters more successfully.

LONG TERM

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
- **Gamification & Virtual Reality (VR)**

Chatbots have advanced and can be used for early screening questions such as location and Right to Work - but people may tell you what you want to hear.

In the future, we hope for advanced use of gamification and virtual reality tools in care recruitment. This could include gamified scenarios that simulate real-life social care challenges, immersive job previews, and support with empathy building - allowing people to experience thoughts and feelings of those receiving care and support.

What action is required?

Stereotypes, Demographics & Diversity

SHORT TERM

- Identify social media champions
- Talk about the unique elements of the role

Which other industries pay people to go to the cinema, the theatre, a football game, or on holiday? This is a unique offering - so make exciting elements of the role heard.

Identify people within your organisation who use social media and encourage them to become champions, telling their story authentically.

MEDIUM TERM

- Review your imagery and content
- Identify who in your communities can be targeted

Review your website for the image you're portraying - and make sure it reflects your diversity. In retail, Dunelm (dunelmcareers.com) showcase colleague networks for Disability & Neurodiversity, LGBTQ+, Gender Equality and Ethnicity & Race.

Open up to a pool of people from a range of backgrounds and skillsets e.g. the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (via.gov.uk).

LONG TERM

- Better connections with Education
- Use data to inform interventions

Generation Z want to know they are working for an organisation that delivers social value. Often, students opt to work part time during term time and full time during holidays.

Whoever enters your recruitment process – make sure it works for them and intervene appropriately. If more younger people are not turning up for interview - what engaging touchpoints are you using?



Find out more in our Diversity White Paper

cohesionrecruitment.com/whitepapers

What action is required?

Future of Retention

SHORT TERM

- **Retention interviews**
- **Stay interviews**

Conduct retention interviews consistently - talk to your people rather than sending an online survey. Dig deeper to understand what's going on. Early stage retention interviews allows you to intervene before it is too late.

Stay interviews support employees in their role and allow open communication about development, progression and training as well as wellbeing.

MEDIUM TERM

- **Support for older employees**
- **A good induction process**

A third of our workforce are over 55. This group has their own unique challenges, some with caring responsibilities of grandchildren, young adults and older relatives. Offer support for those approaching retirement in the form of flexibility, financial advice and options for scaling back.

A poor induction can have a lasting negative impact on new starters. Ensure inductions are consistently delivered well by senior colleagues. Get the basics right - uniform, a positive welcome, and introductions made. Team new starters up with trained buddies; ideally those who aren't scheduled to be on the full-time rota when shadowing.

LONG TERM

- **Weekly pay options**
- **Retention Strategy**

Earned wage access schemes offer instant gratification by allowing employees to access pay as needed. Giving up weekly pay can be an unattractive proposition for temporary workers you want to convert.

Use feedback from retention interviews, employee annual engagement or pulse surveys to inform your retention strategy. Have a dedicated retention lead - a senior champion driving retention initiatives and pushing to make the changes needed.

- FlexForce team members select shifts to work around studies, family life, or other commitments, and benefit from full training and paid annual leave.
- Allows the employee to choose the contracted hours worked within a 12-week cycle.
- Employees are offered a 3 month fixed-term contract – 11, 20 or 33 hours. E.g. if they work 132 hours on an 11 hour contract in 6 weeks, they could take 6 weeks off. Anything extra worked is paid as overtime.
- FlexForce team members accept shifts on a first come first serve basis across multiple homes.

- Various flexible working patterns across their care services.
- Permanent employees can request when they want to work.
- They have opened the doors to younger people - year on year they welcome back students who work purely outside of term time.
- This approach has helped in attracting people with excellent creative skills - actors, artists, teachers, cooks, and fitness instructors. They advertise for 'Resting Actors/Creatives'.
- Team members are guaranteed a full weekend off each month.

- A values based recruitment & retention tool designed for the care sector which includes a validated assessment.
- Candidates are invited to complete the short online assessment ahead of pre-screening: c. 30-35% positively deselect themselves.
- Number of valuable pre-screens have increased.
- Interview 'no shows' halved.
- Offer rate from interview increased by 20%.
- Development Report supports meaningful conversations with new starters during first months.



RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

1. Attraction & Engagement

- Review your attraction strategy
- Offer flexible contracts
- Consider collaboration opportunities

2. Future of Values Based Recruitment

- Embed YOUR Values Based Recruitment
- Flexibility is key
- Provide the very best interview skills training

3. Technology

- The right ATS & Holistic Reporting
- Invest in impactful tools
- Enhance the process with technology

4. Stereotypes, Demographics & Diversity

- Story tell with authenticity
- Focus on what makes you unique
- Use data to intervene

5. Future of Retention

- Deliver a positive induction and welcome
- Consistent retention discussions
- Create a focused retention strategy

■ **Would you like to join the conversation with
event attendees, speakers and sector experts?**

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info@cohesionrecruitment.com

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support your care organisation?**

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