BUILDING THE FUTURE
CARE WORKFORCE

An end-to-end solution for recruiting and retaining care staff

In partnership with

Care Friends · Care Character · JOBTRAIN ...more than an ATS · vivup

CARE ENGLAND
Representing independent care providers

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Care Friends

Care Character
THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE CARE SECTOR

JOBTRAIN
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Executive Summary

The adult social care sector faces unprecedented challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, with staggeringly high rates of vacancy (9.9%) and attrition (28.3%). These workforce challenges have a profound impact on the viability of care providing organisations, staff and the people the sector supports, and are exacerbated by demographic change and increasing demand for care services.

The ability of the sector to address key barriers, including low pay and poor perceptions of social care as a career, is limited by a challenging financial environment and low fee rates paid by Local Authorities. In the absence of meaningful Government intervention, it is vital that care providers explore innovative solutions to support their workforce and attract the necessary talent to their organisation.

Care England has partnered with four organisations which, in isolation, have been shown to significantly improve the recruitment and retention and care staff. Each employs a different tried and tested principle to improve staffing, namely Employee Referral Programmes, Values-Based Recruitment, Applicant Tracking Solutions and Employee Assistance Programmes. Together, these four services represent an end-to-end solution to a care provider's staffing needs. They are:

- **Care Friends** (Employee Referral Programme) - leveraging the power of digital referrals, CareFriends incentivises care workers to refer potential candidates using a points-based system with rewards and recognition mechanisms.

- **Care Character** (Values-Based Recruitment) - an assessment tool designed to evaluate candidates based on crucial 'Care Qualities', giving care providers a consistent approach to identifying and cultivating traits that are essential for frontline care and support staff.

- **Jobtrain** (Applicant Tracking Solution) – offers a streamlined approach to sourcing, assessing, interviewing, and onboarding frontline care workers that increases candidate reach and engagement, reduces administrative burdens and expedites the onboarding processes.

- **Vivup** (Employee Assistance Programme) - a holistic employment assistance program that boosts retention through proactive solutions ranging from financial support forums to burnout prevention strategies.

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Background: Recruitment and retention challenges in adult social care

The adult social care sector faces unprecedented challenges in both recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. According to Skills for Care, in 2022/23 the sector vacancy rate was 9.9% (152,000) and attrition rate was 28.3%, despite an estimated 70,000 individuals joining the sector from overseas. 390,000 care workers left their roles in 2022/23, with a third of those leaving the sector altogether.

This crisis is exacerbated by demographic change, an ageing population and increasing rates of multimorbidity resulting in higher demand for care; the gap between carers and those in need of care is increasing to unprecedented, and unsustainable levels. According to Skills For Care, 'if the number of adult social care posts grows proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population between 2021 and 2035, an increase of 25% (440,000 extra posts) would be required by 2035'.

The issue is compounded by the fact that the care workers tend to be older than staff in other sectors – the average care worker is 45, with 29% of staff aged 55 and above. This 29% of staff moving towards retirement in the next ten years equates to 440,000 posts to fill. This, combined with the need for an additional 440,000 posts due to the ageing population as well as the 152,000 vacancies that currently stand, points to a potential shortage of approximately 1 million workers by 2035.

Barriers to recruitment and retention

There are a wide range of factors that contribute to the challenges facing the adult social care workforce. Low pay and poor perceptions of social care as a career remain key, unaddressed challenges, identified by care providers as the principal factors harming recruitment and retention efforts.

Despite a desire to increase pay, care providers are severely limited in their ability to do so due to insufficient fee rates paid to them by local authorities. According to research by Care England, 79% of care providers reported that local authority fee uplifts failed to cover the rising cost of the NLW in 2023.

The challenge of recruiting care workers has been exacerbated by the loss of EU workers following Brexit and the competition for workers from other sectors such as hospitality. Many over-50s have left the labour market and figures from the Office for National Statistics have revealed social care staff have been the worst hit by long Covid among occupational groups in the UK.

The data shows an estimated 5.5% of sector staff reported long Covid symptoms in the four weeks up to 4 December 2022, having first suspected or confirmed Covid-19 12 weeks previously. This was higher than the figures for healthcare (4.58%), the civil service or local government (4.46%) and teaching and education (4.12%).

In recent months, international recruitment has played an increasing role in fulfilling the sector's staffing needs. However, following backlash about the levels net migration to the UK, and the contribution of care workers to that total, in December 2023, the Home Office announced restrictions to the legal migration system including a ban on visas for the dependents of sponsored workers, expected to come into effect in Spring 2024. Furthermore, international recruitment is not the 'silver bullet' to solving workforce challenges that many have hailed it to be. The system is challenging for many organisations, including smaller care providers, to access. There is acknowledgment across the sector that, in the long-term, domestic recruitment must be the bedrock of sustainable staffing levels.

A further challenge to recruitment relates to the complexity of compliance and onboarding. Care providers must adhere to stringent regulations from bodies like the Care Quality Commission (CQC), necessitating thorough compliance checks for new hires. Manual onboarding and compliance processes are time-consuming, prone to errors and delays; resulting in candidates disengaging and accepting roles elsewhere.

The impact of staffing shortages

Staffing shortages have a real impact on the viability of care providing organisations, existing members of staff and the people who draw on care and support services. According to Care England, as a result of staff shortages in 2023 over half (54%) of care providers increased agency use, 44% turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether.

The impact does not end there. Challenges in the adult social care sector also have knock-on effects throughout the NHS as, in many cases, it is not possible to put in place packages of care to support patients at home. Last year, it was reported that there were 470,000 people in England waiting for care; these delayed discharges contribute to ambulances being unable to transfer patients and lives are lost. A recent report from The Kings Fund shows that while the number of people requesting care has increased over the past five years, fewer people are receiving the social care they need as a result of staffing shortages in the sector.

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges

Organisations from across the adult social care sector have long-since called on Government to take concerted action to tackle the deep-rooted challenges facing the care workforce. For instance, in Care For Our Future: The roadmap to a sustainable future for adult social care, Care England called on Government to mandate the professional registration of adult social care staff, implement a fully-funded £15 minimum care wage and develop parity of esteem with NHS staff, and, eventually, consolidate reforms within a fully-funded, long-term adult social care workforce plan. Without addressing the key barriers to recruitment and retention, most notably low levels of pay and poor perceptions of social care as a career, there is little hope of fundamentally turning the tide and achieving truly sustainable staffing in the sector.

Unfortunately, the reforms tabled by Government to date have been limited. Where investment has been made, the impact has been minimal – 84% of care providers reported that the grants administered by Government in 2023, including the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund – Workforce Fund, had no impact on the financial sustainability of their organisation. In the absence of meaningful Government intervention to tackle workforce challenges, it is vital that care providers explore innovative solutions to support their workforce and attract the necessary talent to their organisation.

The next section of this paper outlines a series of tried and tested workforce solutions for care providers, which together represent a comprehensive end-to-end solution.

An end-to-end solution to improving recruitment and retention

To support care providers, local authorities and other partners address the workforce crisis in social care, Care England has partnered with four innovative services - Care Character, Care Friends, Jobtrain and Vivup - to develop an end-to-end solution that increases recruitment; develops staff; and supports career in the sector over the long-term.

In isolation, each of these solutions has been shown to have a significant impact on recruitment and retention. Brought together, the solutions enhance and improve outcomes for care staff, providers and those drawing on care, beyond any single recruitment and retention solution available in the market today.

This end-to-end solution supports and develops candidates by ensuring they thrive and remain happy working in the social care sector, bettering retention rates. Moreover, these recruitment and retention tools significantly reduce cost by preventing continuous recirculation of existing staff through recruitment and training costs. Altogether, maximising the number of new hires well suited to the social care sector who are proven to stay for longer and are more productive, enabling care providers to focus on delivering the highest levels of care possible.
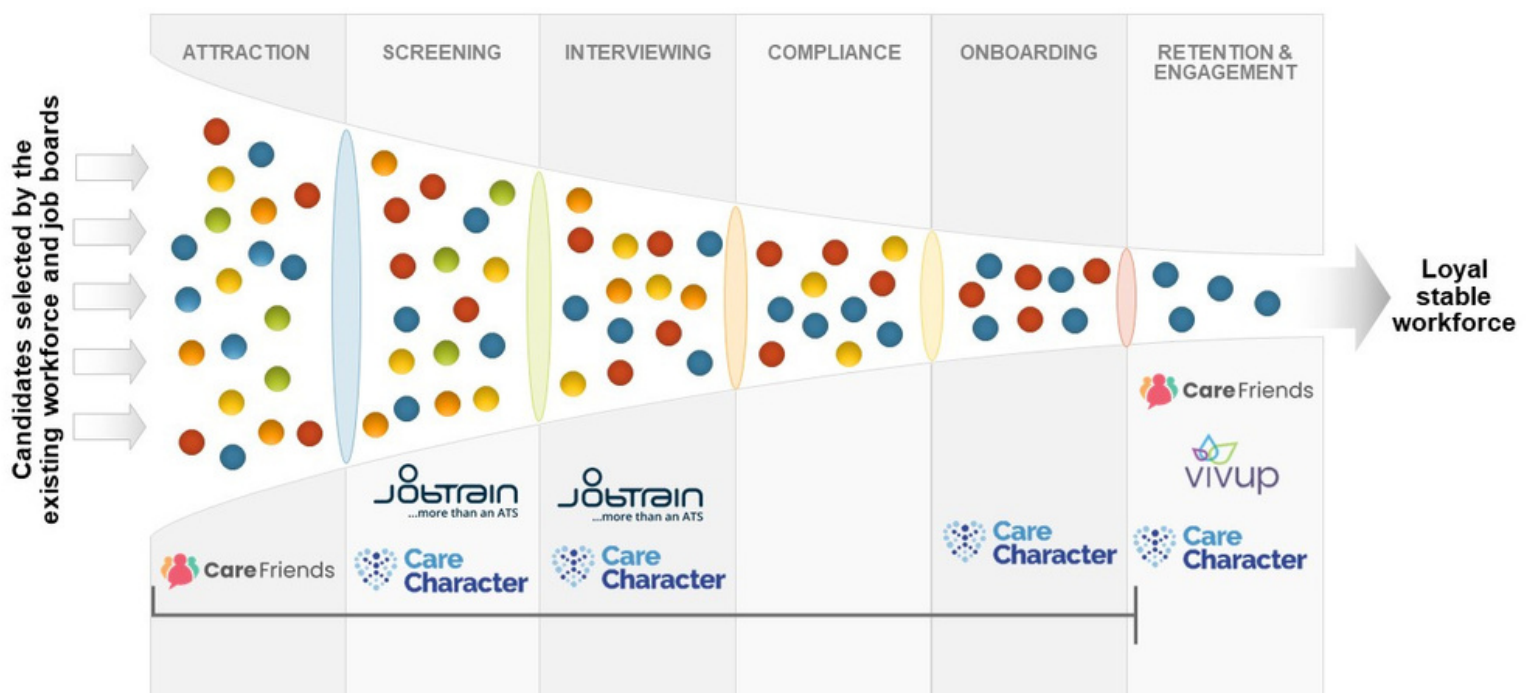
1: ![Care Friends] Digital Employee Referral Programmes (ERP)

One of the most effective ways of recruiting into the sector is using the existing workforce as recruiters and rewarding them for identifying those not already in a paid care role. Thus, Employee Referral Programmes can be used to grow capacity and offer incentives for hires that address specific diversity and inclusion goals.

Each local care market must attract newcomers (or returners) and not simply recycle the current workforce as is currently the case. According to Skills for Care, 60% of all new hires annually are already working in the care sector.

Employee Referrals in Addressing Workforce Challenges in Other Sectors

According to the latest Employee Referral Benchmark Report in 2023, the adoption of Employee Referral Programmes (ERPs) is rapidly increasing as employers recognise their effectiveness in finding top-quality candidates. The report highlights the following statistics:

- 74% of companies are now implementing an ERP, indicating its popularity as a hiring strategy,
- Employers rate that referred hires are 71% better in terms of quality compared to non-referred hires, showcasing the value of employee referrals.
- Referred candidates have a faster hiring process compared to non-referred candidates, enabling care providers to fill positions more efficiently thus reducing the impact of up to 50% who fall out of the often lengthy recruitment process.
- ERPs have been shown to result in a 38% lower turnover rate, indicating that employees referred through ERPs tend to stay longer, reducing the need for constant recruitment at a cost of between £4,000 to £6,000 per hire.

Digital employee referrals in adult social care

Data from Care Friends shows that care providers using the platform can source between 15-30% of their annual hires via referrals, up from an average of between 0% to 7% with a traditional referral scheme. These hires have a much lower turnover rate (up to 6.5x lower in the first year of employment) than hires from Internet Job Boards justifying a significant return on investment.

Digital Employee Referral Programmes vs. Traditional Referral Schemes

Digital employee referral programmes have demonstrated superior performance compared to traditional non-digital schemes. Participation in the Care Friends employee referral programme is many times higher than in non-digital schemes and the regularly cited problems which affect employees attempting to participate in traditional schemes, such as the effort of recording a referral and missed payments are largely negated.

Care Friends

The adoption of digital employee referral programmes, exemplified by the Care Friends app, represents a breakthrough in overcoming recruitment and retention challenges in the adult social care sector.

The CareFriends app provides a digital platform to make it easy and rewarding for care workers to choose who they would like to work with and identify and connect with those in the local community with the values necessary to work in a direct care role. It also deliberately incentivises recruitment of those 'new to care', thus growing capacity where, when left to their own devices, individual employers prioritise hiring existing care sector staff.

With a desire from central and local Government and the NHS to place the emphasis firmly on local recruitment solutions led by employers, the statistical evidence and success stories provide a compelling justification for local authorities and adult social care providers to incorporate digital referral solutions into their workforce strategies.

How it works

CareFriends transforms the traditional, underperforming employee referral process on a large scale. It enables care providers to digitally enrol and engage a significant number of their existing care workers to serve as regular recruiters for their organisations. A participating employer's care workers can earn meaningful rewards that will supplement their income from both employee referral activity and bonuses for good work and achievements.

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The app works by incentivising care workers to earn points (1 point = £1) for each stage of the referral process – for sharing a job role with their connection, for an application, for a successful interview and so on. There are leader boards, challenges, physical and digital badges and status rewards in place within the app to maximise engagement and activity from both app users and the recruiters/managers processing candidates.

Benefits for Local Authorities and Adult Social Care Providers

Based on the statistics and evidence presented, it is clear that incorporating a digital referral solution like Care Friends into the workforce strategies of both local authorities and adult social care providers can yield numerous benefits. These include:

Enhanced Recruitment Efficiency

By leveraging the power of employee referrals, local authorities and adult social care providers can significantly reduce wastage and improve candidate conversion rates from approximately 80 candidates to one hire for job boards to just five candidates to one hire with referrals. There is also a saving in re-recruitment costs to replace early leavers.

Improved Retention Rates

The unique features of the Care Friends app, such as recognition and reward functionalities, foster a positive culture of regular employee appreciation and motivation. This, in turn, improves overall employee satisfaction and reduces turnover rates, as indicated by the lower turnover rate of 38% for Care Friends' referred candidates compared to non-referred candidates.

Significantly increased local capacity growth

As the app is over 30% more effective at attracting those new to a care role than other local recruitment channels, it is far more successful at increasing capacity for the benefit of the local market.

Building long-term recruitment infrastructure

Unlike one-off advertising campaigns, once implemented, the Care Friends platform opens a permanent conduit into the local community delivering a flow of quality candidates into the future.

Giving care workers a performance bonus

The app makes it easy for care workers to earn meaningful rewards both from referral activity and from bonus points awards for achievements and the recognition of good work.

Cost Savings and Return on Investment

The use of digital employee referral programmes not only leads to cost savings by reducing spending on traditional candidate sourcing channels such as internet job boards, and temporary agency expenses, further offering a significant return on investment. Recent research on employee referrals shows that referred candidates consistently outperform non-referred candidates, resulting in improved quality of hires and enhanced organisational performance.

Evidence base

The Care Friends app leverages research, gamification, and reward psychology to convert high numbers of care workers to become effective recruiters for their employers.

In 2023, between 1%-2% of all care workers starting a new job in England were delivered via the app, from just 2% of providers. This led the Department of Health and Social Care to identify employee referral apps as a high-potential innovation.

In recognition of its innovative approach and positive impact on the social care sector, the Care Friends app received The King's Award for Enterprise for Innovation in 2023. This prestigious accolade further validates the effectiveness and value of the app in addressing recruitment and retention challenges.

The following feedback provides practical examples of the results seen by both local authorities and providers when implementing Care Friends:

> "As a council, we are really pleased to have set and surpassed our Care Friends targets."
>
> DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

> "We have tried various recruitment initiatives and Care Friends remains the most successful."
>
> KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

"We have seen a doubling in the growth rate of our businesses after the introduction of Care Friends. 930 employees have been sourced this way so far."

BLUEBIRD CARE

"This year we have hired over 50 staff via the app. Their retention rate is 83% higher than any other recruitment method."

MAJESTICARE

"In 12 months of using Care Friends we have hired 364 care workers via the app and for 50% of them it is their first role in social care. Care Friends hires now make up nearly 30% of all our new starters and we have a much better retention rate with those applicants recommended."

HALES CARE

2: Care Character Values-Based Recruitment (VBR)

Values-based recruitment for the care sector is a model designed to recruit people better suited to working in the adult social care sector. It addresses how a consistent, holistic, and extended approach to both values-based recruitment and retention can begin to combat workforce challenges.

Values-based recruitment is not new and proves to be a hugely successful and commercially viable solution to combat the challenges faced by the sector in relation to recruitment and retention. Basing recruitment on values rather than just experience results in a process that doesn't rely solely on those already in the sector moving from service to service between care providers, costing hundreds of millions of pounds in recruitment costs annually, and who do not contribute to a vacancy reduction across the sector.

Skills for Care's data show that with values-based recruitment practices in place, 62% of staff have lower rates of sickness and absence. Additionally, 72% of staff perform better than those recruited via traditional methods. Skills for Care estimated a 23% cost saving when adopting a values-based recruitment approach.

When values-based recruitment is combined with a focus on learning and development, the solution is even more effective. According to Skills for Care: 'Employers with favourable workforce metrics (such as high levels of learning and development), on average, had better outcomes (lower staff turnover and/or high CQC ratings)'.

As well as demonstrating a cost saving, Skills for Care data shows a staff turnover reduction of 5.6% delivering a £4,000 saving on top of £2,229 training costs per new employee when organisations implement values-based recruitment well.

What does 'values-based' mean?

At the most fundamental level, values-based recruitment and retention is about ensuring quality of care. Not qualifications or previous experience, but a measure of how well an individual will deliver care, alongside a measure of how their values match with those of your organisation (perhaps this being a secondary measure).

According to Skills for Care, "values-based recruitment is a way of getting to know people, their motivations, passions, interests and whether they'll be a good fit for your organisation and for the roles you're recruiting to, so you can make the best possible recruitment choices for those who you provide care and support for".

Values-based recruitment is not an entirely new process, organisations have been recruiting for values as far back as the 1970s, but the use of this selection approach has been standardised and formalised within the care sector over the past 5 – 10 years.

Values-based recruitment was first introduced in England in the NHS with a particular focus after the publication of the <u>Francis report</u>. This specific policy response to the concerns raised in the report was to encourage the recruitment of undergraduate health professional students, trainees, and employees whose personal values were consistent with the overall values of the NHS. The social care sector has subsequently followed this same direction.

'Values-based' in comparison to traditional methods

Traditional recruitment methods are characterised by a focus on skills and prior working experiences. However, this can result in new recruits that are less suited to care work, subsequently leaving the sector altogether, or supporting existing care workers to move between care services at significant cost to the employer. Values-based recruitment considers values as better criteria for workforce selection. The main point at the core of the model is that skills and experience can be learned, while values are an individual trait that cannot be acquired.

Another important characteristic of the values-based model is its holistic approach. While traditional methods focus mainly on recruitment, values-based recruitment has broader implications for the way the whole organisation operates (including its overall ethos, the nature of the care delivered, induction, supervision, appraisal, and staff development).

Values-based recruitment requires adjusting the processes involved in everything from role design and personal specifications to how applicants are assessed and then inducted into and developed within the organisation.

The holistic approach should see organisations adapting values-based approaches to:
- Job and person specifications
- Job adverts
- Assessment criteria including interview questions
- Management training for recruitment and development
- Learning & development programs for care workers
- Team based development and motivation programs

Implementing values-based recruitment to maximum effect

Across the sector, there is a wide variation in approach to values-based recruitment, from lip-service to sophisticated processes. To be successful, of course, the first step is to agree on the values upon which recruitment and retention initiatives will be based. However, this is just the start, and without concerted efforts and detailed planning, values-based initiatives will not become embedded or deliver the results desired.

Line managers need training in core recruitment processes before implementing VBR and can benefit from learning and sharing practices with peers in both their organisation and sector. Ideally, a formal process supported by an appropriate platform will drive the process of using values across recruitment, onboarding and induction, team interaction, and learning and development.

Ongoing communication throughout the organisation about values is essential – particularly highlighting the link between demonstration of the values, and the delivery of great care.

Care Character

Care Character is a recruitment and retention assessment tool specifically designed for the care sector. It is based on academic research from PhD study, "Recruitment and selection in the UK care sector," conducted by Dr John Michael Barratt. The aims of the research included establishing criteria for the effective performance of care workers in adult social care and developing a strategy for the recruitment and selection of effective care workers. The study also identified the drivers of retention and attrition in the adult social care sector.

How it works...

Tools such as Care Character put values and behavioural qualities at the centre of recruitment and retention by helping care providers identify and cultivate the seven Care Qualities and subsequently, build effective teams. The seven Care Qualities include:
- Communication
- Compassion and empathy
- Dutifulness
- Teamworking
- Inclusivity and respect
- Adaptable and resilient
- Procedural compliance

As part of the recruitment process, candidates complete a short online assessment that's designed to evaluate their behaviours and skills across the seven qualities of care listed above. The recruiter or Hiring Manager then receives four reports based on the results recorded on a ten-point scale.

The four reports integrate values-based recruitment into every part of the process. One goes to the candidate to help them reflect on their suitability and prepare for their interview. The second goes to the interviewer, who can use it to assess suitability and access tailored interview questions.

The third report can be passed to individuals receiving care and family members to help them better understand their carer's qualities. The fourth report is crucial to the onboarding process. It's used by new staff members and their line managers to guide learning and development, which helps with improved retention.

Care Character's Care Qualities should be at minimum a starting point for care organisations, given the rigour behind the research. They can be adapted for individual organisations, but they are essential values and skills that are the focus of values-based recruitment in the care sector.

Evidence Base

The argument for a specific values-based retention program for new starters and their managers, as an extension to a formalised values-based recruitment program, is well made by the available evidence and data:

Proposition one - retention is about delivering great care. That's the number one reason guiding individuals to apply for, and to work in care. Assuming the right set of values has been selected by an organisation, then delivering great care will come from the optimisation of those individual strengths. Organisations and their managers should assist workers to make use of and maximise their strengths, thus enhancing both quality of care, and employee satisfaction and retention.

Proposition two - the biggest reason for unhappiness at work and ultimately resignation, is lack of, or poor contact with the line manager. Facilitating a discussion between a manager and their team member, about their strengths and how to apply them to deliver great care, delivers on both propositions one and two.

Proposition three – staff development is all about Care Qualities, or Strengths - assuming that you recognise their accuracy and impact on care provided. Pushing Managers to spend more time with Team members, with a focus on development, will continue to address the main requirements of enhancing retention – engagement with a manager, an opportunity for longer-term development, and again will continue to build the quality of care delivered.

To be truly values-based, organisations need to build values-based programs that are end-to-end, thrive within the organisation and ultimately have high-quality care as their end goal

This case study offers a more detailed understanding of how values-based recruitment through Care Character can improve recruitment results and help identify the right people for the care sector.

Quotes from candidates completing and organisations adopting the Care Character assessment into the recruitment process:

> "The care role is a new career direction and I am keen to understand what is required quickly to enable me to perform the role well, and the report, which not only identifies the necessary skills and/or qualities I might already possess, but also offers good advice about how those new to the role can improve their understanding and develop their skills further."

> "It will help me to see what are my strong-points and how I could work on improving some of them qualities."

> "I think it's good cause there may be things about yourself that you did not even realise."

> "It highlighted my weaknesses and strengths which gave me an idea on which skills I need to develop more in."

> "It was better for us to find people with the right values and attitudes, rather than the right pieces of paper, and invest in them. We found when we did this they stayed longer, and we saw a significant improvement in our staff turnover."

3: JObTRAIN ...more than an ATS   Applicant Tracking Systems

Manual, labour-intensive and often inefficient hiring processes contribute to an average time to hire of 78 days across the adult social care sector. As a result, often valuable applicants are lost due to lengthy application processes and candidates accept offers elsewhere, often because onboarding and compliance processes are protracted, accompanied by a lack of engagement between hiring companies and new hires ahead of their start date.

Online recruitment software (commonly called Applicant Tracking Systems or ATS), is a suite of tools designed to manage every aspect of the hiring process securely online and automate many of the manual and time-consuming tasks associated with managing hiring including online applications, assessment, interview booking/scheduling, tracking of compliance and onboarding, engaging new hires and access to real-time insights and data. They increase candidate engagement throughout the process whilst at the same time reducing recruitment administration by at least 50% and time to hire by as much as 60%, from 78 days closer to 31 days and down to as <u>quickly as 24hrs</u>. This helps to avoid agency and overtime/shift enhancement costs backfilling vacancies at up to double the cost of an employee.

Studies have shown that ATSs have increased acceptance rates by 10%, increased engagement by 54% and evidenced as a result that staff are immediately 70% more productive upon appointment and 58% more likely to remain for at least 3 years as a result of providing an engaging and intuitive online experience for candidates. For recruiters, it provides automated access to free and paid job boards (as well as social media advertising) to increase effective marketing reach to potential hires, in addition to reduced HR overheads and significant cost savings from the hiring process whilst delivering increased staff retention.

The limitations of manual and inefficient hiring processes

Inefficient, manual hiring processes contribute significantly to the challenges faced by the sector and can result in several acute issues and consequences:

- Increased costs
- Loss of productivity
- Negative impact on patient care
- Decreased employee morale
- Impact on quality of candidates
- Effect on patient and stakeholder satisfaction
- The cost of inefficient and manual recruitment

Manual and inefficient hiring processes contribute to an average time to hire across the sector of 78 days (almost twice that of other comparable sectors).

50% of applicants are lost due to lengthy application processes. Candidates are not prepared to fill out long offline or paper application forms, at least not at the initial application stage.

40% of candidates accept offers elsewhere due to onboarding and compliance processes taking too long and a lack of engagement. There are many moving parts and critical steps to be followed to ensure CQC compliance, but when managed manually, these are hard to track, administratively intensive and take much longer than they need resulting in candidates losing interest and engagement and invariably accepting other job offers elsewhere, often outside the sector with organisations with efficient or less regulated hiring processes.

Agency usage and costs are spiralling as a direct result of the above inefficiencies, £360M was spent on staffing agencies across the sector in 2022.

Jobtrain

The Jobtrain applicant tracking system addresses these challenges by prioritising candidate experience, streamlining recruitment processes, ensuring compliance and enhancing communication with new hires.

The adoption of an applicant tracking system not only meets the immediate recruitment needs but also offers a significant return on investment by optimising resources and improving overall workforce management.

How it works...

The Jobtrain ATS provides a sophisticated but easy-to-use onboarding and compliance hub to manage every aspect of the offer, onboarding and compliance process with full audit trails and visibility for stakeholders.

All aspects of offers, contracts, checks, references, and new starter forms can be managed, tracked and signed securely online via a self-service hub for new hires and employers significantly speeding up the hiring process.

Following an offer, the employer can see how far a new starter has progressed with compliance checks and references so support can be offered if there are delays.

Each onboarding element has its own dashboard for quick insights, offering a view of documentation and analysis.

Candidates can raise real-time queries via their onboarding portal. When Onboarding and Compliance is complete, they are introduced to a personalised Welcome Hub to showcase the organisation's culture and get them prepared and excited for their new role.

Employers can carry out crucially important Right to Work and DBS checking online, directly from within the Jobtrain platform. It also captures employment history gaps – a must-have in the CQC regulations. DBS and Right-to-Work checks, managed using the Certified Digital Identity Service Provider, can be requested, and results are returned to the platform.

Reducing reliance on agencies and the associated cost

Jobtrain has been designed to help employers take control of their hiring and reduce reliance on costly third-party agencies.

By offering a platform that accesses free advertising channels and streamlines the candidate experience, the ATS significantly reduces not only cost but also administration time. Moreover, it vastly reduces the time taken to onboard new hires, helping to solve all the challenges that often trigger the need to engage a recruitment agency at a further additional cost.

The platform also enables employers to create their talent banks and pools to be far more proactive and prepared when vacancies arise.

The typical reduction in agency spend is between 50-70% after implementing Jobtrain.

How the Jobtrain ATS solves key recruitment challenges

Increases reach and engagement with potential candidates and increases quality applications

The Jobtrain ATS solves these challenges in several ways. Each solution provides employers with a branded careers site to engage potential hires and inform them about the opportunities available. All job vacancies are easily found, and job seekers can also create job alerts to receive email notifications about new vacancies that match their criteria.

It extends advertising reach at no extra cost by automatically posting all job vacancies to various job boards including Indeed, Google, Talent.com, Adzuna, Zip Recruiter and social media profiles like Facebook and LinkedIn.

The Jobtrain platform also collaborates with the Care Friends referral platform to share job vacancies within the app. Applications are received from referred candidates directly into the Jobtrain platform to manage them quickly and efficiently through the recruitment process online.

The Job Board Marketplace seamlessly advertises on different free and paid job boards within the platform, without having to create accounts, or sign up for contracts and even offers discounted advertising bundles for users.

The fully 'made for mobile' candidate and application experience, is fully accessible to all. Candidates can apply for jobs in just a few minutes online and include CQC compliant application forms. It also facilitates 'quick applications' from leading job boards like Indeed, Reed, Totaljobs and LinkedIn.

Reduces the administration burden of care recruitment

By its very nature, recruitment requires several administrative processes to advertise roles, capture applications, assess candidates, communicate with them and finally manage compliant hiring.

The Jobtrain ATS comes with a host of tools to easily manage every stage of the hiring process quickly and more efficiently, which are easy to use and fully configurable, to fit with existing processes.

Key elements include:
- Creating **screening questions** to handle high volumes of applications and identify the strongest candidates quickly upon which to focus onboarding efforts.
- **Automate personalised communication** with candidates via email and text message to keep them informed and engaged throughout the process to avoid those dropping out during the hiring process.
- **Self-service interview booking** allows candidates to book themselves for an interview online, via their mobile in just a couple of minutes.
- **Talent pools and banks of strong potential candidates** can be created to hire more quickly, reduce reliance on agencies in the future and reduce the time to hire.
- **Comprehensive reporting** on all aspects of recruitment to measure and improve processes.
- Have access to **full audit trails** and **data of all activity** to support CQC audits and GDPR compliance with automated personal data archiving.
- The **onboarding and compliance feature** with the new hire welcome hub manages and tracks all aspects of contracts, offers, references and compliance checks.

Delivers fast and efficient new hire onboarding and compliance

With many new care worker hires accepting offers elsewhere before their start date, the regulated hiring process must be fast, efficient, and well-supported with visibility, consistent communication, and new hire engagement ahead of their first day.

Increases acceptance rates

A study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that a well-managed offer process can increase acceptance rates by up to 10%. A positive offer experience makes candidates feel valued and more likely to accept the job.

Enhances employee engagement

A Gallup study revealed that a strong onboarding process can improve employee engagement by 54%. Engaged employees are more productive, committed and loyal to the organisation and less likely to leave in the early stages of employment.

Reduces turnover

A report by the Wynhurst Group found that new hires who experience a well-structured onboarding process are 58% more likely to remain with the organisation for at least three years, a significant increase from the current 28.3% social care attrition rate.

Increases new hires' performance

The Brandon Hall Group reported that a strong onboarding process can decrease the time taken to settle into an organisation and perform by 30% and increase productivity from day one by 70%.

Evidence Base

Jobtrain provides solutions for organisations employing 50 up to 170,000 people and has over 20 years' experience delivering and supporting recruitment software for many social care, NHS and Local Government organisations.

Jobtrain is highly flexible and quick to deploy. Smaller clients can be up and running within a week and larger employers are typically live in weeks rather than months.

Advice and support is offered throughout the set-up process. All Jobtrain clients have a dedicated Continuous Improvement Consultant who will help improve and get the most out of the system and offer advice on good practice in ensuring goals and SLAs are achieved. The setup and implementation process is transparent, simple and fully managed. The Jobtrain support team is UK-based, offering phone, online and email support to all users and candidates.

Jobtrain is a fully secure solution, compliant with all UK data security legislation, GDPR and proud to be a UK Government certified supplier for many years. In addition, the candidate experience has been fully assessed for accessibility by Shaw Trust.

Success stories

- Aspris
- Active Care
- Borough Council King's Lynn and West Norfolk
- Grandir UK

4: vivup Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programmes (EAP)

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programmes (EAP) have been shown to improve retention rates to support care staff as employers can equip the workforce with the tools they need to build personal resilience and deal with issues before they escalate, become difficult to treat, or affect workplace performance and presenteeism.

An EAP keeps staff well and at work by supporting their mental, physical, and financial wellness with a blend of preventative and in the moment solutions such as telephone and face-to-face counselling. Further, using an EAP solution helps employers demonstrate commitment to the workforce and in turn attract and retain more valued staff by enhancing employee benefits, offering a solution equivalent to a £1,500 per annum pay rise.

Vivup

Demonstrating a commitment to employee wellbeing through long-term solutions, such as preventative mental health support and financial assistance, Vivup helps organisations within the care sector establish themselves as an employer of choice. In turn, these organisations will be better positioned to attract more talent and ensure that talent stays on board by offering a secure career that supports staff in now and in years to come.

How it works...

By introducing an Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (EAP) to support care staff, employers can equip the workforce with the tools they need to build personal resilience and deal with issues before they escalate, become difficult to treat or affect workplace performance and presenteeism.

An EAP will not only help to keep staff well and at work by supporting their mental, physical, and financial health with a blend of preventative and in the moment solutions but will also help employers demonstrate their commitment to the workforce and, in turn, attract and retain more valued staff.

EAP solutions ensure care staff will have access to a wide range of services that work in unison to support their wellbeing across all life stages, including:

- A proactive health management platform to deliver effective, evidence-based interventions that help people live happier, healthier lives
- 24/7, 365 Telephone Helpline with in-the-moment support
- Telephone Counselling
- Face to Face/Virtual Counselling
- Online GP Services
- Access to resources including:
- CBT Self-help Workbooks
- Domestic Abuse Resources and App
- Online Debt Advice
- Legal Support
- Dependent Family Support
- Financial Support
- Peer-to-peer Support
- COVID Recovery
- Carer Support

A credible EAP solution offers care providers the option to discuss and receive support for a range of mental, physical, and financial health concerns, ensuring that employees can access the right support at the right time from one centralised location. Holistic, all-encompassing EAP support services will not only help care homes cultivate happier, healthier workforces but will also enable employers to protect their organisations against any events or challenges that may present themselves in the future.

Benefits to Care Providers

Reduced absence rates

Staff absence is costing the UK economy around £18bn annually and 12.7% of all sickness days in the UK can be attributed to poor mental health. With workers in care experiencing the highest absence rates (3.8%), it's important to offer support options that help tackle absenteeism before it becomes a problem.

Without support in place, employers can expect to pay higher overhead costs in agency reliance and/or overtime cover while also experiencing reduced performance and service levels, workplace disruption, and low morale. However, as The Mental Health Foundation confirms, a business investment in employee wellbeing is key to keeping absenteeism under control. The Foundation estimates that for every £1 invested in wellbeing, £8 is saved due to reduced absenteeism.

Alternative to increasing pay

The issue of low pay is longstanding within the care sector. A report conducted by the Resolution Foundation confirms that the average care worker earns less than 80% of the wider workforce. With the cost of living increasing above the National Living Wage over the last two years, care staff are struggling to afford the things they want and need.

Low wages also present wider issues with morale, productivity, and retaining talent. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) states that employers who pay the UK's voluntary Real Living Wage experience enhanced reputation, easier recruitment, better labour relations, improved employee commitment and higher levels of motivation.

However, with pay rises not always possible in the care sector due to years of underfunding, social care workers are identified as the worst affected by insecure jobs. As such, employers must provide financial wellbeing support to help keep their people on track; this can be done by:

1. Supplying staff with forums which promote open dialogue on financial concerns and providing staff with financial seminars/meetings within the workplace enables their people to gain useful information and much needed support. By encouraging regular and open communication, employers can help reduce any stigma around financial struggles.
2. Provide employees with a financial wellbeing benefit which offers debt advice as well as a variety of easy to access financial wellbeing tools and resources such as financial calculators, information sheets, blogs and videos.
3. Use marketing materials to promote awareness of what financial support is available to staff and how they can access it.

The Care Worker's Charity has produced several resources to support registered managers and care workers to manage their finances, including how to budget, a savings calculator and the charity also offers advice on energy and money saving advice for social care.

Reducing Burnout

The social care sector employs more workers than the NHS and research published by The Society of Occupational Medicine found that, in 2022, NHS England lost 75,000 staff to illness caused by burnout. A further 170,000 have left (or are planning to leave) due to workload pressures.

The reported 152,000 vacant adult social care posts in England during 2022/23 is 13,000 less than the previous year and led to care workers being added to the Shortage Occupation List in 2022, promoting an international recruitment drive which saw 70,000 overseas workers join the adult social care sector to help plug the gap.

This means that 57,000 domestic workers exited the sector which is further evidence of the workforce crisis.

Because burnout is caused by excessive and prolonged workplace stress, it tends to occur once the employee has reached a point of crisis. At this point, the employee is likely to be experiencing a sense of disengagement and a loss of purpose within their role – which in turn can impact workers' health, job performance, morale, and quality of life.

Employers can help prevent staff burnout by:

1. **Ensuring staff levels meet productivity demand.** It is crucial to have experienced staff available who are adequately trained to complete the task at hand. Having a proactive approach to annual leave and sickness absence is vital. Employers should ensure staff members can cover team members roles should an absence occur and that they are fully aware of any ongoing projects.
2. **Workloads are evenly distributed amongst staff** with realistic and achievable deadlines. Keeping up-to-date statistics on employees' productivity levels as well as conducting regular workload reviews, will help identify and address any areas of concern quickly.
3. **Ensure staff feel comfortable in approaching management** should they feel their workloads are unachievable. Having regular one-to-one meetings and an 'open door' mentality will help assist this.
4. **Encouraging teamwork and acknowledging achievements** will help staff feel supported and valued. Employees who feel appreciated in their workplace, feel more engaged and are less likely to want to leave their employer.
5. **Encouraging staff to take regular breaks** and to maintain physical activity throughout the day.

Without preventative healthcare tools and in-the-moment support services, the issue of burnout will continue to cost the UK care sector dearly. It is therefore essential that care sector decision-makers invest in interventions and strategies to address burnout before it impacts employee mental wellbeing.

Evidence Base

The positive impact of providing this kind of mental and financial support is already being felt in other care-related organisations. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board provide community, primary, mental health, and hospital care to 450,000 individuals in the local community. When COVID-19 hit, it became clear that a dedicated mental health programme was needed to safeguard employee wellbeing after leaders realised their existing services no longer met requirements given the huge spike in anxiety, stress, and uncertainty brought about by the pandemic.

During the early days of COVID, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board had just two mental health counsellors providing face to face support to over 12,000 employees. With a long waiting list driven by a huge influx of staff now requiring assistance, it was decided that the introduction of a consistent wellbeing provision was key.

An EAP solution provides three vital strands to form good mental health habits in and out of the workplace. First, a 24/7 telephone helpline calmed the high levels of fear and anxiety being experienced by staff and reassured them that support was always available. Next, access to responsive counsellors with high referral rates allowed for more in-depth mental health care. Finally, a wide range of available online resources enabled staff to initiate self-help behaviours to work through challenging times.

With 50% of all employee referrals now being referred by line managers, support on-hand 24/7, 365 days a year, and the ability to access self-help tools when staff need them most, Cwm Taf Morgannwg are in a much stronger position to safeguard the mental health of their people in a meaningful way as they continue to navigate the after-effects of the pandemic from the front lines.

Most importantly, the introduction of a dedicated EAP has enabled staff to constantly consider their own wellbeing in the same way they would prioritise their physical health. As Cwm Taf Morgannwg discovered, only then can good mental health habits be formed and ingrained in our day-to-day lives.

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