

## Sense

# Taking a values based approach to the recruitment of new workers

Sense is a national charity that supports people who are deafblind, those with sensory impairments and those with complex needs, to enjoy more independent lives.

Their services include a range of housing options, resource centres, educational support, short breaks and arts, sport and wellbeing programmes.

They identified that applications for their direct care roles were not resulting in the right workers for their organisation. Their traditional recruitment methods found applicants with the 'right' experience, however when in post, they didn't always have the right values to provide high quality care.

They set up a group to develop recruitment and selection processes that prioritised people's values rather than their experience and qualifications.

Here, they tell us what they did.

## What we wanted to achieve

Only targeting those that had experience in the sector really limited our talent pool and disregarded a large group of people that had the potential to be fantastic support workers.

We wanted to attract, recruit and retain people who had the right values, behaviours and attitudes to work in social care, who had not necessarily worked in social care before.

We felt it was also important to raise awareness of what the role actually involved, including the more challenging aspects, so that they could decide if the role was really for them.

We hoped that recruiting and selecting candidates in this way would result in a workforce that was aligned with the Sense vision, values and 'I statements', and would therefore deliver excellent support. By giving candidates a realistic view of the role we anticipated that this would reduce short term attrition and develop consistent support.

A key part of the new assessment process is that the reliance on performance at interview alone would be reduced. We weren't looking for people that could complete a solid application form or give text book answers in an interview; we wanted people who had a genuine passion and ability to provide great care and support. We believed that introducing group discussion activities would allow people to be themselves, give them freedom to respond more openly and permission to debate their approach with other candidates.

## What we did

A group of Registered Managers and a HR representative was set up to design assessment criteria, activities and interview questions that would assess people on their values, as well as their professional experience and qualifications.

We decided to use the Sense '**I statements**' as the assessment criteria, to put our values into effect, describe our behaviours and expectations and focus on elements such as respect, involvement in decisions and honesty.

The outcome was an application form, assessment session (circa 2 hours) and interview that all focussed on our values.

The assessment consists of

- completing a one page profile – this allows us to get to know the candidate more and also assists in matching the candidate to a service or individual, if successful
- watching a video and identifying poor practice and what you would do differently
- completing two group discussion activities

The video and group discussion activities are then marked using Sense values as the scoring measure.

Those that achieve the required score are then invited to our values based interviews; again candidates are scored on how well their answers match Sense's 'I statements'.

The project was originally piloted in Birmingham. Following its success, it has since been rolled out across our operational services. We now have a number of 'values based recruitment champions' who take the lead within their area and, also, coach new managers on our approach.

## What we achieved

This approach has resulted in positive changes to the care and support we provide.

It's also helped us improve our recruitment practices. We've been able to reach people who may have previously thought they didn't have the right experience to work in social care; this also supports our desire to increase diversity within our workforce.

The feedback from those who attended the assessment days is positive and they enjoyed the activities in a more relaxed atmosphere. The

assessment days also gave us an opportunity to help the applicant understand what the role involves on a daily basis, so they can self-select us as an employer. As there are a number of Sense managers present on the assessment days, it gives people an opportunity to ask questions in a more relaxed environment.

Introducing more personal elements such as the 'one page profile' has given us a tool to better match support workers to the people they're supporting.

Managers feel that they are more involved and engaged in the recruitment of their teams and report that the calibre of person recruited has improved.

## What we learnt

As we're recruiting people that may not have worked in social care before it's vital that we provide an excellent induction programme to support new workers to learn the practical skills required. Being a support worker can be challenging at times so ongoing learning and development and support from managers and peers is also crucial.

We learnt that rolling out new ways of working such as this can take time, especially when you're geographically dispersed as we are. It is key to have champions that are able to take the lead in their area and be a point of contact for any questions.

It's important to remember that this approach will be very different for the candidates, too, who will most likely be used to a straight forward interview. Candidates may need support in understanding how they will be assessed and will perhaps also be apprehensive about the prospect of a group assessment.

Designing and rolling out the project was hard work, but well worth it! This approach is now fully embedded in the organisation and we're always looking for new ways to enhance the process and increase the number of roles we recruit using this method.

## For more information please visit

[www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)

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## Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care produces a wide range of products and services to support social care and health employers to recruit and retain workers.

### Values and behaviours based recruitment toolkit

This toolkit has lots of useful guidance and templates to help employers recruit and retain people with the right values, behaviours and attitudes.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
valuesandbehaviours](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/valuesandbehaviours)

### Finding and keeping workers

This online resources helps employers to attract, take on, develop and keep their workers.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/  
finderskeepers](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/finderskeepers)

### *I Care...Ambassadors*

*I Care...Ambassadors* can help you to develop and retain workers who have the right values and behaviours, who will also recruit more workers to the sector.

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