

Retention Guide

Recruiting new staff can be an expensive process so it's more important than ever to make sure you look after your staff. Figures from Skills for Care show that the Care Sector in the UK has a staff turnover rate of 30% - nearly twice the average of other professions. This can have a huge impact on your service from level of service, cost of re-recruiting, re-training or even agency cover.

There is no one size fits all solution for recruitment and retention so The Proud to Care team have been working with local care providers and care staff to gain insight into common issues in order to create this guide. A lot of this you may already be doing but hopefully you can take something useful from this guide that you can put into practice.

If you require any further support or advice on recruitment or retention please get in touch with the Proud to Care Team proudtocare@westsussex.gov.uk

Getting it right first time

With shortages across the sector it's hard to resist the urge to recruit anyone and everyone that applies. But this is a short-term solution to a long term problem and can lead to the dreaded 3 week drop out. It can waste your time, energy, and more importantly money, and can quickly turn into a vicious cycle. Getting things right from the outset can help make sure you get the right applicants and that they stay with you.

The Job Ad

Make sure you clearly state not only what the job involves and what your service is like, but who you are looking for. Do they need to be patient and understanding? Adaptable and flexible? Being clear about hours you have available and shifts can help potential applicants decide if the role will suit them.

The Interview

Interviews should try to be a 2-way conversation. It is as much about the candidate telling you about them as it is you telling the candidate about the service and the job. Promoting the job and your service to candidates the same way you would residents / clients makes sure you are putting your best foot forward. Use the interview as an opportunity to explain the day to day work involved and the type of work they will be expected to undertake. Giving candidates a clear and honest view of the work they are doing so they know exactly what they will be signing up to is essential. Using value based questions

can really help get an idea of the candidates values and if they fit in with your company values.

Shadowing/Trial Shift

If the candidate has little or no experience offer them the opportunity to shadow one of your experienced members of staff. This will give them a first-hand look at what the job is like day to day. It will also help develop your existing staff by providing the opportunity to buddy up with a new starter and mentor them. Once candidates have had this experience it will give them insight into whether this is the right job for them and enable them to make an informed decision and prevent any surprises.

I appreciate this may mean some people decide not to go forward, realising the role is not for them. Although this can be frustrating it is important to remember it is better they realise sooner rather than later before you invest time and money in training them.

Induction

Integrating new staff into the team can really help them feel included and welcome from the start. By knowing there is support available for them and being given the opportunity to learn best practice from experienced staff can help build their confidence. It is important to check in with your new members of staff and who they are shadowing to see how they are doing and if they need any further support.

All new starters training should be planned and documented so both you and the new starter can keep track of progress. You can establish what you expect from them and what they, in return, can expect for you. Being approachable and regularly checking in with new starters can help promote the support you offer and make them feel reassured that if they have any issues, they can speak with you.

Wellbeing

The average number of sick days was 5 in 2019/20, this equates to approximately 6.72 million days lost to sickness over the 12-month period in the Care sector. While the majority of staff sickness cannot be helped it still has a huge impact on services trying to cover shifts and puts a strain on the rest of the team. Short term absence can quickly become long term absence and sometimes can result in staff not coming back at all.

One way to try and reduce staff sickness is to improve employee wellbeing. The better they are looking after themselves the less likely they are to become unwell and need time off.

Breaks

Making sure your staff take regular breaks and have space to take time out from work during the day is so important. Many members of staff like yourselves will put off taking breaks or lunches to get work done and end up never getting round to taking them. Regular breaks can reduce stress and help re-energise staff. If you can, try and make some space away from the work environment and of any paperwork, that staff can use to take a step back and relax for 10 minutes without work related distractions.

Work / life balance

We all know how hard it can be to maintain a healthy work life balance but showing compassion and flexibility towards hard working committed staff in difficult times can help in the long run. Changing staff to part time hours or bank for a few weeks or months can often prevent burn out, long term sickness, or them leaving. They will appreciate any efforts to accommodate them and this will encourage trust and loyalty from staff.

Healthy staff

One way to help your staff with their own wellbeing is by providing information about local services available. West Sussex County Council have a wellbeing service online which has a vast array of information available covering things from diet and exercise to stopping smoking. It also has information of local services available:

[West Sussex Wellbeing](#)

If there are any services or events which you feel would be particularly useful print off the details and pop them in the staff room or email them to your staff.

Stress

Working in Care can be a stressful and emotionally challenging role. The NHS support people across West Sussex with issues relating to stress and anxiety through their Time to Talk program. It is a free service where you can call and book an appointment to speak to someone confidentially.

[Time to Talk - talking therapies services in West Sussex](#)

This can be a great help to people to learn new ways of coping with stress and anxiety and managing them, so they do not affect their ability to work.

Finances

Another thing that can affect staff's wellbeing is their financial situation. Being in debt can cause tremendous stress which can affect all aspects of a person's life. A great place to go for advice is the charity organisation StepChange:

[StepChange – Debt Charity](#)

StepChange are a charity offering free advice, guidance, and advocacy for anyone struggling with financial problems no matter how big or small.

Staff Engagement

Engaging your staff is a great way to improve retention. It makes staff feel valued, encourages inclusion, and builds trust. It can also encourage teamwork and help develop and motivate staff which will lead to a better level of service.

Be approachable

Having a management team who are approachable can be a great help with getting staff to engage. If staff feel they will be listened to, they are more likely to speak to management. This can give real insight to how things are working, spot any potential issues early on and build rapport with your staff members.

Keep them informed

Try to include all staff when delivering information or holding meetings. Domestic, kitchen, admin and Care staff are all part of the same team with the same overall goal - to give the best care possible to the individuals they are looking after. Making sure everyone is included will make them feel like a team and work better together. Keeping staff up to date of any changes, being upfront and honest can prevent rumours amongst staff.

Get them involved

Getting staff involved in activities with residents / clients is a great morale booster and helps staff build rapport with the individuals they are looking after. It also gives staff a chance to really appreciate the value of what they do and remind them how rewarding it is. While this can be tricky especially when you are short staffed, if you can rota staff so once a month they join in with an activity it can make a real difference. You can also try and tie it in with staff's own interests. If a particular staff member has a keen interest in gardening this is something they can do with the individuals they are looking after. This again promotes the great work they do, makes them feel valued and included, and can build loyalty.

Feedback

It is important to give regular positive feedback. It is easy to get caught up in giving feedback to keep staff on the straight and narrow and forget good feedback is just as important. Something as simple as thanking staff if it has been a busy day or for staying an extra 10 minutes can go a long way.

Reward and Recognition

It is easy to think you may not have time or money to put a reward or recognition scheme in place, but little things you can do have a massive impact. It will boost morale, encourage high levels of service and makes staff feel valued.

Focussed rewards

You can target recognition to focus on specific areas that need improvement e.g. attendance, teamwork or going the extra mile. Rewarding specific actions or behaviours can improve the culture of the team.

Nominate

Getting staff to nominate each other helps them to recognise good practice in their colleagues and bring them together as a team. It encourages a positive work environment and makes sure hard work does not go unnoticed.

Rewards

Rewards can be as simple as a chocolate bar, a bottle of wine or even a £5 voucher for a local coffee shop. Even printing off a certificate with a staff members name on and displaying it in staff areas. It does not have to be big expensive gestures as the acknowledgement itself goes a long way to making staff feel valued.

Birthdays

Birthdays and work anniversaries are another way to make staff feel valued at a low cost to you. You can pick up generic cards cheaply and give them to staff for birthdays and work anniversaries.

Incentives

Incentivising staff can also be beneficial to both the service and the staff. Offer something to staff for picking up extra shifts paying staff an extra £10 for picking up an extra shift at short notice or an extra £1 an hour will incentivise staff and be cheaper than hiring agency staff.

Recruitment

If you haven't already, you should introduce a refer a friend scheme where a staff member gets rewarded financially for referring friend. This financial incentive can be split into two payments, half when the new team member starts and the other half once the new team member completes probation. This can save you money on recruitment and discourage new staff dropping out or paying agency to find staff.

Personal Development

Some staff are happy in their current roles in the workplace, but others may want the opportunity to develop and improve their skills. It is important staff are made aware of any training available to them and feel there are opportunities to develop in their role.

Utilise existing staff

If you do not have specific training opportunities, you can take advantage of skills of your existing staff. If someone has particularly good knowledge of safeguarding can one of your other members of staff work with them? This also gives the existing member of staff the chance to develop their mentoring skills.

This is the same for new starters; giving your existing staff the chance to help train and support them encourages their personal development and can provide new challenges.

Champions

Another way to encourage staff is to establish 'Champions' this is where certain staff members are assigned as champions of a particular topic/area so they can increase their knowledge in the subject and support other members of the team. It will also encourage your team to work together and speak to 'Champions' if they have queries. Some examples may be: Safeguarding Champion, Medicines Champion, Care Plan Champion, Dementia Champion.

Listening and learning

Giving feedback is as important as receiving feedback. Listening and taking on board staff suggestions shows you are invested in them and see them as part of the team.

Offering the option for anonymous feedback can be a good way of getting constructive and honest feedback from staff. This can be done in the form of a suggestion box which is reviewed once a month. You can then offer insight on the suggestions at the next staff meeting. Even if you can't take action on a suggestion taking the time to acknowledge it and even explaining why you can't action it can be great as it shows your staff you are listening, value their opinion and gives them a better understanding as to why certain things can't be done.

Exit Interviews

If you do struggle with retention, exit interviews can be a great insight into where there might be issues which you can resolve moving forward. It is important though to stipulate that what the employee says will have no effect on any reference they get. This way you can ensure an honest answer to your questions.

We hope you have found some of this information useful and as always if you need any more support with recruitment or retention please get in touch with The Proud to Care Team proudtocare@westsussex.gov.uk