



# Learning Network: Case Study

## Integrated Workforce Planning: Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System

### Introduction

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS created a [People Hub](#) to recruit staff to support mass vaccination. Approximately 1,200 staff were recruited through the hub. Since then, many have gone back to their former employment, but others have remained in contact with an interest in working within the health and care sector.

The Health and Care People Team considered how to make best use of the skills they had gained and redeploy them in the sector.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent had already been involved as a pilot site for the NHS National Reservist programme.

They built on that programme and their strong relationship with the local authority to co-design [bespoke reservist models to benefit both health and care services](#).

Following a meeting with all parties in October 2021, it was agreed that the focus should be on the most challenging workforce issues within the system and the deficit of home care and care home workers.

### Background

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent has a population of around 1.2 million and employs over 40,000 people across NHS, Primary Care and Social Care services. The System is primarily made up of 3 NHS Trusts, 25 PCNs and 2 Local Authorities, as well as the voluntary and independent sector.

### Approach

The reservist programme focused on attracting new-to-care and back-to-care workers who would all be engaged on NHS terms and conditions and then seconded

out to local authority or private providers as either a fixed term reservist or an ad hoc reservist ready to be parachuted in and when required.

Both schemes saw a new approach to the secondment agreements and workforce sharing, including a focus on quality training and induction for all reservists. The programme has been very well received and has received a National Award for Innovation.

### **New-to-care reservists**

The new-to-care reservist programme aimed to recruit new care workers for the Stoke-on-Trent City Council's new enablement service without destabilising the rest of the local care market. These new recruits were appointed on NHS terms and conditions and then seconded back to the Council on a day-to-day basis. This model has been very effective and they are currently on their third cohort, with around 45 care workers recruited.

The approach was to recruit against values and behaviours – not experience. There was no pressure to get staff out and working immediately so they have been given time to develop. Retention rates have been good as a result and the management team have been able to nurture, grow and develop the new recruits.

As it was a new service, they have been able to experiment with different offers – including flexible working, and paying for intensive driving lessons for successful candidates. As the initial 12 month contracts come to an end for these reservists, the People Team have worked with those individual to find them permanent roles within the wider system – either with the Council, independent care providers or the NHS.

Recruitment into the reservists' programme has temporarily paused while new starters are embedded. The plan is to restart and to continue to work on this.

### **Ready-to-go reservists**

In partnership with Staffordshire County Council, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICS People Team also aimed to create and develop a pool of 'ready-to-go' reservists who could potentially be released from their day jobs to drop into gaps within providers who were pressurised by staff absences – for example due to sickness, and hard to fill vacancies, and also support providers of last resort.

The first attempt was ineffective, despite exceptional efforts, calls, meetings, training, and working in collaboration with the local authority. Reserves were recruited, but they were, in the main, already in substantive roles within already pressurised organisations.

Staffordshire acknowledged the approach was not working and analysed the reasons.

Reservists underwent a range of training – including Skills for Care rapid induction training, manual handling, Mental Capacity Act, DoLS and safeguarding. But they still needed to complete shadow shifts within social care settings. Due to the unprecedented pressures on the private and independent care sector, care providers were simply unable to facilitate these shadow shifts.

## **Social Care Hub**

The next phase was the creation of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Social Care Hub, which is an extension of the People Hub. The Hub is enabling them to get new candidates into shadow shifts with providers once they have completed their training and before they are deployed into care homes. The reservists time during these shadow shifts is funded by the ICS Health and Care People Team. Care providers offer their time to support the reservist in their shadow shifts. If the reservist is then deployed within a care setting, the care organisation will be recharged for the social care reservist's hours worked, plus oncosts, at the NHS Agenda for Change hourly rate on a monthly basis and on completion of signed and submitted timesheets. There is currently no management fee for this service.

They are working across both local authorities to engage with private care providers to promote the Social Care Hub offer.

The Skills for Care locality manager and local authority leads have enabled introductions to social care providers and relationships are now much stronger. The People Team now has access to the local care provider manager meetings and local events, such as the local authorities social care strategy launch where workforce integration featured strongly.

The Social Care Hub is focused on recruiting people who are new to care, or people who could come back into the sector again. The aim is to avoid destabilising other parts of the health and social care market. Care providers are now coming to the Hub with their workforce gaps, including maternity cover or long-term sickness, and with offers of shadow shifts. The Hub is currently in the process of matching candidates who have completed their pre-interview checks and training, with those shifts.

## **Retention of staff**

**The System wide Retention Steering Group** has been established with representation from across the System including partners from social care. The Steering Group is responsible for agreeing the scope of the programme, as well as designing and evaluating this strategy as we move forward.

There are also two Retention Partners hosted by the ICS, who are working directly with LA partners. Evaluation is currently underway, but initial indications are that

leaving rates are on a downward trajectory across the overall health and care system.

The programme supports care providers to develop their own retention concerns including:

- Career coaching conversations including structured one-to-one sessions for 10 weeks
- Pilot of 'Wellness Boxes' and 'Missing you' postcards
- Partnership Network meetings to support sharing of good practice on recruitment and retention
- Care Friends staff referral app to encourage staff to refer a friend to a social care job. The app includes a tool to recognise and reward staff.
- Scoping of flexible working and alternative rostering options

## Lessons learned

- Focus on key challenges that impact the overall system (e.g. workforce shortages in particular areas of care)
- Build in time to review and learn from approaches that did not work. Be open with all partnership and accept learning.
- Take time to build relationship with partners and stakeholders
- Start with small numbers and pilots to prove concepts
- Ensure you have clear structures in place that engage all the key partners. Create new ones if necessary.
- Be creative about the use of resources, skills and funding.

## Links and contacts

[Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent People Hub](#)

[Health and Care Reserves](#)

The People Hub email: [SSOT.ICSPeopleHub@mfpt.nhs.uk](mailto:SSOT.ICSPeopleHub@mfpt.nhs.uk)

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