

“Good support isn’t just about ‘services’ – it’s about having a life.”



“Values-based recruitment is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to getting the right people in.”

Action to understand and support Values-Based Recruitment in Social Care.

October 2023

Background

This report describes the key learning, and policy and practice implications, from IMPACT’s Values-based recruitment Network, which ran in 2022. The aim of the Network was to explore how values-based recruitment is being developed in social care and what activities appear to work best. The following organisations took part:

- [Care Workers Charity](#) (CWC) coordinated one of the Networks in England
- In Wales, the Network was coordinated by [Cardiff University](#).
- The [Northern Ireland Social Care Council](#) coordinated the Network in Northern Ireland
- [National Care Forum](#) (NCF) was the Local Network Coordinator for the second Network in England
- In Scotland, [Scottish Care](#) was the Local Network Coordinator.

[National Care Forum \(NCF\)](#) were the Local Network Coordinator for the second Network in England. People who attended included:

- two service managers
- a support manager
- a recruitment manager from specialist recruitment agency
- a Talent Director from specialist recruitment agency, a researcher
- a Support Worker
- a Chief People Officer
- the head of workforce capacity
- a locality manager from a strategic workforce and planning body (Skills for Care).

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The Northern Ireland Social Care Council coordinated the Network in Northern Ireland.

People who attended included:

- service managers from different care organisations
- a director of HR from a care provider
- a researcher from the University of Leeds,
- people who work for a recruitment company specialising in adult social care

In Wales, the Network was coordinated by Cardiff University. People who attended included

- two managers of private care providers
- a care union representative,
- a carer
- a person receiving support
- someone who works for mental health development organisation.

In Scotland, Scottish Care are the Local Network Coordinator. They took a different approach due to issues around care sector capacity, going to providers and care workers directly for their input.

What are Networks?

Networks are one of four main models of evidence implementation which are being developed by IMPACT, the UK-wide centre for implementing evidence in adult social care.

Networks work with complex but everyday practice issues and consist of a series of local groups across the UK – all working on the same practical issue in their local area. Each local Network is made up of eight to ten people who draw on care and support, carers, practitioners, providers, and decision makers, who meet to work on the issue at stake using a set of pre-prepared materials. They meet regularly over a period of six months, with the learning from each meeting collated across all the groups and shared back out before the next session. This way of working was developed very successfully by a national carers organisation in Sweden – NKA – and has been adapted for use in the UK by IMPACT.

Some local Networks might finish when the immediate task in hand is complete; others may go on meeting over the long-term and become more of an ongoing resource on

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behalf of their local area.

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Background to Values-based Recruitment

All four nations of the UK are experiencing significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, and this formed the basis of one of our 'Ask IMPACT' evidence guides (IMPACT, 2023). A recent report on the social care workforce in England (Skills for Care, 2023) found that whilst the number of vacancies had recently fallen, the sector needed around 445,000 new posts to around 2.23 million by 2035. Last year in Wales, there were 5,323 vacancies in social care, which equates to nine per cent of the total workforce (Social Care Wales, 2022). Evidence shows that:

- The adult social care sector has significant problems of **understaffing**. One of the main issues identified is that social care has **difficulties in attracting individuals in the first place**. Evidence has highlighted several reasons for a lack of interest in working in the sector, including: perceptions of care work, a lack of awareness of career pathways, low earning potential and the tendency for employers to ask for [particular] qualifications and prior experience (SCIE, 2017).
- Social care has one of the **highest levels of staff turnover** when compared to other sectors. In 2021/2022, the turnover rate across all job roles in social care was 29% in England (Skills for Care, 2023), around 32% in Wales (Clifton, 2016) and 22% in Scotland (Children and Families Directorate, Scottish Government, 2020). For Northern Ireland, figures are presented slightly differently to the other nations, but the overall leaving rate for health and social care was 4.8% (Department of Health, 2021). There are financial implications associated with high staff turnover for social care providers. First, recruiting has a cost (Skills for Care, 2016). To this cost, we need to add the cost of training and induction. Additionally, turnover impacts directly on the quality of the service, affecting the consistency of care experienced by those who draw on care and support.
- Recruitment challenges in adult social care have been exacerbated by the end of Freedom of Movement in January 2021. This led to a sharp reduction in the pool of potential candidates in the UK (Revealing Reality, 2022), although international recruitment has increased over the last year following more recent changes in visa requirements.

Values-based recruitment is an approach to recruitment in health and social care, which is a potential way to begin addressing at least some of these challenges, and recruit more people with the right values, who are more likely to stay in the profession. **Values-based recruitment** is defined as a way of getting to know people, their motivations, passions, interests and whether they'll be a good fit for your organisation and for the roles you're recruiting to, so you can make the best possible recruitment choices for those who you provide care and support for. Across the UK nations, national skills and workforce organisations advocate values-based recruitment as a best practice approach to recruitment and have developed tools to support the sector (Skills for Care, 2016). Many social care organisations now use values-based recruitment to support

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recruitment of new staff into social care and some evidence suggests it might improve the quality of candidates and supports retention.

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Key messages

- **Values-based recruitment is not well defined and understood.** There is a lack of clarity about values-based recruitment, and a sense that the term was ‘jargon-y’ or a ‘buzzword’ that meant different things to different people across the network meetings. However, there is broad support across the sector for focusing on values and some evidence about how it might make a difference in recruiting and retaining more staff.
- **Values-based recruitment needs a values-based social care system to truly work.** Networks said values-based recruitment should include drawing together the values of the a) care organisations, b) employees and c) people who draw on care and support to see how they fit together, with the person receiving support at the centre. There was a consensus across the four nations that working in a values-based way requires all levels and parts of social care to work in this way, not just those delivering hands-on care.
- **No one size fits all.** Adult social care sector is very diverse with lots of different public, private and voluntary services of different sizes. An IMPACT Network – which allows people to work on their own issues in their own way in their own local context, whilst also sharing learning with others – is a good way of working with this diversity.
- **Organisations struggle to define, articulate and monitor values.** There are genuine questions around whether the focus should be on ‘shared values’ (where organisations hire people with the same values) or values-based recruitment (where providers hire people who can understand and associate with organisations’ values). Additionally, there are key questions around how organisations or the adult social care sector more broadly define their values as a key component of putting values-based recruitment into practice.
- **Values-based recruitment needs more than a focus on recruitment processes to work.** Values-based recruitment is not about the recruitment process in isolation, it requires wider changes in adult social care. In isolation, it was felt that “*values-based recruitment is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to getting the right people*”.
- There is a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to values-based recruitment. There is some evidence that values-based recruitment could be promising in adult social care, but more research is needed (particularly around cost-effectiveness).

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Policy context

All four nations have been exploring the potential of values-based recruitment and developing a series of different toolkits and resources. Values-based recruitment is described as a **way of finding people to work for an organisation who have the beliefs, principles and behaviour that the organisation thinks is important**, as well as the right skills to do the job (TLAP, 2023).

Organisations in each UK nation have developed their own toolkit/guideline for values-based recruitment:

Scotland: Careers Toolkit (Scottish Social Services Council, 2023)

Wales: Values Based Recruitment: A Practical Guide (Gogledd Cymru Gyda'n Gilydd North Wales Together, 2021)

The NHS in England: Values Based Recruitment Framework (Health Education England, 2016)

England: Values-based recruitment (Skills for Care, 2022)

Northern Ireland: Values Based Recruitment (NISCC, 2019)

Values-based recruitment has been proposed as a **potentially promising approach** to try to address a number of **workforce issues**, including, the quality of relationships that are developed (Edwards & Cable, 2009), and the extent to which people have choice and control over the care they receive (Skills for Care, n.d.).

Overall, **evidence to date is limited** – but further research is underway (University of York, n.d.). There are some promising indications from other sectors, and emerging insights based on the practice knowledge of people working in adult social care (Skills for Care, 2016). However, there is scope for further research – both in terms of evidence around cost-effectiveness and around people’s lived experience. An IMPACT Network – which summarises existing evidence but also enables local groups to generate their own learning – may therefore be a good way of exploring what is possible to achieve by working in this kind of way.

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Evidence – why look at a values-based approach to recruitment?

In 2016, Skills for Care commissioned independent research into values-based recruitment. Employers taking this approach reported:

- **Staff turnover**, at 19.0%, was 5.6 percentage points lower amongst employers using a ‘values-based’ approach to recruitment and retention than those using ‘traditional’ methods.
- Staff recruited and supported according to a ‘values-based’ approach were reported to **perform better** (i.e. in terms of sickness absence, punctuality, role-related skills and overall) than those recruited through ‘traditional’, non-values-based methods.
- Values-based recruitment offers a recruitment process which is more inclusive and transparent.
- It can help strengthen the development and role-modelling of values-based working in the workplace and it can lead **to better quality of care**.
- Staff had stronger care-focused values.
- There was a positive return on investment of £1.23 for every £1 spent due to the reduced level of turnover.

The report stated also that “a ‘values-based’ approach was stated to be more effective than ‘traditional’ methods in gaining an understanding of, and building a relationship with, candidates” (Skills for Care, 2016).

Values-based recruitment may also **improve the visibility of social care** and **extend recruitment** to a wider range of contexts and people, including younger generations (Social Care Futures, 2021).

Additionally, values-based recruitment should increase the involvement of people who draw on care and support in the recruitment process. This has multiple benefits: 1) it gives assessors the opportunity to see how the applicants interacted with people who draw on care and support; 2) it can provide a unique first-hand perspective of what is needed from workers delivering care and support, tell potential applicants what is important to the people they might work with and gives the opportunity to ask relevant questions.

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What happened?

The Networks met over six months to discuss their plans for making recruitment more values-based, practical barriers, possible solutions, and national and local actions which could support future progress.

All Networks included a different mix of people who draw on care and support, care workers, front-line staff, providers and commissioners of services and other stakeholders from across the adult social care sector. The network coordinators were:

- Care Workers’ Charity
- Cardiff University (on behalf of a consortium of Welsh policy and practice partners)
- National Care Forum
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council
- Scottish Care

In the beginning of the discussions it was made clear that values-based recruitment had to be placed **within the context of the larger challenges facing social care**, the issues related to **pay and conditions**, and the differences between **public and private sectors** should all be part of the discussion – i.e. this was not just a recruitment issue but was about **values that are important across a whole system**.

Box 1:

How you get the right person: making values-based approaches work in different organisations

People receiving care and support stressed just how important it was to get this right at an individual relationship level and at an organisational level. For example, a disabled person who employs their own Personal Assistant needs to find someone who shares their values and is willing to learn how to enable them to live the way they want to live; in a care setting where there are LGBTQ+ residents, it's important that care workers are mindful of their different needs.

Several Networks raised the point that values weren't just important in individual relationships but they should link together across

- a) care organisations
- b) employees
- c) people who draw on care and support

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The Networks discussed that this way of doing recruitment would change depending on the amount of time, funding and capacity. One Network highlighted that the size of the organisation/employer makes a significant difference to how much “backroom” work can be achieved when working on values-based recruitment. In addition, a large organisation with formalised recruitment processes will be very different to someone with care and support needs hiring a PA, and these differences impact on the ability to put values-based recruitment into practice.

Box 2: Some tips for providers from those who had used values-based recruitment

- Check in with people who have **lived experience of drawing on care and support** to understand the perspective of values-based recruitment from their point of view.
- Check in with employees - can they articulate your organisations values?
- Don’t just rely on statements about values – none of this should be substitute for paying people properly, treating them well and making sure that people have proper job security.
- To recruit, you have to pay and retain and have a contract that’s viable.
- Effective approaches to values-based recruitment are not usually achieved through a single interview but might also involve candidates meeting the people they would be supporting if successful to check that there is a fit and to see if values are applied in practice. This is about relationships – not about how well you answer an abstract question in interview.

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Box 3: Taking a whole system approach to Values-based recruitment

Network members were clear that a whole systems approach is needed.

To be genuinely values-based in our work, we need to:

- Raise the profile of adult social care nationally and work to increase the value that is placed on care
- Think about the kind of care we commission – there’s a risk of asking staff/providers to be values-based in services that aren’t designed or funded very well, and therefore setting people up to fail
- Make sure we offer good jobs that pay as well as possible, that are as flexible as possible and where we treat each other well
- Make sure that everything we do is informed by our values – who we are, what we do and how we do it (not just the way we design our person specs)

As a result, it’s easy to say that we’re values-based- but much harder to actually *be* values-based in a sector which is not often conducive to this

Key solutions for each network

The clear message we got when working with different networks is that values-based recruitment is a whole system issue, but that context is really important. Each network chose a different area to develop when it came to values-based recruitment. A summary of the different approaches to their action plans are included below – it should be noted that these are evolving, responsive to their different contexts and were formulated in May 2023.

Wales Cardiff University

This network wanted to build the awareness of values-based approaches and embed these understandings within organisations. The network wanted to both acknowledge the work that was currently being done whilst also contributing to spreading positive messages about social care jobs. Practical resources that supported people in this approach were prioritised and the voices of people and organisations trying to reflect on their experiences were highlighted. The aim of this approach was that ultimately people who draw on care and support received a better service, and that the approaches, techniques, and strategies around values-based recruitment were improved.

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Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Social Care Council

This network wanted to address recruitment and retention, working to give a voice to carers to improve the leaders in the sector and work with organisations that are struggling with retention. Similar to the work of other networks, partners here recognised that the needs of different individuals and organisations were going to be diverse, and that toolkits and resources needed to be more agile as well as containing practical details, making them more efficient for those who were time poor.

Scotland: Scottish Care

This network felt that the benefits and purpose of values-based approaches needed to be clarified and that values-based recruitment tools could be included in regular recruitment drives. Practical resources were advocated as well as making these available for busy organisations and individuals. Inclusion was also flagged as an issue, as the network wanted to focus on how best to support new starters from minority ethnic groups.

England: Care Workers Charity

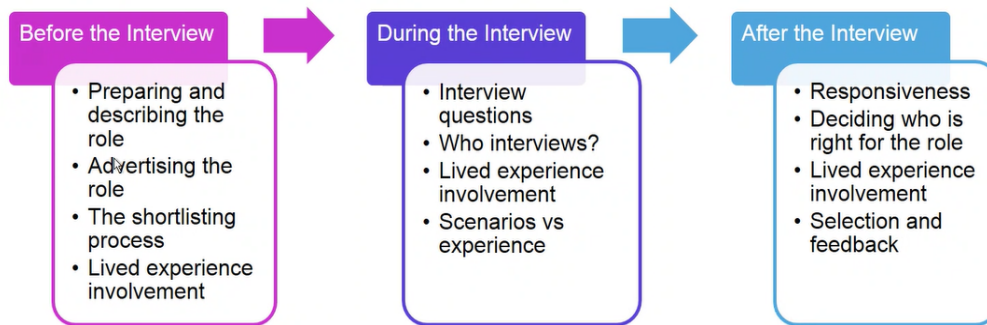
This network wanted to address the lack of recruitment and retention support, focussing on resources designed by, and for, disabled people who employ their own personal Assistants (PAs). The importance of peer support from people and organisations working in the same space was recognised as well as dealing with the practical details of recruitment approaches. Using multimedia approaches to show the reality of care work, and ways of collecting and approaching advice from across the sector as well as investigating how to learn from where things go wrong were addressed.

England: National Care Forum

This network wanted to engage commissioners in the recruitment process and change the perception of values-based recruitment from something that was nice to do into something that was vitally important. The importance of engaging people outside HR was highlighted and a range of resources and ways of targeting commissioners were discussed. These approaches were felt to address the retention of staff but more broadly for improving workforce wellbeing, diversity, and regulatory requirements. The National Care Forum produced this infographic demonstrating how values-based recruitment is not limited to the recruitment process.

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Practical ways to put VBR into practice across the whole recruitment process



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Summary messages:

- **There needs to be a national shift in the narrative about adult social care.** Values-based recruitment can only be successful if the people being recruited are valued, the service being delivered is valued, and ultimately, the people who draw on care and support are themselves valued. There is much which can be learned from the Social Care Future movement in England, which has worked with people who draw on care to develop a positive vision for social care.
- **The system is broken- not the staff.** The evidence from our Networks identified that fair pay, genuine recognition for their work, and opportunities to develop and progress would encourage a lot more people to work and stay working in social care. Care workers in the Networks said they often are not asked what they need, or listened to when they say what would help them feel more supported; instead, there is usually a “top-down approach from corporate” which doesn’t meet their needs.
- **Adult social care sector diversity and capacity is important when it comes to being able to deliver values-based recruitment.** The adult social care sector is extremely diverse in terms of the contexts where care and support are delivered e.g. in residential care or community settings; in rural or urban locations and also how, e.g. different provider types and sizes; people who employ their own PAs.
This diversity has implications for putting ‘standardised’ values-based recruitment into practice.
- **Values-based recruitment needs more than a focus on recruitment processes to work.** Values-based recruitment is about the recruitment process in isolation, it requires wider changes in adult social care and *“values-based recruitment is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to getting the right people in”*.

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