

Redcar and Cleveland Care Academy: Combating skills shortages

Introduction

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is responsible for the planning and delivery of adult social care services from private sector care providers.

The labour market in Redcar and Cleveland is dominated by vacant social care roles. This is despite the number of unemployed jobseekers looking for care roles. One of the main factors contributing to the recruitment difficulties is the significant shortage of skills amongst potential candidates.

What they wanted to achieve and why

To help tackle these skills shortages and address the recruitment issues in the sector, a working group was established, which included Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland College, Jobcentre Plus, Beyond Housing, Skills for Care and local care at home employers as part of the 'Care at Home' project.

By bringing together their joint skills and expertise, the working group aimed to provide a responsive approach to meet the care and support needs of the local community and develop a free training programme for future care workers.

The group also wanted to review and make improvements to the recruitment, training and retention of home care staff.

What they did

The working group worked collaboratively with social care providers to create the 'Redcar and Cleveland Care Academy'. The academy went on to teach a range of introductory level sector-based skills, and broader employability skills training including CV writing, career planning and interview techniques.

The academy offered a six-week free programme which guaranteed an interview at the end. It aimed to:

- raise awareness of the sector by providing in-depth knowledge of the care industry sector and the many different roles within it
- promote a values-based approach to recruitment and retention
- promote local vacancies and career pathways in care
- support employers to recruit a workforce with the right values and skills needed to sustain and grow their business
- offer social care and employability qualifications
- promote apprenticeship training funding to employers

- support recruitment activities by assessing suitability throughout the programme, e.g. transferrable Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks
- challenge the employment and training perceptions of potential applicants so that they can make realistic judgments about the job opportunities in care
- support employers with staff retention.

The process was as follows:

- Jobcentre Plus, community-based organisations referred people to the academy, and people could self-refer.
- Potential applicants were sent information about what it's like to work in adult social care, the career and job opportunities, supported by [I Care ... Ambassadors](#).
- Applicants completed the [A Question of Care](#) quiz to help them decide whether a career in care would be right for them. This gave candidates the opportunity to de-select themselves prior to the awareness session, should they decide that a career in care was not for them.
- Throughout the six-week course, candidates completed pre-employment training directly aligned with the needs of the care sector as well as transferrable skills. These included: teamwork, communication, listening skills, developing expectations and personal aspirations, first aid, food hygiene, vocational training and interview preparation.

Financial support included:

- Public transport costs were covered for people on the programme so they could get to college or local community venues to undertake the training.
- The council paid for appropriate DBS checks as well as the 'update service' so the DBS checks could be transferred if participants gained employment.

What they achieved

Many participants gained permanent employment as a result of completing the programme. The first cohort started the course in January 2018, since then the Academy has operated approximately every three months.

Number started course	Number finished course	Number offered employment	Number started employment
130	105	63	58

Data from cohorts one to three shows that 85% of graduates are still employed after three months, and 75% after 12 months.

All the partners developed a thorough understanding of the different employers' recruitment practices, attitudes, values, skills and qualifications required by the care sector. They engaged with the employers on the council's framework to gain their commitment to recruit from the participants who completed the training programme.

Conclusion

Local employers from the council's commissioned services have recognised the value and benefits of recruiting the right staff, first time round. Most employers have remained part of the 'Redcar and Cleveland Care Academy.'

Employers have also started to work collaboratively with other local businesses to negotiate discounts/benefits for their staff as these extra incentives help show them to be a local employer of choice and help improve staff retention.

Key learning points

1. **Set up a partnership and hold regular meetings with an agreed focus** - The biggest challenge is getting the right partners around the table at the beginning to agree a clear focus and agenda, this ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal.
2. **Marketing is key** – A range of marketing channels were used to attract people to the programme. This included a bus stop advertising campaign, articles in magazines, targeted Facebook advertising and leaflet drops to hundreds of local businesses.
3. **Keep the momentum up** - The campaign is primarily focusing on social media reaching more potential candidates without significant financial outlay. The partnership continues to use the Everyday is Different Campaign marketing materials to promote the course.

More information

Skills for Care has practical resources to help you to recruit and retain the right people with the right values.

- [Values-based video animation](#). This video highlights the benefits of using a values-based approach and includes information about how we can support you in your recruitment and retention practices.
- [Adult Social Care Recruitment Campaign](#). Downloadable resources from the campaign toolkit to support your local recruitment activity.
- [I Care ambassadors](#). Sign up and nominate your staff to become ambassadors and deliver careers activities to inspire more people to work in adult social care. and retain existing workers.
- [A Question of Care](#): A career for YOU quiz to see what a career in care is like.

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