

Supporting those furthest from the job market into social care roles

Connexus

Connexus decided to get involved with Association for Care Training (ACT), who were running a programme to support people who face barriers getting into work, to do training and start a career in social care.

Connexus is made up of the Herefordshire Housing Group and Shropshire Housing Group. They deliver housing and care and support services in Herefordshire.

Part of their group includes the 'Independence Trust' which provides a range of services to support people's emotional and physical wellbeing, for example telecare through their CareLine, healthy living, weight management and exercise, help getting back into work and housing support services.

Independence Trust use a range of promotional channels to recruit, including social media, jobs fairs and newspapers. However their vacancies can be advertised for a long time with little response and they're facing challenges with their recruitment and retention. They decided to work with ACT to tackle these challenges.

The ACT programme

ACT worked in partnership with Safe and Settled Ltd to support people in Herefordshire from 'groups' that are under-represented in the adult social care workforce, including both young (18-24 year olds) and older people (over 50's) who have been out of work or training for over 12 months, to complete the Level 1 Award in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care over a 12 week placement.

They worked with Jobcentre Plus and their local authority to find potential candidates. They matched candidates with local employers who offered work trials, interviews and job offers.

The aim was to support candidates into full time employment and encourage employers to think differently about their recruitment.

Stacey Gardener, Care and Support Manager with Connexus, told us:

The aim of us being a part of the ACT project was to hopefully attract potential candidates with the right values and behaviours, through our advertising campaigns.

“There’s also an element of supporting the community and those falling into groups of ‘unemployed individuals’ who simply need to be given the right support to access employment opportunities.”



We understand that some individuals lack the experience and skills to apply directly for a job vacancy as they may not have the qualifications or experience to be shortlisted for an interview.



What they did

The Independence Trust offered learners work experience in their supported living scheme.

The learners were buddied up with experienced care workers who had similar personalities and learning styles, to mentor them through the placement. They were given the opportunity to experience different social care services, and meet with people who access care and support.

Lance was one of the learners who did work experience with Independence Trust. After leaving school, he worked in different customer facing roles before becoming an informal carer for his parents (his Mum had age-related illnesses and his Dad experienced mental ill-health) and his nephew who had PTSD and possible autism. Lance himself also experiences anxiety which can affect his day to day life.

After been unemployed for six years, he started volunteering in a quiet gym, supporting the manager (who was visually impaired) to run the service. This built his confidence and he decided to look for employment again.

His past experience meant that Lance felt he had some of the right experience, skills and values to work in social care. He was referred to ACT by HVOSS/ Talent Match scheme, and completed the programme including work experience with Hereford Housing (one of Independence Trust’s services).

Throughout his placement he worked at different services including:

- a supported living service for people with additional needs
- a small service for people with mental ill-health, learning disabilities and physical support needs
- a lifestyle centre
- working in the community.

As part of the programme he’s also done other training such as dementia awareness, de-escalation and diffusion, and nutrition and hydration.

He feels that being part of this project, and particularly the work experience, has increased his confidence and he better understands the different opportunities to work in social care. He now feels more determined than ever to get a role in the sector and has applied for a role with Connexus following his work experience.

He said: **“This project has given me the first stepping stone into my long term career aspirations. I’ve overcome my own challenges with anxiety in terms of going to work placement, and actually arranged some of them myself.”**

What they learnt

The Independence Trust has learned a lot about their recruitment practices as a result of been involved in this project. They’ve started to think differently and more innovatively about how they attract and recruit new staff.

In particular they realised that some of the questions and requirements in their application process were restricting lots of people, who might have the right values to work in care, from applying.

They said: **“The overall lesson of the being involved and supporting the programme was that the participants had lots of strengths that weren’t necessarily from experiences of working in paid employment - vital skills that had been learnt from looking after family members which they didn’t value to put on a formal application form.”**

It also motivated existing staff and changed their way of thinking.

can be hard to find employment if you're not "given a chance" to gain some experience in the care sector."

They said: "The care and support team were incredibly supportive of the project and the individual learners, most recognising that it

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www.skillsforcare.org.uk/seeingpotential

Skills for Care recommends

[Finding and keeping workers](#)

This online toolkit has practical tips and resources to help you find and keep workers with the right values.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers

[Values-based recruitment](#)

Taking this approach can help you get the right people to work in your organisation, and save time and resources in recruiting the wrong people.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/values

[I Care...Ambassadors](#)

Nominate your staff to be ambassadors and deliver careers activities to inspire more people to work in adult social care.

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