

Recruitment and Retention Tips: If you're a manager...

Recruitment has never been more important in the face of the biggest staffing crisis to face the UK in recent years. However, solely focusing on recruitment rather than keeping your existing staff happy and content continues to be a mistake a lot of managers make. Retaining nursing and care staff and increasing overall productivity is a cheaper and more effective method to supporting your care home or nursing home.

Invest in your staff: When you provide opportunities for professional development and extra training you can help uplift your staff's team morale and confidence in their skills. This way you're providing service users with a higher level of care as well. You can do this by fully or partially subsidising mandatory or extra training. Even though this might initially feel like another extra cost, remember that the investment will build the loyalty from your staff you need in the long run. When staff feel that they have good opportunities in their workplace and feel that they are given meaningful benefits, they may stay with you as an employer for longer; thus, helping you cut back on recruitment costs. Also, if you are recruiting a new care worker, they may be enticed to join your team if they know that their training costs will not be coming out of their own pocket.

Nursing and Care Work is not an easy job as it stands. Long shifts, emotionally draining situations, and often physical exertion beyond simply walking all day, are all par for the course. Nurses and Carers know what they are getting into, and still love their jobs because of the rewarding nature of the job. However, a constant state of long shifts and an understaffed environment will cause burnout, lack of motivation & focus, illness, and can even push the person away from the profession altogether. Not to mention the safety of clients and care workers is in jeopardy if the staff member is so overworked that they can't maintain the level of focus needed to do their job effectively.

Listen to your staff and take note of things that might be affecting them negatively in the workplace. Are they constantly rushing to and from their breaks? Perhaps extending the break by 5 to 10 minutes can help them do something as simple as have a snack and a coffee peacefully – which can do wonders for morale and productivity.

As a care home manager, you might have a lot on your plate, but making sure your staff are not overworked should be one of your priorities. A great way of doing this is by using temporary workers to occasionally fill in staffing gaps or provide supportive roles to your existing staff.

Having regular meetings is useful for a myriad of reasons. First, it will allow your staff to verbalise issues, concerns or problems they may have. This is also an opportunity for you as a manager to update your staff on any news, situations, or concerns that you may have as well.

Even if you are the manager of the home, it will often be the front-line workers like the nurses and carers, who are first to see or experience any issues that might be arising in the care home. Being aware of all things, however small is important, because it helps you keep on top of anything that might have the potential to create bigger problems down the line. Ensure that the meeting environment is friendly and relaxed is also important, so staff don't feel uncomfortable or nervous attending.

Furthermore, make it as easy as possible to protect all parties when needed – for example someone who blows the whistle on a poor practice by another member of staff might be faced with bullying or

harassment after they report their concerns. If you're not careful to keep their identity hidden, or if you retaliate too drastically to the issue at hand, you might be faced with another problematic situation.

Managing a team is a balancing act, and sometimes it requires you to face situations that need mediation and great people skills. Running regular staff meetings helps to keep this balance intact.

As a care home manager, you know what your goals are for the care home. As an example, perhaps you want to increase the nursing homes CQC rating. If that's the case, make sure that you create incentives for your staff that fall in line with that goal. Share your aims with your staff as well, so they understand the choices being made behind the scenes and can also work together as a goal driven team to reach the ultimate destination.

Motivators or incentives for staff are a great way to keep them goal driven and hungry to succeed for themselves as well. Discuss with your team to find out what motivates them and set that up as the incentive. Money is an obvious choice here, but other things might be extra time off or holiday days, extra training, promotions, or team outings.

Spending a lot of extra money isn't necessary to treat your staff and make them feel appreciated. Something as simple as bringing in cupcakes occasionally, picking up a fancy coffee order for the team, or remembering staff birthdays and festive holidays, is completely enough to show your gratitude for their hard work. When you treat your staff, it keeps their morale high, and makes them more satisfied with their job, and productive with their tasks.

Employee of the month plaques and outlandish awards aren't necessary. Simply recognising an employee that works hard, or shows initiative beyond what is expected of them, reaching out to them and thanking them can go a long way. Letting someone know that their efforts or good work ethic don't go unnoticed, and that they are appreciated, keeps a staff motivated to keep up the good work. These staff members are also the ones who you should elevate with rewards like more responsibilities, pay raises, and promotions. Keeping them satisfied ensures that they won't be jumping ship to a different workplace looking for something more rewarding.

Be consistent in everything like planning, schedules, and policy enforcement. When you are organised and provide a solid backbone for the staff to rely on, it takes away uncertainty from their everyday tasks and even their personal lives. For example, if the schedule always comes out 2 weeks early, staff know that they can organise their other personal tasks outside of work like childcare, shopping, or another job. When they can rely on the consistency of that schedule, they feel less stressed.

Keeping your staff in the loop, following up with them personally, and involving them in the process of planning and scheduling (like asking what shifts they prefer, or if they feel supported at work etc), can also show your consistency as a manager that continually takes their staff's concerns seriously and addresses them reasonably.

At the end of the day it comes down to the work-life-happiness balance when it comes to keeping care staff motivated and productive in the workplace. The job can be hard, mentally and physically taxing, but if the rewards outweigh the difficulties, then carers and nurses happily remain in their positions. Keep your staff feeling appreciated, not overworked, and goal driven, and you'll see your staff motivation and productivity grow!