An introduction to workplace culture
What is it and why is it important?
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Foreword – Sharon Allen

I’m very happy to be introducing our updated version of the ‘Culture for Care’ toolkit, which supports adult social care employers, including individual employers, to develop and maintain a positive culture in their workplace.

High quality care and support is built on values such as trust, compassion, dignity and respect – and having a workplace culture that embeds these values is vital to delivering high quality and person-centred care and support.

A positive workplace culture doesn’t happen overnight – it can take employers months to get right and can change as your organisation and workforce also change. So it’s important that employers continually work to monitor and improve their culture.

This toolkit will help you create a workplace where everyone is valued, included and respected. It uses real life examples from employers across the sector and includes practical activities that you can do as a team of managers or with your staff.

It’ll help us all to think about the culture we work in and how we can make it better to improve the lives of people who need care and support.

Sharon Allen, OBE
Chief Executive Officer, Skills for Care
This toolkit is for adult social care employers of all sizes. It explains what a workplace culture is and how you can develop one in your organisation.

Every workplace has a culture which could be positive, negative or a mix of both. It influences how people behave and feel at work – so whilst you cannot see your workplace culture, you can always see its impact. If it’s positive it can encourage employees to exceed expectations, or if it’s negative it can lead to bad practice and damage your organisation’s reputation.

In their ‘Driving improvement: case studies from nine adult social care services’, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) found that failing organisations tend to have cultures where staff are afraid to speak out, don’t feel they have a voice and aren’t listened to.

The report also showcases services who improved from an ‘inadequate’ to a ‘good’ rating by tackling their workplace culture as a first priority – showing that culture plays a crucial role in improving your service.

So it’s important that developing and keeping a positive workplace culture is a key activity for everyone in adult social care.

Tailored support for your organisation

We can help you improve your workplace culture.

Our locality managers can work through this toolkit with you to identify where and how you can improve your workplace culture, and collate these findings in a short report.

Contact your locality manager to talk about what you need. Find their details at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/inyourarea.
About this toolkit

There’s lots of resources out there about developing a positive workplace culture, but this toolkit is specific to adult social care.

It’s for people with leadership and management responsibilities who work for adult social care organisations of all services and sizes, including individual employers. Others might find it useful, for example front-line care workers, commissioners or those monitoring services.

The toolkit explains why workplace culture is important and how it can benefit your business. It tells you the different elements that make up a workplace culture and how you can develop these in your organisation, drawing on Skills for Care resources and tools to help.

In the ‘Developing your workplace culture’ section there are activities that are based on real life scenarios that you might come across in your organisation. You can use these activities to help you develop your workplace culture.
What is a workplace culture?

It’s the character and personality of your organisation – it’s what makes your organisation unique and is made up of the values, traditions, beliefs, interactions, behaviours and attitudes of the people within it.

Many people have studied workplace cultures. Here are some different types of culture – they don’t belong to one author but are a mix of elements to show the different types of culture that can exist.

1. Some cultures have clearly defined policies and procedures within which workers are expected to function. Roles and responsibilities are formal and hierarchical, and there are clear lines of accountability from strong leadership and between departments. Success is measured by the ability to deliver predictable and maintainable outcomes.

2. Some workplaces are more dynamic. They have leaders who are innovative and comfortable taking risks. Staff are given freedom to think laterally and come up with new initiatives and solutions. Success is measured in growth, the acquisition of new products and being at the forefront of their sector.

3. The need to compete and win, externally or internally between teams, can also drive the development of cultures. These workplaces are outcome driven and focus on achievement in the marketplace, with powerful leaders who encourage staff to be competitive and task orientated. Success is measured by winning, competitive positioning and reputation.

4. Other cultures focus on greater collaboration between workers and emphasise partnership working and problem solving as a team. These workplaces may not market themselves as aggressively but can be a friendlier, more caring place to work. Leaders emphasise the importance of looking after their staff, who in turn develop a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the employer. Success is measured by the positive outcomes of its services on people, both customers and staff.

Cultures are complex and diverse, but in its simplest terms has been described as:

The way we do things around here.

Bower 1996
These examples are just theoretical models and it’s important to remember that one type of workplace culture isn’t necessarily better than the other – it depends on which one fits with your organisation’s aims and objectives.

In reality cultures might have elements from a number of these examples and there might be sub-cultures within your organisation.

**A positive workplace culture**

Our ‘Good and outstanding care’ guide found that services with these CQC ratings had a culture that’s fair, inclusive and transparent. For example they:

- put people who need care and support at the heart of the service
- ensure managers and leaders are dedicated to delivering high quality care and support, and act upon feedback
- ensure managers and leaders are open, visible, approachable and empower others
- embed a person-centred culture of fairness, support and transparency
- ensure managers and leaders encourage and support a strong focus on inclusion, equality, diversity and human rights
- ensure the workplace culture meets the needs of people who need care and support, staff and other stakeholders
- ensure problems and concerns are always a priority and are committed to resolving them.

Download your copy of the guide at [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/GO](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/GO).
### Definitions of workplace culture in the adult social care sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A workplace culture is how it feels to work in a place, and what is expected from the people working there.</th>
<th>A workplace culture is, as I understand it, a supportive, caring working environment based on mutual trust and respect.</th>
<th>A positive workplace culture is where staff are engaged within the organisation. They feel involved and emotionally connected; they invest in their role and the organisation to support the goals and values of the organisation. They enjoy coming to work!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jean’s team</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tracy McClymont</strong></td>
<td><strong>Amber Trust</strong></td>
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How it ‘feels’ to work for an organisation, or in my case an individual employer. Whether you feel supported and valued, whether your skills are recognised, whether you’re given constructive feedback and training when necessary, whether you feel that you can bring up any issues you may have and whether the process for doing that is clear.

**Shana Prezaro**

An organisation’s culture is the feeling it gives, atmosphere it creates, how it’s perceived both internally and externally.

**Newkey**

To me, workplace culture is all about behaviours and how as an employer I support and encourage positive behaviours that fit with our mission statement.

**Nina Osborne**

The culture of an organisation is the translation of our organisational values into our strategy for delivering services.

**Woodford Homecare**

A ‘great culture’ is the lifeblood of the organisation and reflects a common purpose.

**Heathfield Residential Home**

Our culture is about mutual respect and good organisation, particularly in a domiciliary care setting as it’s fast paced and an ever changing service.

**Care 4 You**

Our culture embraces openness, transparency, honesty, professionalism and positivity.

**Wren Hall**
A business case for culture: the importance of a positive workplace culture

A positive workplace culture can bring lots of business benefits.

It offers a sense of shared identity, certainty and predictability, and influences what people think or do.

This can impact the quality of care and support you provide, which is why it’s a vital part of any well-led service and crucial to delivering high quality care and support.

It can:

■ **improve the quality, consistency and personalisation of your service** – a positive workplace culture helps to create a shared identity for your organisation where everyone understands how to behave

■ **help you recruit and retain a stable and skilled workforce with the right values** – a positive workplace culture can help you attract like-minded and talented people who have the right values to work for you

■ **reduce costs** – improved retention as a result of a positive workplace culture can reduce your recruitment costs

■ **improve health and wellbeing in your service** – a positive workplace culture makes staff feel engaged, valued and trusted so they’re happier and healthier at work

■ **improve your reputation and market share** – having a positive workplace culture can raise your profile with commissioners and those who monitor the quality of services, such as the CQC. We also know that a high percentage of new recruits hear about vacancies through word of mouth, so a positive workplace culture can support your recruitment

■ **help you to meet CQC regulations** – workplace culture is fundamental across several CQC key lines of enquiry, particularly under ‘well-led’, and statistics show that most services who achieve a good or outstanding rating for ‘well-led’ go on to achieve this rating overall.

Our culture ensures that we have great staff retention and we can recruit the best staff. It means we don’t look for staff – they ring up and want to join us.

Care 4 You
Influences on your workplace culture

There are lots of different influences which can affect your workplace culture, including:

- organisational influences
- social influences
- environmental influences.

Organisational influences

The aims and objectives of the organisation, and how they’re planned and delivered, can influence your workplace culture. This includes:

- your vision, aims and objectives
- your leaders and how they communicate and influence your staff
- the way your organisation is managed including its systems, structure, procedures and policies
- workplace practices, such as recruiting, selecting, rewards and benefits, learning and development, performance management and wellbeing
- legislation
- social factors
- political factors, such as funding or local initiatives.

Resources for you

- Resources to support your recruitment and retention [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/recruitment](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/recruitment)
- Support for leaders and managers [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/leadership](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/leadership)
- Find out more about learning and development [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learning](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learning)
Social influences

Your organisation is made up of lots of different people, including staff, people who need care and support and their families, who all have different:

■ personalities
■ beliefs
■ values
■ skills and experience
■ cultural heritage
■ aspirations
■ roles and responsibilities
■ relationships with others.

These social influences can affect your workplace culture.

Organisations that employ people from different backgrounds benefit from a more diverse way of thinking, which can bring fresh ideas, new solutions to problems and drive innovation and creativity.

No matter what their background, if your staff and their values align with your workplace values, this can ensure that the people you hire fit into your workplace culture and the way that you work.

Resources for you

■ Values-based recruitment toolkit
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values
Environmental influences

The physical setting of your workplace can also influence your workplace culture, such as the:

- structure of the building
- accessibility
- atmosphere, such as lighting, noise levels, personal space and temperature
- décor, such as displaying your organisation's history, achievements and values
- allocation of desk space.

Staff spend lots of time at work so it's important to have a pleasant environment that's energetic and fun – this can improve people’s moods and make them happier.

Where organisations are also people’s homes, physical settings are important to their health, wellbeing and happiness.

Resources for you

- ‘Adaption, design and premises’ section of the Good and outstanding care guide
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/GO
- Skills for Care Accolades awards
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Accolades