

Review of the Workforce Project



Over the past year the project has looked at the challenges, present and future, of maintaining a sustainable workforce in the health and social care industry. Surrey is particularly challenged when trying to employ skilled workers with the right values, due to its geography and high cost of living as well as an aging population. As the population is aging in the county so is the care and support workforce.

Recruiting and retaining team members in the present climate is more than tough, with many services carrying vacancies and a low level of unemployment in the area other barriers such as the need for driver compound the problem.

These issues are not just the concern of the people receiving and providing care, they are also a very real issue to the residents of Surrey, the general public however does not appear to see the value the care services have to their community. The biggest challenge to recruiting and retaining the right people is to convince the right people to apply for the jobs.

The workforce project initially spoke to community and volunteer groups to determine if those already providing support might consider paid employment. Although some people use volunteering as an access point into care and health roles there are a few who want or need paid positions, those that do have been supported to find opportunities.

The unemployment in the county is very low, the project has visited all the job centres in the county to discuss the industry's needs, working with the job coaches to help them understand the skills and qualities to look out for when discussing people's employment futures with them. This is an ongoing relationship and has led to those looking to work in the field being directed to the most appropriate employers. The personal relationship developed with some of the longer term unemployed has helped them access initial training and skills development courses as well as volunteer roles. A return to work course in care is being devised with a private training company and the job centre, to include supported learning in literacy numeracy and an introduction to the care certificate.

To reach those who are not actively seeking new employment two main approaches have been used. A direct approach engaging potential target groups, and a broader multimedia approach using a more generic introduction to health and care careers.

Having identified the target groups who may be suitable for roles in the field the project has contacted social group, parent groups, schools, colleges and universities to talk to the potential candidates directly. The public has many misconceptions about what a paid job in care would be, by discussing the roles available and opportunities for a career people understand more about what they can do. This is supported by information leaflets offering further information.

The next generation of workers also want to know more about the careers available to them. With the support of a local school a unit from the BTECH in Health and Social care has been selected and is being developed into a training piece that local provider could deliver to their local schools. Key worker will be introduced to the unit and helped in connecting with local schools. This would give real experience and learning to students, develop the relationship with local services and reopen the opportunity of work and volunteer placements in the local community.

The need for placements and work opportunities has also been raised by colleges and universities, East Surrey College is developing a skills academy and has asked for assistance in mapping its curriculum to the care certificate, helping to prepare the young people with employment skills, we would like this to lead to a programme that helps employers offer meaningful work placements to the students.

The NHS is struggling to recruit workers in the area and has a very active recruitment programme. The Royal Surrey in Guilford is working with representatives of Surrey Care Association in a recruitment pilot. The Royal Surrey holds recruitment days, where they interview applicants and introduce them to the hospitals, not all applicants find the work suits them. To ensure they are not lost to the field we will be able to discuss with them the other opportunities they may have. This is the first time a joint recruitment has been done and it will be supported through social media and radio advertising.

Social media the second-best way of reaching the public encouraging them to see the profession as a career. Videos have been filmed and released prompting various roles, and this is being followed up by a career path video that will promote the potential work option available in the field. Reaching the public and bring the discussion to them about how their health and support needs are met and how they can be part of the delivery is a vital part of helping more people consider the profession.

Recruiting today and ensuring you retain your team is a much more pressing issue. To help providers in this toolkits are being developed through provider led workshops, bring together ideas, best practice solutions and innovative creative ideas. By sharing the challenges providers can help each other recruit and support the values teams they have as well as planning for the recruitment they will need. If you would like to know more about how you can become involved in these and other developing project to help recruit and retain the right people, please contact me at workforce@surreycare.org.uk