

Managers' experiences of employing migrant care workers



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Background – what is known about this subject?



The social care workforce is increasingly ethnically diverse – in many places ‘super diverse’ although the patterns of EU & non-EU immigration are changing.

Managers in the long-term care sector are more likely to spend time on conflict resolution and workforce diversity management than their counterparts in acute health care settings.

Research Question

How do social care managers address workforce diversity and any conflicts arising from it along national, ethnic, racial and migration lines?



Methods – ask them



Face to face interviews with 121 managers undertaken at two time points between 2009 -14 investigating how care home managers were approaching workforce ethnicity diversity, through questions on staff demographics, relationships, management challenges and strategies.

Theme 1



Sources of conflict:

- Misunderstanding
- Miscommunication
- Cultural differences
- Relations between different ethnic or cultural groups

Theme 1 – illustration of responses to ‘shouting’

‘I think the message came out quite rudely. It was a second occasion that it’s happened. I think they developed a misunderstanding of each other or misunderstanding of each other’s cultures. I think cultures do clash sometimes and how people express themselves and how they don’t always see themselves as being rude. But the person that’s received the message thinks it’s rude. It’s learning about how do you recognise that in yourself? That’s very cultural. I come across that a lot’.

*(Clinical Director and Registered Manager,
Private Sector Care Home for older people)*



Theme 2



Resolving immediate conflicts:

- Best if 'on the floor'
- Making adjustments – avoiding cliques
- Explaining purpose of care
- Asking for subjectivity – what it looks/sounds like to others

Theme 2 - illustration

‘We live in a cosmopolitan society where people from different, you know blacks, whites, Asians, work as a team. I think it is sometimes inevitable to avoid that type of personality conflict by talking to them and you know coming up with ideas and ways to continue to work’.

*(Care Home Registered manager,
Private Sector Care Home,
Learning Disabilities/mental health)*



Theme 3

Proactive approaches to preventing and limiting conflict:

- Avoiding 'splits'
- Stressing inclusion
- Celebrating diversity
- Managing rotas/shifts



Theme 3 - illustration

‘We try and resolve that by moving people around and not putting them to work together. We separate them. Mostly female staff, but I’ve got quite a few male staff now as well, because I’ve got roughly half and half male and female residents, so it’s nice to have some of the guys around as well’.

(Manager, Voluntary Sector Care Home with nursing)



One outlier – course attender



...it was 10 months, but there was so much in it and managing a diverse workforce was one of the things that we looked at.... What I learned from this course was really, really good. It was how to pull the team together and to refocus on what the job was. We used the thing called the 'Three Rs'. It's 'Recognize, Respect, and Reconciliation'....It's trying to meet the needs of everybody.

(Manager, Voluntary Sector Care Home for older people)

(course provided by Skills for Care - sector skills training body - that appeared to have drawn heavily on the work of Fons Trompenaars & James Hampden-Turner)

Overarching metaphor



Most managers addressed workforce conflict in respect of race and ethnicity within a **family-like** workplace culture but some reported tensions that challenged the family metaphor

Conclusion – this analysis reveals:



- The hidden world of care home management and human relations
- The autonomy and discretion of managers
- Super-diversity of the care home sector – lessons for other employers?
- Expressions of desire for a family ethos

Thanks for listening

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