

Recruiting temporary staff checklist

Working with a recruitment agency

There may be times when you require the support of recruitment agencies to help maintain staffing levels and offer flexibility for other workers. Here are some of the things you need to think about when working with a recruitment agency.

- Meet or interview different recruitment agencies as part of your selection process. Have an understanding of the agency's local presence in your area. Are they responsive, transparent and honest?
- Ask other health and social care providers which recruitment agencies they use and whether they're reliable and responsive. Before you select an agency, ask them for testimonials from clients they support.
Check the terms of business you sign with the agency, this will detail what pre-employment checks they should complete as part of their recruitment process. You will need to check, verify and may wish to also conduct your own pre-employment checks. All agencies should be conducting their own checks on staff they engage prior to introduction to a care provider.
- Brief the recruitment agency with a realistic picture of your service and what kind of staff you need, so they can shape their offer around this. Ensure staff engaged through an agency meet the standards you set for permanent staff to have certain behaviours and values.
- Check how flexible the recruitment agency is. Ask if they can adapt to meet your changing needs; for example – can they provide staff for different job roles, will they always have capacity, and how do they prioritise which providers they send their staff to?
- You may want to consider choosing a recruitment agency that's accredited or a member of a trade or professional body, such as The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo), or similar. Bear in mind that not having this accreditation does not necessarily mean the agency shouldn't be used; smaller agencies may not have this accreditation due to the associated cost.

- Consider commissioning with more than one recruitment agency so you have more staffing options for emergencies, although bear in mind if agencies know you are working with a large number of agencies they might be less inclined to prioritise your requirements.
- Care providers should check that the agency has the correct insurances in place that meet the required level of cover.
- Review the recruitment agency's processes and records to ensure they have suitable, experienced, and trained staff. Ensure that they keep this up to date.
- Ensure staff meet COVID-19 conditions of deployment - skillsforcare.org.uk/COVID-19-vaccination.
- Understand the recruitment agency's costing models, associated fees and any penalties before you select them, so you know exactly what you'll be paying for. Don't forget to negotiate. A Terms of Business agreement is standard practice and protects both parties.
- Understand the recruitment agency's service level agreement and how promptly they can respond to your needs.
- If you're likely to want to directly employ good agency staff on a permanent basis, discuss whether this is allowed and what the associated costs might be.

Using temporary staff

We encourage providers to use permanent staff where possible to provide continuity of care and save costs. The reasons for use should be detailed in your business continuity plan, which will prove useful for providers who collate evidence for CQC assessment.

Sustained use of temporary staff can impact the quality of service, in particular the continuity of care. When using agency staff, try to have the same workers who are known to those who use your service where possible.

Using temporary staff in the long term is not a cost-effective way to fill vacancies or address short staffing. However, they can help you maintain staffing levels and offer flexibility for other workers. Lots of temporary staff have relevant experience and the right values to work in social care, but they must get the right induction and support to provide safe care and support.

Here are some things to consider if you use temporary staff:

- Review the care and support needs of the people you support and decide if temporary staff can meet these needs.
- Think carefully about the role and responsibilities of these staff, considering their knowledge and experience of your service and the people you support. This might be different to your other permanent staff.
- Ensure temporary staff are recruited through the same recruitment processes as other staff – they still need the right values to work in your organisation and to have the right checks, this could be done by you or the agency. Do the right checks before people start work, see the checklist on page 44 of the 'Safe staffing guide' - skillsforcare.org.uk/safe-staffing.
- Ensure staff have the right values, skills and knowledge for their role and assess their competence before they work unsupervised. If you identify any gaps, provide appropriate training.
- If they have experience from the health and social care sector, check that their training and qualifications are in date.
- If they're new to social care, ensure that they meet the Care Certificate standards.
- Provide a thorough induction that introduces them to your organisation's policies and procedures, assesses their competence and ensures they're trained to use any equipment they need in their role. You could give them a mentor or buddy.
- Tell existing staff what roles and responsibilities temporary staff have.
- Provide regular feedback, supervisions and appraisals of performance both to the staff member and to their agency.