



# Developing Line Managers To Deliver Values-Based Recruitment



## The Good Employment **Learning Lab**

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## Supporting Line Managers To Better Manage Values-Based Recruitment (VBR)

Recruiting and retaining good people is a key challenge for the adult social care sector and line managers have a critical role to play. VBR is a way of attracting and retaining people with behaviours that align with organisational values. Research suggests that VBR can lower recruitment costs and staff turnover. It can lead to performance improvements as well as being low cost to introduce. We also know there's a skills gap for line managers who need support to develop the good management practices that create good work for all. Here at the Good Employment Learning Lab, we've been exploring 'what works' when developing line managers to adopt good management practice and suggest how to do that for VBR.

Even before the pandemic hit, the sector experienced challenges with recruitment, selection and retention. Recruiting using a values-based approach is one way to attract the right people to work in adult social care and develop staff through their induction and beyond. As one line manager told us:

Care as a profession is not valued enough. Also, a lot of people don't really know what social care is. We need to be really clear about what is involved before people start – manage expectations.

Evidence from the project showed:

1. VBR can contribute to decent and productive work by supporting performance management, creating a team identity, and improving retention.
2. Line managers need training in core recruitment processes before implementing VBR, and benefit from learning and sharing practices with peers in their sector.
3. Successful implementation depends on connecting organisational values to the experience of both staff and people receiving care, and applying values beyond recruitment processes.
4. Contextual pressures such as workload and short-staffing can make successful implementation challenging.

## How Did We Develop Line Manager Understanding Of VBR?

Our participants were adult social care line managers from the private, public and third sector, including small providers. They had varying experience, knowledge, skills and confidence. In our content design, we emphasised the importance of considering the wider organisational context, beyond the interview process itself. As one line manager explained:

Recruitment has been difficult generally to social work posts. [I learnt the importance of] understanding the recruitment process better, understanding how to incorporate values-based recruitment into interviews alongside competency questions.

We know line managers are busy, so we adapted well-established, evidence-based learning techniques for online learning. We offered three interactive development options to suit differing needs, delivered by qualified HR professionals:

- **Online Masterclasses:** One-off interactive sessions featuring evidence-based content with interactive discussions and practical case studies with around 15 line managers.
- **Online Peer Learning:** Three 90 minute structured and facilitated 'flash peer learning' sessions where around six line managers from different organisations share VBR challenges and listen 'off camera' as they get solutions and support.
- **Online Skills Coaching:** Three 60 minute one-to-one sessions on VBR that blend coaching and mentoring, flexible to the skills and confidence of the line manager.

Line managers could participate in any combination of these sessions. We also provided an online resource bank for self-directed and deeper learning.

Our masterclasses covered:

- The essentials of recruitment practice.
- What VBR is, and its pros and cons.
- The Skills for Care five stage model of VBR.
- How to use VBR in an inclusive way.
- Working through an adult social care case study.
- Applying VBR to line managers' organisational contexts.

The content of our peer learning and coaching sessions was driven by line managers' live VBR challenges and opportunities.

## What Did Line Managers Learn About VBR?

Some line managers were introduced to VBR for the first time. In addition, learning included:

- How to embed values within existing organisational recruitment processes and the models and tools available to support them, such as the Skills for Care 5 A's model (Articulate, Attract, Apply, Assess, Assimilate), which they found helpful.
- How to integrate a VBR approach into interviews and get the best out of candidates by going beyond qualifications and skills to finding out about their values and personality.

I learned more about him as a person, listening to his [story], than I would have done asking him, 'Well tell me about how do you...?' I thought, 'Yeah, ... that's brilliant. You're interested in people. You'll go that extra mile to...' [...]. It was good to do that because... the interviews felt richer.

- VBR is more than tweaking interview questions and extends through the employee lifecycle from induction through to ongoing development.
- Becoming more aware of their personal values and how or whether they aligned with the organisation's values.

## How Did Line Managers Learn About VBR?

Building on well-established learning theory we found that line managers learned from:

- Learning whilst actively recruiting in the workplace, enabling them to experiment with new VBR techniques after training sessions.
- Learning together in online breakout rooms in masterclasses and peer learning groups, discussing challenges, and tapping into others' experiences across the sector.
- Being vulnerable and honest in psychologically safe online spaces, with peers from outside their organisation, facilitated by an empathic expert.
- Reflecting and thinking through new ways of implementing VBR, and the practical implications, with the expertise and input of a coach.

I learnt what others had tried and some of their challenges. My peers made me think about things in a different way too and I thought this made me more receptive and open to learning.



## What Did We Learn About VBR?

Values were recognised as important to ensure people have a good organisational fit, and as a basis for developing required technical skills. Despite this, there was a frequent disconnect between organisational values and recruitment, particularly where the organisational remit was wider than just care, for example, in local authorities. There was also a perceived disconnect between the values established for those receiving care and those experienced by staff, particularly in relation to dignity and respect for those on insecure contracts and low pay.

While generally positively viewed, there were concerns over the time required to implement VBR given the urgency of filling vacancies in a sector under enormous pressure. Additionally, line managers often lacked a basic understanding of recruitment processes, which was needed before working on VBR itself. Inexperienced candidates may also need support adapting to values-based interview questions.

If you get the values right, you can do good training, you can teach people to do the job. But if you've got someone with previous experience but they don't uphold your values, it's probably not going to work.... What they stand for and what they believe in... if they're the right person for you, you can teach them the job, you can train them.

## What Did Line Managers Experiment With, And What Changed As A Result Of The Training?

Line managers experimented with VBR practices including:

- Reviewing and including values on their organisation websites.
- Updating job descriptions and recruitment advertising with values.



- Adding VBR questions to interviews.
- Reviewing interview methods, such as adding scenarios and role plays.
- Developing a new recruitment tool kit.
- Introducing buddy systems for new starters.

#### What changed?

Line managers reported positive changes, including feeling better equipped to deal with recruitment challenges, and supporting their team more broadly.

Whenever I'm supervising staff, particularly maybe staff that I find a little bit challenging, I feel like [the values] have made me take more of a stance of listening, rather than telling and saying. And being less directive in the advice that I give to the team.

For new starters, VBR gave them good insight into the organisation, and helped them to fit in when joining. They also reported that it supported their well-being.

Our research evidences that VBR can support decent and productive work, where managers can use learning to effect change. Better applicant pools were generated and better appointments made. It supports performance management, creates a team identity and improves retention, reducing 'the conveyor belt of high turnover'. It also helps to create a more diverse workforce.

## What Does This Mean For You?

VBR can have a range of positive outcomes, but contextual pressures can make implementation challenging. We suggest:

- Providing line managers with well-designed and facilitated training on both general recruitment and VBR. This should include opportunities to reflect and share their challenges with sector peers from outside of their own organisations as a source of professional support.
- Considering sector-wide values in adult social care, akin to those in the NHS, to support a values-based approach.
- Ensuring values are applied to employees as well as those receiving care.

## Where Can I Find Out More?

You'll find our VBR masterclass slides, articles, websites, toolkits and podcasts on our Wakelet Resource Bank. Read more in our full evaluation report and reports on other management topics when published on the Good Employment Learning Lab (GELL) website. See below for details on how to access the Wakelet Resource Bank and GELL website.

## What Is The Good Employment Learning Lab?

The Good Employment Learning Lab at Manchester Metropolitan University is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council to develop and test the most effective ways of supporting line managers to manage people to create good employment. It is a collaboration between researchers, policy makers, practitioners and managers to find out 'what works, for whom, when, where and why' so that organisations and training bodies can target investment to effectively develop line managers. Here we report specifically from the Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Lab.

### The Good Employment Learning Lab: What Works To Develop Line Managers?

- Research and Practice Working Together
- Designing and Testing Online Masterclasses, Peer-Learning and Coaching to Address Common Management Challenges
- Designed On Five Management Learning Principles



**Gain Knowledge**



**Reflect**



**Make Sense**



**Intend to Experiment**



**Learning Together**

Learning What Works Via Realist Evaluation  
Helping Evidence To Land Where You Work

## How Can I Get Involved With The Good Employment Learning Lab?

Contact Us:

Email: [goodemploymentlab@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:goodemploymentlab@mmu.ac.uk)

**GELL Website**

Resource Bank:

[wakelet.com/wake/dpuXSU9rXB\\_1\\_Lp1jJuD](https://wakelet.com/wake/dpuXSU9rXB_1_Lp1jJuD)



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