



We hope you're enjoying the summer so far. For many care providers, the school holidays can bring an additional layer of workforce planning, with annual leave requests, childcare arrangements and maintaining safe staffing levels all needing to be balanced carefully.

School holidays can highlight the gap between the annual leave available to parents and the amount of time they need to cover childcare. Research from Working Families estimates that parents face an average shortfall of 7.4 weeks across the school holidays.

As September approaches and children begin returning to school, it can be tempting to think of these pressures as easing until the next school holiday. However, school related commitments continue throughout the year, from inset days and school events to changing childcare arrangements and unexpected disruptions. The wider question for employers is perhaps how we create working environments that recognise the realities of working parents throughout the year, while still meeting the needs of the service and the people receiving care.

For employers, there can be real value in getting this balance right. Working Families research found that 68% of parents say they are likely to stay with an employer because they would not be able to get the same flexibility elsewhere, highlighting the potential connection between family friendly working practices and retention.

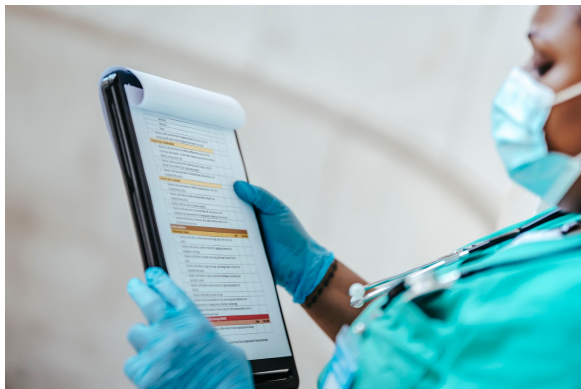
There are practical ways employers can support this balance without losing sight of the needs of the service. Planning ahead and encouraging staff to raise known childcare pressures early can give managers more time to consider what may be possible and plan rotas accordingly.

Where service needs allow, predictable working patterns, advance notice of rotas or agreed flexibility around start and finish times can also make it easier for employees to manage work alongside family commitments. Flexibility does not always mean reducing hours or making significant changes. Sometimes, a small amount of predictability can make a meaningful difference.

Keeping conversations open is equally important. Regular, honest conversations can help managers understand changing circumstances and identify practical solutions before pressures begin to affect someone's ability to work. At the same time, flexibility works best when it considers the needs of the individual alongside the wider team and the people receiving care, rather than unintentionally placing additional pressure on colleagues.

Creating sustainable working arrangements throughout the year can help organisations respond to the realities of working life while building a culture where people feel able to talk openly about what they need to remain successful in their roles.

In a sector where retaining experienced and committed people remains so important, creating sustainable working arrangements can therefore be about much more than supporting employees through the school holidays. It can be part of building teams where people can remain in their roles, feel valued and continue to contribute over the longer term.



World Patient Safety Day takes place on **September 17th**, providing an opportunity to reflect on the many factors that contribute to safe, high quality care. Often, it is policies, procedures and risk management highlighted in relation to safety. But safe care is ultimately driven by the people delivering it.

The way organisations recruit, welcome, develop and retain their teams can have a meaningful impact on the consistency and quality of care people experience.

This starts before someone joins a service. **Values based recruitment** can help organisations understand not only what a candidate has done, but why they want to work in care and whether their approach aligns with the needs of the people they will support. Making sure people have the appropriate skills and experience for their role is equally important.

From there, a **robust induction, ongoing supervision and continued development** can help staff feel confident and well equipped in their roles.

Creating opportunities for staff to ask questions, reflect, learn and communicate

openly, while feeling able to raise concerns and work collaboratively, can help build stronger teams and a culture where safety is taken seriously.

Retention matters too. When experienced staff stay, organisations can benefit from greater continuity, stronger relationships and teams who understand the people they support. This can make a meaningful difference to both staff experience and the quality of care.

Safe staffing is not simply about ratios or filling vacancies. It is about building teams with the **right skills, values and support** to deliver safe, consistent and person centred care.

Staffing is about far more than having the right number of people on a rota. Workforce planning can have a direct impact on the quality, safety and consistency of the care people experience.



The skills and experience within a team, how staffing decisions respond to changing needs, and how effectively risks are identified can all influence whether people receive the right support at the right time.

For leaders, this also creates an important question: **how clearly can we demonstrate the impact of our staffing decisions?**

It can be easy to focus on rota numbers, vacancies or whether shifts have been covered. But effective workforce planning goes further. It considers whether staffing arrangements are reducing risk, supporting person centred care and enabling teams to provide safe, consistent support.

In September, Skills for Care are hosting a practical session focused on how care providers can evidence safe and effective staffing for CQC compliance, offering support for organisations looking to strengthen workforce planning and feel more confident in demonstrating how their staffing decisions support quality and safety. Participants will explore the key workforce data that can help demonstrate this effectively and how to link staffing decisions with outcomes in practice.

[Learn more here.](#)



For managers who are new to their role, having access to the right guidance, resources and peer support can make a meaningful difference as they build confidence and navigate the realities of leadership within care.

Skills for Care are hosting an **Induction Workshop for new adult social care managers**, offering an opportunity to explore practical workforce solutions and development opportunities, learn more about the support and resources available to managers and their teams, and build connections through local and regional networks.

[Find out more and register here](#)

When children and young people experience periods of heightened need or crisis, residential care providers can face the challenge of maintaining safe, consistent support while also responding to increasingly complex emotional, behavioural or mental health needs.

For leaders, having access to appropriate clinical and therapeutic support can provide an important additional layer of expertise. It can help teams develop a deeper understanding of what may be underlying a young person's presentation, consider



appropriate approaches to support, and feel more confident when navigating situations that may place additional pressure on both the young person and the wider team.

Clinical support does not replace the relationships and knowledge held by residential staff. Instead, it can complement the work already taking place within a home, helping teams reflect on practice, better understand individual needs and consider how support can contribute to positive outcomes for young people.

bMindful Psychology are hosting a [free online session exploring how clinical support can help children's residential homes during periods of crisis](#),

offering an opportunity for leaders and professionals to consider how therapeutic input can complement residential care teams and support more responsive, informed practice.



For care providers employing people on the Health and Care Worker Visa, supporting staff effectively involves more than understanding their role within the service. There can also be additional considerations around sponsorship, employment conditions and changes in circumstances, making it important for

organisations to understand the responsibilities that come with employing sponsored workers.

We know that immigration requirements can feel complex, particularly when changes to employment, working arrangements or personal circumstances may have implications for an individual's visa. Having a clear understanding of these considerations can help organisations provide appropriate support to their international workforce while maintaining good employment and sponsorship practices.

A [Workshop on Common Issues Arising for Those on the Health and Care Worker Visa](#) is being hosted online, providing an opportunity to explore some of the issues that can arise for people working under the Health and Care Worker Visa and consider what employers and professionals need to be aware of.

#### **We'd love to hear from you:**

What conversations are currently shaping how you think about workforce support, wellbeing, retention or safe care within your organisation?

#### **Thought for the month:**

It has been positive to see social care placed firmly on the political agenda, with Prime Minister Andy Burnham making reform of the sector a major priority. Speaking about the future of social care, Burnham has highlighted the importance of recognising the contribution of care workers, saying that they should be among the best paid people in society.

The government is also progressing towards the first Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care, with negotiations expected to begin in 2027 and the first agreement due to take effect in April 2028. Alongside this, a new Care Workforce Pathway is being developed to create clearer routes for career development across adult social care.

Pay is undoubtedly an important part of recognising the responsibility, skill and value involved in care work. But it also raises a question worth considering: **is pay alone enough to make care a career people want to build?**

For many people, the experience of working in care will also be shaped by manageable workloads, supportive leadership, opportunities to develop, meaningful career pathways and a workplace culture where people feel respected and listened to.

For employers, these things are increasingly connected to recruitment and retention. A competitive salary may attract someone to a role, but the wider experience of working within an organisation can have a much greater influence on whether they choose to stay.

And this matters beyond the workforce itself. When teams feel supported and valued, they are better placed to build the consistent relationships, trust and continuity that sit at the heart of good care.

As the conversation around social care reform continues, perhaps there is also an opportunity for organisations to consider what valuing their workforce looks like right now, rather than waiting for wider system change.

#### **Further reading/watching:**

 [How Clinical Support Helps Children's Residential Homes in Crisis](#)

 [Beyond the Screen: Belief, Influence and Hidden Safeguarding Risk](#)

#### **Struggling to fill roles or keep up with demand?**

We work with organisations like yours to streamline recruitment and connect you with qualified, committed professionals.

Let's talk about how we can support you.

Warm wishes for the month ahead.



*Connecting compassionate care providers with skilled professionals to build strong, values-aligned teams that enhance care quality and service outcomes.*



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