

How Care Worker Apprenticeships are creating the next generation of carers



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In the current climate, I'm sure many of us are facing the pressing challenges of recruiting and retaining a caring, compassionate and committed workforce.

To tackle this, at [Quantum Care](#) we've been asking ourselves, *'how do we recruit the brightest and best, give them the skills to deliver the very best care, and provide them with the career advancement opportunities that will keep them with us for the long-term?'*

One of our answers has been to develop an Adult Care Worker Apprenticeship scheme. Whilst many of us may have offered Apprenticeships before, these have often been in HQ roles such as marketing, and rarely in the role at the heart of our organisations – care delivery. However, to do this the right way has required a significant investment of time and energy. It has not been, and cannot be, simply a way of accessing a cheaper workforce or to maximise considerations around the Apprenticeship Levy.

Our Apprenticeship programme is very simple – we offer a 13 month, fast-track programme where Apprentices will earn their Care Certificate, Level 2 Award in Dementia Awareness and a Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care. This is broadly twice as quick as normal, and has proved to be very appealing to the most ambitious aspiring carers. Apprentices work a 37-hour week (including training time) and are paid at significantly above the standard apprenticeship pay rate, with a further pay rise after six-months.

The programme itself includes a mix of practical care work and formal education delivered both in and outside of the classroom. We have found the best option for us is to mix college-based education with our own in-house training programmes. This gives Apprentices more practical skills, and means they are more in tune with our own in-house style and quality requirements. Together, Apprentices have greater exposure to the practical elements of care work, which increases both the quality of care provided and retention rates – both vital benefits as we look to professionalise the care sector in the face of an aging population.

Furthermore, by offering a formal, clearly defined Apprenticeship scheme – complete with a dedicated Co-Ordinator based at Head Office who provides additional out-of-home support – we are starting to help shift perceptions about the professionalism of care work. Importantly, we are better placed to communicate this to the communities we serve, which can only be a good thing for recruitment and retention in our local area.

One of the elements we are proudest of is that the Apprenticeship programme now offers a unique and inclusive new entry point into care. The opportunity to gain qualifications whilst being paid has expanded the recruitment pool to include individuals who may not normally have considered care work or who did not have the time to commit to a purely educational programme.

Presently, three of our apprentices are over the age of 30, with our scheme facilitating their desire for a career change whilst allowing them to financially support themselves and their families.

I recently met one Apprentice who, having reached the final year of her nursing degree, found that her health meant she would not be able to pursue a career in hospital nursing. Having searched hard for a new career path that met her progression aspirations, she decided to join our Apprenticeship programme. Now in her 30's, she is thriving and told me this was one of the best things she has ever done. Having already had a setback in one career, she is very driven to succeed in the care sector and looks forward to continuing her management training once she has completed the Apprenticeship programme.

All being well, she will go on to be a Care Team Manager and we hope we can continue to develop her drive and passion so that one day she will become a Home Manager. It is individuals from these varied career backgrounds that tend to have a genuine passion for care work, whilst also bringing new skills and experiences that undoubtedly contribute to Quantum Care's continued success.

However, we've also attracted school leavers who are unsure about going to university. This was the case for one of our younger Apprentices who was still ambitious about her future career options. The fast track entry into management we can provide works for her, and she tells me she now looks forward to a life-long career in care.

It is wonderful to see this level of enthusiasm and passion from someone so young, which will further help shift public perception as she becomes a vocal advocate for the training and career opportunities the care sector can provide.

Whilst it hasn't all been plain sailing, and we have had to invest significant time and resources to create a scheme that provides the right mix of training, practical experience and support – whilst also working for us an organisation and the Apprentices we recruit – we now feel we are starting to reap the rewards. I'd highly recommend to all care providers that they too should invest in developing their own Apprentice scheme, and I passionately believe such schemes will play a vital part in attracting the next generation of carers into the profession and allow us all to continue serving our local communities.

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