

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE

2021/2022 eBOOK

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CHECKS



Thank you for downloading Personnel Check's latest eBook the '[Biggest Challenges for Recruitment and Retention in Adult Social Care 2021/22](#)'. As a background screening organisation, we occupy a unique position. Assisting care organisations across the country with both their safeguarding and recruitment. We regularly witness the challenges care providers face first-hand. In this report, we will explore the biggest issues facing adult social care providers over the next twelve months.

The coronavirus pandemic has been one of the defining events of the twenty-first century. The effects have been widespread and will continue to have an impact for decades to come. Health and social care providers have found themselves on the frontline of this pandemic. In an industry already struggling with high staff turnover, coronavirus has exacerbated these stresses to breaking point. Despite this strain, care staff have shown an incredible degree of resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Before the pandemic, recruitment and retention of staff was already a struggle for most care providers. Post-pandemic, this issue has grown and made the ecosystem for adult social care provision even more fragile. In March 2020, [the CQC Market Oversight report](#) highlighted that without action the labour market for the industry could falter even more. If this happens it will severely impact the quality of adult social care in the UK.

At the height of the pandemic, health and social care providers experienced massive staff shortages. With staff off sick or having to self-isolate, providers struggled to cope. In an already understaffed industry, this led to some providers being so desperate to recruit, that basic safeguards like [background checks](#) have been left at the wayside. This highlights just how severe the impact of COVID-19 has been on adult social care providers.

The rising costs of recruitment and training are also weighing heavily on the minds of care providers. Combined with a desperate need for more funding, financial salience is a key concern for adult social care providers.

[A report from the Competition and Markets Authority](#) found that the current model of care provision cannot be sustained without additional public funding. According to data from the [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#) it is predicted that local authorities will need to spend an additional £2.3bn on adult social care in 2020/21 due to coronavirus. These [additional costs](#) are made up of the following:

£900m to support providers	£260m for personal protective equipment (PPE)
£150m for additional workforce pressures	£840m for additional adult social care demand
£150m of other adult social care related spending	

Recruitment, retention and strained finances have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. However, these concerns were widespread even before the spread of COVID-19. An emerging threat is that of vaccine uptake. The government has declared that all workers in CQC-regulated care homes must have the vaccine before October 2021. Unsurprisingly, this has been met with resistance. Despite evidence demonstrating its efficacy in protecting service users, there is still widespread hesitancy regarding vaccines.

How adult social care providers tackle these challenges will determine whether they survive one of the most difficult periods ever faced by the industry. From the impact of coronavirus to changing attitudes to work, this guide will help you navigate the challenges you are likely to face as an adult social provider over the coming year.

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CANDIDATE ATTRACTION

Attracting the right people to work in care settings has always been a difficult task. In recent years, the difficulty of this has been further compounded, first by Brexit and then the coronavirus pandemic. But with an ageing population, the number of roles in the adult social care sector is set to keep on growing, increasing by at least a third in the next 10 years.

A recent study published by Totaljobs found that a third of UK job seekers would consider a role in social care. Some estimates show that **up to 30%** of employees are looking for alternative work. Combined with the nearly 2 million unemployed, this puts the number of job seekers in the UK around the 11 million mark. Using these stats, it should mean that there are a few million candidates ready to jump into the industry.

With this being the case, what can be done to improve candidate attraction?



USE THE RIGHT RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

According to Skills for Care, care organisations with the lowest staff turnover attracted candidates by advertising job vacancies in the following way:

- via existing employees referring a friend
- adverts posted on the organisation's website
- adverts printed in the local newspaper
- posters in the local community
- adverts posted on social media or elsewhere online

Using these channels offer you the best chance of attracting candidates for your vacancies. It's also important to consider which channels appeal to certain demographics. Different groups tend to search for job information in different ways and have different priorities.

We've summarised some key areas to consider:

Young People (16-24yrs):

Social media is a key channel for young people, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These platforms allow for mass advertising. This demographic is particularly interested in on the job learning like apprenticeships with clear paths for career progression. Advertising should be kept short and to the point and optimised for mobile devices.

School Leavers and Graduates:

Social media channels are also important for this group as they tend to be young people as well. On top of this, advertising at local universities and attending graduate fairs to discuss your vacancies is essential. Advertising should focus on times around graduation dates or when courses finish. This is usually April-May or July-Oct. Graduates are interested in clear career progression opportunities.

Over 55's:

Facebook is the key social media channel to focus on when attracting this demographic. More people over 50 are using Facebook than ever before. Consider posting jobs in local selling or community groups. You can also pay for targeted ads. Other adverts should be placed in local media outlets like newspapers, magazines and even radio. Online job boards and websites are another avenue to target.

People with disabilities:

Linking with specialist recruitment agencies can help you source staff from this traditionally underrepresented group. Advertising with local community or support groups can also be a good area to explore. People with disabilities will likely want to know about flexible working opportunities, what reasonable adjustments can be made and opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

Women returning to work after a career break:

There are a number of specialised agencies and sites targeted at mothers looking to return to work. Sites like [CareerMums](#), [Mum & Career](#) and [Mumsnet Jobs](#) are all good sites to advertise your vacancies. Flexible and part-time work opportunities are often favoured by this demographic so adverts should focus on areas like work-life balance as well as flexible shift patterns.

OUTSOURCING RECRUITMENT

Recruitment companies are often considered too expensive for the adult social care sector. But this isn't necessarily true. The commission charged by recruitment companies is often much less than the overall cost of traditional advertising methods. Things such as online adverts and job boards. This is before you consider the time spent by your existing staff actually posting the ads, arranging interviews, conducting interviews etc.

Utilising recruitment companies might not be appropriate for the average staff member, but they are particularly useful when it comes to senior employees.

VALUE-BASED RECRUITMENT

Value-based recruitment (VBR) can help your organisation attract the right people and retain them for longer. This not only improves the quality of hire but also saves money in the long term. To introduce this approach, employers must first determine their organisational values and then combine these with the expected social care values. Once these values are established, organisations can look for applicants that match these values.

Skills for Care are the key provider of workshops and training on how to implement VBR into health and social care organisations. You can find more support on how to get started here.

STAFF RETENTION

A key component of high-quality care is having strong relationships between clients and carers. Unfortunately, the care sector consistently maintains one of the highest staff turnover rates. This directly affects the ability of care providers to deliver quality care. A recent report from [Skills for Care](#) found that nearly half a million workers in adult social care leave their job every year. With the added stresses of the past 15 months, this is unlikely to change.

What most employers fail to realise, is the real cost of having a high staff turnover. The [average cost of employee](#) turnover, based on an average UK salary, is about £11,000 per lost staff member. According to the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, these costs can rise to well over £100,000 for bad hires at a senior level. [Research](#) has shown that a care organisation with 100 employees could save over £50,000 per year by improving the retention of their staff.

Highlighting the realities of the job during the recruitment process can help mitigate staff turnover rate. Many care sector employees leaving the industry cite the fact they weren't prepared for the day-to-day life of a care worker before entering the industry. But aside from this, what can be done to reduce the rate of staff turnover in care organisations?

BOOSTING RETENTION

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Investing in staff training and development is nearly always cited as the best way to improve levels of retention in your workforce. Time spent training staff members can improve their perception of their abilities, boosting their confidence and level of job satisfaction. On top of this, employees that feel invested in by their employer exhibit higher levels of loyalty than those that feel stagnant in their role.

VALUE-BASED RECRUITMENT

Identifying and embedding the values of your organisation is the second most common technique cited as beneficial for enhanced rates of retention. Workplace values are the principles guiding how staff in your organisation should approach their work. As discussed in the previous chapter, employers must first determine their organisational values and then combine these with the expected social care values.

Recruiting from a values perspective means you are more likely to recruit the right people for your advertised roles. Employees matched with values during the recruitment process are more likely to stay long term with an organisation. Employers with a values focused approach to recruitment and retention experienced a turnover rate of around 19%. This is around 6% lower than the industry average of 25.4%.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

Celebrating the achievements of individual staff is important as it can help foster confidence. This in turn boosts their motivation to work. Confident, motivated employees are far more likely to stay with their employer for the long term than those that feel disenfranchised.

It's also important to celebrate organisational achievement. This can be an opportunity to improve relationships within your workforce. Having time away from work to celebrate the achievements of the team as a whole can be great for team morale. High team morale again has a positive effect on rates of retention. Allowing workers to celebrate the achievements of the wider organisation can also help them to feel as though their contribution is valued.

INVOLVE WORKERS IN DECISION MAKING

Involving your workers in the decision-making process of your organisations can boost retention as it demonstrates a level of trust between you and your employees. It can help increase employee engagement, improve internal communication and also ensure your staff are bought into any changes before they happen.

NEW EXPECTATIONS AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

While there are a number of resources out there offering support on improving staff retention, most of this was produced prior to the pandemic. Changing attitudes to work mean that employers need to anticipate changing expectations from their workforce. One side effect of the pandemic is that many parts of the UK workforce are now expecting greater levels of flexibility from their jobs.

This doesn't traditionally fit with what is required from health and social care workers. Unsociable hours and shift work are often the norm. When recruiting, employers need to be aware of these new expectations and attempt to educate any potential recruits about the realities of working in care.

Another consideration when recruiting after that pandemic is vaccines. [The GMB Union](#) believe the industry is facing a mass exodus of staff due to the prospect of mandatory vaccinations. This is something we'll discuss in more detail in the next section.





VACCINE HESITANCY

Vaccine hesitancy is an emerging problem in developed nations.

Research [published in the journal, Nature Medicine](#), has shown that over 80% of individuals in low-and middle-income countries (LMIC) were willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine. This dropped to around 65% in the United States, [59% in Western Europe](#) and even further in Russia, where vaccine acceptance rates hovered around 30%.

Historically, the benefits of vaccines, both personally and socially, have been abundantly clear. Considering the visible effects of conditions like polio and tuberculosis, any potential vaccine side effects clearly outweighed the damage done by the illness. But now that vaccines have essentially eradicated these illnesses, people are less aware of the preventative benefits of vaccines. This means they can choose to focus on the small risk of negative side-effects.

COMPULSORY VACCINES

The government [recently announced](#) that from October 2021 anyone working within a CQC-registered care home will be expected to have had both doses of the COVID vaccine. These rules will apply to any full or part-time staff that a care home employs. It will also apply to any healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers, beauticians, or CQC inspectors who need to access the home.

Whilst it has been confirmed there will be a grace period of up to 16 weeks, this news has been met with resistance from those working in the industry. Over 60,000 people have [signed a petition](#) calling for the plans to be scrapped. In an industry where staff turnover is already causing huge problems, the added pressure of vaccine hesitancy is poised to make the problem worse.

It is the care homes 'registered person' who will be responsible for enforcing these rules and checking workers entering the care home meets the vaccine requirements. The only exceptions to the new rules are listed below:

- anyone with a medical exemption
- current care home residents and service users
- friends and family of a current resident
- workers who do not enter the care home, for example a gardener
- someone providing emergency assistance or urgent maintenance
- members of the emergency services who need to enter the care home to carry out their job
- anyone visiting a dying resident
- anyone giving bereavement support to a resident after the death of a relative or friend
- anyone under 18

Care home managers are in a difficult situation as the demographic make-up of staff in the industry are those seemingly **most resistant** to accepting the vaccine. The health and social care workforce consist of more women and those of ethnically diverse backgrounds than other sectors. Government documents state that the **reason for hesitancy** in these demographics is down to:

- lack of knowledge about the vaccine,
- misinformation
- mistrust of government
- perceptions of equality and discrimination in health and public services.

Care home managers need to ensure they have the processes and resources in place to be able to manage their staff's vaccination hesitancy.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There is a range of tactics that managers can employ to try and boost vaccine uptake amongst staff. The majority of these in essence come down to trust and communication.

Openly discussing people's concerns about the vaccine and making information available that addresses their specific concerns can make all the difference. It can be useful for those in management positions to educate themselves by attending webinars and reading official guidance.

In some cases, leading by example can be all that is needed. A government case study found that when one care home manager posted a video of herself being vaccinated to the work WhatsApp group and social media accounts, the vaccine uptake from the rest of her staff increased.

The Department of Health & Social Care's **'UK COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan'** is a good resource for managers to familiarise themselves with for tips on how to boost vaccine uptake.

TECHNOLOGY

Whether we like it or not, the UK economy is becoming ever more reliant on digital technology. The world we live in is fast becoming digital by default. While some sectors lead the way in adopting new technology, others, like health and social care have often lagged behind.

Some technologies are widely used in the provision of healthcare but haven't been as common in social care services. In general, the health and social care sector have been poor adopters of newer technology. Unless it is directly related to providing care or treatment. Historically this has been down to a lack of funding from central agencies for investment in digital technologies. However, the coronavirus pandemic has forced the hand of UK health and social care providers. Care homes, GPs surgeries, social services and other providers have all been forced to rapidly adapt to technology to continue providing services and assist their clients.

REASONS TO INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY

The achievements of health and social care providers in the past 18 months highlight just how well digital technologies can be integrated into health and social care services. Providers have supported their clients throughout the pandemic with communicating with family and friends via technology or online platforms. A significant portion of social care services have managed to move certain day or community services online as well.

Using technology like this has granted a lifeline during periods of intense isolation. There is no reason for this to stop post-pandemic. The social benefits of digital communication technology are clearly evident. Aside from the social benefits, the use of digital tools has allowed clinicians to use their time more effectively when it comes to consultations and other appointments where physical contact isn't always necessary.

Technology can also be used to improve patient safety by highlighting early signs of illness. 5 clinical commissioning groups in mid and south Essex have begun the process of adopting [Whzan Digital Health Systems](#). This technology records clients' vital signs and can notify carers of clinical staff of any deterioration or development in their condition. This helps reduce the strain on NHS services by allowing staff to intervene earlier than previously possible.

These systems are to be implemented in all care homes across the area within the next 12 months. This follows the successful introduction of the technology into all care homes on the Isle of Wight.

Wearable smart devices are another technology that can be leveraged in health and social care settings. Sedentary behaviour is well known to be one of the main contributors for chronic illness. Research is beginning to show that wearable fitness trackers can be a positive motivator to increase physical activity amongst all demographics. The access to visible data on a daily basis seems to contribute to longer term behaviour changes in regard to physical activity.

The use of these technologies can all contribute to a better quality of care for service users, lessen the strain on care providers and in some instances help save money.

DATA PROTECTION & CONSENT

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CONSENT

Consent for processing personal data must be given freely by an individual, without feeling pressured, coerced or threatened. If an individual lacks the mental capacity to provide consent for themselves, you must obtain consent from their legal representative, or someone authorised to make decisions for them. If this cannot be done you may need to explore other lawful avenues providing you with a lawful basis for processing their data.

To obtain consent you must make the individual aware of the following clearly and explicitly:

- who you are and your contact details
- how you intend to gather their information
- the type of information you will be gathering
- the purpose of you gathering their data
- how you'll use and access the data
- who (if anyone) you are likely to share their data with
- how long you'll keep personal data (or how you'll decide this)
- their rights under data protection law, including their right to withdraw consent
- if not giving their consent means you will not be able to provide a particular service to them.

The above is usually outline in a written privacy notice but in some circumstances, you may have to discuss these things orally with the individual. Consent does not have to be given in writing but there must be a clear confirmation that the individual has given consent. This consent, how it was confirmed and when, must be recorded for data protection.

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) provide a series of checklists for employers to ensure they are consent compliant. These can be found [here](#).

BEING DATA COMPLIANT

In 2017, the Department of Health and Social Care put a policy in place for all health and social care providers to follow. Developed by the National Data Guardian, providers must adhere to the following 10 Data Security Standards:

- 1 All staff ensure that personal confidential data is handled, stored and transmitted securely, whether in electronic or paper form. Personal confidential data is shared for only lawful and appropriate purposes.
- 2 All staff understand their responsibilities under the National Data Guardian's data security standards, including their obligation to handle information responsibly and their personal accountability for deliberate or avoidable breaches.
- 3 All staff complete appropriate annual data security training and pass a mandatory test,
- 4 Personal confidential data is only accessible to staff who need it for their current role and access is removed as soon as it is no longer required. All instances of access to personal confidential data on IT systems can be attributed to individuals.
- 5 Processes are reviewed at least annually to identify and improve any which have caused breaches or near misses, or which force staff to use workarounds which compromise data security.
- 6 Cyberattacks against services are identified and resisted and CareCERT security advice is responded to. Action is taken as soon as possible following a data breach or near miss, with a report made to senior management within 12 hours of detection. Significant cyberattacks are to be reported to CareCERT immediately following detection.
- 7 A continuity plan is in place to respond to threats to data security, including significant data breaches or near misses, and it is tested once a year as a minimum, with a report to senior management.
- 8 No unsupported operating systems, software or internet browsers are used within the IT estate.
- 9 A strategy is in place for protecting IT systems from cyber threats, based on a proven cyber security framework such as Cyber Essentials. This is reviewed at least annually.
- 10 IT suppliers are held accountable via contracts for protecting the personal confidential data they process and for meeting the National Data Guardian's data security standards.

To ensure you meet government standards for data protection it is important that you familiarise yourself with the full GDPR guide provided by the ICO as well. This can be found [here](#).

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Over the course of the past 18 months the unemployment rate has risen considerably. Between August and October 2020, there were a record 370,000 redundancies made. This would have been a significantly higher number had it not been for the furlough scheme.

But what does this mean for your recruitment practice?

GAPS ON CVS

More and more people are going to have gaps in their employment record. Considering this is usually a worrying feature of a CV, it's something that hiring managers are going to be seeing far more commonly. In the changing recruitment landscape, background screening solutions can provide that extra layer of confidence and security.

Large gaps in someone's employment history can raise alarm bells. Missing periods of time can be an indicator of many things, from taking time out to raise your family, all the way through to a custodial sentence. But lost time between 2020-2021 is going to become a typical sight.

We all empathise with people who have suffered employment difficulties due to the pandemic. It has been a hard year even if you've not lost your job. It would make sense for hiring managers to adopt a more understanding approach to gaps in occupational history.

However, these gaps being common means some unscrupulous characters may try to take advantage of this. To some people, the pandemic will present as a ready-made excuse to explain away discrepancies on their employment record.

Anyone willing to do this would, at best be a bad culture fit for your business. At worst, they could end up costing you a lot of time and money.

HOW CAN BACKGROUND SCREENING HELP

One of the most common concerns about background screening is the cost. However, the benefits of having a robust screening process in place significantly outweigh the costs. A 2019 study by the University of Portsmouth reveals employment fraud in the UK costs employers an estimated £24 billion, each year!

Incorporating background screening can help mitigate this. Sometimes even without the need to carry out any checks! People who commit employment fraud are far less likely to apply for a role where background screening is standard practice. Knowing that a company screens its new recruits is often enough to deter people from applying.

Enhanced DBS Checks are an essential part of recruitment in health and social care, but fraudsters can pass these checks without flagging up any concerns. However, there are a number of other background checks that you can use to aid you against employment fraud.

OTHER BACKGROUND CHECKS

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY CHECKS – These checks reveal a complete history of an applicant's work history, including all periods of employment, self-employment, unemployment etc. These checks are essential for any senior hires and cover up to six or ten years' worth of occupational history.

MEDIA CHECKS – These checks provide selected results based on a search using an online search engine and media feeds against the candidate's full name. This will reveal any negative information that has been publicly reported on the individual. Particularly useful for positions in the public eye.

ADVERSE FINANCIAL CHECKS – These checks search against publicly available data to reveal any adverse information. This data includes 6 million County Court Judgements (CCJs), bankruptcies, voluntary arrangements, decrees in Scotland and administration orders. Unsurprisingly, these checks are highly valued by those in the financial services sector but are of value to any positions where people will be managing large sums of money.

As you can see, there is far more information available to you as an employer than you may first realise. In such a strange recruitment landscape, the more information you have, the better your chances of making a successful hire.

Implementing a legally compliant background screening process is a complicated and time intensive task. Screening regulations tend to involve overlapping areas of legislation that can often be contradictory. Relying on professional background screening and compliance organisation is the best way to ensure you get the most out of this process.

Why not join the ever-growing community of conscientious businesses that are taking the leap into background screening? For more information about how Personnel Checks background screening solutions can aid your organisation, get in touch! You can give us a call on **01254 355688** or drop us an email at letstalk@personnelchecks.co.uk

