

MEETING: Health and Care Scrutiny

DATE: 28th November 2024

SUBJECT: Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 In November 2022 the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) was announced as part of the autumn statement. The primary purpose of the fund was to support Local Authorities to make improvements to adult social care services in their area.
- 1.2 Utilising an element of this money, Bury Council co-designed and developed a suite of innovative, collaborative workforce solutions to support our Adult Social Care providers to address their workforce challenges. These were badged as the **Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme** and this report provides detail on each element and demonstrates the positive outcomes they have achieved for the provider sector.

2.0 Collaboration

- 2.1 To ensure the best use of the MSIF monies and that any support programmes adopted a collaborative approach across the health and social care workforce in Bury, two provider events were facilitated. All care providers across the Independent sector and Adult Social Care council services were invited to attend.
- 2.2 The purpose of the events was to hear their views, to understand their challenges and to codesign and agree what the solutions should be.
- 2.3 There was a strong appetite for collaborative working, with the providers wanting to work in this way but not understanding how to.
- 2.4 The care providers told us their current key hiring challenges were:
- All services across Bury hiring from the same catchment of candidates.
 - Managers and senior staff members dedicating endless hours to the recruitment process, taking them away from other priorities.
 - Those who apply who are not truly looking for work and the time is taken to sift these out.
 - Turn up rates to interviews are low.
 - Turning around the negative perception of working across adult care and attracting people to the roles.
 - Working around the desired shift patterns of candidates
 - Childcare considerations of candidates
 - Time to turn around DBS and referencing and losing candidates in the process as it takes too long.

- Not having someone who is dedicated, or the right person dedicated, to the recruitment processes.
- Validating prior training so new starters do not have to repeat prior learning.
- Attracting people who are looking to commence a career in health/care.
- Demonstrating career pathways and progression routes.
- Retaining staff
- Spiralling agency costs
- Time to step back as leaders to analyse what is working and what needs to be improved to inform workforce strategy planning.

2.5 Out of all the issues identified the care providers identified their 3 top priorities where by working together with the council and the adult social care department better support could be delivered. They were:

2.6 **Attraction:** Attracting more people into the sector

- Providers wanted to be able to attract more people to work in the sector from diverse age groups with an increased flow of candidates also accepting positions.
- Centralised and co-ordinated attraction and promotion of job opportunities.
- They wanted to align employment to the demands from the job centres.

2.7 **Process:** Improving provider wide processes and better access to support for recruitment and retention initiatives

- Providers expressed interest to collaborate further on removing people who are unmotivated to work from the recruitment process.
- Centralised data and more efficient recruitment processing platforms.
- Support with understanding advertising platforms and content that attracts the right hires.
- Improve overall recruitment processes and time to hire with a noticeable reduction in time spent in recruitment processes with hiring managers.
- Initiatives to reduce all provider services “fishing from the same pond” of applicants.
- They wanted access to a flexible, centralised workforce provision to support reduction and reliance on agency spend.

2.8 **Retention:** Providers wanted access to initiative and support that will keep people working in their services sector for longer period and retaining them in clear “career pathways”

- Providers wanted support in how they build career paths and employee initiatives that encourage development.
- Providers wanted to understand what career paths work for the diversity of people in the workforce.
- Providers would like additional support with the transitional change in workforce patterns and forward planning.
- Providers wanted to understand and access better initiatives around reward and retention.
- Providers wanted to have access to centralised benefits and initiatives that can support their workforces. Specifically, leadership training, and other wellbeing or development programmes that are funded sector or nationwide.

3.0 **Provider Support Offer**

3.1 Bury Council used MSIF to commission an organisation specialising in workforce support and growth; Unique Training Solutions (UTS). Alongside UTS and our providers, we developed a support programme made up of 3 main functions:

3.2 **Centralised Permanent Recruitment Function**

A central recruitment team was established that providers could share all open, care and support vacancies with. The team advertised, screened and signposted relevant candidates into providers ready to interview.

3.3 **BURY FLEX: A Centralised Shared Workforce Function**

Our partner UTS built and piloted a shared workforce initiative that allowed providers in Bury access to a “ready to work” bank of flexible workers.

3.4 The criteria for the Flex Workforce was for applicants to have 9 months or more UK experience in a care and support position and be fully compliant with UK, Right to Work legislation and CQC Regulation 19: Fit and better persons employed.

3.5 The Flex Recruitment Team would process all applications, compliance and training requirements. Once a worker was “ready to work” UTS would facilitate the introduction into contractual casual employment, directly to each provider. Each provider was then responsible for payroll and working time directive requirements.

3.4 **Care Development Programme**

The “**Bury Workforce Strategy Grow Programme**” has UTS working alongside Bury College, Health and Social Care educational departments to streamline the transitioning of Health and Social Care students into Burys’ Social Care providers for both courses aligned, work experience placements and the opportunity to gain paid employment placements.

3.6 Bury Integrated Care Partnership (BICP) is a united group including social workers, nurses, GPS, hospital staff, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, as well as independent patient champion Healthwatch. The BICP Workforce Transformation Lead, alongside UTS supported the development of a **central access point for workforce resources**. This vital central access allows everyone in the Health and Social Care in Bury to access information that can support workforce sustainability including Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Wellbeing resources. It also provides a destination to promote workforce training and development, funded initiatives such as Bury Flex and the central recruitment support.

3.7 Alongside the Commissioning Team, and as part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework, UTS are developing a **Registered Manager Leadership Development Programme**. The work by the Commissioning Team, including through Quality Assurance Reviews, has identified the lack of development opportunities and succession planning for those staff newly into Registered Manager roles is posing a risk to quality of services in Bury. A **free development programme** has been offered to those suitable to ensure they have the skills to prepare them for a managerial role.

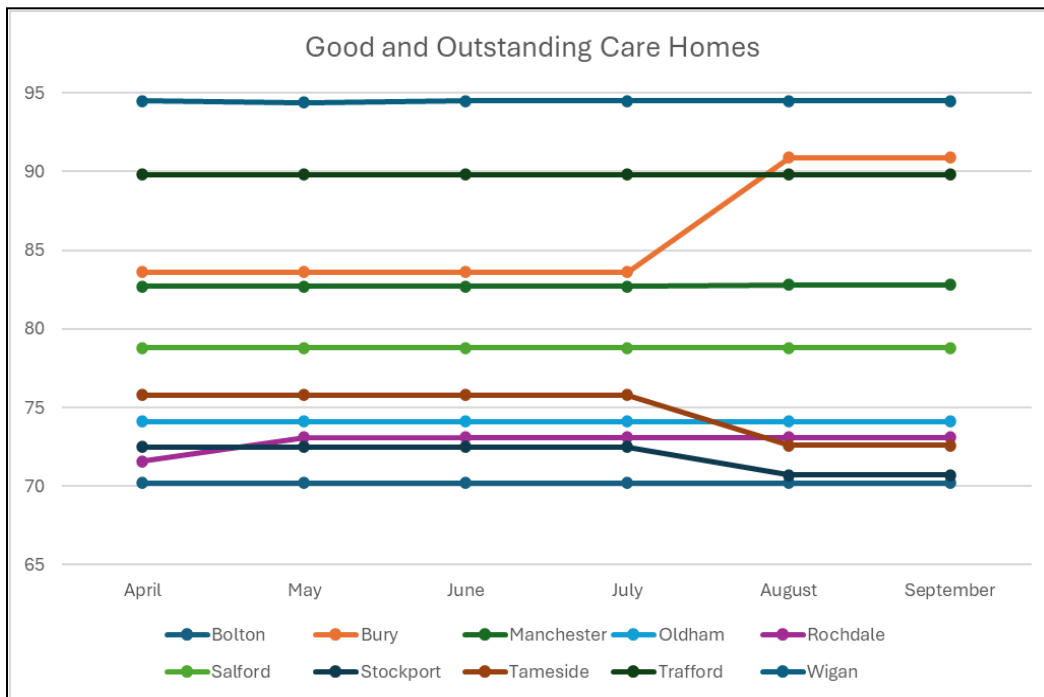
4.0 **Impact**

4.1 Since the introduction of the **Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme** there has been:

- **Decrease** in vacancy rate
- **Decrease** in leaver rate
- **Increase** in number of staff working in Adult Social Care in Bury

Of the GM authorities, Bury is now:

- **Second** in number of Good and Outstanding CQC rated Care Homes.
- **90.9%** of Care Homes are rated Good or Outstanding
- **No** Care at Home providers rated Inadequate
- **No** Supported Living providers rated Inadequate



4.2 The **Centralised Permanent Recruitment Function** has averaged approximately **30** open vacancies a month spanning a wide range of positions, skill types and shift requirements.

4.3 The recruitment team worked to clear performance indicators that ensured candidates meet expectations, attended interviews and are processed to job offerings.

The key achievements by the team in the last 12 months were;

- Permanent employment offers for over **75 people**.
- **1 in 2** people that have interviewed for open vacancies have secured an offer.
- 84% have accepted the offer and started employment.
- 30% of applicants offered have been new to the social care sector.
- 70% of people offered, already have over 2 years' experience in sector.
- All offers of employment have been within a **5-mile radius of Bury**.

4.4 **BURY FLEX: A Centralised Shared Workforce Function** has:

- *Flexed* to meet the needs of care skills and skills provision required by providers.
- *Flexed* to fill the utilisation gaps caused by sickness, holidays and winter pressures.
- *Flexed* to match the needs of the workforce.

4.5 Feedback from many smaller providers was that they did not have the ability to add supernumerary employees to an already stretched financial commitments and this service “levels up” access to additional staffing needs.

4.6 Flex enabled employees of the care sector to build “portfolio careers” and facilitated the ability to work across a diverse range of services, enhancing skills and sharing knowledge and capability with others. Flex was and is about ensuring employees remain working in sector or have the social care sector as a secondary employment opportunity.

4.7 The Flex team also run consistent wellbeing and performance checks to ensure both worker and provider are receiving the best service possible.

4.8 During the initial pilot phase Bury Flex was able to offer over **900 extra hours** into sector and each worker currently offers an average of 18 additional hours per week.

4.9 The Local Government Association were looking for outstanding examples of person centred approaches to recruitment and included Bury Flex as a case study earlier this year: [Bury Council](#), [Bury Integrated Care Partnership](#) and [UTS: Working collaboratively with](#)

Case Study

Supporting Lifestyle, Home Care Services with Bury Flex

A family-run organisation providing domiciliary care to the Northwest.

Supporting adults with a variety of care needs. Contact leanne@homecarebury.co.uk



Challenges

- Recruitment is EXTREMELY tough into community as the provision requires 80% females and drivers or people happy to do long walking shifts both early in the morning and late into the evenings.
- Gaps of 400+ hours per week across Bury.
- Due to 4 closing services an additional 1000+ hours required per week.
- Cost of compliance and training for candidates not comfortable in home care provision.

Impact of Bury Flex

- Filled all emergency gaps in workforce.
- Works alongside perm hiring and temporary and fully flexible employees.
- Access to complex skills.
- Removed need to hire agency workers who NEVER meet the criteria.
- Flex hires have become sponsored perm hires.
- Consistently trained and supported by Lifestyle and Flex team.



The Bury Flex workers are simply fantastic, they are clearly screened and selected well. We have never had to refuse a worker or not invited them back into a further shift. All can provide great care and have the competencies and communication skills to excel.

We have recently sponsored 2 to come FT with us and are keen to hire more flex workers to support our imminent increase in care requirements.



5.0 Issues

- 5.1 The Provider Support Offer is currently funded via MSIF and had been piloted with UTS under a grant agreement. This funding and grant agreement will end in August 2025 and a full review of the outputs and outcomes is underway to determine next steps, future funding and a potential tender exercise
- 5.2 UTS provide monthly performance reports detailing the activity levels of both the centralised recruitment support and Bury Flex, while a library of case studies is also produced with feedback from Providers accessing the support available.
- 5.3 Alongside Bury IPC, Bury Council Commissioning Team are working alongside providers to develop an **Independent Provider Workforce Strategy**. There are already:
 - Bury Locality Workforce Strategy,
 - Greater Manchester Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy
 - Skills for Care Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy.
- 5.4 We are committed to developing one for Bury providers; creating a culture of collaboration with our Providers and having the strategy will outline how together, we can address the challenges we all face, including recruitment, retention, training and career development.
- 5.5 The strategy will also outline our shared vision for a skilled, resilient and supported workforce that can meet the current and future needs of the residents of Bury and an action plan for doing this.
- 5.6 The Provider support offer will form a key part of the strategy and we will look to strengthen those areas that are working and develop solutions alongside providers for those areas that require attention.

- 5.7 One area where we want to focus development is on a pipeline of new care staff. We are bringing a cohort of providers together to work alongside the local college in offering exciting and worthwhile work placements to students; promoting careers in social care.
- 5.8 Bury has the second highest aged care workforce in Greater Manchester but **472 students** completing health and social care qualifications in the borough. We are committed to giving them the opportunities to work alongside good quality provides and develop their skills and experience.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report is for information purposes. It provides members of the committee with an update on the substantial work being undertaken by Bury Council and Bury IPC alongside the borough's care providers to tackle the substantial workforce challenges they face.
- 6.2 Feedback from those utilising the support on offer has been positive but more work is needed to improve take up further. Work is ongoing to continue publicising the offer, including case studies and the recent Provider Workforce Workshop in October 2024 with representatives from all provider sectors.
- 6.3 While the current programme of support will continue to be publicised, work will move forward at pace to develop the **Independent Provider Workforce Strategy** and in turn the future support offer that will be available to providers.
- 6.4 We are committed to supporting our providers with their workforce challenges and embed workforce support and strategy into business as usual for the Commissioning Team.

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