

# Retaining homecare workers in the independent and voluntary sector

## Executive survey - results and insights

October 2020



## Executive summary (1/2)



- Improving care worker retention has been a **major priority** for many years, with home care providers experiencing, on average, higher staff turnover than the rest of the sector (\*)
- **Covid-19 is likely to increase the pressure**, despite a short-term increase in care job applicants. Already exhausted staff need more support than ever to recover from the pandemic, while newcomers need a highly positive initial experience, to encourage them to remain in the care sector
- The findings of this retention survey, conducted in December 2019, among **234 home care providers, are particularly relevant to inform current and future, post-pandemic, workforce plans**
- Unsurprisingly, staff retention was a major challenge for the majority of respondents, with **two thirds experiencing staff turnover in excess of 15%**, increasing to **over 25% for a third of the sample**
- The trend is equally concerning for the **38% of providers for whom staff turnover has increased or significantly increased** in the last three years – to December 2019
- **Increased pressure on management and staff**, leading to **low staff morale** as well as **rising recruitment costs**, are some of the well-known consequences of high staff turnover
- There is also a **danger of a negative spiral**, with excessive pressure from staff vacancies becoming a major cause of turnover, leading to more care workers leaving their roles
- Among the most relevant causes of staff turnover, **impact on personal life** and **unacceptable working patterns** (e.g. gaps in rotas) ranked higher than dissatisfaction with pay or overall compensation

## Executive summary (2/2)



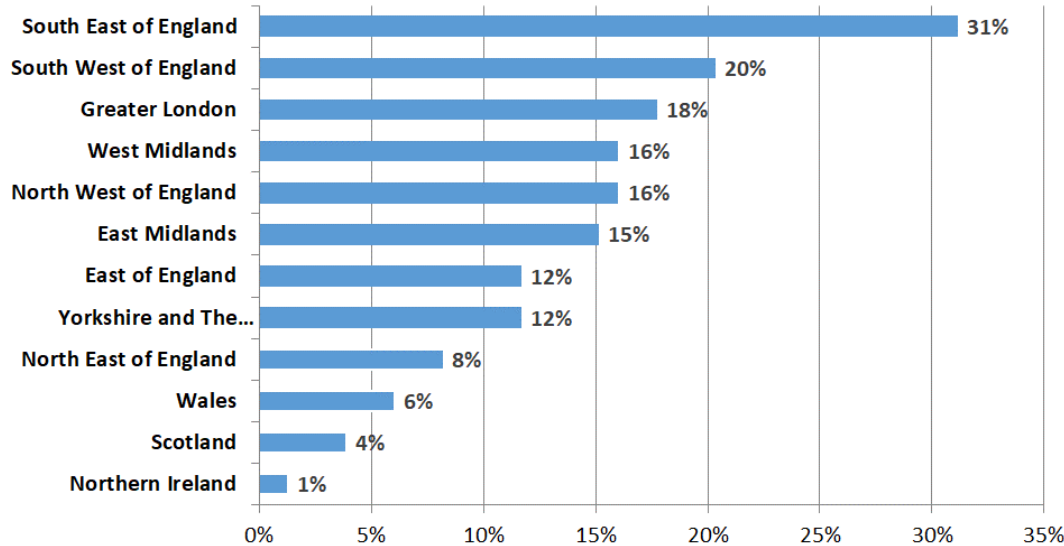
- **Inability to manage anxiety and stress, lack of personal resilience, motivation and poor communication skills** are the main personal factors impacting care worker retention among our sample – on a positive note, these are **all addressable factors**
- So, what works (and what doesn't work) to tackle staff turnover?
- According to our respondents, **flexible working hours (80%) and regular feedback from line managers (79%)** appeared to be more effective than increasing pay (69%)
- **There is room for innovation:** from providing **personal development opportunities for front-line staff** to performance bonuses – yet untested by the majority of the organisations in our sample
- **The desire for innovation** to improve retention was **confirmed by 57%** of respondents, while 59% were planning to increase the **use of technology** to make life easier for staff
- **Better funding, improving the perception** of homecare as a career and **closer integration with healthcare** are the top sector-wide initiatives advocated by our respondents, to improve staff retention
- In summary, retention is likely to remain a major challenge for the coming months, through to a post-Covid world, and **innovation** – from organisational improvements, to **investment in personal development of care staff** and increased use of technology – **will be required to tackle care worker turnover and drive workforce sustainability**

# Profile of survey respondents

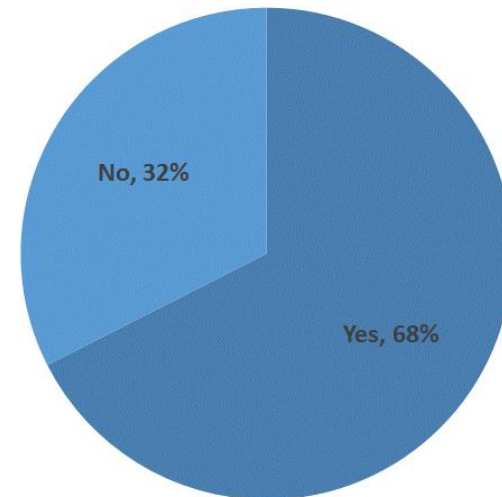


- **234 home care providers** from across the UK took part in our survey in December 2019, just months before the Covid-19 pandemic
- All the respondents supplied homecare to private individuals. Approximately two out of three (68%) also supply homecare services to Local Authorities; the numbers of respondents was broadly proportionate to the number of providers in each region

Which of the following government regions or UK administrations do you operate in? (\*)



Does your organisation supply homecare services to one or more local councils (or Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland)?



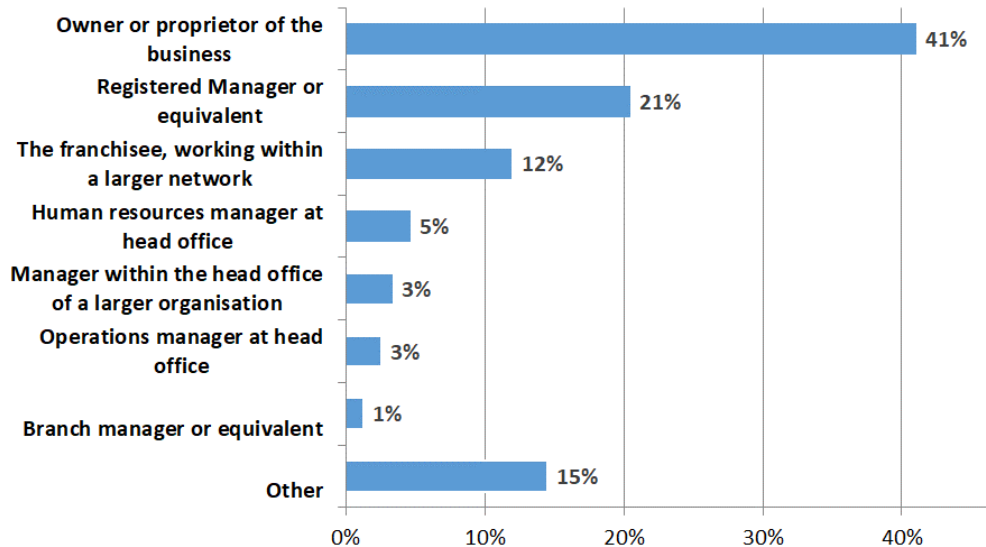
(\*) Respondents were allowed multiple regions to be selected, therefore the total can be greater than 100%



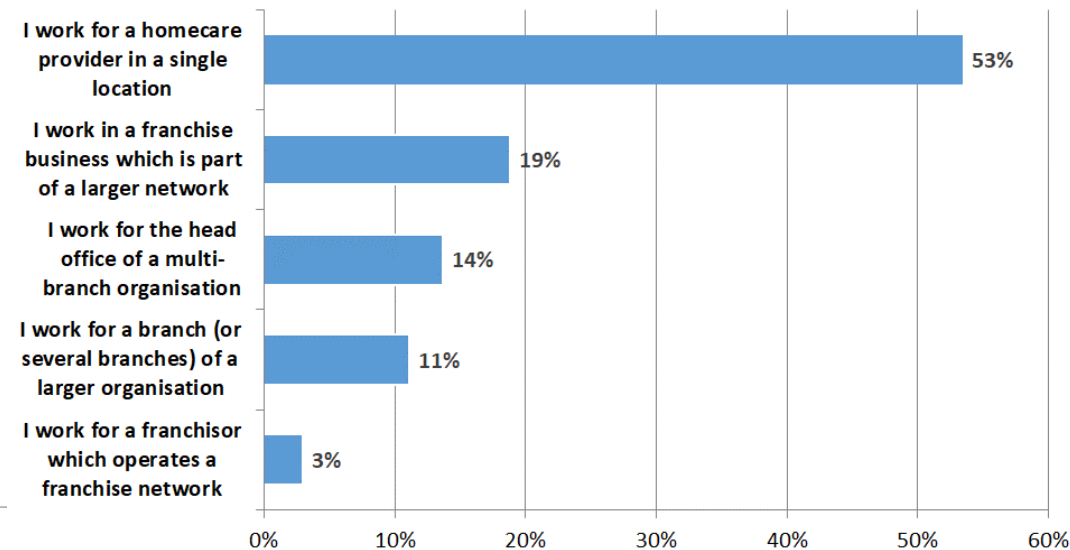
# Profile of survey respondents

- The majority of respondents were **business owners** and **registered managers**
- We are confident that the people answering the survey could describe their organisations' experience of recruitment and retention
- Approximately half of respondents are **single-location providers**, with **franchise and multi-branch organisations** accounting for the other half

Which of the following best describes your role?



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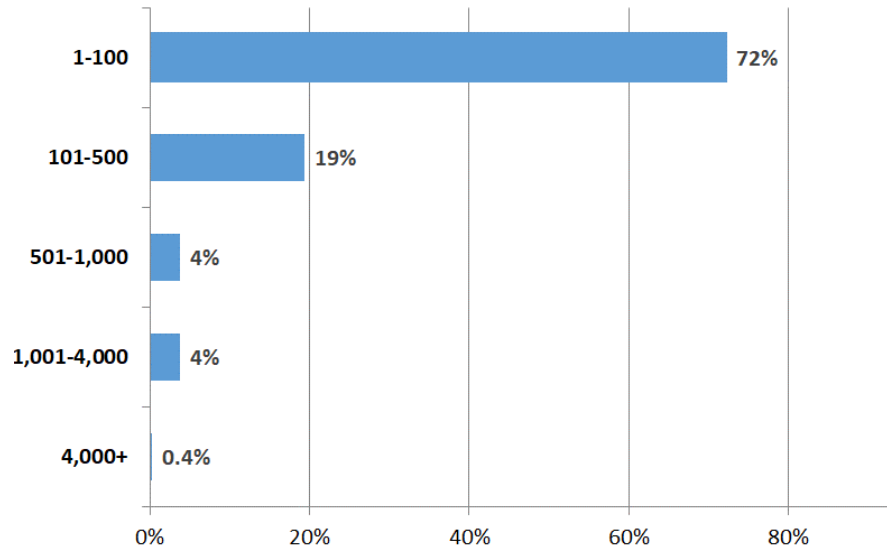


# Profile of survey respondents

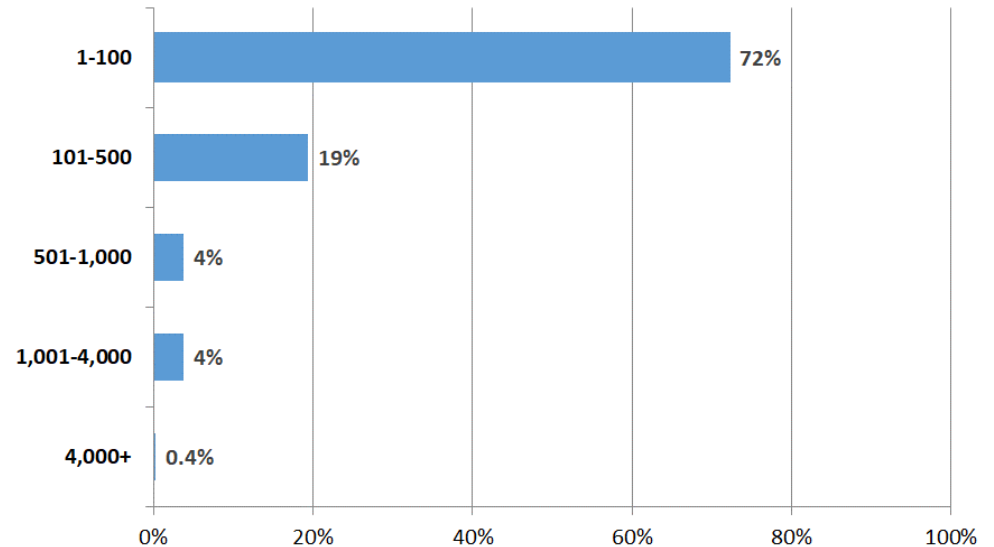


- Almost three quarters of respondents employ **up to 100 staff**, while larger organisations (including head offices of franchise organisations) with **over 1,000 careworkers** are also represented in the sample
- In total, respondents to the survey delivered an estimated **1.3 million hours of care per week**

How many careworkers work in your whole organisation?



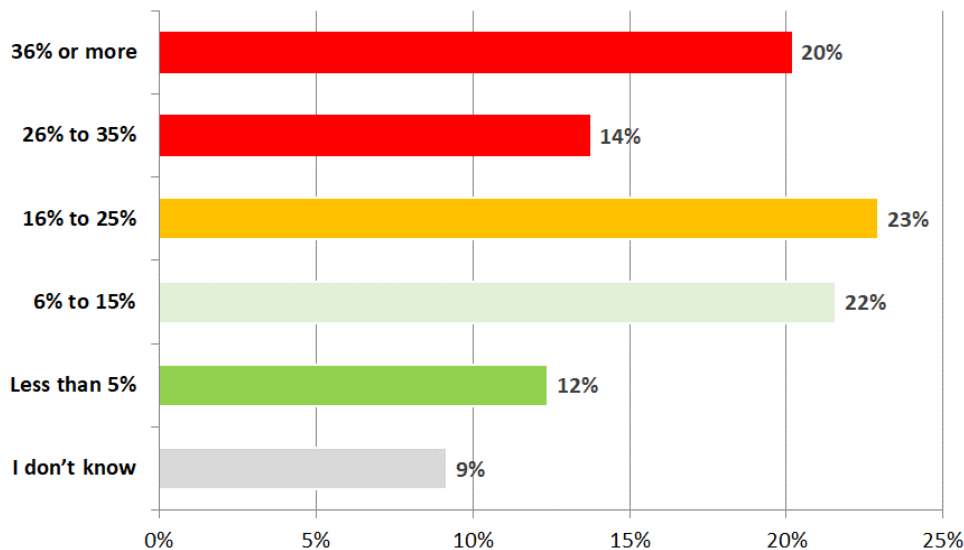
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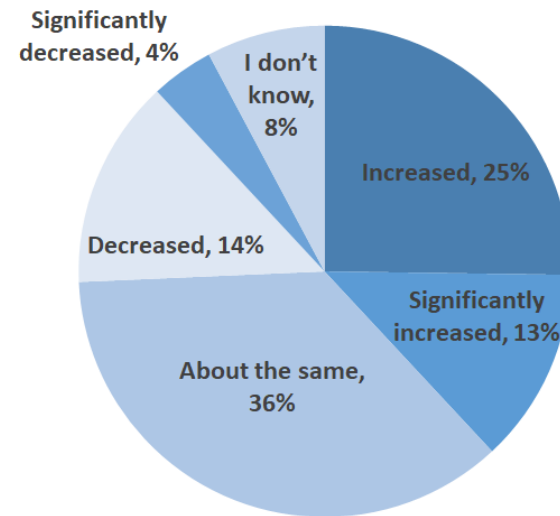
# Staff retention challenges

- **Two thirds** of respondents were experiencing staff turnover **in excess of 15%**
- The scale of the retention challenge is confirmed by **a third of the sample, experiencing over 25% staff turnover**
- Skills for Care reported average careworker turnover for home care providers of **43.7%(\*)**
- On a positive note, **12% of providers** were reporting staff turnover of less than 5%
- Retaining care workers is clearly getting harder: **38% of respondents reported increased or significantly increased staff turnover**, compared to **18% managing to improve retention**, over the last three years

Which of the following best describes the annual staff turnover of careworkers?



How has the turnover of careworkers changed over the last three years?



(\* ) The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England - Skills for Care, September 2019

# The impact of Covid-19



- “During COVID-19, absence rates have trebled, so **while we have new people coming into the sector, there is also a greater demand** on our very experienced staff” (\*)
- “We heard from the Royal College of GPs that they are expecting more people in general to suffer from PTSD as a result of COVID, and I think considering that our care staff are on the frontline and trying to manage their own service, as well as their own family issues the way that we all do, **my concern is that the vacancy rate, particularly among experienced staff, will increase.**” (\*)
- The UKHCA pointed out that the short term influx of new applicants for care jobs could lead to a false sense of security: “The increase in new applicants, in particular for home care jobs, is very welcome, although it might be short-lived. **It will be essential to ensure that all newcomers to the care sectors will have a great experience** and thoroughly enjoy their new roles, **for them to want stay in the long-term,** rather than just fuelling the care worker revolving door”
- Having run a pro-bono support and well-being forum for care workers and managers through the pandemic (with participants from 16 Health and Care organisations), Talent for Care’s experience is fully consistent with those remarks: “**the priority is now helping our exhausted workforce to recover, rebuilding resilience and motivation,** while preparing for whatever will come next – the winter, possibly a second wave, in any case a ‘new normal’”
- The findings of this pre-pandemic survey on retention seem therefore to be very current and should provide valuable food for thought, for **prioritising staff support, well-being and retention** through the coming winter and beyond

(\*) Oonagh Smyth, Chief Executive, Skills for Care, (<https://www.homecareinsight.co.uk/> June 2020)

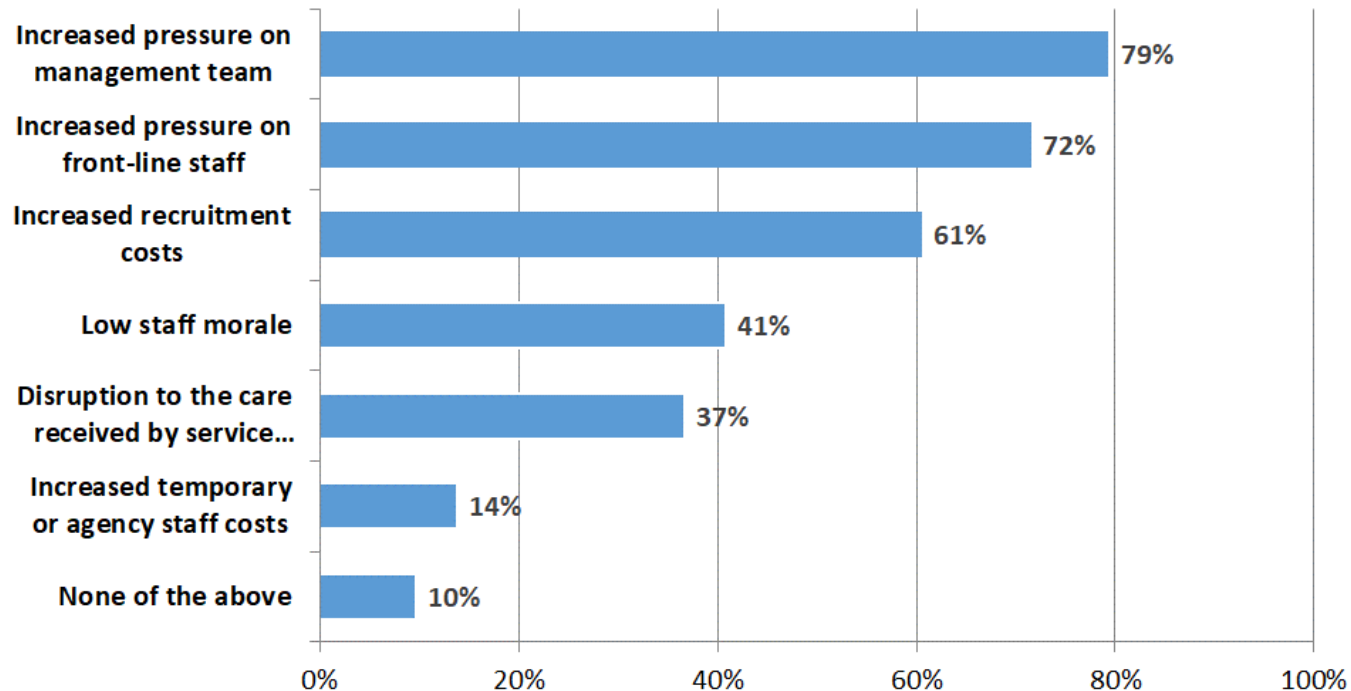




# Impact of staff turnover

- Excessive turnover of careworkers has a **major impact on management (79%), staff (72%)** and, inevitably, on **recruitment costs (61%)**, even more so than on **disruption for users (37%)**
- The impact of turnover on **recruitment costs** seems to be much more relevant than on **agency costs (14%)** – this is probably because agency workers are unlikely to accept very short homecare visits and, in many cases, the first five months of the pandemic were characterised by a sudden shortfall of new referrals.

Have any of the following occurred as a result of the staff turnover in your organisation? (\*)

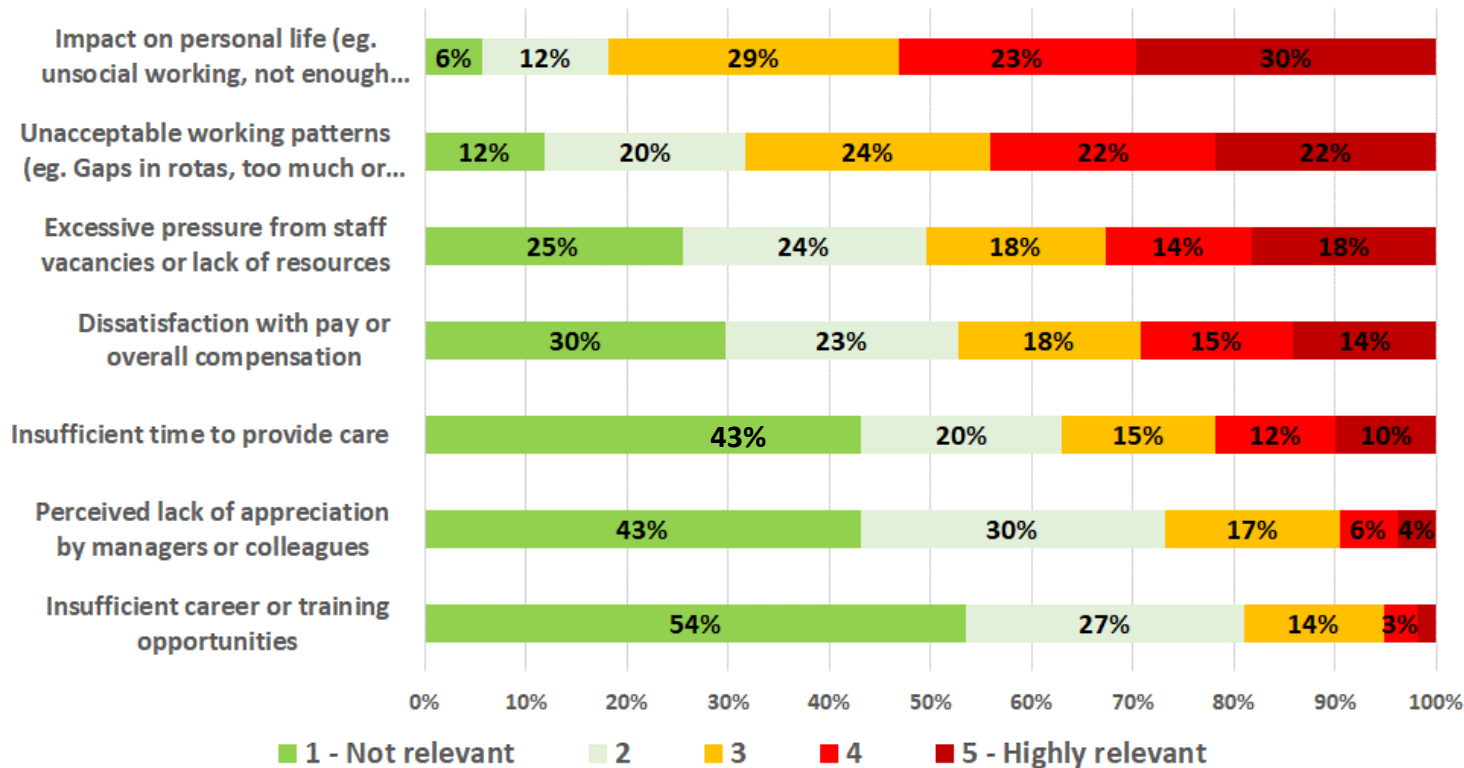


(\*) Multiple responses allowed, therefore the total can be greater than 100%

# Causes of staff turnover

- Although pay is an important issue, other factors, particularly the **impact on personal life and working conditions**, have a considerable impact on turnover
- Staff turnover can generate a **negative spiral**, leading to increased vacancies that, in turn, disrupt rotas and put additional pressure on front-line staff, further increasing turnover

How much have each of the following issues contributed to your organisation's staff turnover? (\*)

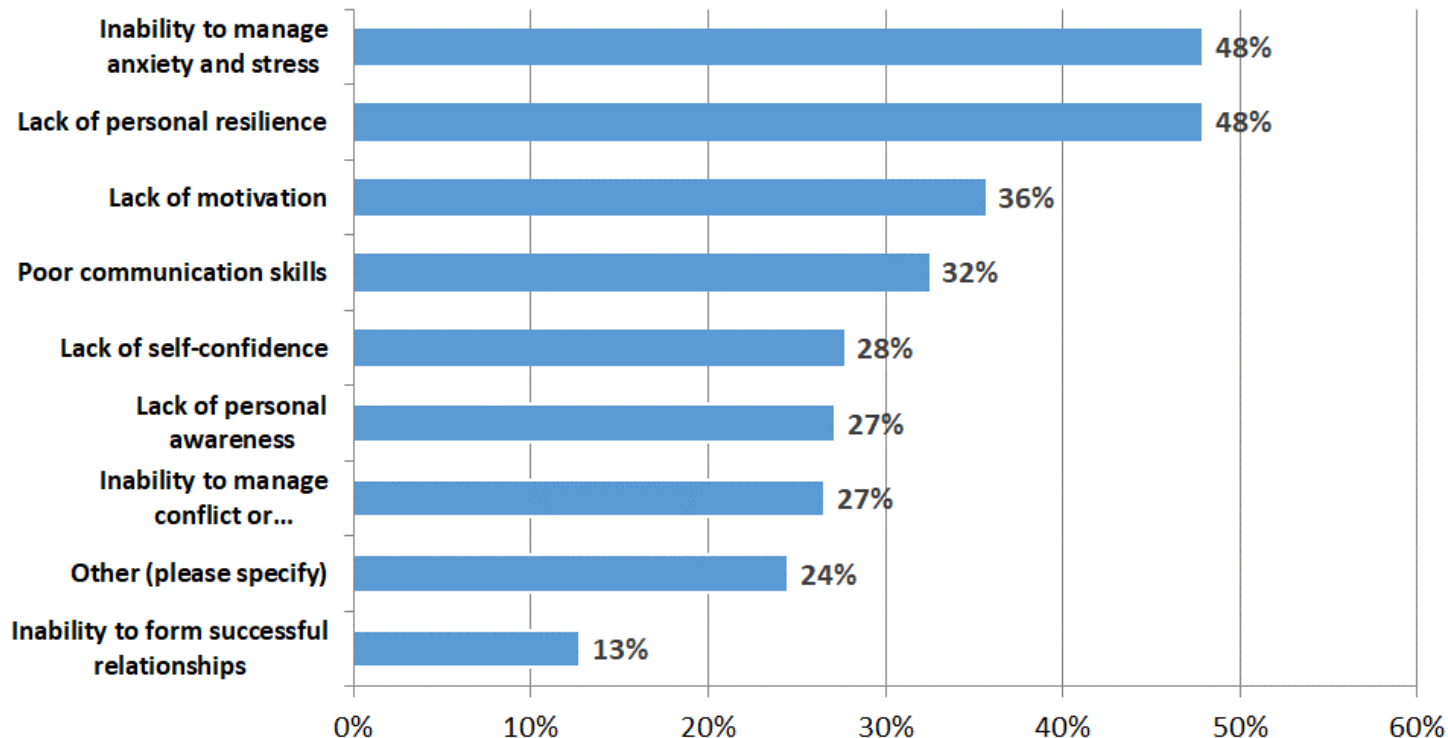


(\*) Excluding "Don't know"

# Human factors behind staff turnover

- **Inability to manage anxiety and stress**, alongside **lack of personal resilience, motivation** and **poor communication skills**, were reported as the most critical human factors behind care worker turnover
- **On a positive note**, they are all **addressable factors**, highlighting the need to support staff through good employment practice and through **personal and professional development** of front line care staff

Which of the following factors contribute to staff turnover? (\*)



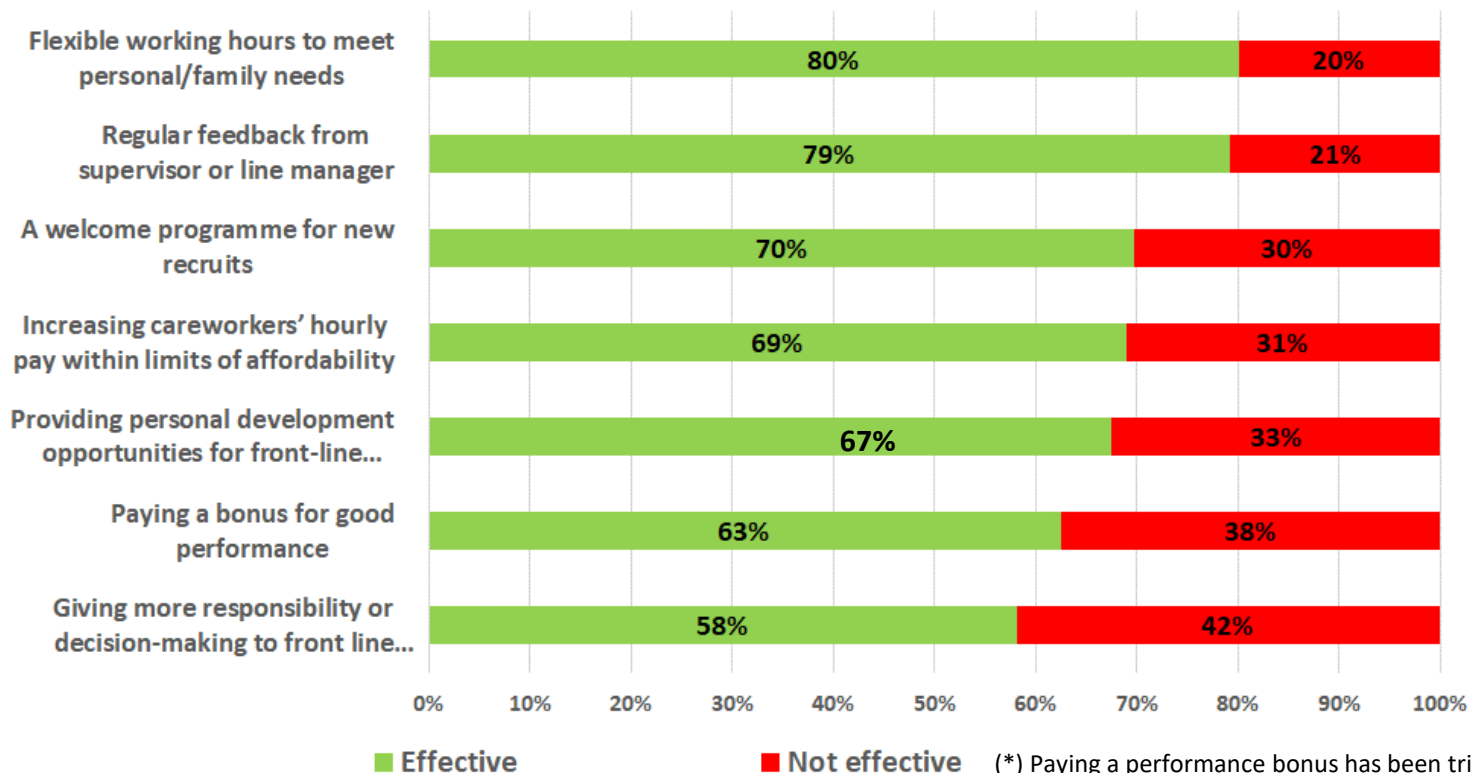
(\*) Multiple responses allowed, therefore the total can be greater than 100%

# What works and what doesn't to tackle staff turnover



- Interestingly, **flexible working hours, regular feedback from line managers and a welcome programme** are deemed **more effective than increasing hourly pay**, to drive care worker retention
- There is also room for **sharing best practices and innovation**, with initiatives like **providing personal development opportunities** and **paying performance bonuses**, considered effective by the majority of organisations who introduced them but yet to be fully tested by quite a few of the respondents (\*)

Which of the following initiatives have you tried and found to be effective in reducing staff turnover in the last 12 months?

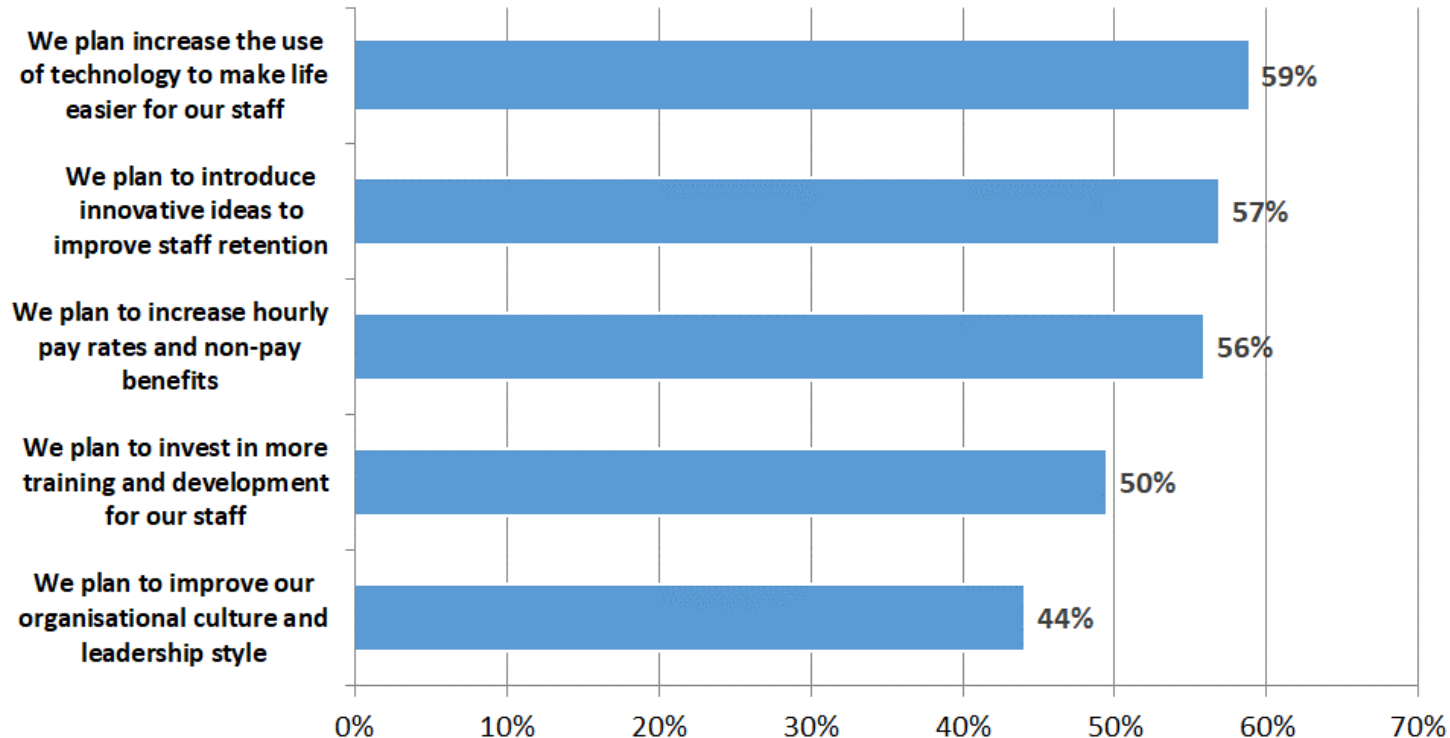


(\*) Paying a performance bonus has been tried by only 45% of the sample

# Future retention plans

- In order to improve staff retention, organisations in our sample were planning to **increase the use of technology** and **explore innovation**, as well as **aiming to increase pay and non-pay benefits**
- According to approximately half the respondents, **investing in staff training and development**, as well as **improving culture and leadership style**, provide relevant opportunities for improving care worker retention

Which of the following items are you planning to do within your organisation to maximise retention of care staff? (\*)

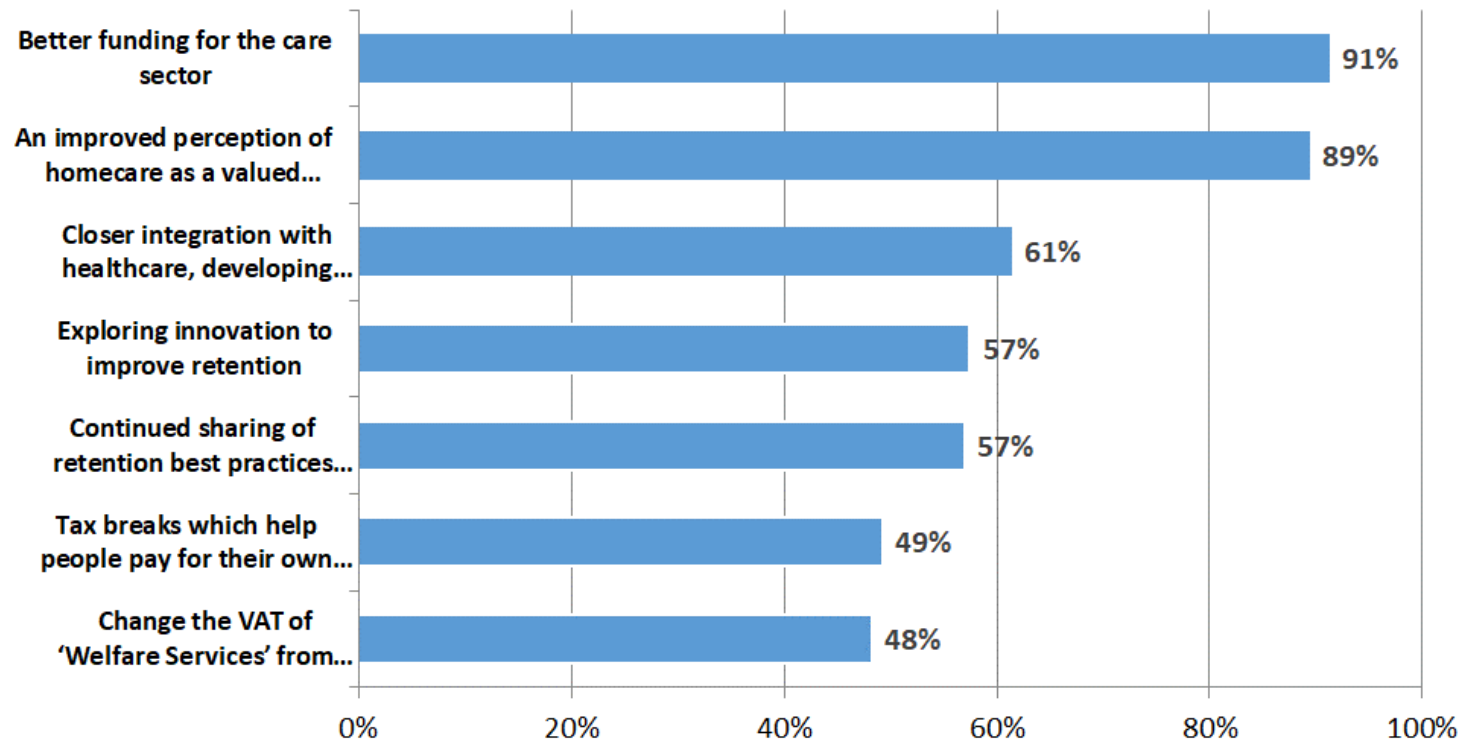


(\*) Multiple responses allowed, therefore the total can be greater than 100%; "other" not included, as not relevant

# Future retention plans

- **Better funding (91%)** and **improving perception of homecare (89%)** as a career are the main changes providers in the sample identified, as needed to improve workforce retention
- According to over half of respondents, **closer integration with Healthcare (61%)**, **exploring innovation (57%)** and **sharing best practices (57%)**, will also be relevant for reducing staff turnover

**In your opinion, what needs to happen within the homecare sector to make a significant improvement in the retention of care workers? (\*)**



(\*) Multiple responses allowed, therefore the total can be greater than 100%; "other" not included, as not relevant



## About us – Talent for Care



**Talent for Care** is an innovative provider of sustainable workforce solutions to the Health and Care sector. Our purpose is to transform care worker retention, through innovation and investment in personal development of front-line staff. We need a retention approach that works for each care worker, for the person as well as for the team and the organisation.

Our teams have been supporting care workers and managers through Covid-19, at a time when it is essential to invest in workforce support, wellbeing and recovery, to prevent a large scale fallout from the pandemic.

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## About us – United Kingdom Homecare Association



**United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA)** is the national professional association for homecare providers. Our purpose is to enable a strong, sustainable, innovative and person-led homecare market to flourish, so that people are supported to live well and independently at home.

UKHCA's support to social care providers includes research, practical guidance and advice for providers, and external representation of homecare services with government, policymakers and the public.

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