

WELCOMING AND SUPPORTING NEW CARE WORKERS INTO THE SECTOR

timewise
TALENT THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

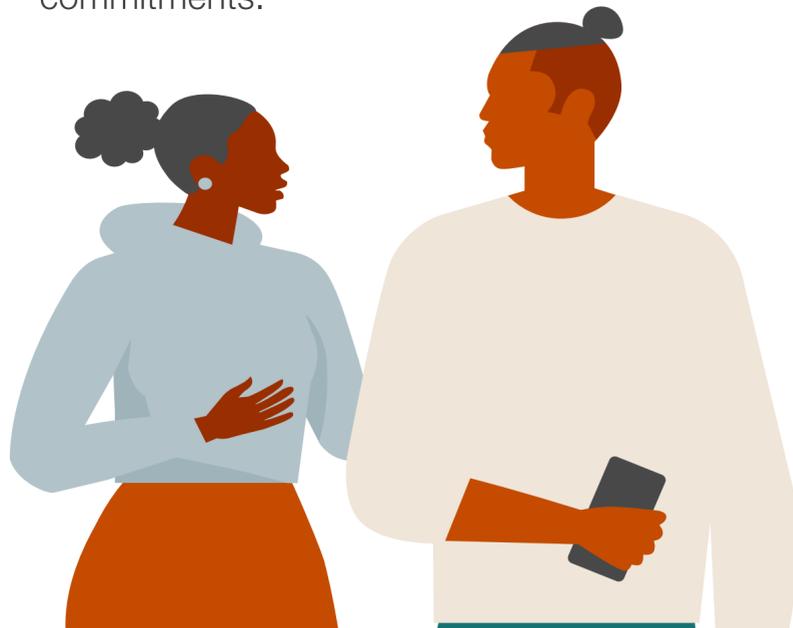
A care manager's checklist to accompany the 'Time to Care?' guide for care workers



INTRODUCTION

Working in adult domiciliary care is not your typical nine to five role, and new recruits often find it challenging to fit their schedule alongside their life outside of work. The unpredictability, difficult client visiting slots, and onerous travelling times are contributory factors to the high staff turnover in the sector.

Whilst fully aware that there are many other reasons behind the struggle to recruit and retain care workers, Timewise determined to try to address the specific challenge of poor work-life balance – something we could see was a particular problem in a feminised sector where many workers have their own family caring commitments.



About the 'Time to Care?' guide

Over the last six months, we have worked alongside care workers from two providers, getting to understand the pinch points of the job, and learning what kind of support might smooth the early months of a new care worker's career. The outcome was our 'Time to Care?' guide, which provides supportive tips for care workers on how they can build a client schedule that suits their lives whilst maximising their earnings.

About this manager's checklist

The care workers we spent time with also told us what they felt is needed from recruiters and managers, to make the on-boarding process work better. This checklist is not a formal workforce practice resource; it's a reflection of what care workers have told us they want from you. It's designed to sit alongside the 'Time to Care?' guide, helping providers to welcome and support new care workers during the challenging early stages of the job.

We hope the advice set out in the guide and in this checklist will assist the care sector in one of two ways:

- By helping candidates to fully understand the daily schedule, it will allow some of them to make informed decisions that the job will not be workable for them. Whilst not helping recruitment itself, this will save time and money spent on costly training and induction only to find that people drop out before the job even starts.
- By supporting new care workers to adapt to the role more smoothly and quickly, it will hopefully reduce the high drop-out rate during the induction phase.

Our ultimate goal is to help keep more care workers in the sector for longer, because they are happier in their work.

Who are Timewise?

Timewise is a social enterprise that helps people to access good flexible work. Over the last few years we have worked in the NHS, retail, construction and education sectors, exploring ways to improve the working lives of staff. Our focus is on finding flexible working patterns that support a better work-life balance. Aside from benefiting individuals and enhancing well-being, good flexible working is known to improve recruitment and retention, and even productivity.



01 TRANSPARENCY DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

We recommend that care providers are clear and honest about the working patterns of care workers, from the start of your connection with a potential future employee. Think carefully about what you say in your job adverts, and don't make any assumptions about what they know and what they need to know.

All of the providers Timewise worked with were seeing significant candidate drop-out between the initial application and the interview, interview and the induction, and induction and the actual start of work. A consistent factor was the journey of discovery that candidates went through, as they grew to understand exactly what the role involved and what the terms of their employment would be.

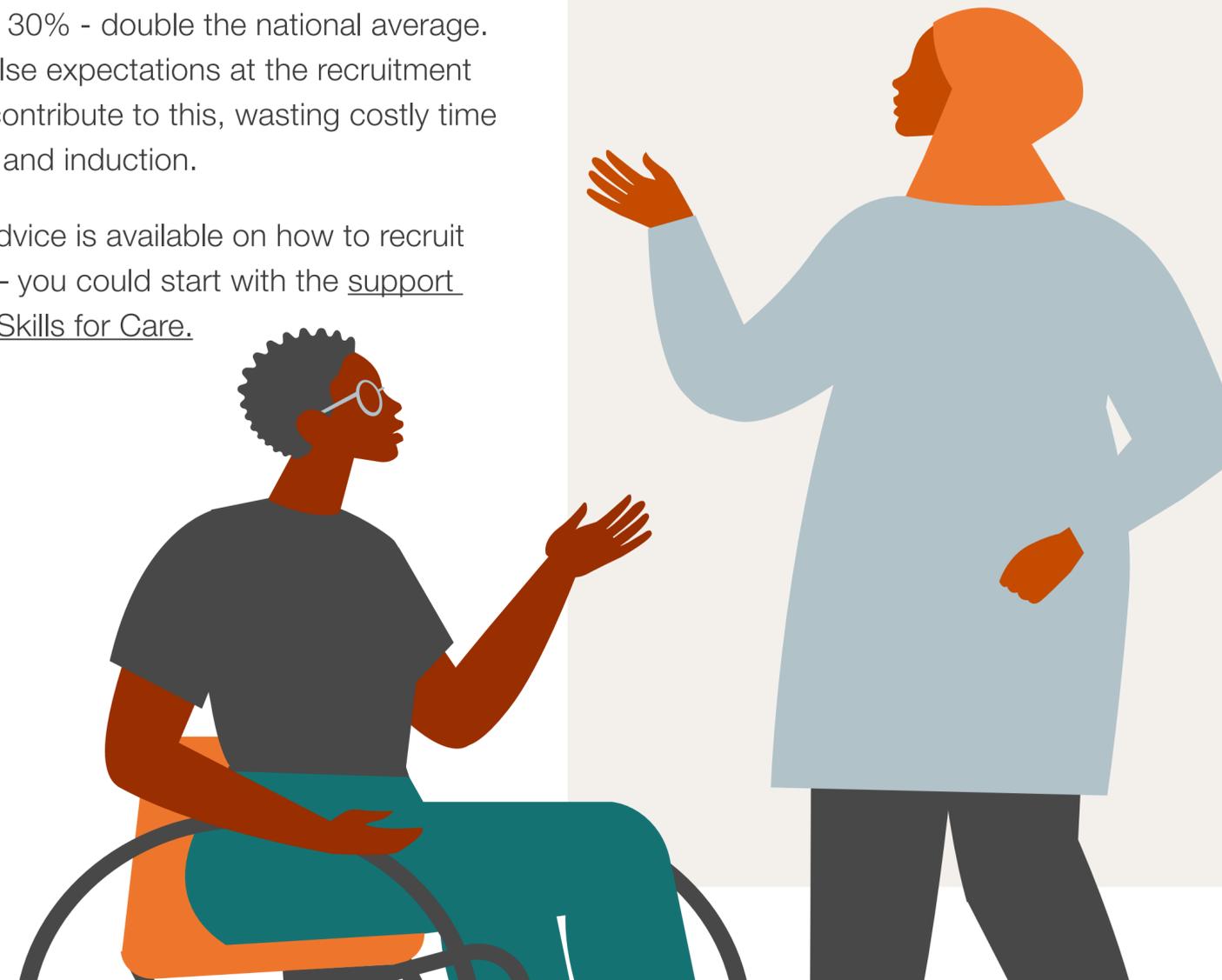
Save time for yourself and your candidates by being really clear from the start about the challenges and rewards of the role: the hours of work, the nature of the tasks involved, and the paid and unpaid elements. They will uncover the truth sooner or later, and the best approach

is to give them a clear picture of the role, at the same time as supporting them to make decisions about what will or won't work for them, given their personal circumstances.

Social care suffers from a very high labour turnover of 30% - double the national average. Creating false expectations at the recruitment stage will contribute to this, wasting costly time on training and induction.

Plenty of advice is available on how to recruit effectively – you could start with the [support offered by Skills for Care](#).

MAKE SURE YOU COMMUNICATE...



The reality of social care tasks

- You could provide a video showing a day in the life of one of your current care workers.
- Check that candidates have the right values for care work – Skills for Care have advice on [values based recruitment](#) and how to [embed values in your job descriptions](#).
- You could also give candidates scenario-based questions in the interview, that will help them to think about the types of situations they will face, and the decisions they will need to make on the go.
- [Organising a work trial](#) is a particularly helpful way to ensure a good fit.
- Alternatively, bring the shadowing element of the induction sooner in the process, so they get a true feel for the role quickly.

MAKE SURE YOU COMMUNICATE...

The terms of their employment

- If the contract is zero hours, explain up front that this will give them choice and flexibility in the amount of work they accept, and how their daily schedule works with the rest of their lives; but also that there is no guaranteed work, that clients come and go, and that there are often periods of unpredictability.
- Usual practice is to pay care workers for their travel and wait time between clients, by adding an allowance for it to their hourly pay rate for client time. This is often difficult for care workers to understand, so explain the allowance clearly to them and help them to work out their actual hourly pay rate for all the time they spend on the job, once their travel time is included.
- Also explain how travel time eats into their available time for work, and that they may not be able to get as many hours as they hope for.

The hours and shifts

- Explain the typical care packages and the timings when clients usually need to be visited.
- Clarify which tasks are timebound (eg meals and key personal care tasks), and which are more flexible (eg domestic cleaning, shopping).
- If a candidate needs the more time-flexible tasks, give an honest idea of how much work of this kind is available.

The checks and references

- Explain which elements of the pre-recruitment checks will be paid for and if care workers will need to pay for some themselves (eg DBS).
- Refer them to the local authority's brokerage team, who can often provide funding for the DBS check.
- Give candidates a realistic timeframe for checks and references, and whether or not any training can be commenced during this time.



02 TRAINING AND INDUCTION

We appreciate that no two inductions will be the same, as each worker will have different previous experience and will learn in different ways and at a different pace. However, they still need to understand the process of the training and induction and the further support that will be made available to them.

Providing care workers with a structured induction and training plan will enable them to plan their non-work commitments around this.

Training

- Explain what training they need to undertake, and how long it is likely to last.
- Clarify which elements of the training will take place in the office, which can be done in their own time remotely/online, and which will be covered out and about on the job.
- Be completely clear on which elements of the training they will be paid for, which will be unpaid, and most importantly if they have to pay for any of the training themselves.

- What additional training can they expect to receive, after the initial induction period? What are the routes to progression for a care worker? Support your care workers with information and advice, and point them to the [Skills for Care website](#)

HELPING NEW CARE WORKERS WITH TRAINING COSTS

- If your employees need to pay for parts of their training, there may be ways they can get support. Skills for Care have [information about the DHSC's development fund](#).
- Ensure you are linked in with your local authority and know what training they make available through providers.

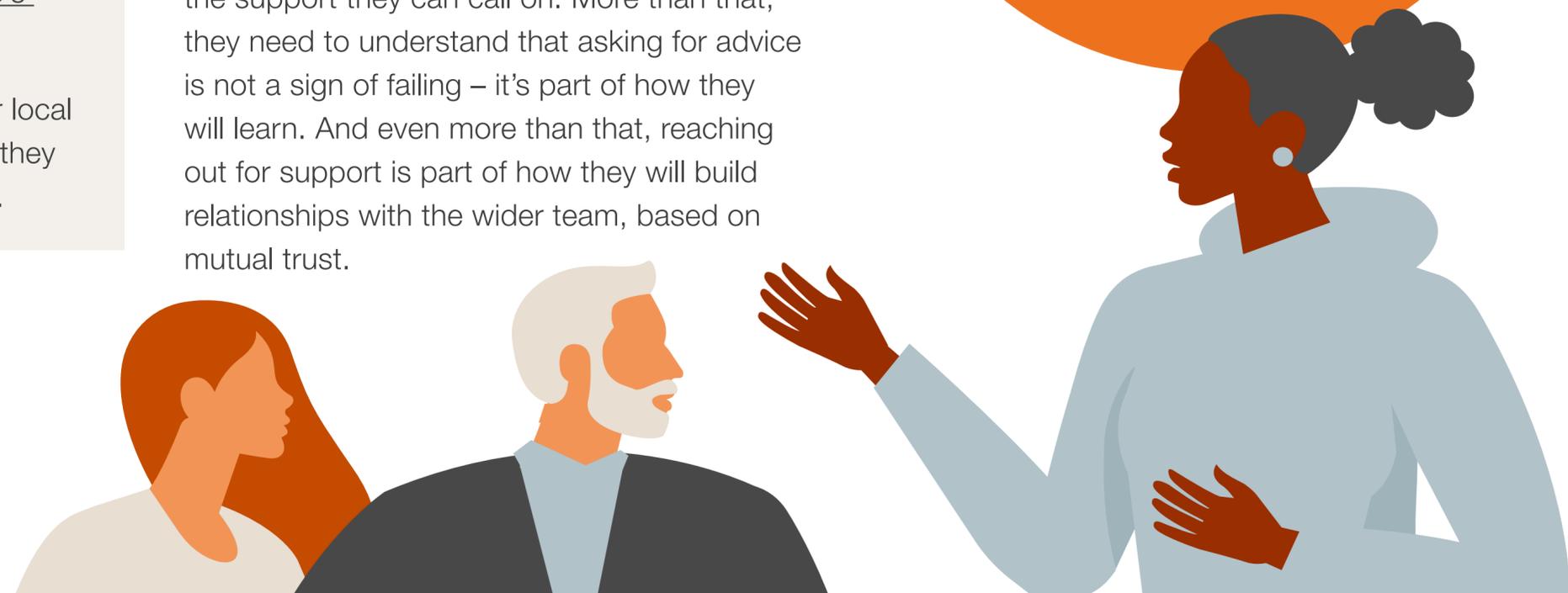
Supporting new care workers to become part of the team

Many care workers told us of the huge responsibility of working alone with vulnerable clients, and needing to use their initiative, often in challenging circumstances. Even for the more established care worker, the support of their field supervisor and having access to a network of support at the office is a great source of reassurance.

For new workers, this is even more important, so it's vital to ensure they are fully aware of the support they can call on. More than that, they need to understand that asking for advice is not a sign of failing – it's part of how they will learn. And even more than that, reaching out for support is part of how they will build relationships with the wider team, based on mutual trust.

SUPPORT NETWORK

- How will they work with their supervisor?
- How often will they meet with them?
- Explain the process and purpose of spot checks.
- Explain how they can get further support if they need more training (eg additional shadowing time, double-handed jobs etc).



03 CARING FOR CARE WORKERS

Developing a close-knit team

The providers we worked with gave great insight into what helped to make a good care worker. They spoke of the importance of building personal connections not just with clients and their families, but also with key contacts back at the office, such as the coordinator and the supervisor. Building these internal relationships helps care workers to develop a sense of belonging, and means they are more likely to seek support from the wider team when needed.

We spoke to field supervisors who had a monthly welfare meeting with their care workers, outside of the compulsory spot check visit. They used the meeting to focus on the care workers themselves, not their clients, to understand any personal or well-being concerns and ensure their workers had the support they needed. These providers recognised how important it is to support their workers to be in a good place personally, so that they can give their best selves to this challenging role.

Advice on how to support well-being is available from [Skills for Care](#) and the [NHS](#).

Encouraging team cohesion

- Explore ways to [support your teams to keep connected](#)
- Supervisors need to be proactive about checking in on the well-being of care workers in their team. [Skills for Care have some good advice.](#)
- How often do the teams come together to share information and good practice, or for skills development?
- Can you encourage the teams to set up informal communication channels such as WhatsApp or private Facebook groups in order to keep connected, offer each other support and share hints and tips?

Recognising good work

Good providers seek feedback from clients and their families, and channel positive comments back to their care workers. It's the best thanks a care worker can receive – their role can be quite solitary, and they rely on their relationships with clients as a measure of their success.

How can you motivate and reward your care workers?

- How is performance evaluated? [Skills for Care have useful advice.](#)
- How often do your team receive feedback?
- How is exceptional performance recognised and rewarded?
- What additional benefits could be put in place for care workers? eg parking permits, bus passes, paid travel time, differentiated pay for unpopular shifts or additional responsibility.

We hope this guide has been helpful, and that you will use it alongside giving our **Time to Care?** guide to your new care workers and candidates. Our suggestions are based on what care workers have told us they'd find helpful to know from the start, and what would support them to stay in the sector. We recognise there are many wider issues that need fixing in the sector, but we hope that these insights, on how care workers can manage the ups and downs of their work schedules, will go some way to alleviating the recruitment and retention crisis.

