



Taking a global approach to adult social care recruitment in the West Midlands

Paul Lowes from West Midlands Employers writes about the collaborative initiative to improve international recruitment, retention and quality within the adult social care sector across the West Midlands, through shared learnings and the power of collective communities working together

International recruitment has played a significant role in ensuring the care sector has the talent it needs to deliver care across our local communities. Fundamental to those outcomes, and the wellbeing of all, is ensuring those recruits are – in turn – cared for and supported in order to be safe, confident and capable within their roles.

Achieving that is an ongoing process of development and improvement, which is why we were delighted when West Midlands Employers (WME) were commissioned to support the West Midlands ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) International Recruitment Programme following funding from The Department of Health and Social Care. The initiative was launched after a successful bid in Spring 2023 from the host local authority Shropshire Council working in partnership with WM-ADASS.

This has very much been a collaborative partnership, where everyone involved has been united in their vision for meaningful outcomes. Crucially, it has been set against a foundational backdrop in which both WME and West Midlands ADASS have worked hand-in-hand with stakeholders to provide support to help tackle local workforce needs/challenges in response to the changing economic and social landscape.

Our key goal is to provide information and services to build on existing knowledge and build confidence in the sector around international recruitment in the adult care sector to achieve better outcomes for all through:

1. Helping care providers achieve best practice when it comes to ethical recruitment, a key part of which is working with ethical recruitment agency partners.
2. Ensuring we equip care providers with the information they need to feel informed and able to make ethical decisions regarding international recruitment.

We continue to work closely with local authorities, care associations, care providers and Skills for Care to ensure what we are providing meets their needs. A pivotal element has been the development of a microsite, the International Recruitment HUB, through which Care Quality Commission-registered providers can access information, resources and free services, enabling them to make more informed decisions.

Achieving ethical best practice

Grounding information in legislation and the Code of Practice set out for international recruitment has been an important part of empowering care providers and giving them information that enables them to make

informed decisions in response to the specific needs of their local community.

Through the International Recruitment HUB, Care Quality Commission-registered providers in the West Midlands can find:

- Free legal and HR specialist support including helplines and webinars
- 30 minutes of free legal advice for each care provider
- Templates for best recruitment practice and contracts
- An audit tool for providers to help them make a decision in respect of agency supply against legislation
- An e-booklet guide providing bespoke information for West Midlands providers

Evidencing management best practice

An important part of this initiative will be sharing examples of those who are already achieving best practice so that successful, tried and tested, approaches can be replicated. WME has been attending local events for care providers to raise awareness about what support is available.

So far, the initiative has been well received with the transparent sharing of information and ideas providing valuable knowledge for all parties working across our communities. It is notable that our audit tool has been recognised and promoted to the Department of Health and

Social Care as a tool that could potentially be used on a national level.

Pete Jackson, West Midlands ADASS improvement director, said: 'It has been great to see the progress this project is making in real terms, creating not only greater collaboration between staff from different organisations and people who rely on care services, but laying out a pathway by which we can make recruitment and retention in the care sector more sustainable going forwards.' ■

Paul Lowes is interim director of Resourcing at West Midlands Employers

If you would like to find out more, you can access further information via the International Recruitment Social Care Hub at <https://irwestmids.co.uk> or email us at internationalrecruitment@wmemployers.org.uk

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