



# **Finding and keeping workers**

## **Online resource evaluation**

Stage two research summary report

December 2016

**Written by Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd.**

**Published by Skills for Care on behalf of the Department of Health's  
recruitment and retention group**

## Summary

### Background and approach to the research

The Department of Health's recruitment and retention group is responsible for the development of the first ever adult social care sector recruitment and retention strategy, originally developed in 2011 and then refreshed in 2014 to run until 2017. The strategy identified a need to "explore the development of an online recruitment and retention resource" supporting employers to address their recruitment and retention challenges. After initial exploration and consultation with employers, this led to the Department of Health asking Skills for Care to develop an online resource during the financial year 2014/15.

Using the popular format of the publication 'Finders keepers' as a basis, and further developed in consultation with the sector, the online resource Finding and keeping workers<sup>1</sup> was launched on the 20th May 2015. It provides a range of resources that share good practice from across the whole of the adult social care sector and, where relevant, health.

The development and management of Finding and keeping workers has been led by Skills for Care on behalf of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group. This evaluation aims to demonstrate the role of Finding and keeping workers in:

- supporting the implementation of the Department of Health's adult social care workforce recruitment and retention strategy 2014-2017; and
- supporting employers in the adult social care sector to meet their recruitment and retention challenges.

This evaluation (Stage Two), which follows on from an earlier (Stage One) evaluation completed in February 2016, had four strands:

- Desk research including analysis of website visitor statistics
- Consultation with stakeholders (i.e. members of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group and Skills for Care)
- An online survey completed by 177 employers to assess the impact and awareness of Finding and keeping workers
- Depth interviews with seven employers, and
- Shorter interviews with six employers not aware or yet to apply the Finding and keeping workers resources.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/findingandkeepingworkers>

As was the case with the Stage One evaluation, the effectiveness of efforts to disseminate the online survey through the networks of partners on the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group was difficult to quantify.

The promotion of the survey via Skills for Care communication channels had clear and positive impacts on the response rates. However, with growing demand for these channels across the whole organisation and feedback from employers regarding the amount of marketing emails they received, Skills for Care sent out fewer direct emails to promote the survey than the previous year, resulting in a lower number of responses. As a result of the lower number of responses, care should be taken when interpreting the results based on smaller sample sizes, (e.g. it is difficult to know the degree to which changes in awareness and use of Finding and keeping workers are caused by a reduction in response rate).

The breakdown of the consultation sample is however broadly representative of the adult social care sector overall and therefore provides valuable evidence which can inform the ongoing design and delivery of Finding and keeping workers.

This report summarises the findings from the Stage Two evaluation of Finding and keeping workers and the implications for the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group. The report provides an assessment of changes in awareness of Finding and keeping workers compared to the results of the Stage One evaluation report. Analysis of the longer-term impact accessed through Finding and keeping workers on approaches to, and performance in respect of recruitment and retention, is also presented based on interviews with employers applying the resources and able to attribute the impact on their organisation and workforce.

This report is supported by a Technical Appendix presenting the data tables developed from the online survey underpinning the following analysis.

## Key Findings

### Development and roll out of Finding and keeping workers

Participants in the stakeholder interviews were asked to discuss the effectiveness and efficiency of work to update and enhance the Finding and keeping workers resources in the period since the Stage One evaluation report published in February 2016.

- Finding and keeping workers has consistently met and surpassed its targets in terms of visits and unique page views to the online resource website. Analysis of the latest available Google analytics data reveals that there have been 8,643 unique page views of the Finding and keeping workers home page between April 2016 and the end of November 2016. This compares well to the 8,579 page views recorded in the period May to December 2015 at the time of the Stage One evaluation despite a relative reduction in external marketing activity.
- The redesign and addition of new content to the Finding and keeping workers 'landing page' in particular, led by Skills for Care on behalf of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group in response to recommendations in the Stage One evaluation report, has been widely praised by stakeholders. The changes were judged to have enhanced the accessibility of the resources, providing greater clarity on the objectives for and nature of resources within the four themes of 'Attract more people', 'Take on the right people', 'Develop talent and skills' and 'Keep your people'.
- The online resource attracted a total of 13,241 unique page views (i.e. individual visitors looking at a page) across all pages over the period - down from 24,241 between May-December 2015. The most popular sections were 'Attract more people' followed by 'Take on the right people'.
- The partners on the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group met once face to face in early 2016. Pending a Department of Health review of the work of the group, Skills for Care has remained in contact with group members via email and telephone. However, fewer meetings could have affected activity of group members to influence the ongoing promotion of Finding and keeping workers which in turn may have impacted on awareness amongst employers.
-

## Awareness of Finding and keeping workers

Respondents to the Stage Two online survey of adult social care employers were asked about their awareness of Finding and keeping workers.

- The online survey revealed that 18% of employers had applied the knowledge to support their approaches to recruitment and retention - up from 10% in the Stage One survey undertaken in 2015.
- The online survey identified relatively low levels of awareness of Finding and keeping workers with 59% of respondents stating they were 'not aware' of the online resource. This does however represent a slight improvement on the equivalent Stage One survey figure of 62%.
- 23% of employers were 'aware but had not used' the resources available online. Again this represents a positive trend from the Stage One survey which returned a figure of 28%.
- In contrast to the Stage One survey results, awareness is highest amongst smaller employers (i.e. 53% amongst employers with 10-49 employees and 43% amongst those with less than 10 employees). At 30%, the awareness rate was lowest amongst employers of 250 employees or more.
- As was the case in the Stage One evaluation, awareness is greatest amongst respondents from 'local authorities' at 55% (up from 52%). This is 9 percentage points higher than employers in the 'private sector' and 12 percentage points higher than employers in the 'voluntary or third' sector.
- Awareness is highest amongst employers providing 'Adult domiciliary' services at 53% - up from 38% compare to the Stage One survey. Awareness also increased since the phase one evaluation amongst providers of 'Adult community care' (i.e. 5 percentage points to 44%) and 'Adult residential' (9 percentage points to 43%).
- As with the Stage One evaluation, all but a small minority of employers first heard of Finding and keeping workers through Skills for Care communication channels. These included the main website, e-news and Skills for Care events and meetings.
- In terms of assessing the efficiency of different approaches to promoting Finding and keeping workers, 51% of employers stated they were 'not in contact with the Skills for Care locality teams', 41% are 'not involved in local networking with other social care organisations' and 37% stated that they 'do not receive newsletters or emails from Skills for Care'.

## **Barriers to accessing and using Finding and keeping workers**

Employers outlined the barriers they faced to accessing and using Finding and keeping workers to inform their approaches to recruitment and retention.

- Although down five percentage points from the Stage One survey, the most frequently cited barrier to using and applying the resources remains a 'lack of time due to other business priorities' as cited by 35% of respondents. The pressure of taking 'time away from delivery' increased as a barrier by seven percentage points from the Stage One survey to 16%.
- Employers were more likely to have applied the knowledge gained from the resources if they had accessed it for the first time in 2015 than those accessing it for the first time in 2016. For example, the largest group of employers (56%) applying the knowledge in the latest survey accessed Finding and keeping workers for the first time in 2015, compared to 37% accessing the resources for the first time in 2016. This shows the benefit of allowing the online resource time to embed within the sector with employers gaining more benefits from the resources over time.

### **“Finding and keeping workers helped HR staff shape their internal policies”**

**One provider of care for people with learning disabilities and autism highlighted how wider business and short term priorities can impact upon the speed of change, even within a business committed to improving its approach to recruitment and retention with the support of Finding and keeping workers resources.**

The company has recently taken over two other providers that had gone into administration and lacked any form of coordinated strategies including the desired values based approach to recruitment and retention.

Finding and keeping workers helped HR staff to shape their internal policies and procedures around a recognition of the job roles available (e.g. intensive rehabilitation work) and the skills and values required to provide the high quality of care desired. The resources have since been used to improve the advertising of posts and job descriptions as part of a new and improved recruitment and retention strategy with improvements in staff turnover expected to emerge throughout 2017.

## Effectiveness of Finding and keeping workers

Respondents to the online survey of adult social care employers assessed the effectiveness of Finding and keeping workers and compared it to other sources of information, advice and guidance.

- Finding and keeping workers is rated very highly by those employers using the resources. 72% of employers who had 'used and applied the knowledge' rated the online resource overall as either 'good' or 'excellent'. This is down 10 percentage points from the Stage One survey although the 2016 results incorporate a far higher proportion of 'excellent' ratings (28% compared to 7% in 2015).
- There are indications of greater use and application of the Finding and keeping workers resources since the Stage One evaluation. Approximately 30% of employers stated that they had 'used it a lot', up from 14% in 2015.
- The design and accessibility characteristics of Finding and keeping workers continue to be well received by employers. The most recent changes to the landing page were received particularly well in terms of more clearly navigating the user through to the four main resource areas. However, whilst recognising the value of being able to access a wide range of information about recruitment and retention, the sheer number of resources requires more efficient search functionality.
- As with the Stage One evaluation, the most useful section of Finding and keeping workers was 'Taking on the right people', with 79% of employers using the resource stating it was either 'very useful' or 'useful'.
- 43% of employers had accessed other sources of information, advice and guidance in the last six months - compared to 48% in the Stage One survey. As with the Stage One evaluation there is a strong correlation between employers using and applying the Finding and keeping workers resources and accessing other sources of information, advice and guidance to support their approaches to recruitment and retention.
- The most frequently cited other sources of recruitment and retention information were Skills for Care (e.g. the wider website, Locality Teams etc.) and Job Centre Plus, as stated by 56% and 40% of all respondents respectively. The largest group of employers (50%) stated that Finding and keeping workers was better than other sources of information - up from 38% in 2015.

**“I like that the information provided is informal, doesn’t include the usual jargon and can be easily applied to your own business”**

**Denise Wake, owner and manager of Severn Sunrise Homecare<sup>2</sup> outlines how Finding and keeping workers resources supported its approach to recruitment of staff to the recently formed provider of personal home and dementia care.**

Starting my own care business has enabled me to design my own approach to recruitment and retention of staff based on my own knowledge and experience. However, I have used the good practice and guidance provided by Finding and keeping workers to ensure that everything from job adverts to policies and marketing materials reflect a values-based approach built upon person centred care and supported, motivated staff.

I like that the information provided is informal, doesn’t include the usual jargon and can be easily applied to your own business. Although making the most of over 20 years’ experience of managing and delivering care, Finding and keeping workers definitely made the process of establishing Severn Sunrise Homecare easier and less complicated than I expected. The whole experience has increased my faith that people believe in social care and professional practice.

- 81% of employers answering a question about the effectiveness of the online resource stated that Finding and keeping workers had had a positive impact on their approach to recruitment and retention.
- 84% of employers would recommend Finding and keeping workers to colleagues and/or other social care organisations.
- As with the Stage One evaluation, ‘Attracting more people’ was by far the most frequently cited area identified by respondents overall (69% up from 67% in 2015) as an issue they require additional support in.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.severnsunrise.co.uk/>



## Impact of Finding and keeping workers

Respondents to the online survey of adult social care employers provided details of the impacts of Finding and keeping workers on their own organisations and the adult social care sector more widely. Where possible these impacts were explored in greater depth in follow-up interviews.

- The results of the online survey of employers illustrate the positive impact of Finding and keeping workers on those employers aware of and using the resources. It also highlights the size of the task facing adult social care employers, and the long-term nature of support required, before changes in practice or policies translate into positive results in terms of staff turnover and increased quality of care.
- The online survey also revealed positive feedback from those employers using Finding and keeping workers in terms of its impact on them and the wider adult social care sector. Employer quotes taken directly from the online survey include:

**“I have found the recent impact evaluation/research very useful as it backs up the approach with costs - which is what everyone wants to hear about.”**

**“It opened my eyes to doing things in a different way. Involving customers in the recruitment process. Encouraging managers and customers to work together on recruitment. Assessing candidates for the work that they will do and thinking more broadly about transferable skills.”**

**“The guidance and documentation is clear and concise, the links and useful information have been really valuable to the growth of the business over the past 18 months.”**

- 79% of employers stated that Finding and keeping workers has helped their organisation ‘to improve its recruitment and retention practice’ whilst 50% stated that Finding and keeping workers has ‘helped their organisation to reduce its staff turnover rate’.
- 69% of employers each stated that Finding and keeping workers has helped ‘to raise the profile of adult social care and the career progression opportunities it offers’ and helped ‘to attract more people with the right values and skills to work in the sector’.
- The positive assessments of impact from the group of employers aware of and applying the Finding and keeping workers resources accentuates the requirement and role of all partners on the Department of Health’s recruitment and retention group to market the existence, role and benefits of Finding and keeping workers.

- The need for shared, coordinated and sustained action is further emphasised with 71% of employers stating that they would 'like to change their approach to recruitment and retention in the future.
- However, when coupled with the feedback from stakeholders and detailed feedback from employers, the size of the task facing the adult social care sector both in terms of recruitment and retention but also wider, yet interlinked, business areas becomes apparent. It is widely accepted, that whilst an important and valued resource, Finding and keeping workers cannot answer all the ingrained economic, structural and political challenges facing the sector on its own including:
  - A small and diminishing pool of quality labour, given the rates of pay typically on offer, from which to recruit from
  - Competition for quality candidates from other sectors offering similar or better rates of pay for less demanding roles (e.g. customer service, retail)
  - A poor perception of the sector amongst job seekers and the wider sector
  - Reduced profitability from local authority contracts
  - The potential impact of Brexit on the supply of immigrant labour in London and the South East in particular
  - High costs of recruitment linked to a high turnover of staff, and
  - Managers with little or no time to invest in recruitment and retention strategies for the medium to long term due to short term staffing and wider business issues.

**'Taking on the right people' informed our new approach to recruiting'**

**An employee from Newham Borough Council provides an example of how Finding and keeping workers has been applied and achieved results.**

The **'Take on the right people'** resources were used to inform a new approach to recruiting a number of enablers with role play used to explore a typical enablement scenario. The approach was thought to be particularly useful in assessing the caring qualities of the candidates, for example in examining body language and seeing how they interacted with 'the customer' and their family members. The successful candidates also reported that the assessment method allowed them to demonstrate their skills to carry out this role better than traditional interview techniques.

The approach is tailored to each situation with role play sometimes combined with practical interview tasks including completing a Visiting Record Sheet, writing a report and emailing it and/or presenting a report to the panel - all based on the scenario. The new approach is thought by staff to have contributed to more robust recruitment decisions, for example, by testing whether a candidate can engage, advocate and negotiate rather than simply recount a learnt passage or story.

**Of the five enablers recruited approximately two years ago one has recently been promoted, one has just left for another job but all have performed excellently.**

The approach has now been used in the recruitment of other professional roles including occupational therapists, social workers and a senior enabler (care coordinator role) as well as in training with scenario observation used as part of a non-judgemental assessment.

## Suggested Improvements to the online resource

### Design and accessibility

There were very few suggested improvements in terms of the design and accessibility of Finding and keeping workers following the amendments made to the layout of the landing page recommended in the Stage One evaluation. However, there were consistent calls for improvements to the methods and speed of navigating around the site given the wide variety of resources. Examples provided by stakeholders and employers, in order of popularity, include:

- Improving the efficiency of the search function
- Adding 'pop-up' dropdown menus to the graphics representing the main themes/logos on the landing page which appear when hovering with the cursor to provide an at-a-glance view of potential sub-themes
- Providing a list of recently added, topical and/or most viewed resources (e.g. in the last week or month)
- Adding a 'contents section' or 'jump to key' to avoid multiple clicks to access some information
- Developing a 'basket' feature which allows users to collect documents of interest to access at a later date (these could be emailed automatically to them for example or stored securely during their session), and
- Adding British Sign language to videos.

**It is recommended that Skills for Care assesses the viability of potential improvements to the navigation of Finding and keeping workers. This should underpin initial discussions with the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group. This could include links to recently added or most viewed resources, a simple diagnostic tool which links resources to key words or questions and/or an A-Z of resources.**

## **Content and Quality**

As was the case in the Stage One evaluation, the content and quality of Finding and keeping workers was widely appreciated by all stakeholders. Indeed the comprehensive nature of the catalogue of resources was, on occasion, highlighted as being too extensive if not accompanied by a better method of navigating/searching the site. Amongst the suggested improvements to content and quality were:

- The need for more case studies to highlight the impact and effectiveness of the resources in a variety of formats (e.g. short videos, infographics and more traditional written formats);
- Showcasing or producing content which is tailored to the nature and characteristics of specific types and ages of employees (e.g. how to attract Generation Y<sup>3</sup> with family friendly policies etc.);
- Providing resources which are both easy to share with colleagues (e.g. one-click attachment to email) and are designed to encourage employers to apply the learning to their own circumstances through a series of prompts/guidance and space for ideas/plans etc. rather than providing just guidance in isolation;
- Links to external organisations or resources should be tailored and bespoke wherever possible rather than simply signposting to a homepage; and
- A greater emphasis on resources to support the retention of staff including approaches not related to pay and conditions.

## **Gaps**

Stakeholders identified very few gaps in the content of Finding and keeping workers although the economies of scale to be gained from combining resources between social care and health should be fully explored. Suggested additions to the resources include:

- Guidance on the use and effectiveness of social media in recruitment and retention;
- A need for more content on non-salary methods of retaining staff (e.g. good working conditions, supporting staff development etc.);

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation\\_Y\\_\(disambiguation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y_(disambiguation))

- Advice on employing volunteers in the workplace and supporting them to potentially become paid members of staff;
- Making the resources on 'proactively looking at reasons why people leave' more focused on social care rather than health;
- More examples of successful approaches to online recruitment;
- A myth buster page (e.g. clarifying the roles people aged 16-18 can perform);
- More links to external organisations providing equivalent support and/or useful resources across a range of sectors (e.g. CIPD<sup>4</sup> or FSB<sup>5</sup>);
- More information on the use of assessments centres as part of the recruitment process;
- A link to a learning needs analysis template;
- Information on staff-driven rewards and recognition strategies (e.g. liP Gold<sup>6</sup>);
- An exit interview template;
- Updated job descriptions which portray the role and sector more positively; and
- More links to previous Accolades<sup>7</sup> winners to showcase good practice.

### **Increasing awareness and use**

The positive response to the content, quality and effectiveness of the online resource from a relatively small proportion of the adult social care sector underlines the need to strengthen approaches to raising awareness of Finding and keeping workers amongst employers. Potential approaches suggested by stakeholders and employers, in order of popularity, include:

- Increasing the quantity of direct promotional activity (e.g. building on established small groups, networks or employer forums) at a local level, exploring local issues with the support of Finding and keeping workers resources; and
- Maximising opportunities to promote Finding and keeping workers amongst all members of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cipd.co.uk/about>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fsb.org.uk/about-us>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.investorsinpeople.com/accredited-silver-gold-platinum>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Getting-involved/Accolades-awards/Accolades-awards.aspx>

The results of the online survey strongly suggest that the promotion of Finding and keeping workers is heavily reliant on the work of Skills for Care. Whilst this may be a reflection on the approaches used to promote the online survey, it does underline the need for all members of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group to assess whether they can improve the quality and quantity of future promotional activities in relation to Finding and keeping workers.

It is widely agreed amongst stakeholders and employers that whilst time consuming and therefore expensive, the most effective promotion of Finding and keeping workers is through local events which both raise awareness and use the resources to explore solutions to local or organisation-specific issues. Opportunities to maximise these opportunities (e.g. focusing on employers least likely to respond to other communication channels) should be explored across the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group.

Opportunities to link Finding and keeping workers to related initiatives and organisations (e.g. the Social Care Commitment<sup>8</sup>, the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care<sup>9</sup> (NMDS-SC), Investors in People<sup>10</sup>, the Care Quality Commission<sup>11</sup> (CQC)) should be explored in order to raise awareness of resources which can improve performance.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/The-Social-Care-Commitment/The-Social-Care-Commitment.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.investorsinpeople.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cqc.org.uk/>

## Conclusions

1. The ongoing development and delivery of Finding and keeping workers has continued to work towards meeting its objectives in the Department of Health's Adult social care workforce recruitment and retention strategy 2014-2017;
2. Finding and keeping workers continues to generate very positive feedback in terms of its design, accessibility, content and quality from those employers that are aware of, and have applied, the information and knowledge provided;
3. A significant proportion of employers reported a range of positive impacts of Finding and keeping workers. 81% linking it to a positive impact on their approach to recruitment and retention and 50% stated that the resources had 'helped their organisation to reduce its staff turnover rate. 69% of employers each stated that Finding and keeping workers has helped 'to raise the profile of adult social care and the career progression opportunities it offers' and helped 'to attract more people with the right values and skills to work in the sector'.
4. Finding and keeping workers is also viewed very positively by members of the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group and wider Skills for Care staff who use the resource to support employers with their recruitment and retention activities (e.g. Locality Managers and Employee Engagement);
5. Whilst the proportion of employers aware of Finding and keeping workers has increased, the major challenge for the Department of Health's recruitment and retention group remains in increasing the number of employers who are aware of, and use, the resources accessible through Finding and keeping workers;
6. Although a degree of realism should be maintained in terms of what Finding and keeping workers can achieve in terms of step changes in retention rates in the sector, comparisons of the Stage One and Two evaluation results highlights the benefit of allowing the online resource time to embed within the sector.
7. Whilst Finding and keeping workers cannot solve all the issues facing the adult social care sector in isolation it remains live to play a valuable role in supporting adult social care employers with their recruitment and retention needs. However, the Stage Two evaluation has shown positive progress in terms of the awareness, use and impact of the resources which will continue to address the challenges faced by the sector as they arise.