

Wigan Council and Jobcentre Plus: Ethical framework to improve care provision

Introduction

Wigan Council had 26 providers across the borough, however, the existing provision wasn't fit for purpose as there were difficulties with staff transport, high staff turnover rates and inconsistency of homecare provision.

The infrastructure of the provision meant that providers were in competition with each other for staff. The inconsistencies between the rates of pay and terms and conditions also led to staff switching from one employer to another.

What they wanted to achieve and why

The council wanted to tackle some of the difficulties and recruitment barriers by working with providers to make positive changes.

They needed to create more parity amongst providers and reduce recruitment costs. The council wanted carers to work near where they lived to reduce the need for car drivers, as well as provide more opportunities for people who didn't drive, but who wanted to work in social care.

Their thinking was that:

- clients could benefit from carers being local, which would reduce delays
- people who live and work locally can help signpost clients to community activities and services
- it would reduce the number of staff moving from one care provider to another.

What they did

Employer Advisers at Wigan Jobcentre Plus and the council's Adult Social Care Quality Manager discussed potential barriers for jobseekers and came up with some practical solutions.

The council implemented the 'Ethical Home Care Framework' in January 2017 with 10 providers covering 16 zones across the borough.

To be part of the framework employers had to:

- use a values-based approach to recruitment where a lack of experience isn't seen as a barrier. People are recruited based on their values and will receive any necessary support and training required for the role
- pay the same hourly rate, pay for travel time and mileage to help prevent carers moving around for more money. An annual audit ensured this standardisation was taking place
- create walking rounds so that staff who don't dive can access their appointments on foot
- demonstrate that they value their staff by showing they respect the need for a work – life balance, taking care of staff well-being and providing initiatives to retain staff.

What they achieved

Initially the partnership took small steps. The Employer Advisors worked with providers individually to help with their recruitment needs. They promoted recruitment days and organised care sector specific jobs fairs. The Employer Advisors also gave a presentation to job seekers around Universal Credit changes to help dispel any fears.

Workshops were held where potential recruits could meet employers and sometimes people who were using services. This face-to-face approach meant potential recruits could see if their care values were a match for a career in social care. An interview was offered to people who showed potential.

Following discussions, the providers also looked closely at their own working practices and how these could be improved. Some introduced buddies, and some put staff into small teams, which resulted in staff taking more ownership of the workload and improved teamwork. Employers also began to share more good practice and worked together to support each other.

Employment Advisors discussed the [Government's Disability Confident scheme](#) with the group and with support from the council, all 10 providers signed up to Disability Confident Level 1.

Certificates are now proudly displayed in their offices and going forward Employment Advisors will support them to progress to Level 2.

Conclusion

By creating a level playing field for pay and working conditions, this resulted in the reduction in the number of employees moving from one care provider to another. Some employers told us they now have **95% staff retention**.

The next step is for Wigan Jobcentre Plus to work with providers to deliver a generic sector-based work academy (SBWA). This will include:

- a presentation on the ethical framework
- current job vacancies available from a range of providers.

In addition, the next steps also include:

- the development and launch of a generic application form to be used by all providers
- matching applicants to providers and arranging interviews
- equipping Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches with the understanding of the Ethical Framework.

If this proves to be a success, then the plan is to repeat the programme on a regular basis.

Key learning points

Here are the top three learning points from Wigan Council which might be useful to other adult social care employers wanting to recruit and retain the right people.

1. **Work in co-production with others** – this helps increase the value your staff can deliver in the workplace.
2. **Being comparable and not competitive leads to savings for all** - Wigan Council providers benefit by levelling their working conditions, which prevents staff moving from one provider to another. This reduces recruitment costs and is beneficial for staff retention as well as the continuity of care.
3. **Provide solutions** - by providing solutions to barriers, such as transport problems, this can lead to employers being able to attract the right people with the right values.

More information

Skills for Care has practical resources to help you:

- [Values- based recruitment and retention](#). This includes information about using a values-based approach and how we can support you in your recruitment and retention practices.
- [Planning your recruitment](#). This section helps you understand your business needs. Planning your recruitment effectively will help you identify barriers and help you to recruit and retain people with the right values.
- [I Care...ambassadors](#). Sign up and nominate your staff to become ambassadors. It's a great way to retain your staff and inspire more people to work in adult social care.

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