

Transforming Services Together

Research into perceptions of the social care sector in East London

February 2017

Transforming Services Together did research to explore what people in East London thought about working in social care, to inform future recruitment campaigns into the sector.

The research identified some of the biggest barriers to recruitment into the sector, and made recommendations to address them. You can read the full research report at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/careersresearch.

What is Transforming Services Together?

Transforming Services Together is a programme that wants to reconfigure the local health and social care economy in the London boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, and is represented by local authority, NHS clinical commissioning groups, NHS acute, community and mental health trusts.

One of their priorities is to deliver a health and social care workforce that meets local needs both now and in the future, which includes recruiting and retaining the right staff in light of significant workforce challenges, including recruitment shortfalls, high turnover and reliance on agency staff in many professional roles, such as nursing, allied health professions and social work.

Background to the research

Local anecdotal intelligence suggested that employers in East London often struggle to attract people from outside the region, and a lot of young people and adults don't understand what social care is, the range of careers within the sector, or who provides it. And those that do wish to explore a care role are often not aware of the learning pathways, routes to employment e.g. through volunteering and apprenticeships or the breadth of organisations offering jobs within the sector.

Transforming Services Together had recently done research into local attitudes to health care careers and wanted to complement this with social care intelligence.

Social care has different challenges and a very different workforce demographic to health care, for example a larger and older workforce, fewer young people entering the sector, high turnover, a perceived lack of career progression and lower pay.

They wanted to test anecdotal assumptions that social care was less attractive than health care and understand young people and adults' perceptions of the sector, how this impacted on recruitment, attitudes to social worker and care worker careers (where there are particular recruitment challenges), attitudes to apprenticeships and understanding of the job roles available.

They hoped to bring this research together to gain a more rounded view of the entire social care and health sector to ensure that future recruitment and retention initiatives were developed in line with local need and aspiration.

This research was funded, with thanks, through Health Education England – North, Central East London Region.

What they did: the methodology

Here, they told us what they did and what they learnt.

“We did research using a variety of methods and gathered responses from 210 participants. The research methods consisted of:

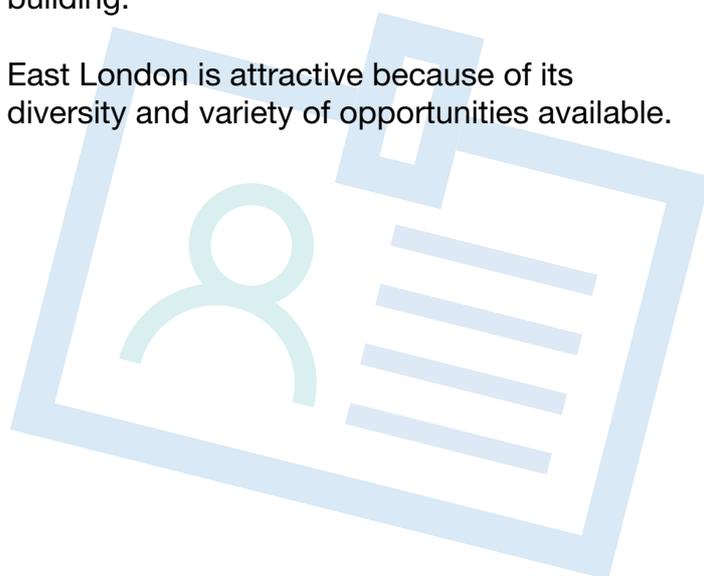
- Focus groups with 75 year 12 health and social care students in three local schools and colleges. These explored why young people choose to do a health and social care course, their attitudes to working in East London, their reactions to working in different roles, their attitudes to work placements, and where they would go for more information.
- A paper survey with local school and college learners on a level 2 or 3 health and social care course, resulting in 102 responses. The survey asked similar questions to the focus groups above.
- A short paper survey with year 9 pupils at a local school, resulting in 20 responses. This asked if they were interested in careers in health and social care and where they would go for careers advice and support.
- A survey of newly employed care workers, resulting in 18 responses. This asked new workers why they had applied for their current job, what they saw as the benefits and least attractive aspects of working in a social care role, what they considered as their next steps, what information they needed to help them and what attracted them to working in East London.

- A focus group with 15 Job Centre Plus employment advisors and work coaches, to explore the key challenges they face when recruiting to care roles and what they needed to address this. “

What they found out

“Through the focus groups and survey research with young people and adults, we found that:

1. There are not enough work experience opportunities for young people to find out more about the variety of work involved in social care.
2. Young people (even when on health and social care courses) have very limited knowledge of the roles available, what they involve and the entry requirements.
3. Teachers and careers advisors are very influential but may not be linked enough to existing resources, employers or local opportunities.
4. Health care and child care roles are better known than social care.
5. Information about local careers in care is not easily available.
6. Many people are put off working in health and social care because of pay and conditions.
7. Health and social care roles aren't suitable for everyone.
8. Routes into and through the sector need building.
9. East London is attractive because of its diversity and variety of opportunities available.



We made recommendations to address these findings and these are currently being considered by the Transforming Services Together project team.

The recommendations include:

- building closer relationships with teachers and careers advisors so they have access to good information about careers and local opportunities
- strengthening links with local employers to offer work experience placements
- targeted work with parents and the wider community to raise the profile of care careers and apprenticeships
- developing promotional materials which showcase local young people in care roles, and young people acting as care ambassadors.

We've identified initial priorities for the programme and are currently co-designing a local 'careers in care' website with young people. This will draw together national information and resources available about the range of roles and progression routes, together with local training and work opportunities.

We're also developing an assessment tool to help job brokers effectively signpost people to suitable social care and health jobs."

For further information please contact

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Skills for Care recommends

We have lots of resources to promote careers in social care.

I Care...Ambassadors

I Care...Ambassadors are care workers who deliver activities to promote careers in social care. You can join as an employer to promote your organisation and vacancies. If you're a teacher or careers advisor you can request an ambassador to do activities.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/icareambassadors

Think Care Careers

Think Care Careers has lots of information about working in social care including apprenticeships, graduate roles, different job types available and case studies. There's also a page for teachers and careers advisors.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/thinkcarecareers

Finding and keeping workers

Finding and keeping workers has lots of practical links and resources to help employers attract, take on, develop and keep the right people. There's also lots of case studies about what's worked well for other social care and health employers.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers
