

TheBusinessOpinion

The complexities of care: What are the difficulties facing employers when it comes to Jersey's ageing population?

Care home workers have a range of training needs and the demands on institutions are many

AS the longest-serving private employment law firm in Jersey, we are privileged to work across the public and the private sectors. Our work in both sectors covers the many and varied businesses and organisations which operate in the Island. None are more rewarding to work with than those in the care sector, but equally none are more complex.

The changes that have taken place since the implementation of the Employment (Jersey) Law 2003 as amended are immense, and have placed huge demands on employers for the need to be abreast of statutory provisions, case law and regulatory/due diligence requirements.

Many homes are registered for residential care, rather than nursing care which has different requirements, but the whole care sector is changing, with the move to provide care in the community to keep people in their homes for longer. This means that the number of people requiring residential care is dropping, and the need to provide nursing care increasing. In the past, the likely age of someone entering residential care was in their early seventies, an age group who presented with perhaps minor age-related conditions such as high blood pressure. The age of those now leaving their own home to move into care has increased, and they often present with complex health needs. In order to survive, residential care homes are going to have



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to evolve to a nursing care model, with all the additional requirements that will bring. Dementia units will also be necessary as a consequence of the ageing population, with their additional training and regulatory needs.

Let's take the business of a normal care home, for instance, and look at some of the considerations. Firstly, there are diverse employees – there are likely to be kitchen staff, gardening staff, care workers, nursing staff, administration staff, a caretaker, maintenance staff and cleaners, to name but a few. All those staff have to be recruited, inducted, supported, appraised and trained. The latter is likely to include topics such as

data protection, safe handling, first aid, working with vulnerable adults, food handling and fire safety. The majority of those topics mentioned will need to be refreshed on an ongoing basis. The sector is heavily regulated which, as previously stated, puts a huge training burden on homes. All staff will have their own ongoing CPD and updating of professional qualifications, which takes them out of the workplace for considerable lengths of time each year. All the training has manpower, rota and cost considerations.

Now add in the fact that the operation of the home is 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. There may be twilight shifts, night shifts, split shifts and day shifts. There

will be rotas to plan, with different rates of pay for the various shifts, and the need to factor in staff holiday leave and bank and public holidays.

Organising and liaising with external personnel may include GPs, family members, visiting medics such as

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chiropractors and physiotherapists, hairdressers, therapists and friends of residents. All have to be welcomed into the home and kept safe in what is an exceptionally busy working environment.

Recruitment is not easy due to the need for flexibility around shift work and comparatively low levels of pay when viewed against the finance sector. As all hospitals are suffering from a recruitment crisis in all areas of nursing, it is likely that recruiting staff to care homes is going to become ever more difficult.

So, the next time you visit anyone in either a residential or nursing care home, take time to appreciate the logistical nightmare of running it and be grateful for the many wonderful people working there who keep your loved one safe and well.

Giving feedback creates a happy workforce

The mystery shopping industry once had a bad reputation, but it can provide very useful insights about company performance

BY the time this article is published I will actually be in Belgrade, in Serbia. Yes, I am, as we speak, attending my Mystery Shopping Providers Association's European conference. This is the sixth conference and I am so excited to join them again. Putting 250 'mystery shoppers' in the same room for three days is pretty amazing – I am surrounded by people that eat, sleep and breathe mystery shopping and have common values and common beliefs.

Everyone there is so open, wishing to meet new members, ready to share ideas and help each other, because we are in an environment where we feel comfortable, and that creates a real sense of trust.

The core service of my business has always been mystery shopping, helping businesses to measure their service. We

will create a specific questionnaire to follow the organisation's standards and processes and we will send in a mystery shopper – someone who pretends to be an everyday customer of this business and who is going to be giving an objective view of the service received that day.

When I first set up the business, mystery shopping had a bit of a bad reputation – rather like the Big Brother house – because businesses used to take the results the wrong way. Nowadays, I encourage all of my clients to be completely transparent with their employees, even down to giving them the questionnaire. After all, you are not trying to trick your employees – you want to give them the tools to do their job and tell them exactly what is expected of them.

So use mystery shopping to celebrate success first, then look at the gaps and

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see how you can improve the areas that need improvement. Be transparent and get your staff involved.

Above all, use it to encourage them to

provide an exceptional service, because positive behaviour breeds positive behaviour, resulting in a happy and efficient workforce.