Lancashire Temporary Staffing Agency

Lancashire County Council

In April 2020, faced with the pandemic and its implications on frontline care staff, Lancashire County Council (LCC) set up an internal staffing agency – Lancashire Temporary Staffing Agency (LTSA). This has successfully built capacity for care workers, easing the burden on care providers' management teams to ensure they can focus on increasingly demanding frontline activities.

LCC initially launched a local recruitment campaign through LTSA to meet demand for residential care roles, as in Lancashire this area of care was the first to see the impact of the pandemic. This campaign received 1,454 expressions of interest, 738 of those received within the first two weeks. To date, LTSA has 160 carers on their books, and is supporting 60 residential care homes for older people.

Built at speed, this campaign was launched with the help of corporate communications colleagues, and in order to support the LTSA, LCC deployed its own staff from services that had been stood down as a result of the pandemic.

> "With limited thinking and planning time, we are constantly refining our tactics and processes to make recruitment as efficient as possible. It's also vital to be flexible in order to meet demand."
>
> Katie Dunne
> Human Resources Service, Lancashire County Council

On the supply side, LTSA staff initially conducted safeguarding and DBS checks, as well as telephone interviews for shortlisted candidates. LTSA received feedback that this process was too time-consuming, so stopped conducting interviews and instead deployed candidates into care homes on a paid work-shadowing basis, whilst pre-employment checks were being put in place. Candidates also completed paid online training throughout this period, whilst LTSA underwent all safeguarding checks. Although not all candidates had completed full DBS checks before entering a home, they were constantly accompanied by a trained professional throughout the shadowing process, therefore eliminating safeguarding risk.

Initially, LTSA involved care homes run by LCC to assist in the work-shadowing process for new recruits, and as the programme went from strength to strength, LTSA gained the support of private care providers in this process too.

Once candidates were trained and cleared, they would be put into the LTSA pool and deployed to care homes as needed. In practice, many candidates have remained working in homes where they underwent work-shadowing, but are sometimes deployed elsewhere following demand, whilst adhering to infection control requirements.

In terms of demand, LCC also created a care capacity tracker, in which a team of staff calls providers on a daily basis to assess capacity and then feed this through to LTSA as an early alert to identify temporary staff who can fill gaps in rotas.

Following the success of this initial campaign, LTSA has used the same model to recruit for community-based care roles, cleaners and caterers within care homes, drivers and passenger assistants, and staff for community testing sites – all of which can be found on LCC's recruitment campaign website. Each recruitment campaign is tailored to the skillset required, with successful recruitment rates observed across the board.

Top tips for creating an in-house temporary staffing agency

Create a sophisticated database to track all vacancies, applications, training processes and results, and automate as many processes as possible

Keep in regular contact with care providers and use a care capacity tracker to monitor and rapidly respond to demand

Incorporate paid work-shadowing into the recruitment process, to swiftly provide employment whilst getting people on the ground as quickly as possible

Be clear about the job at hand within the job adverts in order to reduce drop-out rates

For more information, contact Katie Dunne, Human Resources Service, Lancashire County Council via Katie.Dunne@lancashire.gov.uk