Recruiting and retaining social workers

Economic and geographical factors within a locality
Organisations will be aware of economic and geographical factors impacting their recruitment and retention. In some areas agencies play an important role in managing a shortfall of social workers. Recruitment bodies have been represented in the Standards for Employers of Social Workers which focuses on a partnership approach to the ASYE and other aspects of CPD.

The demographic and experience profile of the workforce
ASYE data indicates an increasing number of NQSWs being recruited into adult services. This trend supports evidence that retention of experienced social workers is an issue in some areas and agencies are recognising the potential of ASYE in enhancing retention rates. It is important to understand the reasons for this to ensure correct measures to alleviate this are being put in place. Click here for recruitment and retention support. NMDS – SC knowledge can further support employers with their succession planning.

Conditions of service
The Standards for Employers of Social Workers make it possible for employers to “set themselves apart” in providing structural support for their frontline social workers. This can be demonstrated through an organisational approach to CPD and resources which support the implementation of a CPD framework.

The LGA is currently planning pilot activity to help employers support flexible working within the social workforce. You may also wish to refer to Unison / Community Care’s – Social Work Watch: inside an average day in social work which provides recommendations about improving working conditions for social workers.

Deployment within statutory agencies
The decisions that local authorities make in relation to the deployment of their social workers will have an impact on the profile of staff that are needed in the future. Skills for Care (with partners) have developed resources to inform workforce capacity planning.

Employers need to ensure that, social workers who are being deployed in new and emerging ways have access to CPD to support the necessary culture change.

Opportunities for employment in the independent sector
ASYE data plus anecdotal evidence from university partners indicates that there is an increasing number of newly qualified, registered social workers finding employment within the private and voluntary sectors. This is due fewer posts within the statutory sector and positive career choice. Click here for more information employing social workers in the independent sector.

Changes to the way social care services are being provided means it is important to find ways of engaging with workers to find out more about their career decisions and share knowledge and experience to benefit the sector. The creation of single nationally recognised framework for social workers will support this development.

Workforce planning with university partners
In the absence of a national approach to workforce planning, local collaborations between employers and universities would seem to have some merit. Local social work partnerships may be a starting point for this activity. Click here for more information.

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Skills for Care