



Working with an agency

Things to consider

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Got a question ? Contact the office on 01372 231007 or e-mail admin@Care101.co.uk

Its easy to think of agency work as more flexible, easier & better paid. After all, you've probably worked with agency staff yourself who point out they only work when they want to and they're not tied to one care home.

Whilst true, agency work is not for everyone and there are pros and cons for everything. It can however be very rewarding, not specifically in terms of money, but also in the people you meet and the variety of work you might do.

Ask questions up front

With the general shortage of healthcare staff around, it's fair to say that you might be able to shop around. As with any job, don't be shy to ask questions either before or during your interview. Its best for everyone if you know the answers to things that are important to you before you start

If the agency avoid the answer or you're not happy, delve deeper or move on.

Personally, we'd much rather you asked any questions you might have before joining our team, to make sure it's the right move for you ... and us.

Being flexible

First off you need to be flexible and have a pretty open mind. Each home will work slightly differently and so you'll need to adapt to their way of doing things. Of course you can always influence these, but it's best not to do this on your first visit.

Teamworking

You'll need to be sociable such that you can fit in with a new and potentially well-established team. Some find this very easy, but so don't so it's worth considering beforehand.

Likewise, the best agency workers tend to be quite chatty – not to gossip, but just in order to get along with people who you may be working with for 12 hours at a time!

Ultimately you're looking for the other team members to like you – ideally they'll want you to come back and work with them again!

Salary and allowances

This is an obvious one and the one most people do in fact ask, but you mustn't be shy. If you want to know what you can earn, how and when you'll get paid and how the pay structure works, it's far better to ask now than once you're waiting to be paid.

Different companies operate in different ways - and some are more up front than others, so it's a good idea to check.

When it comes to pay, some agencies are more flexible than others. Some, for example, always pay a fixed rate for a particular shift while others **like us pay based on both the shift and the client. In essence, the more the client pays them, the more they offer to you.** Often this will depend, for example, on the type of work and its location.

Price vs shifts

The most obvious thing to do is look for the groups that pay best. That said, there's no point being paid double if there are no shifts to pay double for, so think carefully. From the client's perspective they're more likely to offer the work to those who are better value, even if that means you receive slightly less (but a lot more often).

PAYE vs PSC

In terms of being paid, many agency staff prefer to be paid direct rather than PAYE. Whilst some agencies only pay this way, others only pay through PAYE and won't pay directly at all. Some allow both, so if it's important, ask first.

At Care101 we offer both PAYE and PSC payments. Although we don't operate an umbrella company, we can of course pay through a 3rd party if you prefer.

Job related benefits

The agency world is complex because no one really knows what's around the corner? A client may be fully staffed this week, and suddenly need 3 nurses or 5 HCAs next. Some agencies may guarantee hours but if they do that, ask them again! What does "guaranteed" actually mean – be suspicious!

One, two or many employers?

If you're only working for agencies – i.e. don't also work specifically for a care or nursing home, **we always suggest you should consider joining at least 2, maybe 3.** This will help with your continuity of work – when one's less busy, the chances are another will have shifts – and vice versa.

Interpersonal relationships

What's the relationship like between staff and the management or office team? What happens if you turn down a shift they offer you? Who resolves issues between staff, or between staff and the client?

All good questions and all things that can easily make your life better or worse. **One option here is to ask an existing member of staff and it's something we'd always recommend.**

Education and training opportunities

For those who are solely agency staff, training and development can be an issue - for example, when RN revalidation looms or simply to aid your own personal development. Larger groups do sometimes offer training days – some are free, others charge.

For smaller groups like us, these are less practical and some may require you manage your own training.

With us, we offer subsidised training on public courses where we pay 50% of the cost and make the arrangements for you. Often we will try to get a small group of staff on the same courses so you can work together.

Will your personal circumstances be considered?

If you've got specific needs or circumstances, check out how the agency – and therefore you will deal with these. **With Care101 for example, we're very much used to working with part time staff who's availability changes on a weekly basis. We fit around you so in general this doesn't pose a problem.**

In terms of travelling, some national agencies could send you many miles per day. The advantage is that you'll be busy; the flip side is a lot of the time you'll spend in your car, on a train or a bus! **Others like Care101 is focussed on a target area – so check where that is before you start.**

How does the agency contact you?

Agency staff are busy people and often uninterruptible, so how will the agency get in touch with you or keep you informed? Do you need to phone in, can you text them or send an email? And how often will you have the time, or energy to do that?

At Care101 we try to make use of everyday technology as much as we can - such as web & text messaging for example. We always say you don't have to use it, but in reality about 90% of our staff do just that.

Shift confirmations, reminders & requests are all sent by text whilst the dedicated staff area of our web site allows you to keep track of all your information, CV details, shifts & payroll. Upcoming shifts are posted online and can be accepted with the click of a button. Its quick & easy for you just as it's quick & easy for us!

Want to know more?

Whichever agency you choose, get in touch, ask questions or have a general chat. Get to know the people and see how you might fit in. It's in everyone's interest for you to make the right choices etc.

If you think we might fit the bill, why not give us a call at 01372 23007 or email enquiries@Care101.co.uk!

To sum up

As you can see, there's a few things to think about when joining an agency and we hope the above has shown **how life is with us at Care101.**