



JOB REDESIGN:

A STRATEGY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

Of the 685,000 people working in the domiciliary care sector in England, most are women, and most are low-paid. As local authority budgets have been cut over recent years, care providers have faced real challenges in recruiting and retaining care workers. Although the scope for improving pay is limited, we believe there is scope to improve job quality, by designing jobs which are compatible with the personal care responsibilities of professional carers.

In a sector where 80% of employees are female, most professional carers have their own caring responsibilities for children or other family members who are elderly or have disabilities. Many carers want to work part-time. The issue of 'compatible flexibility' is therefore particularly acute, but may hold the key to improving the attraction and retention of staff.

This project, funded by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation, aims to help care providers to design working practices which improve job quality, and specifically compatible flexibility. In a sector where there isn't a spare penny of funding, and local authority budgets continue to be squeezed, this has to be achieved within existing or reducing budgets. As the sector deals with vulnerable adults, this also has to be achieved without any diminution of care quality standards.

Timewise is working with representatives of the different types of social care employment – employees of private companies and social enterprises, as well as independent 'personal assistants' who work directly with service users. We are conducting research with care workers (both personal carers and support workers) to find out what their frustrations are, and share their good ideas. As the project progresses, we will pilot different types of interventions to find out what works in practice. And at the end of the project, in April 2017, we will share learning across the sector and, where relevant, with other sectors facing similar challenges.