

TRAINING

SPECIAL REPORT

ANDREW CANNON ON PEOPLE



“ We believe our people are priceless. That’s why, at Bupa Care Homes, we’ve already invested over £10m into a fresh approach to learning. And why this renewed focus on development underpins our 2020 vision – a Bupa-wide plan with three key goals.

First, to expand the reach of our care and touch millions more lives. Second, to achieve extraordinary business performance and growth. And third, that people continue to genuinely love working at Bupa Care Homes.

For some people, joining us is vocational. For others, they “fell” into the care profession. For me, it shouldn’t matter. Bupa should be a place that people love to be part of and where they feel they are getting all the world class training they need.

Having recently spent time in the US at Google and Facebook, I saw that the most effective organisations had a flatter structure that increased transparency and reduced the gap between leaders and the frontline.

And it’s this approach we’ve started to take at Bupa. We don’t limit our thinking to an executive team holed up in a boardroom. We tap into the skills and knowledge of the 27,000 minds across our business. I believe that by nurturing happier, more fulfilled employees, we can help our residents to live longer, healthier and happier lives too. It’s part of why I feel so lucky to be part of Bupa. Our work has nobility about it and is uniquely rewarding in a way only care can be.

Throughout my career – and at Bupa specifically – I’ve seen that when people know their work has real value, it can inspire them to develop industry-leading ideas. But, of course, it’s up to organisations to listen.

It all starts by putting lots of small changes into action. And, bit by bit, it can transform a business and change the lives of its own people, as well as its residents.

I believe we can change the culture to one that gives home managers the freedom to get away from their desks and ever-increasing paperwork.

It comes down to a choice. Do we only satisfy the bureaucrat? Or do we support our people to get out there, understand their residents better and deliver exceptional care? Of course, that’s not to say it isn’t a challenge. After all, removing certain pressures and creating the space for people to improve millions more lives isn’t easy.

But at Bupa Care Homes, we’ve put big plans in motion to achieve it.

Andrew Cannon is managing director of Bupa Care Services UK
www.bupa.co.uk/care-services

WORKFORCE

‘IT’S EASIER THAN PEOPLE BELIEVE’

Care organisations often struggle to offer good training. Claire Read on efforts to forge a new learning model

In a statement accompanying its 2009 *State of Care* report, the Care Quality Commission summed up the essential problem with the provision of training in health and social care. “It goes without saying that skilled, competent staff are essential for safe, high quality care,” the commission reported. “Nevertheless many services in England struggle to meet the required quality standards in staff training.”

There is a common perception that such struggles can be explained by the mission of health and social care providers. How can training be reliably delivered in an environment where there are constant demands on staff to deliver care? Andrew Cannon, the new managing director of Bupa’s UK care homes, is confident it can.

“I think it is easier [to deliver learning and development] than people believe it is,” he states. “The critical thing is to be clear around what your purpose is.”

Mr Cannon says that, for Bupa Care Services, that purpose is: “To improve people’s lives – to give people a better life for the fact that they live with us. For me, learning and development is about continuously improving ourselves and our organisation for the benefit of our residents.”

Clare Jacobs, employment relations adviser at the Royal College of Nursing, agrees that training is crucial to the provision of good quality services. “It is fundamental,” she argues, “particularly in care homes which from my point of view is a specialist area of care. Staff should receive introductory training when they first come into a home, then basic skills training, and then specialist skills on top of that. It’s also important that they are supported to learn on the job, not just going out and having classroom teaching or particular training sessions.”

Staff at Bupa say they have long benefited from all of those sorts of opportunities. “Everybody has supervision, appraisals every year, personal development plans in place,” explains regional manager Judith Reyner. “And I think those people that want to progress or want to try something different, Bupa supports you 100 per cent.”

That support will be bolstered by the more than £10m investment Bupa Care Services is making in learning and development. The company is entirely relaunching these services, tied to the firm’s vision of where it should be by 2020 – one of the key planks of that vision is “people love working at Bupa”.

“I don’t think we can be a care business without caring for our staff,” reflects organisational development and learning partner Sarah Melia. “When people are in our care homes, we want them to feel they’re treated as an individual, not a number. And I think we have to try and treat our staff in the same way.

“It is a huge responsibility looking after someone’s wellbeing. So staff should feel supported and should always have someone to talk to, someone to ask a question to. They should always be able to have that training at their fingertips.”

The company’s new training model aims to ensure that knowledge and support. One notable innovation is the introduction of a dedicated trainer in each of Bupa’s 300 UK care homes. “Before this new launch, training would be given by staff on top of their day job. But in a busy shift, training isn’t always the first thing that gets prioritised,” explains director of learning and development Julie Stephens. “Now there will be staff whose only role is to deliver training – that puts continuous learning right at the heart of our organisation.”



Caring for staff too: those looking after older people need regular support to improve their skills

“Having a trainer in every home should help ensure the training gets done efficiently and on time, but also make sure people are engaged in it,” agrees Ms Melia.

The company is using technology to get that engagement as well. Everyone will have an iPad on which they can access a series of e-learning modules.

“The theoretical side of healthcare knowledge can be delivered really efficiently through e-learning,” argues Ms Stephens. “Other organisations, and certainly the NHS, do this very well already but the flexibility and functionality of iPads means we can help everyone to drive their own learning, help them be fantastic at their jobs, and enable them to share their learning through blogs or community discussion groups.”

While the ultimate aim is to deliver the best possible care for residents, Mr Cannon sees the benefits of a dedication to learning and development as going much further. He speaks of removing the hierarchical structure common in many care settings and of empowering employees to find better ways of caring for residents.

“In the really effective organisations I’ve been a part of – those that continuously improve – they have strong cultures around learning and development; strong cultures around testing ideas and learning,” he says.

“If we can create a thinking environment and a culture of continuous improvement,

‘Staff should always have someone to talk to, someone to ask a question to. They should always be able to have that training at their fingertips’

Bupa is currently recruiting for a number of roles. For details visit www.hsjobs.com/minisites/bupa

which includes learning and development as a critical element of that, then actually we already liberate our people. And instead of having my brain at the top, or the 12 brains on the executive team, we have the 27,000 brains on the frontline focusing on constantly improving.”

It is an idea about which Mr Cannon is clearly passionate. He has spent time working in a care home to understand the reality of life on the frontline, and the company intranet has an “Ask Andrew” section which allows staff to pose questions and share ideas.

He believes it will take some time for the new learning and development programme to become fully mature – he talks of a timeframe of 2015. At that point, he is keen for the organisation’s approach to training to have an impact far beyond the company’s own borders.

“My ambition is for us to be the gold standard – for people to join us because of our learning and development, and for us to be a point of reference for the rest of the industry for the quality of L&D and the scale and scope it gives people to progress.

“So my ambition is not to put in place a simple stage thing where we develop people, they get a qualification and they earn a little bit more money,” he continues. “It is significantly broader than that. It is to be the touchstone for learning and development and quality care in this sector.” ●



WORKFORCE: CASE STUDIES

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT COURSES

Good training doesn't only happen in the classroom but in the workplace, through reflective practice and having 'someone I can ring up and talk to'. By Claire Read

THE CARE HOME MANAGER

When Sarah Lally joined Bupa Care Homes in 2004, her aims were clear. "I started as a relief care assistant, and was very much looking for something that would fit around my kids, in all honesty," she remembers. "My daughter was four at the time and I thought: couple of hours a week, it'll get me out of the house, I can get to meet some new people since we'd relocated, and earn a bit of money as well."

Fast forward almost a decade, and Ms Lally is now a relief care home manager at the organisation. It is a significant career progression, but one which she says has been gradual and natural.

"I have been supported and encouraged the whole way," she explains. "About four or five months in I was asked if I would be interested in being a relief senior on shift. I agreed, and then I took on contracted hours. I did all my care training; I was encouraged to do my NVQs. I then got funding for the registered managers award (RMA), which at that time was the managerial qualification you needed. And then I applied for a home manager's job, and got it."

She went on to manage two homes, before recently taking up her current role as a relief home manager. Although she has, and will, work across a number of facilities, she says that one thing remains constant.

"If something's not going to plan, there's always someone you can call," she explains.

In her new role, Ms Lally says she is looking forward to what she expects will be continuous, on-the-job learning. "In the home I'm in at the moment, we've got three different units – elderly/frail, dementia, and there's also a young physically disabled unit. Every day I'm learning something because of the different people I'm working with, the different client groups and the different

challenges each home has."

As she looks back over the last decade, she draws a conclusion as clear as her original aims. "I think I'm very lucky," she says. "There's training on everything at Bupa, and I think the nice thing is that it's at your own pace. As a company we recognise – and we do it well – that what one person picks up very quickly isn't necessarily be going to be picked up by another as quickly. It's about listening to the individual."

THE REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Vivienne Birch says that her experience is proof that Bupa Care Homes offers learning and development opportunities for individuals at all levels of the organisation.

"I joined as a general manager of three care homes and I'm now deputy regional director," she explains. "During that time, I've completed all the regional management training awards, I did a leadership programme within the company called Supporting Excellence, and they also sent me off to Warwick University to do a diploma in business studies.

"They also enabled me to finish my master's in healthcare, which I had started before I joined. So I've fully benefited from the company's focus on learning and development. I'm not just speaking on behalf of my staff when it comes to L&D, I suppose I'm speaking on behalf of myself as well."

Ms Birch also talks of development opportunities outside straightforward training and academic courses. She explains that she has had a series of coaches and mentors during her time at the company. "It isn't just about formal courses," she says. "It's also about reflective practice and having somebody I can ring up and talk to, or meet face to face."



'The opportunities are there to learn what you want to learn, progress in what you want to progress in'



Training in every home: Bupa's Anglesea Heights residential and nursing home in Ipswich

It is a similar story for Richard Jackson, also a regional director at the company. He joined in his current role in 2011, having previously worked on the hospitals side of the Bupa business. While he says that most formal training took place during his first stint at the company, he has been far from lacking in development opportunities since he rejoined.

"The developmental work – it's not really direct training – has been part of the company's culture shift. So, for example, I and 200 other senior executives have been receiving direction and instruction around our leadership styles.

"So we're doing quite a lot of formative, to a certain extent self, development work around leadership style. It's quite a big development curve and inevitably I've learnt some new things as a result."

Part of the culture change Mr Jackson describes is the significant refresh of learning and development at the company. He says the new approach is one he is very keen on.

"The way we're structuring the training now is going to be a lot more on the ground facilitation of the process," he explains. "Before we were dependent upon one of two approaches: cascade training, or buying in resources from outside when we felt we needed them. What I like about the new

structure is that we embed training professionals at the grassroots in the organisation, working closely with the homes to ensure everyone has the training they need and can also take advantage of the full range of training we can make available to them."

Ms Birch is clear on the benefits of such a dedication to learning and development. "I think it inspires people to do the best they can," she reflects. "Our vision is for our residents to live longer, healthier, happier lives and our staff need not only to be motivated to do that but know how to do it. Training and development really fits in with that."

THE REGIONAL MANAGER

Ask Judith Reyner if she has taken part in learning and development since joining Bupa and her answer is immediate. "Since day one," she says. "My induction was a week in a classroom going through the basics and from there I've done a certificate in palliative care, a lot of mandatory training, courses in coaching... It's that much that, to be honest, it's where to start listing it."

Ms Reyner joined the organisation in 2007 as a senior nurse, moving on to become a clinical services manager, a home

manager, and a regional support manager before taking up her current role as interim regional manager. She says it is a position which enables her to help other staff to progress through the company in the way she has.

"I started this role at the beginning of January and I'm looking after a portfolio of 10 home managers who look after 10 homes of their own. My initial job in January was setting objectives for these managers and launching their personal development plans for this year," she explains.

"Some of it runs in line with the Bupa 2020 vision, and so finding out what part our managers want to play in that – whether it be getting involved from an HR perspective, whether they want to move up to bigger homes, whether they're actually really happy staying where they are and want to support the business from their existing home."

Ms Reyner emphasises that for all the company is keen to help individuals progress, it is also supportive of those who feel they are already in the role they want to be in.

"I think Bupa helps you be who you want to be," she says. "For those who want to progress or try something different, Bupa supports you 100 per cent. If you want to move to bigger things, if you want to move sideways into quality or any other department, then we're more than happy to support you. The opportunities are there to learn what you want to learn, progress in what you want to progress in.

"But also if you're happy to stay as a nurse, or a carer, or a home manager, again the company is there to support you so you've got the tools to continue doing what you're happy doing. Bupa just wants you to be the best you can."

For Ms Reyner, that has most recently involved becoming one of 28 internal assessors for Investors in People. As part of collecting evidence for the people management standard, she was given the chance to visit homes in Devon and Somerset – a long way from her conventional patch of Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria.

"I was talking to people I didn't know and I think that's when I could really see the learning and development of our people from the grassroots," she says.

"We place such a big emphasis on L&D for all our staff because if our staff feel well equipped to do the job at hand, then their work practices are safe. And if our work practices are safe, our staff are knowledgeable, then the quality of care we're delivering is much better." ●