Workforce Development Group Meeting | 21 March 2024 | 1-2pm

Actions from February meeting	Actions from this meeting
• ***Member to share guidance on NHS exemption from changes with Care England, to be shared with DHSC for clarification. Complete – shared with DHSC.*** • ***Members to share details of CoS challenges with Care England. Complete.*** • ***Care England to write to the HO on CoS challenges, anonymously using member case studies to illustrate the scale of the issue. Complete – awaiting response from the Home Office.*** • ***Care England to explore getting DHSC back later in the year to discuss domestic recruitment and retention challenges. Ongoing.*** • ***Care England to compile an FAQ document based on member queries, to be shared with DHSC. Complete – awaiting response from DHSC.***	• ***No actions from March meeting.***

Welcome & introductions

Ioan Bishop (**IB**), Policy, Parliamentary and Projects Officer at Care England, welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Supporting this meeting:

- Simon Bottery (**SB**) – Senior Fellow, Social Care, The King's Fund
- Nicola Blythe (**NB**) – Researcher, The King's Fund
- Hannah Bollard (**HB**) – Associate, Anthony Collins

IB went through the status of actions from the February WD Group meeting.

Meeting Notes (see accompanying slides here)

Young people in the adult social care workforce – key findings

- **SB** explained that he was conducting a piece of research looking at younger people in the adult social care workforce, exploring how the sector can better recruit and retain these individuals. There are three individual publications – a quantitative analysis of the number of young people working in care, a qualitative analysis of the perspectives of care providers and a qualitative analysis of the perspectives of younger people working in care. For the provider piece, the focus of today's presentation, 11 care providers were surveyed, tending to be medium to large organisations and offering a variety of services.
- **SB** noted the first main finding – providers recognised a number of positives and potential drawbacks of employing young people to work in care. In terms of the positives, young people were described as energetic, positive, tech-savvy and offering a breadth that could be matched with particular clients, particularly for providers working with working age adults. In terms of drawbacks, some providers noted a 'lack of work readiness' and a greater need for support among younger staff members. There were also stereotypes associated with young people, including needing instant gratification and spending a lot of time on their phones.
- **SB** noted the second main finding – while the providers involved in the study tended to be positive about young people, there was a perception that the sector more generally was cautious about employing younger people, due to some of the aforementioned drawbacks. When young people are being hired, there is often an expectation that they will not be there for the long term.

- **SB** noted the third main finding – providers believed that the main reason young people were leaving the sector was due to the challenging nature of the role. There was a sense that young people aren't always aware of what the role involves and the reality can come as a surprise. There was also a recognition that young people were leaving because the support they require in the role is not always available. This perception contrasts with what young people themselves said about working in care, namely that they were leaving due to a lack of training and support, as well as a 'toxic culture' in some organisations. In some instances, young people described facing bullying in the workplace which led to them leaving the organisation or sector as a whole.
- **SB** noted the fourth main finding – what providers felt should be done differently to encourage more young people into care work. Firstly, it was acknowledged that providers could do more to support young people and offer things such as flexible working. Secondly, at a local level, the sector could do more to work with schools and colleges to promote care as a career option. Thirdly, at a national level, it was felt that more could be done to improve perceptions of social care as a career.
- **NB** noted that many young people feel well-suited to working in care but are discouraged by the environment in some organisations and the perceptions of family members that it isn't a career worth pursuing.

Discussion

- **Member** noted that some of the challenges identified apply across the workforce, not just for younger people. Enquired about how this was being navigated.
- **SB** agreed that many of the challenges will apply to all workers. Explained that the research aims to draw out what factors are most important for younger people, especially those entering work for the first time. Noted that there are generational differences, but these probably aren't as great as some people think they are and will not apply to all people in a particular age bracket.

- **Member** welcomed that local care associations were identified as having a key role in getting young people into care. Asked whether the young people interviewed outlined what would encourage them to stay in the sector. For instance, noted that many young people would simply want to work the same shift as a friend of theirs.
- **SB** noted that a positive culture is incredibly important to young people working in care. Where younger people described negative experiences, it was often in terms of being 'left out' by older members of the workforce.
- **NB** noted that some providers described offering a long-term vision to younger people, outlining what may be possible in terms of promotion to senior positions over time.

- **SB** asked whether members agreed with the notion that the sector is generally not welcoming of younger people in the workforce.
- **Member** strongly disagreed. Outlined that they specifically target younger people, who often have strong technology skills that really benefit older members of staff. Similarly, young people benefit from the life experiences of their older colleagues.
- **Member** also disagreed; young people are a key target for them. It is their highest attrition group and they want to understand what they can do better. Technological skills are really beneficial. Noted that with the right skills and attitude, young people can progress very quickly into better paying roles.
- **SB** noted career pathways are extremely important. Noted that there is a cohort of individuals who were not particularly high achieving in the education system, but would make excellent care workers if they have the right values.
- **Member** noted that while they do encourage younger members of staff, there was some bias at management level that needs to be overcome.

- **Member** noted that the relationships with colleges and universities are really helpful, where young people can join on bank contracts and get accustomed to care work at their own pace.
- **SB** noted that some providers like to get people in as kitchen assistants to get a feel of the care home, before moving to care worker roles.

- **Member** noted that some young people who missed on out work during the COVID pandemic have suffered as a result in terms of their self-esteem and people skills. Enquired about how to navigate challenges around the nature of working in social care.
- **SB** noted that, as a sector, we need to be frank about what care work involves, and should be looking for people that are ready for those challenges. Noted that many of the young people they spoke to over the course of their research did fit that category and needed to be supported to enter and stay in the sector.
- **Member** noted that, as providers, we need to adapt the way we support staff to recruit and keep young people.

- **IB** enquired about the next steps for the research project.
- **SB** explained that the first report will be published in April and the second report in the Summer. The reports will include recommendations aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of young people.

- **Member** noted that health and social care education courses are not delivered in a way that is engaging or interesting to young people, and once you reach a higher level these courses can be quite challenging. This discourages people who may be very well suited to working in care. These courses also lack a work experience element, which would be a good way of introducing people to the sector.

- **IB** enquired about what recruitment methods effectively reach younger people, and whether these differ from traditional methods.
- **Member** noted that a candidate journey map can be effective.
- **Member** noted that in-person events, such as job fairs, have been really helpful in terms of building trust. Additionally, your social media presence will be picked up by younger people and needs to make working at your organisation an attractive prospect. Highlighting stories of young people already in the workforce really helps.
- **Member** noted that they were asking their younger members of staff about the type of content that would be appealing to them. Videos were mentioned as being particularly engaging and effective for younger people.

AoB

- **IB** invited members to share suggestions for topics for the April WD Group meeting. Please send through any suggestions to ibishop@careengland.org.uk.

End of meeting.