

How to reduce your staffing costs

Nursing home managers spend £5-7 billion per year using staffing agencies to recruit temporary nurses, but the process can be less than satisfactory for both parties and more importantly can affect standards of care, says Bunie Anyaegbunam, CMO at Florence

It is estimated that 65 per cent of care homes in the UK are using temporary staff to cover vacant shifts. However, the 'arm's length' nature of recruitment agencies means care and nursing home managers have no direct relationship with the worker. Temporary nurses can feel they are just a body to fill a gap rather than a hard working professional being employed for their skills.

The current agency nurse solution is failing nurses and care homes. Every day nurses experience conflicting demands, difficult working conditions and low morale, which has led to the largest shortage of nurses for many years.

To help ease some of these demands, a new and innovative web platform called Florence has been launched to help connect nursing home shifts with pre-vetted engaged local nurses. Florence allows RGNs to showcase themselves,



their experience and skills and build a reputation. They create a personal profile including their training, accreditation and feedback they've received from homes they've worked at previously. Nurses can feedback on the homes too, so both parties are encouraged to make the working experience a positive one.

Home managers can clearly see all of this information so they are fully aware of a nurse's abilities by the time they arrive for a shift. And because that nurse has been selected for their skills and experience, they are likely to be more engaged, motivated and have a greater sense of professional pride.

Clear benefits

By cutting out the staffing agencies in the middle, Florence not only reduces the associated fees, saving the home up to 30 per cent of their monthly staffing costs, but homes are also encouraged to pass some of that saving back to the nurses in the form of higher wages.

Feeling valued is key to being able to attract a member of staff and for them to accept subsequent shifts, which is what every home manager wants. Continuity is key for a care setting where residents are faced with 'strangers' coming into their homes and where getting to know individuals is crucial for personalised care.

Florence was created by a doctor - Dr Charles Armitage - who was dissatisfied

with the staffing agency system. He found the whole shift booking process difficult and frustrating and was concerned about how much the process was costing providers.

This experience was the driver behind Dr Armitage creating the Florence app, a digital platform that bridges that gap. It allows homes to make more informed choices about the nurses they employ and that empowers temporary nursing staff by giving them the chance to showcase their skills and experience and be seen as a valuable asset to a staff team.

Digital-contingent labour platforms like Florence are recommended as one way of reducing costs, managing fluctuating demand and attracting a wider skills base for the public sector and there's no reason why that shouldn't also apply to the private care sector.

As the gig economy grows, disruptive technology will be the way forward for engaging with older, experienced staff as well as new starters. With more nurses leaving the profession than joining it, the available pool of nursing staff is growing increasingly limited and with the approach of Brexit, this could diminish even further. Care and nursing homes are competing with the NHS for nursing staff so the more attractive you can make that working relationship, the greater edge you'll have.



Bunie Anyaegbunam

Bunie Anyaegbunam is CMO at Florence, a web platform that connects private healthcare institutions with pre-vetted, self-employed RGNs who are looking for extra shifts



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