Recruitment and retention in adult social care: secrets of success

Learning from employers what works well

May 2017

Written by Davina Figgett

Published by Skills for Care

Recruitment and retention in adult social care: secrets to success. Learning from employers what works well
Published by Skills for Care, West Gate, 6 Grace Street, Leeds LS1 2RP www.skillsforcare.org.uk
© Skills for Care 2017
Reference no. 160177A
Copies of this work may be made for non-commercial distribution to aid social care workforce development. Any other copying requires the permission of Skills for Care.
Skills for Care is the employer-led strategic body for workforce development in social care for adults in England. It is part of the sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development.
This work was researched and compiled by Davina Figgett of Skills for Care.

Table of contents

Table of contents **3**
Acknowledgements **4**
Executive summary **5**
1. Introduction **11**
2. Overview of research methods **12**
2.1 About the surveys 12
2.2 About the research strategy 13
2.3 About the respondents 14
3. Key findings from the research **17**
3.1 Attracting more people 17
3.2 Taking on the right people 24
3.3 Developing talent and skills 31
3.4 Keeping your people 34
3.5 Recruitment circumstances 41
4. Key findings from the research with individual employers **49**
4.1 Recruiting personal assistants 49
4.2 Skills and experience 53
4.3 Retaining personal assistants 54
5. Conclusions and recommendations **57**
5.1 Conclusions 57
5.2 Recommendations 58
6. Appendix **60**
6.1 Analysis of questions only asked of 'Parent' and Local Authority respondents in the online employer survey 60

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the following people and organisations who freely gave their time to contribute to the development and execution of this research.

- Skills for Care's recruitment and retention matrix group (membership of which is drawn from across the organisation) for reviewing drafts of the survey tools.
- Skills for Care's workforce intelligence team for producing and managing the sample and mailing and for co-ordinating the work with individual employers.
- Colleagues from the Department of Health for reviewing drafts of the survey tools.
- The research group at the Association for Directors of Social Services (ADASS) for reviewing and approving the fieldwork amongst Local Authority employers.
- All of the social care employers who completed the survey for their time and insights into what works in relation to recruitment and retention.
- The Penderels Trust and My Life for distributing surveys to individual employers on our behalf and to all of the individuals who shared their experiences of employing personal assistants.

Executive summary

Introduction

We know that there is a real and enduring challenge for employers within the sector to recruit, develop and retain the right people to deliver high quality, person-centred care and support services. We are also aware that there is no single solution to this challenge, especially given the wide variation in recruitment and retention circumstances across the country.

We therefore decided to conduct a piece of research amongst adult social care employers with a turnover of less than 10% to explore what it is that they do that they feel contributes to their success in relation to recruitment and retention. To compliment this we conducted research amongst individual employers to explore their experiences of recruitment and retention.

Our hope is that by disseminating their ideas on good practice others can learn from the experiences and that we can use the information to shape our future resources.

Adult social care employers

Our research amongst employers with low staff turnover rates found that the things that make a difference do not necessarily cost organisations more but can have a positive impact on potential candidates and existing employees. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that staff turnover is an influencing factor in organisations obtaining favourable ratings from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

A) Attracting more people

Attracting the right people, with the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work in adult social care is vital.

"When recruiting we have in our minds 'would we like them to look after our family member?'"
(Foxglove Care Limited, Residential care provider)

Employers told us that:

- you need to have a good understanding of local needs and circumstances to underpin your recruitment planning process; this enables you to be proactive and strategic, rather than reactive

- it's important to pay above the National Living Wage, but also to sell the wider benefits of working in adult social care; employees value good working conditions, especially flexibility
- developing a positive organisational culture, where staff are supported and valued and have opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge reinforces the message that working in adult social care can be a good career choice
- building a strong reputation for being a good employer means that existing staff will spread the word and will attract like-minded people, that 'fit' the organisations values to apply for your vacancies
- being honest about the realities of the job saves time for both potential job applicants and organisations and helps ensure a good match with the organisation's ethos and values and the people who need care and support.

"You need to offer a competitive pay rates, good working conditions, training and development."
(Greek and Greek Cypriot Community of Enfield, Domiciliary care provider)

B) Taking on the right people

Having attracted the right people to apply for your vacancies it is important to select and employ the best people for the jobs.

"Don't just fill the vacancies. Fill them with the right people."
(Claxton House, Atlanta Healthcare, Residential care provider)

Employers told us that:

- finding staff with the right values and behaviours is more important than finding staff who are already qualified; skills can be taught but personal attributes (kindness, compassion, reliability, honesty, etc.) cannot
- life experience and a willingness to learn can be more desirable than previous work experience (reflecting the principles of values based recruitment)
- inviting candidates for 'taster shifts' and involving people who need care and support and their families (or friends and advocates) in the recruitment process helps you to establish whether candidates 'walk the talk'
- you need to take a multi-pronged approach to communicating the values, behaviours and attitudes you look for in staff so that candidates are clear about whether the role is right for them

- values based interviews enable you to explore whether candidates will 'fit' your organisational needs.

"Spending time with the candidate at the beginning of the process will pay dividends later on. Informal interviews allow you to select / deselect candidates from the process at an early stage."
(Orchard Vale Trust, Residential care provider)

C) Developing talent and skills

Once the right people have been recruited the priority is to ensure that they stay and grow with you.

"Treat employees as the key to the business – invest in them and involve them in the direction of the business."
(Step-A-Side, 'Other'[1] provider)

Employers told us that:

- investing in staff should not be a tick box exercise; find out what they need and then explore the best way/s of addressing it
- there is funding available to help you support and develop your staff if you look for it (almost half had accessed Skills for Care's Workforce Development Fund[2] and a similar number had invested in apprenticeships)
- learning and development needs can be identified in many different ways, including through the induction process, regular structured supervision sessions, performance appraisals, performance development plans and reflections on practice
- as well as formal training, knowledge and skills can be developed through mentoring or buddying, bespoke schemes to support staff in specific roles and through apprenticeships. Likewise, continuous professional development can be delivered through group knowledge transfer sessions and professional development time
- it's important to ensure that all staff understand and uphold the values of your organisation; by creating a positive and open environment staff are more likely to thrive and grow.

[1] Privately owned home care agency
[2] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/WDF

"Offer extensive training and support where and when it is needed. Less confident staff may need the support to get the best from them."

(DICE Healthcare Limited, Domiciliary care provider)

D) Keeping your people

Retaining good staff is especially important to organisations delivering adult social care as continuity of staff is crucial in delivering high quality care to people who need care and support.

"To be an 'outstanding' care provider [means providing] a secure happy environment where staff can be themselves and grow and develop."
(Chestnut Grove Rest House, Residential care provider)

Employers told us that:

- respecting and valuing staff, investing in learning and development, embedding the organisation's values and celebrating achievements all go a long way to improving staff retention
- involving staff in decision making and paying above the local minimum (paying competitively) also ensure that staff feel valued for the work that they do, which in turn has a positive impact on retention rates
- it pays to be as flexible as possible when it comes to setting working hours; different shift patterns suit different types of workers and employers who can accommodate this are rewarded with more loyal staff
- it's important to support staff and to take into account their responsibilities outside of the workplace as these can affect performance at work. Ensuring staff are physically and mentally fit for work goes hand in hand with providing a positive workplace culture
- measuring staff satisfaction can be useful in identifying ways to further develop the culture of the organisation but whether this is done formally or informally, the crucial part is to be seen to listen to and act upon what staff tell you.

"Maintain high levels of staff motivation by supporting staff development, tackling performance issues, and developing a culture of shared ownership over successes."
(Old Hastings House, Residential care provider)

Useful resources from Skills for Care

Finding and keeping workers has lots of practical resources themed under the four sections above.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers

Practical support for your organisation is available if you'd like more bespoke help with your recruitment and retention.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/RandRsupport

Values and behaviours based recruitment toolkit has guidance and templates to help you recruit and retain people with the right values.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/valuesandbehaviours

I Care…Ambassadors is a great way to develop your existing staff and find new staff by delivering careers activities in your local community.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/icareambassadors

Think Care Careers has information about working in social care, the different job roles available and how you can progress in your career.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/thinkcarecareers

A Question of Care – A career for you? is an interactive scenario based quiz that helps potential candidates assess whether they have the right values to work in social care.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/QofCare

Learning and development is vital in delivering high quality care and support and we have resources to help.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learning

Individual employers

Similarly we're aware of the challenges faced by those who directly employ personal assistants (PAs), often called individual employers, to enable them to live their personal, social or professional lives according to their wishes and interests.

Our research amongst this group of employers found, for many, employing people that they know (friends, family, neighbours, or people known through school, work or the community) had been successful. However, where this was not possible or desirable, then individual employers stressed the need to seek recommendations and support from others to identify suitable candidates for the role.

Getting recruitment right involves being very clear from the start about what the role entails and then, for many, using your instincts to select a candidate who is a good 'fit' with you, rather than being reliant on finding people with specific qualifications or experience. The recruitment process could be improved if there was greater access to registers or databases of personal assistants who understand the role and have been vetted in advance.

Putting aside issues relating to low pay and hours required, in order to retain personal assistants, individual employers identified a range of things that fall under the umbrella term of 'being a good employer' and which contribute to successfully retaining PAs. This included establishing good lines of communication, treating staff with respect, being flexible and creating a positive working environment.

Useful resources from Skills for Care :

Individual employers may find the following resources useful:

Information hub for individual employers and PAs has lots of useful resources to help you as an employer, including details of organisations that provide local support (in your area) and details about money for training. There's also sections for PAs and support organisations.
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iehpahub

Employing personal assistant's toolkit provides step by step guidance for individuals about employing PAs.
www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk

To keep in touch with Skills for Care, sign up to our quarterly newsletter.

1. Introduction

We know that there's a real and enduring challenge for employers within the sector to recruit, develop and retain the right people to deliver high quality person-centred care and support services. We're also aware that there's no single solution to this challenge, especially given the wide variation in recruitment and retention circumstances across the country.

To date the main focus of attention has predominantly been employers with high staff vacancy and turnover rates. However, analysis of the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC) shows that there are a significant number of employers who have very low staff vacancy and turnover rates.

We therefore decided to conduct a piece of research amongst adult social care employers with a turnover of less than 10% to explore what it is that they do that they feel contributes to their success in relation to recruitment and retention. To compliment this we conducted research amongst individual employers to explore their experiences of recruitment and retention.

Our hope is that by disseminating their ideas on good practice others can learn from the experiences and that we can use the information to shape our future resources.

2. Overview of research methods

2.1 About the surveys

Adult social care employers

We conducted an online survey amongst adult social care employers with low staff turnover rates (defined as less than 10%). There were three complimentary versions of the survey:

- a version for 'standalone' organisations – organisations registered on the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC)[3] as not having any subsidiaries and not controlled by a 'parent' organisation
- a version for 'parent' organisations – organisations registered on the NMDS-SC as having subsidiary establishments linked to them
- a version for Local Authorities.

A core set of questions, devised in conjunction with an internal Skills for Care working group including representatives from across the organisation and agreed with the Department of Health, ran through each survey, with slight tweaks to tailor them to the relevant audiences.

The surveys were based upon the four key themes of the 'Finding and keeping workers' resources[4], one of the outcomes from the Adult Social Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2014-17[5]:

- Attract more people – recruiting people of all ages and backgrounds
- Take on the right people – finding people with the right skills, values and talent to work in social care
- Develop talent and skills – providing effective induction, training and career progression for your people
- Keep your people - keeping the best people by offering fair terms and conditions.

Individual employers

We also produced a short, complimentary survey for individual employers. This was designed to explore what works well in terms of the recruitment and retention of PAs.

[3] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/NMDS-SC
[4] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers
[5] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/RandRstrategy

2.2 About the research strategy

Adult social care employers

The strategy for disseminating the online survey to adult social care employers was three-fold:

1. A targeted email invitation was sent to the following groups in December 2016, with a reminder email sent in January 2017:
   - 1426 'standalone' organisations
   - 157 'parent' organisations
   - 40 Local Authorities.

   These organisations were selected as being eligible for the survey following analysis of the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC). The criteria for inclusion was that staff turnover in the preceding year had been less than 10% and that they had given Skills for Care permission to contact them for research purposes.

2. A media campaign, using Skills for Care's eNews bulletin, our Social Care Commitment newsletter, a piece in our regular update to trade organisations (including Care England, National Care Association, National Care Forum, Registered Nursing Home Association and UKCHA) and social media in January and February 2017 invited organisations with a staff turnover of less than 10% in the preceding year to complete the relevant version of the survey. This was supplemented by promotions (email and face-to-face) by Skills for Care's locality managers.

3. A postal mailing to organisations rated 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), minus those who had already been identified in Stage 1 (giving a sample of 68 organisations). The letter invited them to complete the survey if their turnover in the preceding year had been less than 10%.

Individual employers

The individual employer survey was distributed on our behalf by two direct payment support organisations (DPSOs) and user led organisations (ULOs). The survey was available online from November 2016 and was supplemented by a paper format which was mailed out in April 2017. It was also publicised via social media and promoted in Skills for Care's eNews and the quarterly newsletter for individual employers and those that support them.

2.3 About the respondents

Adult social care employers

In total we received 140 responses to the online surveys distributed to adult social care employers, representing a response rate of approximately one in ten based on the initial mailing to 1523 organisations:

- 119 employers completed the survey designed for 'standalone' organisations
- 13 employers completed the survey designed for 'parent' organisations[6]
- 8 employers completed the survey designed for Local Authorities[7]

Sector: 72% represent private sector organisations; 19% represent voluntary and third sector organisations: 6% represent Local Authorities; and 4% assigned themselves to the 'other' category.

Main service: 42% work in adult residential care; 36% work in adult domiciliary care; 12% work in adult community care; 4% work in adult day care; and 6% assigned themselves to the 'other' category.

Location: 44% operate in the South of England; 39% in the North; and 23% in the Midlands. 36% operate in a predominantly urban area; 20% in a predominantly rural area; and 44% operate in an area that they described as a mixture of urban and rural.

Size of establishment: 9% work for 'micro' organisations (employing up to 9 people); 51% work for 'small' organisations (10-49 people); 24% work for 'medium' sized organisations (50-249 people); and 14% work for 'large' organisations (more than 250 people). 2% were unsure how many people were employed by their organisation.

Care Quality Commission (CQC): 83% of eligible employees[8] have been inspected by the CQC under the new approach, using the categories 'safe', 'effective', 'caring', 'responsive' and 'well-led'[9].

[6] + [7] Owing to the low response rates amongst these groups, the questions that were only asked of the 'parent' and Local Authority employees are reported in Appendix 6.1 rather in the main body of the report. Where they were asked the same questions as in the 'standalone' version of the survey their answers are included in the main body of the report.

[8] i.e. excluding Local Authority employees

[9] www.cqc.org.uk/content/adult-social-care-providers#handbooks

CQC ratings for those taking part in the survey compare favourably with the national picture [see Table 1][10]. Previous research by Skills for Care[11] demonstrated that those rated favourably by CQC had a lower staff turnover rate than those rated either requiring improvement or inadequate. Whilst staff turnover is only one of many factors that influences the quality of care the data analysed did show that it was an influencing factor.

Table 1: CQC ratings achieved

	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Base
Survey respondents	6%	87%*	7%	0%	98
National scores	1%	76%	21%	2%	21,396

* Most had been awarded a rating of 'good' across the five Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs).

Individual employers

In total we received 917 responses to the online and paper versions of the survey for individual employers, representing a response rate of approximately one in ten based on the number of paper survey packs distributed (10,400 people).

The majority of responses (92%) were from people in receipt of a direct payment from their local authority, with one in ten (8%) being in receipt of a personal budget from the NHS and 3% using their own money to pay for a PA[12].

Although the majority of the data came from members of one DPSO and ULO they operate nationally and we received responses from all regions and from people with different types of care needs.

Notes on data presentation:

Where quantitative data was collected and analysed we have shown the results as percentages. Where qualitative data was collected and analysed we have indicated the strength of opinion by noting the number of times it was mentioned by employers.

[10] CQC inspection ratings data analysed by Skills for Care, February 2016, unpublished
[11] Skills for Care (2014) NMDS-SC trend briefing 2: Recruitment and retention [Available online] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/RandRtrendbriefing
[12] Some individual employers indicated that they used more than one source of funding

The term ‘employers’ used throughout this report refers to the 140 employers who responded to the online surveys, representing ‘standalone’ organisations, ‘parent’ organisations and Local Authorities. The term ‘individual employers’ is used to refer to the 917 online and paper surveys received from people employing PAs.

Throughout the report we have used quotes from employers to illustrate the analysis. Where permission was given we have attributed the quotes to the organisation they represent. Where permission was not given we have simply stated the main service area of the organisation (i.e. domiciliary care, residential care, etc.). We have also highlighted if the quote is from an organisation that has received an overall ‘outstanding’ rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

3. Key findings from the research[13]

3.1 Attracting more people

Attracting the right people, with the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work in adult social care is vital. In this section we examine good practice in relation to planning for your recruitment needs, attracting people to apply for your vacancies and encouraging people to work in adult social care more generally.

Your recruitment plan

Two-thirds of employers (60%) use in-house workforce planning tools to ensure that they have the right mix and numbers of employees to deliver the care and support needed by their organisation, both now and in the future. Half (49%) use their own recruitment and retention plans and two-fifths (42%) use their Business Plan. Three in ten (28%) use workforce audits and a fifth (22%) use their NMDS-SC account.

Just over half of employers (54%) said that their organisation had a recruitment plan. In many cases this had been based upon Skills for Care resources:

- Workforce planning (46%)
- Finding and keeping workers (40%)
- Values and behaviours based recruitment resources (37%).

Of course, such tools need to be underpinned by your knowledge of your local needs and circumstances, as these quotes demonstrate:

"Our recruitment plan and strategy is based on the local environment and opportunities."
(Domiciliary care provider)

"[Our recruitment plan is based on] the requirements of the people who live within the Friary Care community"
(Residential care provider)

[13] This chapter refers to data collected in the online surveys distributed to adult social care employers with low staff turnover rates. Data collected from individual employers can be found in chapter four.

Employers told us that the benefits of having a recruitment plan are:

- acting strategically rather than reactively (24 mentions)

"Identify gaps in certain areas ahead of time so they don't become major issue."
(Domiciliary care provider)

"It helps you keep focused on what you need as an organisation. It clearly highlights how and why you are recruiting, but as we are a small organisation, we can be flexible with it. I think the key is not to be too rigid but to be able to respond promptly to changes in support, funding, and staffing levels."
(Crimson Hill Support, Domiciliary care provider)

"We then have something to measure our recruitment against"
(Domiciliary care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

- targeting the right people with the right skills and values (16 mentions)

"We can forward plan to ensure we have sufficient staff with the correct skills and values to support people."
(Foxglove Care Limited, Residential care provider)

"Crystallises our core values, defines what we believe makes a good carer and informs us quickly in the recruitment process if the candidate will be a good fit for our model of care delivery."
(Home Instead Senior Care, Domiciliary care provider)

- consistency and building upon what you know works (11 mentions)

"It outlines the structure for our recruitment process so that everyone knows what their responsibilities are and it gives us a clear process to follow. It ensures a smoother recruitment process for the candidates."
(Care Concern Healthcare, Domiciliary care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

"[It] provides a quick process to follow when needed – [the] recruitment pack is ready to use/print [and we can] follow procedure and track process."
(Proctor House, Residential care provider)

- using sparse resources wisely (4 mentions).

"Is useful to plan in advance so it will make us minimize costs and post the adverts in the right place."
(Domiciliary care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

Despite lots of examples of the benefits of having a recruitment plan only two-fifths (39%) of employers said they actually measure them. Measurement is generally related to the value for money of the recruitment options used (i.e. the number of applications received in relation to the number of successful appointments) or in relation to staff retention levels.

"[We use] a recruitment tracker to manage recruitment figures – attraction, pre-screens and successful interviews."
(Domiciliary care provider)

"We check how many CV's we've received from each source and how many have been contacted."
(Domiciliary care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

"In measuring the results of our recruitment strategy against our staff retention we can see where particular areas may need development and support and continue to structure the criteria we seek in successful applicants…"
(Right at Home Nottingham, Domiciliary care provider)

Attracting people to work for your organisation

We asked employers what they had tried in an effort to attract people to work for their organisation over the past twelve months and which they would try again in future. The most common responses were:

- invested in staff development (75%)
- offered flexible working patterns (74%)
- ensured that people are aware that staff are paid the National Living Wage, or more (61%), challenging the perception that social care is low paid work
- worked to develop and promote the organisation's culture (55%)
- used a values based approach to recruitment (47%).

NB: Everyone who said that they had tried these things said that they would do so again in the future.

Other popular answers were:

- promoted the organisation at local events to raise awareness of potential opportunities (41%)
- offered volunteering opportunities (38%)
- offered Apprenticeships (34%)
- promoted your ethos by signing up to the Social Care Commitment (31%)
- offered incentives for existing employees who introduce potential new employees (31%).

NB: Most who said that they had tried these things said that they would do so again in the future.

At the end of this sub-section we asked employers if they had specifically targeted any of the following, who are typically under-represented amongst the adult social care workforce, to work for them in the past twelve months[14].

Three-fifths (60%) of employers had successfully targeted younger people to work for them and half (48%) had successfully targeted men. Two-thirds had successfully targeted University students or graduates or Black and minority ethnic people (36% and 32% respectively) whilst three in ten had successfully targeted senior managers, managers or regulated professionals (29% and 28% respectively).

[14] Skills for Care recognises that many individuals and groups are underrepresented in the adult social care workforce. This is a priority area of work for us during 2017-18. See www.skillsforcare.org.uk/randr for details.

Table 2: Groups targeted in recruitment efforts in the past 12 months (Base = 107-123 employees)

	Yes	No (tried but not successfully)	No (haven't needed to try this)
University students / Graduates	36%	8%	56%
International workers	16%	3%	81%
Older people (65+)	17%	7%	76%
Younger people (18-25)	60%	2%	38%
Disabled people	19%	5%	76%
Men	48%	3%	49%
BAME people	32%	4%	64%
Regulated Professionals	28%	5%	67%
Managers / Senior Managers	29%	6%	65%

Advertising your job vacancies

Employers told us that the most successful methods of advertising job vacancies are:

- via existing employees referring a friend (49%)
- adverts posted on the organisation's website (29%)
- adverts printed in the local newspaper (20%)
- posters in the local community (20%)
- adverts posted on social media (17%) or elsewhere online (25%).

In addition to the 49% who told us that they successfully recruit via employee referrals, word of mouth 'advertising' was mentioned by five employers (residential care and domiciliary care providers). This can be a valuable avenue to pursue because as well as being low or no cost there is a greater potential of attracting people with the right values and behaviours because the existing staff know the organisation's core values and can share these with the people they know. Three domiciliary care providers also mentioned finding it useful to place banner advertising on their building when they are recruiting.

Your job descriptions and person specifications

Employers were asked whether they had reviewed their job descriptions and person specifications in the past twelve months to ensure that they:

- don't discriminate against any group of (potential) employees
- promote a values and behaviours based approach to recruitment and retention

- are jargon free
- are clear about key elements of the role
- are clear, concise and easily accessible
- don't include criteria that aren't relevant to the role.

Two-thirds (64%) had reviewed all job descriptions and person specifications. One in seven (14%) had reviewed some of them and one in eight (12%) had reviewed them more than a year ago. The remainder either said that they would review them as vacancies arise (8%) or that they had no plans to review them (2%).

The most important thing a social care employer can do to attract more people to apply for its vacancies

Finally, whilst acknowledging that the best recruitment processes require a combination of many factors, we asked employers to describe the **most** important thing a social care employer can do to attract more people to apply for its vacancies. The results of this question are illustrated in the Word Cloud[15] below:

Pay topped the list (36 mentions), with several employers expanding their answer to note that in order to be competitive employers should pay above the National Living Wage to reflect the worth of their staff. This reflects previously published findings from Skills for Care which highlighted that staff look at more than bottom line figures when describing what is important to them[16]. Frequently mentioned alongside pay was working conditions, particularly offering flexible working hours (12 mentions).

---

[15] *"Word clouds or tag clouds are graphical representations of word frequency that give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in a source text. The larger the word in the visual the more common the word was in the document(s)."* www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/wordcloud

NB: The word clouds in this report were created using a thematic analysis of the qualitative data provided in response to the stated questions (https://wordart.com/create)

[16] Skills for Care (Dec, 2016) NMDS-SC trend briefing 4: Pay in the adult social care sector [Available online] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/paybriefing *"…it is worth noting that pay is not the only factor in attracting or keeping workers"* (page 9).

Pay was closely followed by the organisation developing a positive culture that supports and values its staff (32 mentions). In relation to this, employers mentioned staff morale, motivation, having an ‘open door’ policy and valuing every role within the organisation. Furthermore, by ensuring that staff have access to appropriate training and development employers can demonstrate to staff that there is a career for them in adult social care (26 mentions).

All of these tie in with another commonly mentioned answer, developing a good reputation as this leads to word of mouth promotion which is considered priceless (22 mentions).

Being honest about the reality of the job was mentioned 21 times. Employers talked about the importance of being clear about what the role would entail up front so as not to set candidates up to fail and to avoid wasting time on both sides. Promoting the positives of working in adult social care was mentioned 13 times and looking beyond qualifications to find candidates with the right values and ethos was mentioned 4 times.

Below are some quotes from employers in which they describe, in their own words, what they feel is the most important thing that a social care employer can do to attract more people to apply for its vacancies.

“Our team is dedicated to providing the best possible support for our clients, and are valued for their efforts. Our reputation is founded on being an enjoyable place to work, with a supportive team, transparent practices and the client at the forefront of all we do.”
(Linton Support, Residential Care provider)

“To provide a positive culture and environment that allows people sufficient time to deliver outstanding care to patients [and] provides education and training to support outstanding care delivery and to help staff to maximise their potential.”
(Embrace Quality Care, Domiciliary Care provider)

“Demonstrate a commitment to staff training and development and clear career progression routes.”
(Risedale Estates Limited, Residential care provider)

"We stress the importance of providing an excellent service which is caring, respectful, enabling and appropriate for individuals' requirements and how rewarding the work can be. We pay well, compared with many places, and offer plenty of training, development and qualifications as well as hands-on, daily support from management. We do not employ agency staff so our team are genuinely close and trusting of each other. Our work environment is friendly and encouraging. Our excellent reputation has been built over 30 years with the same owners of the business in place and daily available."
(Highfield House, Residential Care provider)

"Give all the relevant information in the vacancy advertisement and state what the ethos of the organisation is."
(Optimal Living (Luton) Limited, Residential Care provider)

"Ensure that the culture of the home is explained to prospective employers… Ensure that prospective employers spend time in the home with the residents so that the residents can voice their opinions about candidates."
(Chestnut Grove Rest Home, Residential Care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

3.2 Taking on the right people

Of course, recruitment isn't just about attracting people to apply for vacancies; it's about ensuring that the right people are employed. In this section we examine good practice in relation to what to look for when selecting new staff and how to ensure you employ the best staff.

What to look for when selecting staff

Employers were asked to rank the importance of various potential recruitment considerations in their experience. As Table 3 shows, 'values and behaviours' were ranked in first place, followed by 'prior relevant work experience' and then 'qualifications', suggesting that the majority recognise the importance of investing in 'raw talent', based on the principles of values based recruitment.

Table 3: Ranking of potential recruitment considerations (Base = 138 employers)

	1 Most important	2	3 Least important
Qualifications	7%	20%	**73%**
Prior work experience	7%	**70%**	24%
Values and behaviours	**86%**	11%	3%

In addition to these three core considerations, employers offered a range of other things they felt it was important to consider. A lot of comments were related to a range of attributes that come under the broad heading of 'values and attitudes' such as kindness, compassion, reliability, honesty, professionalism and positivity (35 mentions). Closely linked to this was establishing a candidates commitment, for example, whether they are taking the job seriously or not, whether they appear to genuinely care for others (21 mentions).

Willingness to learn (rather than necessarily having previous experience or qualifications) and flexibility were also mentioned (12 times and 8 times respectively). There were several mentions of involving people who need care and support (and their family, friends or advocates) in the interview process, both formally and informally, which allows the interviewer to assess how the candidate relates to them in a real-life scenario (5 mentions).

"Following a person-centred interview format I want to know how caring and empathetic the person is. Life experience is more important than previous work experience. I like to explore if a prospective candidate can see a person holistically…"
(Chestnut Grove Rest Home, Residential care provider)

"Bad experience can be a lot worse than no experience. If people have the right values we can give them experience. We are looking for people who can be dedicated to the person they support."
(PBS4, Domiciliary care provider)

"When recruiting we have in our minds 'would we like them to look after our family member?'"
(Foxglove Care Limited, Residential care provider)

"We look to see how the people we support engage with the candidates at interview stage."
(IDEM Living, Domiciliary care provider)

How to ensure you take on the right people

We asked employers what they had tried in an effort to take on the right people for their organisation over the past twelve months and which they would try again in future. The most common responses were:

- offered work experience, candidate visits or 'taster shifts (45%)
- included people who need care and support and/or their advocates, family, friends in the recruitment process (45%)
- included pre-interview assessments (31%)
- offered pre-employment training (25%)
- worked with apprenticeship agencies or learning providers to find the right apprentices (22%)
- included useful sources of advice about becoming a care worker in your application pack (20%).

NB: Everyone who said that they had tried these things said that they would do so again in the future.

We then asked employers how they communicate the values, behaviours and attitudes that their organisation looks for it its employees. The majority mentioned more than one thing in their answering, suggesting that a multi-pronged approach is most beneficial.

"We try to communicate our values and beliefs to potential employees at every stage of the recruitment and selection process so they are aware of the values, behaviours and attitudes [that] are expected of them by the time they start."
(Community care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding)

"[We communicate our values and expectations through a wide range of tools, including] job specifications, comprehensive job interviews, policies and procedures, health and safety booklets, our comprehensive induction, three month probationary period, service users and work colleague questionnaire, assessment during two week shadow working period, self-assessment toolkit for new staff members who have previously worked in care."
(Allcare Shropshire Limited, Domiciliary care provider)

"We have a video which was made by service users for this purpose. It reflects our key value "people at the centre of everything we do". Potential recruits watch the video and then participate in discussion questions on it in the interview… Our values are on a poster which is regularly circulated via staff bulletin, newsletter, staff handbook, etc. We have service user volunteers that co-produce these documents with us. We also model the values at all times in all interactions"
(Castle Supported Living, Domiciliary care provider)

Communicating the organisation's values, behaviours and attitudes via its website, social media and promotional literature was often mentioned (22 times). This means that information is readily available to both potential applicants, but also to existing members of staff. There were 4 mentions of specific Codes of Conduct or Charters being published, as well as other literature such as staff handbooks (5 mentions) and newsletters (2 mentions). Mission statements were also referred to (5 times).

"We have a 'Charter' that all our employees sign up to outlining our values and beliefs, we also have written brand values that are readily available and displayed within our office."
(Domiciliary care provider)

At the application stage, employers spoke of ensuring that job adverts clearly state what the organisation is looking for from candidates in terms of their values, behaviours and attitudes (10 mentions) and many gave details of pre-interview opportunities and activities laid on, sometimes as part of the assessment process, but sometimes just for information (13 mentions). The application pack, including role or job descriptions and person specifications were mentioned as another opportunity to convey what the organisation is looking for in candidates (25 mentions).

"We usually take any applicants to each of our residents and have a general chat with them whilst touring the building. On this tour around we will give the applicant all the information about how our home functions and what is expected of our employees. During this tour you usually find out more about the applicant than just sitting in an office asking questions."
(Residential care provider)

Clearly interviews, particularly ones that are specifically values based, are an ideal opportunity to explore the candidates 'fit' with the values of the organisation (49 mentions).

"[We] give the person a one page profile as them to explain their work ethic."
(Action on Hearing Loss, Residential care provider)

"We set a scenario and ask their opinion on how they would handle it."
(Vicarage Farm Care Home, Residential care provider)

"We use a [bespoke] value based recruitment tool when interviewing and this carries on through our induction to the culture of our company."
(Foxglove Care Limited, Residential care provider)

Once employed employers talked about on-going opportunities to convey and confirm the values, behaviours and attitudes required through the induction process (15 mentions) , team meetings (8 mentions) and supervision sessions (7 mentions). There were also six mentions of the importance of modelling the values, behaviours and attitudes that you want to see, from owners and managers downwards.

The application process

Over half (57%) of employers said that candidates must complete a full application form in order to apply for vacancies at their organisation. One in ten (8%) accept CVs and 1% a supporting statement. A third of employers (32%) have an application process that requires a combination of the three.

Some employers said that they accept a CV at the initial stage and then if the candidate is successful at either a pre-screening stage or at an interview they are asked to complete a more comprehensive application form (8 mentions).

Three in ten employers (30%) have a question/s in their application process that is designed to eliminate candidates prior to the shortlisting process. Examples of questions that exclude candidates are:

- not having a driving license if driving is essential to the role (10 mentions)
- some posts have minimum experience criteria (8 mentions)
- why they want to work in care (4 mentions)
- enhanced DBS checks (3 mentions).

The most important thing a social care employer can do to recruit the right people

Finally, whilst acknowledging that the best recruitment processes require a combination of many factors, we asked employers to describe the **most** important thing a social care employer can do to ensure that they recruit the right people to work for their organisation. The results of this question are illustrated in the Word Cloud below:

Establishing that candidates have the right personal attributes, motivation and values topped the list (34 mentions). Employers spoke about establishing how candidates relate to other people, about their need to be sensitive and empathetic in their role and to maintain dignity for the people they are working with and having a genuine passion for working in a caring role.

Knowing the type of person that you want to employ is a great starting point, but this needs to be tested through a robust recruitment process (32 mentions). Specific mention was made of clarifying your expectations of the work involved so that both parties are clear on what is expected (16 mentions), taking up references and ensuring candidates pass DBS checks (14 mentions), as well as tailoring job adverts (5 mentions).

Take time with recruitment (7 mentions) to ensure that you find the best candidate for your vacancy and, where possible, observe and interact with candidate, ideally with the involvement of people who need care and support and their families (12 mentions), this should help to ensure that candidates are matched to the work available (5 mentions). Some employers spoke of offering a trial period and others of the support they offer throughout the induction and probationary period (6 mentions each).

Just two employers mentioned experience and qualifications as being the most important a social care employer can do to ensure that they recruit the right people to work for their organisation, suggesting that for the majority a multi-faceted values based approach works best.

Below are some quotes from employers in which they describe, in their own words, what they feel is the most important thing that a social care employer can do to recruit the right people to work for their organisation.

"Most importantly, we try to get a sense that people truly care and have pride about their jobs and are passionate about providing excellent standards of care. DBS checks and references are essential. Practice shifts help both employee and employer to determine whether it is a job the employee is going to enjoy. Involving service users and other staff members in the interview process help gain rounded opinions."
(Highfield House, Residential care provider)

"[We] take into consideration life experience not just work experience - sometimes it is better to take on staff without experience who you are able to train to work to the methods of your organisation."
(Alzheimer's Society, Day care provider)

"[We have a] robust recruitment process that includes: Pre-interview visits to ensure candidates understand the values, attitudes and behaviours required for the role; Interview questions that explore attitudes, values and beliefs and critical thinking skills; Consideration of how the candidate will integrate into an established team."
(Embrace Quality Care, Domiciliary care provider)

"We find spending a bit of time with the candidate at the beginning of the process is essential - the candidate gets the opportunity to ask questions about the organisation and the employer has the opportunity to see the candidate operating in a relaxed manner (this is when you find out who the person really is) and whether they have the right values and skills."
(Orchard Vale Trust, Residential care provider)

"Openly invite all applicants to a meet and greet before any shortlisting as we found some younger and older people do not have the skills to complete the application and were excellent workers being missed. We also had excellent applications where people proved they were not right for the role at interview."
(Independence Matters, Day care provider)

"The trial shift is vital as often people do not shine at interview but on the trial shift their personality etc. starts to show."
(Risedale Estates Limited, Residential care provider)

3.3 Developing talent and skills

Once the right people are recruited to work in adult social care the key is to ensure they stay and grow in their roles. In this section we explore good practice in relation to supporting and developing talent and skills within the workforce.

Supporting employees

The most popular ways of identifying employee learning and development needs are:

- via the induction process (94%)
- through regular structured supervision sessions (91%)
- through regular performance appraisals (84%)
- through individual performance development plans (63%)
- through reflection on practice (61%).

One employer (a domiciliary care provider) also mentioned carrying out spot checks and individual reviews if a breach of policy or procedure had been identified and another (a residential care provider) that team meetings are used to reflect on practice and consider how services may be improved.

A range of methods can be used to support and develop employees. Nine out of ten employers referred to providing learning and qualifications to improve skills and knowledge (with 47% accessing the Workforce Development Fund[17]). Seven in ten have a mentoring or 'buddy' scheme and half have provision to support new managers. 45% offer apprenticeships. Additionally, two employers (one residential care provider and one domiciliary care provider) said that they base their support on what employees are specifically interested in and what their aspirations are.

[17] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/WDF

Continuous professional development is ensured through group knowledge sharing sessions (69%) and professional development time (50%). 11 employers said that this was managed through the supervision and appraisal system or via their in-house training manager or bespoke CPD tracking system.

Workplace values

It is important to check that staff **understand** the values of your organisation, buy into them and embed them in everything they do. Typically employers told us that this is covered in supervision and appraisals (73 mentions), but also in team meetings (28 mentions), through observation of practice (24 mentions), training (20 mentions) and one-to-one meetings (12 mentions). Feedback, including feedback from people who need care and support (8 mentions) and from staff via surveys (6 mentions), was also found to be useful (16 mentions in total).

"Emphasise at every opportunity, adverts, job interviews, meetings, appraisals and supervisions. Pass on compliments from service users. [It's] our ethos: How do we expect care workers to care if we don't show we care for them?"
(Allcare Shropshire Limited, Domiciliary care provider)

Employers gave very similar answers when asked how they ensure that staff **uphold** the values of their organisation, with feedback getting more mentions (10 general mentions and 24 mentions of feedback from people who need care and support).

"Seeing staff at least weekly. Regular supervision and training programme. Feedback from residents, relatives and professionals. Observation of care practices."
(Chestnut Grove Rest Home, Residential care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding)

The most important thing a social care employer can do to develop the talent and skills of its employees

Finally, whilst acknowledging that the best retention processes require a combination of many factors, we asked employers to describe the **most** important thing a social care employer can do to ensure that it develops the talent and skills of the people for work for it. The results of this question are illustrated in the Word Cloud below:

Unsurprisingly the majority of comments in response to this question were related to providing training and investing in staff. There were 64 mentions of ensuring that staff have access to (on-going) training and development opportunities, including some who pointed out that this should be tailored to individual needs, rather than just following a mandatory, tick-box approach to training. Additionally, there were 34 mentions of using and developing staff's existing skills, thereby creating opportunities for staff to grow within the organisation.

Creating the right environment for staff to thrive (30 mentions), listening to staff and following up on their thoughts and ideas (20 mentions) and positively reinforcing and recognising good practice (9 mentions) were the main non-training related answers to this question.

Below are some quotes from employers in which they describe, in their own words, what they feel is the most important thing that a social care employer can do to recruit develop the talent and skills of their employees.

"Ensure that the environment encourages and promotes development to whatever level to suit the individual and ensure that the support network is made available to them during any training and development."
(Ashmore Nursing Home, Residential care provider)

"Recognise that people develop skills at different rates - and don't be afraid that you might lose good staff because they develop - others will see that you invest in the staff group as a whole and be more likely to want to develop."
(Thomas Owen House, 'Other' provider[18])

[18] Specialist nursing care home for people with mental health problems

"Offer everyone the opportunity to progress within the organisation. I have found that staff become more keen when they realize that they can grow to managements and are willing to develop themselves with our help, they work harder and become more dedicated."
(Domiciliary care provider)

"By working closely with your staff and showing that you care for their well-being and their future development in caring for the people they are caring for."
(Abbeyfield Bognor Regis Society, Residential care provider)

"As an employer if I am enthusiast about our service users and their needs, it encourages staff to engage more and want to learn more about how they can make a real difference in their working life."
(Huntingdon Mencap, Domiciliary care provider)

"Know your staff, what motivates and makes them tick. Above all reinforce to staff that they are your most important asset by nurturing them and celebrating their achievement so they know their key value to the overall team."
(Old Hastings House, Residential care provider)

"As a small care home we all grow and develop together adapting to the different daily challenges that we learn from. We are 'family' and support and care for each other. A secure environment enables people to grow and develop their talents. We learn from our mistakes and have a 'no blame' culture. We trust each other and feel valued and supported."
(Chestnut Grove Rest House, Residential care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

3.4 Keeping your people

Retaining good staff is vital to the success of any organisation, but especially so in the delivery of adult social care services where continuity of personalised care and support is crucial for the people who need care and support. In this section we explore good practice in relation to staff retention.

Improving retention

We asked if organisations had tried various activities that could potentially positively impact upon staff retention.

The majority of employers had seen a positive impact on staff retention as a result of investing in learning and development, embedding the values of their organisation and celebrating the organisation's and individual achievements (94%, 92% and 86% respectively).

Involving colleagues in decision making, paying above local minimum wage rates, giving staff additional responsibilities and using CQC reports as a catalyst for change had also successfully impacted upon staff retention for seven-eight in ten employees.

Table 4: Activities that potentially impact upon staff retention (Base = 104-136 employees)

	Have tried this – It had a positive impact on staff retention	Have tried this – It had little/ no impact on staff retention	Haven't done this
Invested in learning and development	94%	1%	4%
Embedded the values of your organisation	92%	5%	5%
Celebrated your/ their achievements	86%	4%	10%
Involved all colleagues in decision making	81%	8%	11%
Paid staff above the minimum local rates	78%	10%	12%
Given staff additional responsibilities	72%	14%	14%
Used your CQC report/s as a catalyst for improvement	70%	9%	22%
Reviewed your workplace culture	66%	10%	23%
Offered opportunities to progress through different levels of apprenticeship	53%	3%	45%

Signed up to the Social Care Commitment	44%	12%	43%
Offered an *I Care…Ambassador* service	13%	8%	79%

We then asked if organisations offer various benefits and incentives to their employees and if so, whether they believe they make a difference to staff commitment.

Reflecting the emphasis on learning and development in previous sections it's not surprising to find that this topped the list of benefits that employers felt make a difference to staff commitment (87%). This was followed by offering flexible shift patterns (81%) or set shift patterns (63%); clearly different shift patterns suit different employers and types of employee so both can prove beneficial, depending on individual circumstances.

Beyond this there was less conclusive evidence of the impact of various other benefits as the take up rate by employers was much lower. In addition to the incentive we asked about, some employers said that they ran recognition schemes to recognise/reward staff achievements (3 mentions).

Table 5: Benefits and incentives
(Base = 109-132 employees)

	Offer this – Feel it makes a difference to staff commitment	**Offer this – Not sure it makes much difference to staff commitment**	**Don't offer this**
Investment in learning and development	87%	8%	5%
Flexible shift patterns	81%	11%	8%
Set shift patterns	63%	17%	20%
Free meal provision	30%	10%	60%
Negotiated discounts with local businesses	19%	9%	72%
Option to purchase or sell annual leave days	15%	3%	82%
Benefits platforms	15%	6%	79%
Child care vouchers	10%	11%	79%
Wheels 2 Work schemes	10%	7%	83%
Health cash plans	8%	6%	86%

Supporting employee well-being

Most employers (93%) conduct return to work interviews with employees that have been on sick leave and the majority conduct risk assessments for employees with a disability, those expecting a baby, those with a pre-existing health issue (85%). Less than half (46%) conduct occupational health assessments, either during employment or during periods of long-term sick leave.

Two-fifths of employers (37%) said that they hold social activities as part of their monitoring of the health and wellbeing of their staff and three in ten (30%) provide free eye checks for office based workers.

Four employers said that staff wellbeing was monitored through supervision sessions and four that they offer counselling or support groups for staff.

Staff satisfaction

Two-thirds of employers (64%) said that their organisation measured staff satisfaction amongst all employees at least every two years. A fifth (21%) said they measure it either through surveys sent to a sample of staff or via service specific evaluations or some other method. However, one in six employers (16%) said that their organisation did not do this formally. There were seven mentions of covering staff satisfaction through the regular supervision process and four mentions of covering it in team meetings.

For some (11 mentions) measuring staff satisfaction reinforces that they should continue doing things the way they currently do them as staff are happy, whilst for other conducting staff surveys has highlighted a need to listen to staff more and improve communications (19 mentions). Specifically, it is important to not only be seen to listen to the views of staff, but to act upon their suggestions, where possible (13 mentions) and ensure that they feel supported (6 mentions). Whilst pay is undoubtedly important to most staff, surveys often show that it's not the most important factor for them and that employers can make a difference by offering other benefits and rewards, such as flexible shift patters, recognition schemes and even providing social opportunities for staff to enjoy.

"When staff raise an issue, [it is important] to ensure that it is dealt with quickly and effectively to show we are committed to supporting them."
(DICE Healthcare Limited, Domiciliary care provider)

"Staff appreciate the opportunity to give their input and [know] that their opinions are listened to. It is most important that they know action has been taken where required."
(Highfield House Residential Care Home, Residential care provider)

"[We have learnt that] everyone would like more money but surprisingly it's not as important as being happy in their work. Support and development of people is held in higher regard."
(Claxton House, Atlanta Healthcare, Residential care provider)

When staff leave

Three in ten (30%) employers don't find out what their employees plan to do after leaving their organisation. Amongst those who do ask, their leavers were roughly split between those going to work for other social care employers (53%) and those going to work in other sectors (47%)[19].

When asked if they knew why employees had left their organisation employers who collected this information said the most common reasons given were:

- personal reasons (30%)
- career development (21%)
- retirement (12%)
- pay (11%)
- the nature of the work (6%).

Those who monitor the reasons for staff leaving are able to feed this into their business planning process (13 mentions) and to take a more proactive approach to dealing with issues raised by staff (9 mentions).

The most important thing a social care employer can do to keep its staff

Finally, whilst acknowledging that the best retention processes require a combination of many factors, we asked employers to describe the **most** important thing a social care employer can do to ensure that it retains the staff it employs. The results of this question are illustrated in the Word Cloud below:

[19] Using NMDS-SC data Skills for Care estimates that, for all employers, 66% of people leaving their jobs remain in adult social care: www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/The State of the adult social care sector and workforce

Respecting and valuing staff came top of the list with 41 mentions, followed by listening to staff and ensuring good lines of communication (33 mentions). Supporting staff, both in their roles but also increasingly in their personal lives too was mentioned 25 times, with flexibility in working hours (sometimes linked to responsibilities outside of work) being mentioned six times.

Ensuring staff are well trained and well paid (including benefits and incentives) remain important retention factors (23 mentions and 20 mentions respectively), but it is clear that other factors often play a more significant role and the importance of a good working environment which allows staff to grow cannot be underestimated (21 mentions). Employers were keen to note the value of rewarding and celebrating the achievements of their staff (12 mentions).

Below are some quotes from employers in which they describe, in their own words, what they feel is the most important thing that a social care employer can do to retain their staff.

"*We believe in valuing our staff…our staff know that their voices are heard and that all individuals in the organisation are striving to offer the best possible support for our clients. This pride in our clients, our achievements and our team promotes better staff engagement and more opportunities for the individuals we support."*
(Linton Support, Residential care provider)

"Respect and value staff as individuals and equals. Care for them and let them grow and develop at their own pace within a secure environment…[Provide] good working conditions and pay above the living wage."
(Chestnut Grove Rest Home, Residential care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

"Treat staff with respect… [We call our staff] 'care professionals' rather than care assistants, support workers, care workers etc. We recognise that the role is a professional role and encourage our staff to introduce themselves as care professionals in all situations."
(Bluebird Care Mendip, Domiciliary care provider)

"Ask for their opinions…say thank you for their efforts. Let them know they are important to the success of the organisation. Pay wages on time. Pay at least the accepted minimum wage. Note birthdays and anniversaries on the job."
(Shalom Care, Domiciliary care provider)

"Keep staff interested in the job by offering in-house or outside training. Keep their morale positive by reminding them of the good work they do."
(Lyndale Care Limited, Residential care provider)

"Provide an on-going and structured personal and career development plan which is reviewed on a regular basis. Ensure that training and development opportunities are available to support their on-going needs."
(Community care provider)

"Actively encourage autonomy within their role and promote a culture of gratitude for a job well done no matter how small…letting staff know their value to the organisation costs nothing and promotes an overall feeling of worth to employees."
(Transition Care, Domiciliary care provider)

"Support them and reward them. Share the successes with them they are vital in achieving them. Our CQC report was a way to show people what they do well and where we can achieve further."
(Claxton House, Atlanta Healthcare, Residential care provider)

"Give staff the tools to do the best possible job (sufficient numbers of colleagues, a supportive and warm team culture, clear and agreed aims, on-going learning and development opportunities, etc) and then acknowledge when they have achieved outstanding outcomes."
(Old Hastings House, Residential care provider)

3.5 Recruitment circumstances

Employers often tell us that their recruitment and retention issues are related to specific circumstances. We therefore took the opportunity to explore these issues with employers who overall have positive recruitment and retention rates.

The table below shows how many employers said that the various recruitment issues affected them, either positively or negatively. It has been ordered by the number of mentions of each issue, from most mentions to least mentions.

Table 6: Recruitment circumstances
(Base = 15-126 employees)

	Total number of mentions	Has a positive impact on us	Has a negative impact on us
Reputation	126	121	5
Working hours or patterns	118	103	15
Pay	111	69	42
Career progression opportunities	101	79	22
Competition from other social care providers	89	26	63
Local on-site leadership and management	88	86	2
Funding	78	25	53
Service user profile/s	73	64	9
Competition from other sectors	65	8	57
Organisation-wide leadership and management	58	50	8
Transport issues	55	8	47
Local labour market issues related to operating in an urban area	52	24	28
Local labour market issues related to operating in a rural area	45	15	30
National labour market issues	45	10	35
Seasonal issues (i.e. staff leaving because they don't want to work over holiday periods)	30	7	23
Local labour market issues related to operating in an area dependent upon tourism	15	5	10

Reputation (mentioned by 90% of employees[20])

Without a doubt, building a strong reputation as a provider of adult social care can play a huge role in successfully recruiting and retaining staff. The majority of employers mentioned this, with some saying that this is spread via word of mouth, whilst others promote it more formally through publicity, meetings with other professionals. Formal recognition of reputation is referenced, for some, by their CQC inspection ratings.

"We've built a reputation for being a fair and responsive employer who places the clients at the forefront of our practice."
(Linton Support, Residential care provider)

"We are fortunate to have a good reputation, gained over many years and evidenced by our CQC reports."
(Huntingdon Mencap, Community care provider)

"Anyone visiting the home always receives a warm welcome and cuppa and the home speaks for itself as a very care homely environment."
(Chestnut Grove Rest Home, Residential care provider, CQC rated 'Outstanding')

"We have been named as one of the top 10 homecare providers in the East Midlands and have a fantastic reputation that continues to grow through gaining reviews and feedback shared across a variety of platforms."
(Right at Home, Nottingham, Domiciliary care provider)

Working hours and patterns (mentioned by 84% of employees)

Adult social care is generally a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year service. This can present challenges to employers, especially managing shift patterns and covering unsociable hours. Employers told us that they key to managing this is to be as flexible as possible, realising that staff have responsibilities outside of work or wanting to support employee well-being, and that by working in this way staff tend to be more loyal and willing to go the extra mile when needed.

"We allow a certain amount of flexibility, helping out were possible.. [This] breeds loyalty and support from staff in 'crisis' times i.e. illness outbreaks." (Ashmore Nursing Home, Residential care provider)

[20] Total number of respondents to the survey was 140

"Staff send us their availability and times they wish to work and we try to accommodate this as much as we can. We also have regular shift patterns so everyone knows what they are doing one month ahead."
(Domiciliary care provider)

"Although the service delivered is 24/7 we recognise that staff members need to have a good work/life balance so we negotiate shift patterns to fit around outside commitments where possible and practicable."
(Orchard Vale Trust, Residential care provider)

Pay (mentioned by 79% of employees)

Whilst there's evidence that many other factors influence recruitment and retention there's no getting away from the fact that, for some employees, pay will influence their decision to join, and stay with, a social care employer. Many employers reported that they pay slightly above the National Living Wage, with some also offering further incentives for working unsociable hours or when staff obtain higher qualifications. **NB:** Local pay levels and benchmarks can be obtained via the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC).[21]

Career progression opportunities (mentioned by 72% of employees)

Promoting career development opportunities that exist within the sector contributes to improving perceptions of working in adult social care as well as encouraging staff retention. The most successful employers are likely to be those who invest in their staff and enable them to develop their talent and skills. This can be challenging in smaller organisations where opportunities are fewer, but sometimes employers have to accept that staff will grow with them up to a certain point, and then move on. Where employees remain within the adult social care sector their enhanced skills will, of course, continue to be beneficial.

"We believe in training our staff to a very high standard and in assisting them to achieve their personal development goals."
(Residential care provider)

"We are happy to see people move onto a better paid job with promotion – It's is a fact of life we can live with and we take pride that carers are leaving with experience and training that we have provided."
(Domiciliary care provider)

[21] See www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/reportengine/dashboard.aspx

Competition from other social care providers (mentioned by 64% of employees)

Competition from other social care providers can be difficult for some, especially if the competitor can offer higher rates of pay, but employers suggested that there are other ways of attracting and retaining staff, including having a good reputation, offering benefits and rewards (including training) in addition to salaries, creating a positive working environment.

"There is competition but often our reputation as a good local provider of support means we are not concerned about competition in terms of staffing. Many competitors offer higher salary but this has not impacted on our staffing."
(Mind in Furness, Community care provider)

"They will always be able to pay more but this is offset by good working conditions and our service users are not very challenging."
(Residential care provider)

"[We] offer a positive culture and work environment where staff are valued and given the resources they need to deliver excellent care."
(Embrace Quality Care, Domiciliary care provider)

Local on-site leadership and management (mentioned by 63% of employees) and organisation-wide leadership and management (mentioned by 41% of employees)

Employers gave a clear message about the importance of having on-site, visible and approachable leaders and managers. Not only can they model the core values of the organisation, but they can inspire others by being hands-on and demonstrating good practice.

"Visible presence, lead from the front, positive role modelling of desired values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours."
(Embrace Quality Care, Domiciliary care provider)

"Management team are very much part of the 'team'. They are very visible and work alongside all levels of staff."
(Ashmore Nursing Home, Residential care provider)

Additionally employers suggested that the role of leaders and managers in adult social care should not be under estimated. They can act as positive role models, demonstrating the organisation's core values in all they do, and enhance the reputation of the organisation, both internally and externally.

"We are led by a Chief Executive and Board who are visible and proactive – this ensures all staff feel that they are part of something bigger and that we all work as one team."
(Mind in Furness, Community care provider)

"We have focused a lot on leadership and management with a programme running to support the managers at all levels to enhance their skill set to lead their local teams."
(Independence Matters, Day care provider)

Funding (mentioned by 56% of employees)

Funding cuts have been felt across the sector, so it's important for employers to be proactive and to ensure that they're accessing everything that they're entitled to, whether this be through charitable income, government funding, forming partnerships with others to bid for funding, accessing Skills for Care funding (such as the Workforce Development Fund[22]) or taking advantage of free training and development opportunities for staff.

"Social Care funding has been hit hard so we are having to be as creative and innovative with our funds as possible, ensuring we deliver the best service possible to our client group. We do actively fundraise (London Marathon and an annual golf event)."
(Orchard Vale Trust, Residential care provider)

Service user profile/s (mentioned by 52% of employees)

Where organisation's support people with challenging behaviour it can be difficult to recruit staff, even though this client group can be very rewarding to work with. However, employers more often talked about the attraction of working with specific client groups. Building strong, professional relationships between staff and people who need care and support is seen to be the key to happier, more dedicated and loyal employees.

[22] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/WDF

"We speak of our clients with dignity, respect and compassion and are proud of their accomplishments. Our clients are not considered a 'challenge' to recruitment and retention, rather they are the reason we are here."
(Linton Support, Residential care provider)

"We create and update wonderful care plans and service user profiles that tell a story and capture the attention of our employees, who can really get to know service users and build a great relationship based on the information provided."
(Right at Home, Nottingham, Domiciliary care provider)

Competition from other sectors (mentioned by 46% of employees)

Competition from other sectors can be difficult to overcome, especially if they can offer higher rates of pay of more sociable working hours. However, employers suggested that pay isn't always the most important factor for (potential) employees, although offering other incentives and rewards can help to attract and retain staff. Others focus on the positive aspects of care based roles and the organisation's reputation as a good employer, as well as career development opportunities, even if this means staff will eventually leave to realise their career goals.

"[We have] increased advertising about our reputation and the service/benefits we offer."
(Residential care provider)

"[We have] promoted the home as a career development opportunity towards other sectors, as training will contribute. Career development is an unavoidable attraction away from the home."
(Proctor House, Residential care provider)

Transport issues (mentioned by 39% of employees)

Transport, both public and private, can be problematic for social care employers. If staff are reliant on public transport then this can affect the hours that they're available for work and the places that they're able to get to. In these cases employers told us that they encourage car sharing or provide a driver or transport during unsociable hours. Others have specified that being a car driver is essential to the role. Those who can drive might be faced with the cost of parking to attend client visits or struggle with traffic in urban areas, as well as the high cost of fuel.

"We are responsive to transport problems which sometimes involve changing visits or switching to two carer calls."
(Allcare Shropshire Limited, Domiciliary care provider)

"We advise personal care assistants how to complete the mileage forms for Inland Revenue for rebate for travel costing."
(Greek and Greek Cypriot Community of Enfield, Domiciliary care provider)

Issues relating to operating in an urban area (mentioned by 37% of employees) and issues relating to operating in a rural area (mentioned by 32% of employees)

Operating in an urban area often has advantages for employers as there's typically a wider pool of potential employees to recruit from, compared with those operating in rural areas, and staff are able to utilise public transport links to travel more easily between locations if they cannot drive. However, employers may also face increased competition from other sectors or may find that people are being priced out of the housing market, particularly in more central areas; factors which are beyond their control.

Employers suggested that this can be mitigated to some extent by being creative with advertising. Recommendations included casting the net wide, encouraging people with the right values and behaviours that they can "mould" (not necessarily experienced care workers) and making use of social media. Adverts should include the advantages of working in adult social care and for the particular employer.

Operating in a rural area can also pose challenges for employers in relation to the number of people available to recruit and also in relation to logistical issues such as availability of public transport and travel times between visits. Employers suggested that offering good mileage rates can be beneficial for some staff, as can ensuring that staff are paid for the time they are travelling.

"[We] pay all travel time [and aim to] keep people working in the area where they live."
(Radis Community Care, Domiciliary Care provider)

"Staff work a set shift (early or late) so travel time between patients is incorporated into the working day therefore paid at the same rate as care visits."
(Embrace Quality Care, Domiciliary care provider)

National labour market issues (mentioned by 32% of employees)

Recruiting into adult social care can be hampered by a lack of awareness of the breadth of opportunities available (such as different employers, settings, job roles and career opportunities) and because potential candidates discount themselves if they don't have existing experience.

Employers need to build on initiatives in the adult social care recruitment and retention strategy 2014-2017 such as *I Care…Ambassadors*, sector based work academies and engaging with local Jobcentre Plus sector specific initiatives, careers events and work hard in their local area to dispel the myths and promote the positive aspects of the roles available, as well as making all efforts to ensure that pay and rewards are as competitive as possible.

"Social care is not seen as an attractive industry to work in nationally so we promote just the opposite. Stating it can be a very fulfilling industry, it's more than just a job. We try and keep our job adverts interesting to attract future candidates."
(Orchard Vale Trust, Domiciliary care provider)

Seasonal issues (mentioned by 21% of employees)

The realities of adult social care are that most roles are required around the clock and throughout the year. This requires an element of shift working or flexible working patterns and whilst this might not be desirable to everyone, employers suggested that the best way to deal with this is to tackle it head on and ensure that new employees are aware of the situation when they are recruited and, where possible, to offer some flexibility.

"We are open and honest about our expectations (we are open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day). Over the Christmas period, we have asked staff to opt in to the hours they want to work and then we've accommodated as much of this as possible and discussed openly where we've not been able to agree to everyone's requests."
(Linton Support, Residential care provider)

Issues relating to operating in an area dependent upon tourism (mentioned by 11% of employees)

It can be difficult to recruit and retain staff if you operate in an area that is traditionally dependent upon tourism for its economy. Employers suggested that recruitment efforts need to be well targeted, sell the advantages of the employer, as well as the surrounding area and that pay and rewards need to be competitive.

4. Key findings from the research with individual employers

4.1 Recruiting personal assistants

Attracting and recruiting people with the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work as personal assistants (PAs) is vital. In this section we explore the recruitment experiences of individual employers.

45% of individual employers reported having no problems recruiting PAs to work for them. However, 27% said they had 'some' difficulty and 28% said they did not find recruiting PAs easy.

Those who had not experienced problems recruiting PAs to work for them were asked what they would recommend that others could do to replicate their success.

The most commonly cited 'tip' was to employ someone already known to you, whether that be a family member, a friend, neighbour, someone you know through school, work or the local community or someone who has previously worked for you via an agency or other provider (96 mentions). Individual employers who recommended this said they felt that these people would have a better understanding of their specific needs, that they were flexible about the hours required and that they felt more comfortable around people that they knew.

"I employ my family as my carers. They understand my health and abilities and have a vested interest in keeping me safe and well."

"Use family members - less intrusive for me and others living with me."

"I employ PAs who have previously worked with my daughter in a school setting who already know her and have an understanding of her complex medical needs."

The second most popular 'tip' was to seek recommendations from others (39 mentions). There was a sense that asking others to vouch for a PA gives some reassurance that they are right for the role.

"I have found people through word of the month. I think that if you are able to do that it is less stressful and people often only recommend the better people."

"Ask other people who use PAs to recommend."

Linked to this was seeking the advice or support of others during the recruitment process (24 mentions). Sources of help ranged from direct payment support organisations (DPSOs), social services, social workers and agencies employing care staff.

Ensuring that you're seen to be a good employer in order to encourage people to want to work for you was another top 'tip' (35 mentions). Individual employers spoke about being approachable, friendly, respectful and flexible and about developing close working relationships with their PAs which were of mutual benefit to both parties.

"Be easy to get on with, don't be a horrible person to be looked after… employ carers that are similar to you personality wise."

"Have open and frank discussions with [PAs]. Even though you have a role of employer, it's important that where possible you develop a close friendship – it makes a usually stressful experience easier."

Employing someone who's the right 'fit' for you (whether that be according to their values, attitude, personality or chemistry or simply based on your gut instinct) was mentioned more often than employing someone with previous care experience (25 mentions compared with 10 mentions).

"Employ someone you'll get along with."

"Don't just look for someone with care experience look for someone who communicates well."

Individual employers spoke about the importance of being clear about your needs up front in order to help select a PA who will be suited to your vacancy (20 mentions).

"Ensure you know exactly what you are looking for and advertise accordingly so there are no surprises on either side."

"Know what support you want, be honest to yourself and PA with what you need from the role. Be realistic and honest from the beginning."

Other tips offered were to think about different methods of advertising your vacancies - DPSOs, cards in newsagent windows, adverts in local newspapers and Facebook were all suggested – (9 mentions), to interview in a relaxed manner that enables you to see how the person reacts in more 'normal' circumstances (4 mentions), following this up with background/reference checks (5 mentions) and to be flexible as far as possible (5 mentions).

We asked those who experienced some or a lot of difficulty recruiting PAs to identify ways that the issues they've encountered could be overcome.

Some individual employers took the opportunity to outline the nature of the difficulties they'd experienced. Constraints associated with funding and pay topped this list (63 mentions) with frustration expressed about low pay rates putting off better qualified staff and staff best suited to meet complex needs.

"Although they are expected to [undertake] complex roles…it is a constant fight to get money for pay rises."

"The job itself needs to merit more respect in society and pay better, it's not offering a career."

For many individual employers issues relating to pay were closely linked to the hours that they need a PA (55 mentions). For those only requiring a few hours support each day (possibly at unsociable times) it can be difficult to find people willing and able to take on the work.

"As it's only a few hours per week it's difficult for people to commit especially if it's a 2nd job and they are taxed on the small amount they would earn."

"The lack of hours does not give an incentive for employees to apply when a vacancy is available."

"I think it's the hours split between morning and evening shift – [they need to leave] home for two hours when they could be with their families."

The other main difficulty noted is related to finding suitable staff to meet your needs (46 mentions), either because you have specific care or medical needs, because you want a PA of a particular gender or because you are looking for someone with specific qualities.

“It’s very hard to find the right kind of person with the right approach, character and awareness of my wife's needs."

“It was very difficult initially to find someone with the right skills and attitude to cater for my needs.”

Other difficulties noted were living in places that are difficult for PAs to get to (10 mentions), cultural or language barriers (5 mentions) and bureaucracy (2 mentions).

Suggestions made by individual employers for overcoming some of these difficulties centred on having more support. 86 people spoke about needing more advice or support with advertising and recruiting.

“More support and advice on how to successfully recruit staff when you are a new recipient of direct payments.”

“I found the whole process very stressful, time consuming and would have benefitted from the correct information and support.”

Linked to this, 56 individual employers raised the issue about the need for a local register, network, database or bank of PAs who had already been checked and vetted.

“A simplified register of available PAs in my area, making the process of finding someone suitable a lot less stressful and easier.”

“Access to a database/pool of available PA's with all details on experience, qualifications for us to contact re: employment.”

Reiterating the experiences of those who have had few problems recruiting PAs, 26 individual employers that had experienced problems suggested that employing people known to them could be a potential solution.

Other suggestions relating to overcoming recruitment issues included a greater availability of training and of PAs being willing to undertake training (12 mentions) and a general suggestion that the role of PA needs to be more widely publicised so that people are aware of it as a career option (9 mentions).

4.2 Skills and experience

In this section we explore individual employer's views on the skills and experiences of PAs.

We asked individual employers how they ensure that the PAs they recruit have the right skills and experience to meet their needs. 70% said that they established this during the interview process. 41% continue to review performance regularly after employment commences. 32% stipulate the qualifications they require PAs to have at the application stage and 17% send PAs on training courses once employed.

Other ways that individual employers said that they ensure the PAs they recruit have the right skills and experience included:

- employing someone known to you[23] - usually this means a friend/family member, but could be someone known through school / work / etc. (66 mentions)
- providing ongoing training 'on the job' (27 mentions)
- focussing on finding people who 'feel right' or who have the right 'soft skills' as opposed to qualifications (26 mentions) which suggests a values based approach to recruitment
- employing someone with prior care experience (21 mentions)
- ensuring regular lines of communication are established to review performance and training needs (18 mentions)
- ensuring that you have a comprehensive interview process (possibly including other family members) and build in a trial period/induction (16 mentions)
- ensuring they are clear about your needs – this is particularly important if the needs are related to a specific/unusual condition (12 mentions)
- taking recommendations from others (11 mentions)
- checking CV details, references and conducting DBS checks (4 mentions).

[23] It's likely that individual employers who prioritise employing people known to them do so because they possess the values and behaviours they desire over and above their specific skills and qualifications

4.3 Retaining personal assistants

Retaining good staff is cost effective and is vital to ensuring continuity and quality of care and support. In this section we explore the retention experiences of individual employers.

75% of individual employers reported having no problems retaining the PAs that work for them. However, 19% said they had 'some' difficulty and 6% said they did not find retaining PAs easy.

Those who hadn't experienced problems retaining PAs to work for them were asked what they would recommend that others could do to replicate their success.

For some the crux of retaining staff is getting the recruitment process right in the first place (42 mentions). Individual employers spoke about the benefits of taking time to get the right people in place. Related to this was the reiteration of the need to be clear about your needs from the start (27 mentions) and, for many, employing people that you already know (56 mentions).

The remainder of the suggestions for successfully retaining staff all fall under the umbrella term of 'being a good employer':

- ensure that you have good lines of communication (59 mentions)
- treat your PAs with respect (58 mentions)
- be flexible (49 mentions)
- create a positive working relationship (39 mentions)
- pay well and on time (26 mentions)
- create a pleasant working environment (12 mentions)
- show your PAs that you appreciate them (12 mentions) and value your staff (8 mentions)
- be supportive of your staff (9 mentions).

"Ultimately you want happy staff, so be reasonable, be kind, be flexible.. (for example, to calculate a start time I asked my PA to take her son to school then come to work - how simple is that?)."

"I have tried really hard to make working with me and in and around my home a pleasant environment and have maintained a simple working relationship with both [PAs]. We don't have contact outside of work, not Facebook etc. I always thank them before they leave for their help and apologise if I've been short at any point with frustration."

"Pay a living wage. Be accurate and on time with payments. Treat people as individuals allow them to use their initiative and work in their own way as long as the client is well looked after. Minimise bureaucracy."

"Treat PAs well. Let them enjoy [your] days out…They should not be out of pocket working as a PA. Make the job interesting. Listen to their suggestions and be lenient."

"Value them. Listen to their opinions. Make them feel part of the family. Get to know them. Reward their loyalty."

Interestingly individual employers had mixed views about the nature of the relationship with their PA: 14 mentioned that it was important to maintain a professional working relationship with 15 mentioned that they treat their PA as a friend or one of the family.

"Maintain a professional relationship [with] clearly defined boundaries. Be respectful of employees whilst also working within terms and conditions of the codes of conduct."

"Our carers have become part of the family rather than being regarded simply as employees."

We asked those who experienced some or a lot of difficulty retaining PAs to identify ways that the issues they've encountered could be overcome.

As when we asked about recruitment, some individual employers took the opportunity to outline the nature of the difficulties they'd experienced. Constraints associated with funding and pay again topped this list (44 mentions), along with the number of hours that people generally need a PA for (22 mentions). These two things combined can restrict the pool of people willing to take on the role.

"Pay more. Have more hours and stop cutting people's hours. There's no security in the job [because] at your next review your hours on payable amount could be reviewed."

Beyond increasing pay and hours there were very few suggestions made by individual employers for overcoming difficulties with retaining staff. Instead they spoke about the need for a greater supply of suitable PAs (26 mentions) and the need for some kind of PA register or database (7 mentions). There was a sense amongst this group that being a PA wasn't seen as a career choice and that the

workforce was transient because it was viewed as a ‘stop gap’ (i.e. for students during their studies).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Adult social care employers

This research sought employer-led solutions to the challenges of attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining staff. The contributions have come from a wide range of employers representing differing service settings, sizes and geographical locations; the common thread between them was that they have a low staff turnover rate (less than 10%). The majority of (eligible) employers who took part in the research have also been rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Employers painted a clear picture in which there is no 'one size fits all', 'quick win' solution to the challenges faced by the sector. Instead they spoke about adopting a holistic approach, carefully balancing a range of key 'ingredients' that positively impact upon their attempts to attract, recruit, develop and retain the best people to work for them, and in turn, enable them to deliver high quality, person-centred, professional care and support services. And the good news is that the experiences they shared showed that the things that make a difference, such as an emphasis on recruiting for values and behaviours and a strong emphasis on developing a positive workplace culture, that recognises, supports and celebrates the strengths of their workforce, often cost very little to implement.

Individual employers

For individual employers the challenges are related to finding suitable people who are willing to undertake the role of PA, often for relatively low pay and few hours. Greater clarity about the role and raising the profile of the variety of job roles it entails it would be helpful, along with increased access to PA registers or databases.

In the light of this report, Skills for Care will continue to shape its offer of support to employers, to disseminate examples of good practice and 'top tips' from employers of all kinds and to use this information to refine future work.

5.2 Recommendations

Adult social care employers

The key messages that we hope employers will take from this research are:

1. The importance of making use of data collected when planning recruitment activities to ensure that the process is proactive and cost effective.

   When collecting data and making use of it for planning recruitment activities you need to make sure you have a good understanding of how you're going to use the data and what the rules are around how you store and use that data. Our Information sharing for social care employers guide can help you understand what you need to do[24].

2. The collective responsibility to improve the image of the sector as a good place to work in order to attract more people to consider applying for vacancies.

   The Adult social care workforce: Recruitment and retention strategy 2014-2017[25] has within its priorities, activities that will help:
   - target and attract a diverse range of new talent, address misconceptions about the sector and better promote the rewarding career opportunities it offers to ensure care is a career of choice
   - recruit more people into the sector with the right values and skills
   - raise retention levels and reduce vacancy rates.

3. The benefit of adopting a values based approach to recruitment and taking a more holistic approach to the process (such as involving people who need care and support and their families/advocate or offering taster sessions).

   For further information and support relating to values based recruitment please refer to the values and behaviours recruitment toolkit[26].

[24] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Digital-working/Information-sharing-for-social-care-employers.pdf
[25] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/RandRstrategy
[26] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/valuesandbehaviours

4. The value of investing in learning and develop to ensure that staff stay and grown with your organisation.

   For further information and support relating to learning and development please refer to the learning and development[27] section of our website, including information about apprenticeships, qualifications and manager induction standards.

5. The importance of developing a positive working culture that values and listens to staff.

   For further information and support relating to developing a positive workplace culture please refer to our Developing a positive workplace culture toolkit[28].

Individual employers

The key messages that we hope individual employers will take from this research are:

1. The value of recruiting people that you know and who understand your needs or, where this is not possible or desirable, the benefit of seeking recommendations from others about the suitability of potential candidates.
2. Getting recruitment right goes a long way towards creating a positive working relationship, built on mutual trust and respect and a clear understanding of what the role entails.
3. Values and behaviours based recruitment is generally more effective that recruitment solely focussed on qualifications or past experience.
4. Being a 'good employer' means ensuring you have open communication, respect, flexibility and a positive working relationship.
5. The desire for improved access to PA registers or databases is great and more pressure needs to be put on local authorities and CCGs (for PHB holders) to see this happen.

Skills for Care will continue to develop further resources to support these findings over the coming year.

[27] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learning
[28] www.skillsforcare.org.uk/culture

6. Appendix

6.1 Analysis of questions only asked of 'parent' and Local Authority respondents in the online employer survey

Owing to the low response rates amongst these groups (13 from 'parent' organisations and eight from Local Authorities) we've extracted the questions that were only asked in their versions of the online employer survey and have reported them below. Where they were asked the same questions as in the 'standalone' version of the survey their answers are included in the main body of the report.

Attracting more people

It would appear that in Local Authorities and 'parent' organisations recruitment is typically co-ordinated centrally, either entirely by the 'head office' or locally using corporately designed tools. The type of information that is monitored includes spend on agency workers, applications received from specific sources, monitoring data (disability, ethnicity, etc.), advertising costs and shortlisting and selection data. The monitoring data is helpful to determine where to advertise vacancies in the future.

Developing talent and skills

It would appear that in Local Authorities and 'parent' organisations recruitment is typically co-ordinated centrally, either entirely by the 'head office' or locally using corporately designed tools. Most then monitor recruitment centrally, using staff feedback, supervision meetings, staff satisfaction surveys and staff progressions through recognised career pathways. This information is used amongst managers to develop and strengthen future planning activities and spend.

Keeping your people

It would appear that in Local Authorities and 'parent' organisations retention is typically co-ordinated centrally, either entirely by the 'head office' or locally using corporately designed tools. Recruitment is then monitored centrally, using vacancy and turnover rates, absence and sickness rates, length of time in job role, progression and job changes and complaints, compliments and suggestions. The data is collected via supervision and appraisals, exit interviews, performance management reporting and staff surveys.

Two-thirds of these employers are also using their National Minimum Dataset for Social Care reporting facilities. This information is used amongst managers and workforce development colleagues to develop and strengthen future planning activities and spend.

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone: 0113 245 1716
Email: info@skillsforcare.org.uk
Web: www.skillsforcare.org.uk