



**Ashley Care**  
RESPECT & DIGNITY IN HOMECARE



## **Working in Care Myths**

### **The corona virus pandemic means that it is now unsafe to work in the care sector**

Covid 19 has presented us all with an extremely virulent pandemic that has not been seen before so being apprehensive about working in the care sector is understandable.

The pandemic has affected every corner of our communities including the care sector and care homes were very badly affected by cases and deaths early in the pandemic.

But by the very nature of the type of establishments that they are, care homes have always had robust infection control practices.

At the beginning of the pandemic however, people were being released from hospital to care homes without a Covid test or with a positive Covid test and it was very hard to control a rampant virus like Covid.

Domiciliary care did not have the same rate of infections and now nearly a year into the virus, PPE, testing, risk assessment and infection control has been tightened up more.

There is of course now the vaccination programme that is being rolled out as a priority to the care sector. There is still a risk, but there is for all of us and in any role where there is contact with people because Covid is highly infectious.

The most important thing that someone needs to consider going into a care role is what safety measures has that care service got in place, and how you they can keep themselves safe, especially if they are BAME or have underlying health conditions.

Generally care settings are very used to high levels of infection prevention and control but it is recognised that people may be fearful of working in the sector even though care providers are doing all they can to keep clients and staff safe.

During the pandemic the care workforce has stabilised slightly and there are currently less job vacancies than there was a year ago and applications for nursing for example have risen sharply, which means that people still want to work in the sector and have confidence in the safety of workplaces.

## **I have no qualifications in care so would be unable to get a job**

You do not need any qualifications to work in care.

That is not to undervalue it and of course if you have Maths, English, IT skills or HSC qualifications that is great, but ultimately it is all about values.

Years ago, employers asked for care experience/and or qualifications, but those days have gone, and employers should and do now recruit for values. And when we say values, we mean what is important to people, and how it defines them, such as being respectful, caring, reliable, compassionate, and empathetic.

Of course, if you are an employer you will need a mix of experience and qualified staff to meet the needs of those receiving care provision.

Generally, employers have enough experienced and qualified staff that they can recruit people new to the sector without any qualifications. As a sector we can train people in all the elements they need to be competent and confident in their role but cannot train people to have the values that makes them 'care'.

Working in the care sector means you can gain lots of qualifications though and really progress, so you may start out with no qualifications but have the opportunity to increase your skills, experience and ability to gain qualifications such as diplomas or apprenticeships that can really shape your future career.

## **Care work only involves personal care**

It is true that some care roles do include personal care such as care assistant and domiciliary care assistant, but there are many roles such as activities coordinator, domestic assistant, housekeeper and also roles such as medication assistant, nutrition champion, occupational therapy assistant, admin assistant and support worker that usually don't.

As a support worker for example, you may have a small element of personal care but the majority of the time you will be supporting people to live independently and manage everyday tasks such as shopping and cleaning whilst also supporting them to undertake social activities or go to college for example.

Many people say that they cannot do personal care, and it isn't for everyone, but with the right training and support most people are fine and it is often a very small but very important part of care work.

## **Care work is low paid**

It is a common myth that care is poorly paid, and by the very nature of the work it should be seen more as a vocation than a job.

But you can earn a very good living if you work in the care sector and are more likely to do some if you are passionate about the role and making a difference in the work that you do because that will stand out to employers as you progress through the sector.

When you first start working in the care sector as with many service roles such as hospitality or retail, the starting rate of pay is often the national minimum wage.

Many providers do pay the living wage or top up the basic hourly rate with enhanced pay for example night shifts, weekend shifts or for covering extra shifts or pay a mileage allowance if you work in domiciliary care. This does of course vary from employer to employer.

## **Working in care means working unsociable hours**

It is true to say that providing support and care to individuals is not generally a 9-5 job.

Social care like many other sectors such as retail, hospitality and logistics for example can mean working evenings, nights, or weekends.

Care is 24 hours a day. But what does the term unsociable hours mean in the world we live in today?

‘Working hours’ are very personal depending on your circumstances. What is unsociable to one person is convenient for another. So for example, a parent who wants to get back to work but needs to do the school run in the morning may find working a couple of nights a week say from 8pm to 8am really fits in with their lifestyle because their partner gets home from work at 5pm and then can have a few hours together before a night shift starts.

This can also be the same for people working weekends. When you are first starting out in your care career working weekends may be the only free time you have from other responsibilities so can be useful.

The biggest problem with hours is sometimes the shifts that are for example 8-2, 2-8 or domiciliary care where the day can be split over a number of hours.

Sometimes domiciliary care, or home care as it is sometimes called works for people because they often get a break in the afternoon for doing school runs for example.

Some providers do shift patterns such as 4 days on 4 days off which helps plan, or long days i.e. 8-8.

It is important that you only commit to what you know you can reasonably do.

We work with employers and encourage them to be flexible i.e. if someone can only work Tue and Sat that enables regular shifts on a rota to be covered and people are more likely to stick to that commitment.

Always be honest about the hours you can work but be prepared that this may include weekends, early morning or evenings on a rota basis depending on the type of role you are undertaking.

### **I must have my own transport in order to work in care**

It can be helpful to own a vehicle. It will give you more choice of where you can work and the type of work.

It can sometimes be difficult to get to early shifts or home after late shifts if you rely on other people or public transport. The main thing to consider is your safety and what you can commit to.

Care provision is obviously everywhere so normally there will be care homes near you and many will be recruiting so look close to home and check if you need to use public transport.

Domiciliary care and some support worker roles can be more difficult without your own vehicle. Many employers say you need your own transport. Some do short walking routes, cycle routes, or have care rounds that can be accessed by public transport but again don't commit to a job that realistically just will not work for you.

It is not impossible to work in care without your own vehicle, but it is easier if you are going to be working in one location rather than across multiple locations.

### **I do not want to work on my own without support**

You should never work in a care role where you do not have proper training and ongoing support from your employer and other staff.

When you start working in care you should have an induction so you understand the organisation you are working for, the people they support, and information and training such as the care certificate so you feel confident and competent in your role.

Even people who are not new to care should receive ongoing support because every care service and their clients is different.

In the care sector you may, after full training, work as a 'lone' worker on a one to one basis with someone who is receiving care in roles such as a support worker or domiciliary care worker, but you should always have other colleagues and managers that can support you if needed.

Care work is a responsible but rewarding role, but you should never feel that you are alone without adequate support and supervision.

### **Care work is not for men**

The care sector actively wants more men to work in the sector!

84% of people who work in care in Southend on Sea are female!

Care is often perceived as a female job, and historically it has been seen as a role that fits in with parental duties, many of which fall to women, although we know that isn't always the case.

Some of the reason behind this theory is because many care roles are part time, around family commitments and men are still often seen as the main bread winner, but of course there are full time roles and different jobs on different levels of pay.

But we do need more male care staff to balance out the workforce and to bring the same values but different skills to meet the needs of those who receive care and support.

Men or women care staff can support people of the same or opposite sex, but for more intimate care such as personal care it is quite right that some men would prefer a male carer which is a very important reason for wanting to attract more men in to the sector.

### **You can't turn care work into a career/ There is little progression in the care sector**

This is a popular myth and really is not the case.

It is more the fact that the care sector is made of lots of different care providers each with their own way of progressing their staff.

In Southend for example there are 146 care establishments with over 6,600 jobs.

So, as you can imagine, within those nearly 150 care establishments there are small providers, big companies, local authorities, and direct employers who all offer progression in a slightly different way.

So, for example a large care provider with many care homes or in domiciliary care a large client base, will have a more structured progression route because they have lots of staff and establishments.

A small care provider, in domiciliary care for example, may only have a handful of staff so progression may be more difficult and slower.

Different providers also call care roles different names which can also complicate matters.

As a rule of thumb, when you first start your care career you may start working as a care assistant or support worker, maybe via an apprenticeship route or even as a housekeeper, domestic or working in the office.

Once you have developed skills and experience and probably at least a L2 qualification you can progress on to roles such as senior care worker/leader, activities coordinator, or senior support worker where you may gain a L3 qualification.

From there you may want to consider further progression routes such as deputy manager, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, or care management.

There are lots of progression options but they may not always be within the care service where you may work, so look at where else within the sector your experience can take you, for example to health services or another care provider.

Some of the best care professionals that I have worked with did not realise the progression routes and we need to do more as sector to promote the great opportunities that exist. Many senior managers started their career as a care worker, working their way through the levels of care to reach the highest of roles.

Care is a profession to be proud of and make a difference to somebody who is in need of care, every single working day.

**Ashley Care can give you that position..... Speak to us.**

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