

Care workforce specialist answer to sectors' staffing problems

Radical changes need to be made to the planning and recruitment of social care workers in Edinburgh to offset an impending care crisis.

With the role and value of social care at unprecedented levels owing to the pandemic, Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership [HSCP] is being urged to look at digital workforce mapping technology to support the care of the region's most vulnerable citizens.

The call is being made by innovative care workforce specialist [Netli](#) who has developed a range of solutions – working in consultation with multiple industry organisations – to resolve the serious challenges faced in Edinburgh.

Netli has provided Edinburgh HSCP with a detailed proposal offering to support the provision of local care services and is seeking talks with senior officers and department heads to outline the plan in more detail.

The move follows a call in an Independent Review for a National Care Service to be formed, which also underlined the importance of better workforce planning and development to reduce the impact of ever-worsening recruitment and retention problems.

It is estimated that 36,000 people in Scotland do not have

access to the care they need. Care UK estimates over 1.4 million people across the UK currently have unmet care needs, with delayed discharges due to the lack of social care costing the NHS more than £500 every minute.

Stephen Wilson, CEO and co-founder of Netli, said that as the sector is not growing fast enough – due to inherent difficulties with recruiting and retaining staff – it is unable to keep up with the increasing demand for care services caused by an ageing population. A care crisis is not just looming, but is happening right now.

Stephen said: “People are already being denied vital care – but that position is only going to get worse if we don’t change the failed ways of the past and look to digital technology to sort out this workforce problem.”

Netli’s solution involves collating workforce data from care providers and making this available to HSCPs like Edinburgh HSCP in real-time. This would offer detailed information to help HSCPs with current and future workforce planning, identifying risks and threats within the industry, comparing and benchmarking against regional and national data, and identifying the necessary supports for care providers.

Stephen Wilson, CEO and co-founder of Netli, said: “Our proposal will enable HSCPs like Edinburgh HSCP, and those across the country, to gather and access valuable data which will help them to understand how to better manage the planning, recruitment and retention of social care staff.

“For example if we can monitor what impact Brexit, Covid or a closure of an individual care provider will have, it means you can react and impose a solution before serious damage is done.

“Having continual access to real-time workforce data, combined with the other integrated workforce tools we have devised, will help to attract applicants to the care sector, improve staff retention and mitigate the risk of provider failure,

lost revenue and unmet needs.”

Around 206,000 people work in social care in Scotland, but the Scottish Social Services Council predicts the social care workforce must grow by 2.2% each year.

However, the sector had around 14,000 vacancies and growth has stalled at just 1.2%. It comes as the Scottish Government acknowledges that “recruitment and retention of staff working in the social services sector has long been seen as key to improving service provision, standards and outcomes”.



Stephen Wilson

Stephen said: “The facts speak for themselves: we need to radically improve the way we manage and process recruitment in the social care sector.

“But, crucially, as well as the pandemic shining a new light on the importance of good social care, it has also provided a platform to showcase a career in social care like never before.

“The new respect and value that social care now has should act as a trigger to encourage people in say, retail, hospitality or travel who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic, to take up new roles in social care.

“So when the UK opens up post-Covid, social care can be a key sector to support the economic recovery of the nation. “

Netli plans to contact all HSCPs in Scotland – as well as consulting with the Scottish Government – with the aim of securing country-wide support and take-up of its services. They also want to speak to care providers who can become ambassadors to press for change with local authorities.

Stephen added: “We believe we can play a key role in helping HSCPs and Scottish Government to ensure the continuous

provision of consistent and uninterrupted care in communities across the country.

“Every person employed into the care sector will positively impact the lives of at least three people in need of support. This year, Netli wants to help at least 10,000 people to gain employment in the care sector who, in turn, will support 30,000 people.

“But if we secure the wide scale take-up from local authorities, and from those in Scotland, that we are looking for, we could see 100,000 jobs being created.”

Netli’s proposal to Edinburgh HSCP – titled ‘The Continuous Provision of Consistent and Uninterrupted Care’ – consists of three integrated solutions to cover the entire lifecycle of the care workforce:

- CareJob.co – a job board specific to vacancies in care, developed to increase recruitment into the sector;
- Workforce – an end-to-end recruitment and HR system built specifically to speed up and improve the recruitment and retention process for care providers
- Workforce Portal – a database of available care workers, giving care providers 24/7 access to a permanent pool of staff to reduce the risk of staff shortage.

The company, which rebranded to Netli from its previous name Novacare in preparation for its planned expansion this year, has developed its product offering over the last five years in direct response to the care industry’s demands for bespoke support and solutions.