

# Seeing potential

## Leeds City Council Step into Care



This series of case studies profiles how locally-based programmes can support people from non-traditional backgrounds into the care profession, from the perspectives of the programme operators, local care employers, and the candidates themselves.

These four case studies profile Leeds City Council's Step into Care Programme, which helped Devon Watson and the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board become an ideal match. In this case study, we hear from Home Manager Gillian Lee about how the Step into Care programme supported her to recruit staff with the right values.

### Gillian Lee

Gillian Lee is the Home Manager of Leeds Jewish Welfare Board's (LJWB) Montague Burton House. She has had the pleasure of working with Leeds City Council (LCC) through the Step into Care programme, and with Devon, their first ever and longest standing Step into Care graduate.

#### The case for change

Before working with LCC and Step into Care, Gillian said she used to recruit new staff using a traditional application and interview process. She highlighted how challenging it could be, including having to find significant time for administration, vetting, and carrying out interviews. Once someone made it to the interview stage, Gillian also said: "Candidates often had very different expectations about what working in care involved."

As such, Gillian found all too often that newly appointed candidates would leave the role when the reality did not match their expectations.

#### How Step into Care works

To tackle this, the Step into Care programme places prospective candidates on a two-week work experience placement so they can see first-hand what the role involves. Candidates also complete two weeks of training before starting the role, which Gillian feels gives participating care providers the confidence that the individuals who are placed at the home have the basic skills they need.

When she first started working with Step into Care, Gillian was concerned the programme was going to be difficult and time-consuming. But having been convinced to give it a try, she hasn't looked back.



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Firstly, Gillian said the extensive values-based assessment process that LCC undertakes means that candidates move into a care role for the right reasons and with the best intentions. This is vital, because while caring is a rewarding career, it can be very challenging. Step into Care includes an eight page '[Question of Care](#)' profile, a case study-based assessment covering a hypothetical situation on the job and a values-based interview. Through this experience, Gillian has discovered just how important a values-driven recruitment process is, and how it really helps to identify staff who will be successful in care.

Devon excelled throughout this process, passing his assessments, clearly exhibiting all the qualities needed for a role in care and being posted at the Montague Burton House for his placement. It was clear to Gillian and the staff who encountered him that he was a "kind and caring person". Devon had previous personal experience of providing care, as well as volunteering experience. His performance during the programme only proved this; he had developed strong relationships with the people he supported and his colleagues. He is now an ambassador for the programme and speaks to new entrants about to go through the Step into Care programme.



Gillian finds that the two-week placement process provides: "A great opportunity to ensure candidates are engaging and communicating well, and completing documentation correctly". The programme is also designed so that employers can look at wider characteristics, like whether a candidate is punctual or friendly.

All the candidates that Gillian has worked with as part of the Step into Care programme have been happy to learn and take on board her advice and feedback. She also worked hard to foster open and honest relationships with candidates, so they were comfortable to ask for help when needed.

The programme was created this way because LCC found that where applicants don't have this level of support, it is more likely that the role would soon become vacant again. As such, Step into Care now gives each candidate a mentor to work alongside in the home. The mentor can help with any challenges, provides coaching, and makes sure the candidate has the support they need to succeed. Gillian finds this invaluable stating: "If something's not going right either from an employer point of view, or from the individual's point of view, there is a key link to identifying and resolving any issues quickly."



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## Success for all

Step into Care has led to Montague Burton House gaining several new and highly regarded care workers, who may never have found the care sector on their own. The long-term benefits of the programme can't be overstated by Gillian. She sees the whole experience as an opportunity to help potential care workers feel positive about the organisation and the sector, to build a strong care skills foundation, and develop effective relationships that help them succeed in their careers. Asked about her advice to other care homes considering getting involved in the scheme, she says: "Definitely give it a try. It's so much better. You don't use as much time. The standard of candidate is better to come from there because they're already kind of shortlisted and they've done that work for you."

### Top tips for home managers participating in any similar programmes



Take advantage of similar programmes in your area. The programme is a great way of employing people, particularly as you work alongside them first before offering them a permanent role.



Use a values-based recruitment process – it means providers access the right staff with the right outlook, and above all, residents get the care they need and deserve.



Give candidates an induction booklet that they can fill in with their supervisors, to see if the role lines up with what they expected and to track their progress.