



Workforce: staff and volunteer recruitment

DAY CENTRE RESOURCES HUB - SECTION 6

These resources are for older people's day centres and organisations who may work with them. They aim to support day centre sustainability by improving knowledge about them, supporting their operation and encouraging joint working.

NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration
South London



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About this document

This document forms part of the Day Centre Resources Hub which can be found at <https://arc-sl.nihr.ac.uk/day-centre-resources-hub>. These resources are for older people's day centres and organisations who might work with them. They aim to support day centre sustainability by raising awareness and improving knowledge about them, supporting their operation, and encouraging joint working.

People who might be interested are those whose roles involve planning, funding, evaluating and referring or signposting to day centres. They might be people working in community organisations or considering partnership working with day centres. Others might work or volunteer in day centres or support other stakeholders, research service provision, or be carers of people who attend day centres.

This Resources Hub contains seven sections.

Each section is available as a downloadable Adobe Acrobat document. Alternatively, you can download one document that includes all seven sections. There are also Word or Excel templates that can be downloaded and used locally.

Documents can be printed in black and white by selecting 'printer properties' and 'print in grayscale'.

Each section is a compilation of useful material. We hope people will dip in to find specific resources relevant to their work and appropriate

to their needs. A broad range of day centre stakeholders were involved in developing these resources. They address priority support needs identified by day centres and their stakeholders in various roles. They were created because a survey found that day centres felt unsupported and under-prepared for current and future environments. Day centre providers, professional decision-makers and community groups felt there needed to be more supportive and informative resources, and they had an appetite for joint working.

This work was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration (NIHR ARC) South London, which brings together researchers, health and social care practitioners, and local people under different themes. It focuses on 'applied' research designed to solve practical problems faced by local people and their health and social care services. This work falls within the Social Care theme, which aims to support the sustainability of social care services.

- About this Resources Hub
- Why research matters
- Research evidence on day centres for older people
- Understanding outcomes and measuring impact
- A guide to marketing communications
- **Workforce: staff and volunteer recruitment**
- Case studies and inspiration

People who 'road-tested' the Day Centre Resources Hub said:

My overall reflection is that this is the type of resource I wish I had when I first started commissioning day services 7 years ago. I can see this being like a 'one stop shop' resource that collates examples of what good looks like and valuable hints and tips that can be considered by professionals from different sectors, whether it's policy makers, commissioners, or providers.

Commissioner

I found the resources really helpful and have already shared some with my team.

Assistant Locality Team Manager (adult social care social work team)

I found it very useful and I am sure that it will be used to enhance understanding and joint working.

Senior Social Worker

I would direct "commissioners" or those looking at local health and social care spending to see these pages and find the evidence to inform their plans for local services.

GP

The website is well structured and offers detailed information. The presentation is clean and easy to read. The content is right to the point on the topics. I particularly like the links to research and marketing.

South Croydon Day Centre for the Retired Co-ordinator

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Workforce: staff and volunteer recruitment

This document outlines staff and volunteer roles in day centres, shares recruitment and retention tips, signposts to useful resources about values-based recruitment, share tips about role descriptions and adverts and highlights the value of sharing testimonials. It then suggests ideas for bringing young people and people who have support workers and specific skills-sets into day centres.

1. Introduction to day centre staff and volunteer roles

Day centres may be operated by paid staff, a combination of paid staff and volunteers, or by volunteers. As day centres vary hugely, so do the roles of their staff and volunteers.

Day centre staff have described their roles as a mixed care and social role. Their work is likely to involve personal care; planning, running and supporting activities, playing games with people attending the centre, organising occasional events; providing emotional support; monitoring attenders' wellbeing and health, often by chatting on arrival or during the day, and acting on information given where necessary; making/serving refreshments; practical support; attending to logistical requirements, acting as a key worker for named attenders and maintaining paperwork.

Both staff and volunteers might set and clear tables and serve meals, and perhaps even wash up or load a dishwasher.

Volunteers tend not to undertake personal care. Instead, their roles are likely to involve taking initiative in supporting attenders to enjoy themselves, thinking of stimulating activities, supporting attenders during activities, reassuring anxious attenders, making and serving refreshments, serving lunch, helping people walk to the toilet, moving furniture, chatting with attenders, collecting money and "troubleshooting" (e.g. sewing on a button, popping out to buy something locally).

It could be considered as an 'assisting/filling gaps' role when volunteers work alongside paid care workers; but, sometimes, day centres are reliant on them to open - even day centres employing staff. [1]

Training (or qualifications) may have already been undertaken or may be undertaken in-house, externally delivered and online once in their roles.

To find out more about typical day centre staff and volunteers, see King's College London's 2023 report [*What happens in English generalist day centres for older people? Findings from case study research*](#) (see Chapter 6: Formal and informal care and support) and [*Making My Day. Volunteering or Working at a Day Centre for Older People: Findings of Exploratory Research in English Day Centres*](#), an article in the Journal of Long-Term Care.

2. What helps recruitment and retention?

Skills for Care asked social care employers with low turnover rates what they did that they felt helped recruitment and retention [2]. They said the following:

Recruiting the right people

- Finding staff with the right values and behaviours is more important than finding staff who are already qualified; skills can be taught but personal attributes cannot (e.g. kindness, compassion, reliability, honesty, etc.)
- Life experience and a willingness to learn can be more desirable than previous work experience (reflecting the principles of values-based recruitment)
- *“Openly invite all applicants to a 'meet and greet' before any shortlisting as we found some younger and older people do not have the skills to complete the application and were excellent workers being missed. We also had excellent applications where people proved they were not right for the role at interview.”* (Day care provider)
- Inviting candidates for 'taster shifts' and involving people who need care and support and their families (or friends and advocates) in the recruitment process helps you to establish whether candidates 'walk the talk.'
- Asking candidate to complete a pre-interview assessment is very useful.

Once employed

- Respecting and valuing staff, investing in learning and development, embedding the organisation's values and celebrating achievements all go a long way to improving staff retention. Continuity of staff is crucial in delivering high quality care to people who need care and support.

- Involving staff in decision making and paying above the local minimum (paying competitively) also ensure that staff feel valued for the work that they do which can have a positive impact on retention rates.
- Monitoring staff satisfaction can be useful in identifying ways to further develop the culture of the organisation but, whether this is done formally or informally, the crucial part is to be seen to listen to and act upon what staff tell you (see the [Resources Hub downloadable document Understanding outcomes and impact \(Some 'tools' \(questionnaires\) or approaches to gathering data that could be used by day centres\)](#) for more about this.)
- The importance of good leadership and management cannot be underestimated. *“We have focused a lot on leadership and management with a programme running to support the managers at all levels to enhance their skill set to lead their local teams.”* (Independence Matters, Day care provider)
- Monitoring reasons for leaving can feed into the business planning process and inform how the organisation responds to staff concerns.

3. Resources to support recruitment

This section covers values-based recruitment, role descriptions and advertisements, and the value of testimonials.

Values-based recruitment

Values-based recruitment is an approach that contrasts with the traditional approach that focuses more on qualifications and experience. It aims to attract people whose values, attitudes and aspirations are suitable for working in a certain care environment, in this case, a day centre.

Skills for Care’s evaluations of a values-based recruitment toolkit (VBRT), suggests that values-based approaches might lead to lower recruitment costs, positive return on investment, lower staff turnover and better staff performance.

IMPACT (IMProving Adult Care Together) separates using a values-based approach to recruitment into stages. After identifying the organisation’s values, the recruitment stage includes attracting the right people, the process of application and selection. After recruitment, things that matter are feeling welcome, an induction that sets out expectations, goals and aims, consistency, regular managerial contact and supervision and ongoing support and development. See the [2 minute 19 second video explaining values-based recruitment](#) (top of page)

🔍 Values-based recruitment toolkit (Curious about Care)

The University of York and Skills for Care have developed a free, evidence-based tool to help employers make a decision about candidates. It puts applicants in the shoes of care workers facing dilemmas (based on real life scenarios) that stretch people's values. In addition to three pre-selected scenarios, employers choose at least two or three others from the range available to create a bespoke quiz for applicants. Candidates take the quiz, and a short report is automatically generated based on their responses. It uses a traffic light system for making recommendations (red, yellow and green). Applicants' answers may lead to discussion in the interview and to support early training/induction, if selected.

Person-centred evidence underpins the scoring system and the values are around person-centred care. Scoring was set by people with lived experience, not service providers.

Curious about Care is available at <https://curiousaboutcare.org.uk>.

See the [two-page infographic introduction, 'how to' guide and overview of the scenarios](#) and the [video introduces the tool \(for homecare providers\)](#).

🔍 Helen Sanderson used a values-based approach to recruitment

The process they went through to start using a values-based approach to recruit the right people for new wellbeing teams is explained in the report [Using values-based recruitment to recruit the right people for new wellbeing team](#).

🔍 Skills for Care's web pages offers guides and tips for attracting different types of people with the right values and behaviours.

The ['Attracting people' webpage](#) covers:

Effective ways to target specific groups of people: channels / routes to use, suggested key messages each group may be most interested in and top tips. It is 7 pages long. Channels, messages and tips are given separately for the following demographic groups: young people, graduates, older workers, under-represented groups including male workers, disadvantaged groups such as care leavers, long-term unemployed people and people who have a criminal record, people with disabilities and women returning to work. Further resources are signposted to. **Using social media for recruitment** suggests tips and platforms to use.

The ['Widen your talent pool' webpage](#) focuses on how to remove unfair and unnecessary barriers that could unintentionally prevent certain people applying for roles. Guides cover **Employing men**, **Employing people with criminal records** (Safe and fair recruitment guide, Did you know – see the person value the difference) and **Employing people with disabilities** (A guide for employers, Busting the myths), and **Employing young people** (Employing workers aged 16 and 17, What Gen Z need to know about working in social care, Attracting a diverse workforce – generational differences).

Role descriptions and advertisements

Social care employers with low turnover rates (see Skills for Care report [2]) offered the following tips with respect to role descriptions and advertising.

Role descriptions and person specifications should be checked to ensure they:

- use neutral language and do not discriminate against any group of (potential) staff/volunteers
- promote a values and behaviours based approach
- do not include jargon
- are clear about key elements of the role
- are clear, concise and easily accessible
- do not include criteria that aren't relevant to the role (are minimum skill or knowledge requirements necessary?).

The most successful methods of advertising job vacancies are:

- via existing employees referring a friend (49%)
- adverts posted on the organisation's website (29%)
- adverts printed in the local newspaper (20%)
- posters in the local community (20%)
- adverts posted on social media (17%) or elsewhere online (25%).
- word of mouth 'advertising' can be a valuable avenue to pursue because as well as being low or no cost there is a greater potential of attracting people with the right values and behaviours because the existing staff/volunteers know the organisation's core values and can share these with the people they know.

Department for Health and Social Care's Every Day is Different campaign

This **campaign aims to highlight the benefits and positives of social care**. The website includes role descriptions (activity support worker and care worker), various videos and resource materials for advertisements about social care careers (e.g. pictures to use on social media).

The value of testimonials

Given that word of mouth and individual stories are said to be effective recruitment strategies, there is value in featuring volunteers and staff in short videos that feature on websites.

Example: Staywell's videos of volunteers

[Staywell's You Tube channel](#) features a film in which [Hilary talks about how she has benefited from volunteering](#) at The Bradbury Centre (3 mins 15 seconds).

Another film shows an ['interview' with Stewart](#), who is the centre's volunteer photographer. He talks for almost 5 minutes, answering questions about himself and his association with the day centre.

4. Bringing younger people into day centres

Intergenerational activities and relationships can be very beneficial for both older people and younger people. Developing links can lead to low-cost activities for day centre attenders.

Day centres can make formal links with local **universities, further education colleges and sixth forms** so that students can undertake course-related and other activities (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award, volunteering, placements) in a planned way for a fixed period. Students may be following courses in health and social care, social work, allied health professions or medicine. Day centres participating in this study suggest doing this at the beginning of the academic year, or at the start of courses, to maximise time for engagement with individuals.

Day centres may also wish to make links with **nurseries** so that they think of the day centre as a local resource for them and their children. Research has shown that sharing activities with pre-school children (e.g. reading with them, talking to or playing with them, watching dancing/singing) improves wellbeing and physical activity levels among older people. Those choosing not to actively join in benefit from the children presence. Some said it helps them feel connected or needed. [3, 4]

Making links with **schools and youth clubs** could lead to the development of, for example, occasional days (e.g. one visit per term) during which younger 'buddies' visit the day centre to support older people with using tablets, facilitate WhatsApp video calls with family or simply chat to learn empathy.

🔍 The following case studies highlighting relationships with schools were developed for the Resources Hub:

Bringing the community into day centres: Performances by local theatre groups and a secondary school

Introducing cycling for day centre clients: Young people from a Pupil Referral Unit support older people living with dementia during bike-riding sessions. They were already volunteering with Wheels for Wellbeing, which provided the bikes.

These case studies appear in the [Resources Hub downloadable document Case studies and inspiration \('Outreach, involving and bringing in the community, and local partnership working'\)](#).

🔍 Example: University student placements and the benefits of these

Braid Health and Wellbeing Day Centre hosts placements for allied health professional students at two universities – occupational therapists, paramedics, physiotherapists, podiatrists and nutritional therapists. Links with universities (via students' supervisors) have led to the introduction of a rolling programme of therapies and interventions which has counteracted lack of payment for student placements. Positive feedback on these placements have led to placements for nursing students.

Students have been surprised at the level of complexity faced and the range of experiences they have gained. They bring in new knowledge, skills transference and a new workforce experiencing day services for the first time. An unexpected benefit of these placements the new referral pathways they have generated. Students sharing their new understanding of the day services provided with a workforce among which there was low awareness of day services has led to extra referrals.

This is an abridged extract from the case study entitled 'Redesigning for survival': an in-depth case study of re-designing a day centre for people with dementia' which appears in full in the [Resources Hub downloadable document Case studies and inspiration \('Day centre service expansion or re-design'\)](#).

Example: University student volunteers

A day centre participating in this research was near a university campus. Students often approached the centre about volunteering, or when they needed to do a research project or an exercise (or 'intervention') with day centre attenders. While useful, it found this not consistently sustainable due to term times, essay pressures and suchlike.

Example: Secondary school sixth form volunteers

A day centre participating in this research provided a Saturday Club for people with dementia and their carers. The club benefited from school and sixth form volunteers who may have been considering medicine or an allied health profession as a career and wanted to gain work experience. This was possible because the club was out of school hours.

5. Bringing in people with Support Workers and specific skills-sets as volunteers

Meaningful activity is good for wellbeing. People who have Support Workers and who are without paid work could be introduced to day centre volunteering if their skills match those needed. For example, someone may become a 'conversation volunteer' and simply chat with older attenders; some day centre staff are too busy to be able to chat for as long as they would like to. The example below shows how a day centre benefited from much-needed computer skills; the volunteer benefited from being able to share their skills.

Example: Social media presence with the support of a volunteer

A voluntary sector day centre receives IT support from a volunteer once a week (2.5 hours). The volunteer loves computers and technology and was introduced to the organisation by their local authority support worker, who accompanies them during volunteering time. The volunteer has been in this role for four years. This has enabled the organisation, which was lacking in IT expertise, to have social media presence (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and an improved website.

6. References

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