Options for supported living (OSL): stunning recruitment

Innovative practices in Personalisation

Merseyside: Options for Supported Living

Project: Stunning recruitment

Options are a small local provider supporting people with disabilities to live full and varied lives across Merseyside. They particularly focus on supporting those described as ‘difficult’ to support. Options provide individualized support for people with disabilities.

Following Option’s most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection the staff and people they support were asked their thoughts on the way Options recruits staff. One person stated that "Options has a well established recruitment process".

Applicants are invited to a 'recruitment workshop' to help give them an idea of the sort of work they would be doing. The workshops also included people who need support. Several new appointees have commented on how useful this was in giving them a flavour of what was expected of them. The CQC looked at sample records for recent recruits and they confirmed that all of the checks had been completed, thereby helping to protect people against the employment of unsuitable applicants.

The reasons for starting the project 'stunning recruitment' were to ensure:
- Great staff - relying on in-depth workshops and not a 30 minute interview.
- High staffing levels - essentially aiming at 100% staffing.
- No use of agency staff EVER.
- Reduced pressure on teams.
- Higher level of compliance with the European Working Time Directive
- Reduced overtime and better work home balance for staff

Outcomes:

The overall outcome is to achieve and identify our teams as being great support staff, and this is down to the relationship they build with the people they support. The current staff team and families recognize that the new recruits have fitted well into the person's life. Another way this is measured is through Quality Assurance Audits. Each month Development Managers visit the people we support at home and check how their support is going and what they have been up to for the past week, ensuring they have been fully involved in their communities and activities of their choice.

All staff receive monthly supervisions from their Team Leader which will identify goals for each support worker to achieve in the next month with the person they support and within their team. Also each team will meet monthly to review their team action plan and what they are going to achieve, as a team as well as with the person they support in the next month following the goals from the person's ELP.

Options decided that in order to have low vacancy levels they needed to recruit five times a year. The recruitment process is broken down into several stages to get a number of people involved. It starts with short listing from application forms from an average of 200 down to 90 who are invited to a recruitment workshop.

The aim of the workshops is to give people an insight into Options and the role of support worker.
Throughout the workshop applicants will be asked to take part in a variety of exercises that look at how well people work in teams. It spots the leaders, team players and those who are uninvolved. The workshops allow families, people we support and staff to come along and meet potential applicants. They have the chance to spot people who would work well with them.

We find a lot of people, particularly those we support, enjoy being involved in the workshop stage rather than at interview as it makes them feel more relaxed and at ease.

Following the workshop stage applicants are shortlisted from 90 to 30 and invited to an half an hour interview. The interview panel is made up of 3 Options staff which provides a more realistic analysis of the candidates. Following interview successful candidates are matched to the people we support and will go through an enhanced CRB and reference check.

One of the main reasons for the stage recruitment process is to get to know applicants better and who best they would be matched to. We wouldn't want to put a smoker with someone who doesn't like smoke, and we wouldn't want to put someone who is really loud and outgoing with a person who is quiet.

Financial benefits:

Options have an allocated recruitment budget of £12k per year. The benefits are evident in the money saved on overtime due to low vacancy levels, lack of burnout of staff, balanced home/work experience and no use of agency cover. Ultimately the benefits are seen in the outcomes achieved by people in their lives.

Feedback:

The father of someone we support recently emailed Options to comment on the support his son has received.
"It is clear that despite the lack of input from the NHS/PCT in helping 'A' cope with his autism, that the support team are providing a level of proactive support that is helping 'A' to raise his perspective on life and expectations from a mundane level to something with a little more meaningful with direction.

On my behalf, please thank the team, for providing something more than just 'babysitting'. I realise that it is not necessarily part of Options responsibility to 'improve the outcome' for people that they support, but it is very much more beneficial and satisfying when it is obvious that progress is being made, despite the lack of input from NHS/PCT."

Visit our website at www.options-empowers.org or contact Richard Williams at rwilliams@optionsforsupportedliving.org.