

Seeing potential

Greater Manchester's Transforming Lives and Communities scheme



This series of case studies profiles how locally-based programmes can support people from non-traditional backgrounds into the care profession, from the perspectives of the programme operators, local care employers, and the candidates themselves.

These two case studies profile Upturn Enterprise and Outreach Community & Residential's Transforming Lives and Communities programme, which helped Dawn not only find a job but a fulfilling vocation in caring for others.

Transforming recruitment in social care – local enterprise helps upturn lives for the better

The employability support – Maria's story

Maria Williams is the Director of Human Resources Management at Upturn Enterprise, a not-for-profit social enterprise helping people and businesses in the local community in Oldham, Greater Manchester. On any given day, Maria and Upturn might support a self-employed entrepreneur with setting up their business or help a young person living at home – with no education, employment or training (NEET) – take vital steps towards finding a job.



Recruitment and high turnover are some of the key issues facing the social care sector. The Transforming Lives and Communities (TLC) scheme helps place the right people with the right values and character in social care roles

TLC in practice

Talent coaches and community champions go right to the heart of the community, making the scheme visible in local supermarkets or job centres. They talk to people in the community about the opportunities available among local care employers, which is especially important, Maria says, because local employers often neglect to consider directly promoting recruitment in the community.



**“We want people who will make a lasting impact and change
...We work one-to-one so the individual gets a talent coach
who works with them”**

When someone approaches Upturn, they receive individual support right from the start. “We work one-to-one so the individual gets a talent coach who works with them to look at barriers,” she says. “We look at skills, health, lifestyle, current issues, employment, education and you score from nought to 10 where you feel you are now.” A bespoke personal development plan outlines the action required to increase this score and address personal barriers to employment, such as a lack of experience or confidence. The more detailed ‘Skills Star’ assessment examines a client’s circumstances and determines the right support they need to address issues in different areas of life.

One of her clients, Dawn, first approached Maria after seeing a leaflet on the TLC scheme. She highlights: “When Dawn first phoned up, I couldn’t get her off the phone. She was wonderful!” A tour at Outreach Community Services and Residential followed. Throughout recruitment diagnostic tools, an application form and an interview, Maria worked with Dawn to help build her confidence, sharing her advice on what to expect, how to present herself and the importance of being herself. Her advice was especially reassuring when discussing hair colour: “If purple’s you, you wear purple.”

After Dawn started her job, Maria kept in touch and celebrated important moments with Dawn, such as when she received an ‘Employee of the Month’ award. Maria adds: “She’s really developing. She has been there for two years, she’s doing her level 3 qualification and she’s progressing at college so she can get to that senior level. She’s doing brilliantly.”



“It’s about working with employers to persuade and convince them to create their own talent pool from the local community.”

Support for employers is also thorough. Maria’s human resources background means she can enter an organisation and immediately identify opportunities in their recruitment work. “I tell them where they’re missing out,” she explains. “There are lots of talented people in the community. So, I ask them, ‘Have you thought about Kickstart? Apprenticeships? Traineeships?’” She persuades them to consider putting on a ‘World of Work’ tour, for example, where local people are invited into an organisation’s offices to understand what they do.

Smaller organisations can sometimes struggle to implement HR good practice. Maria and Upturn work with employers who require support to help them solve issues and create recruitment plans.

Breaking down barriers to employment and local recruitment

Issues of addiction, time spent in prison or a lack of direct work experience mean employers can be reluctant to engage with the local community. Maria supports employers to take a different view: “It’s about working with employers to persuade and convince them to create their own talent pool from the local community.”

Maria explains there are many issues for which Upturn might be supporting someone. She adds: “That’s the key to our projects – it’s that glue or that support that needs to be there as long as people need it.” Maria recounts her experience of working with those who worry about financial issues or the uncertainty of going back into employment. Using something as simple as the benefits assessment calculator, she sits down with them to work out where they are, financially, and where they could be if they take on the role in question. She effectively encourages people into careers in social care by showing how they can gain a livelihood as well as a job.

Homelessness, addiction, mental health conditions and childcare issues have all presented similar challenges for her clients. Working with local housing associations or mental health charities like Six Degrees and Mind, Maria helps progress clients into accommodation or getting them the help for less tangible issues –such as the bereavement they face as carers– ultimately trying to introduce more stability into their lives. The overarching priority of TLC is to engage people with the right values and what Maria describes as the right “personal skillsets”, supporting them to transition into social care roles, whether as carers, activity coordinators, administrators or cooks.

TLC acts as the first point of contact between potential recruits and the social care sector. This is why Maria strongly values Skills for Care's values-based recruitment tools in her initial conversations with new people. These situation-based judgement tools, including a 'Question of Care', help identify a person's strengths. They use videos and real-life scenarios in residential or community care to provide valuable insight as they check for personal aptitudes or values. In Maria's own words, the tests help her understand if someone is better suited to take someone out shopping or provide personal care. She says, "There are different roles in social care and we get lots of people who come to us and say, 'Yeah! I can work in social care.'"

Maria's experience has shown her the potential for this stage of the recruitment process to help increase retention in social care and cut recruitment costs for employers. She recounts an example of someone who did not have the right profile to be a care worker and instead became a grower, cultivating vegetables for a care home in Trafford Park which were used by the home's chef for residents' meals.

Maria concludes with the following: "We want people who will make a lasting impact and change, and that's why there's a lot of churn of people who just wanted a job. Social care is not just a job."

Tips for employers thinking of working with an employability support organisation



Think about the value-add you're looking for and what you want to achieve with an employability support organisation.



Keep an open mind; Maria highlights that working with a social enterprise will mean a local organisation saves money but transforming a workforce means working with new people, ideas and perspectives.



Work to build a strong relationship with your employability support organisation. They can create tailored recruitment processes, with in-built steps such as DBS checks or character references to manage risk or offer HR support to develop and motivate employees – crucial support which might otherwise be unaffordable.



Most importantly, think about recruiting people who truly represent the community the organisation serves as this has knock-on benefits for both the business, its employees and local people – even if some support is required to face personal challenges or tough circumstances.