



'My Care at Home'

Homecare Workforce
Survey (2024)

healthwatch
Suffolk

Background and contents

The project aims to explore people's experiences of receiving and providing home care services in Suffolk. It will support Suffolk County Council to monitor the quality of home care services and provide an independent assessment as to whether care is meeting the needs of service users and carers.

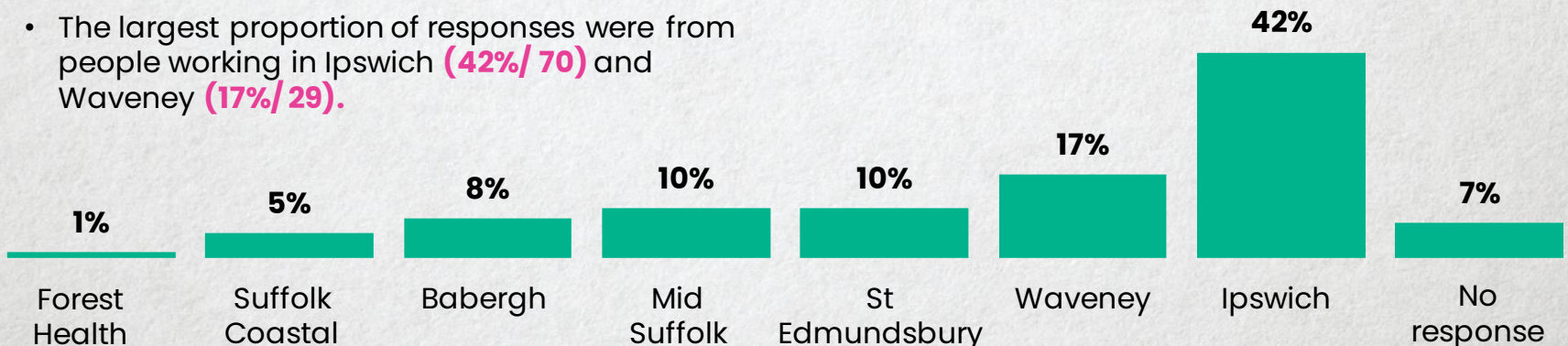
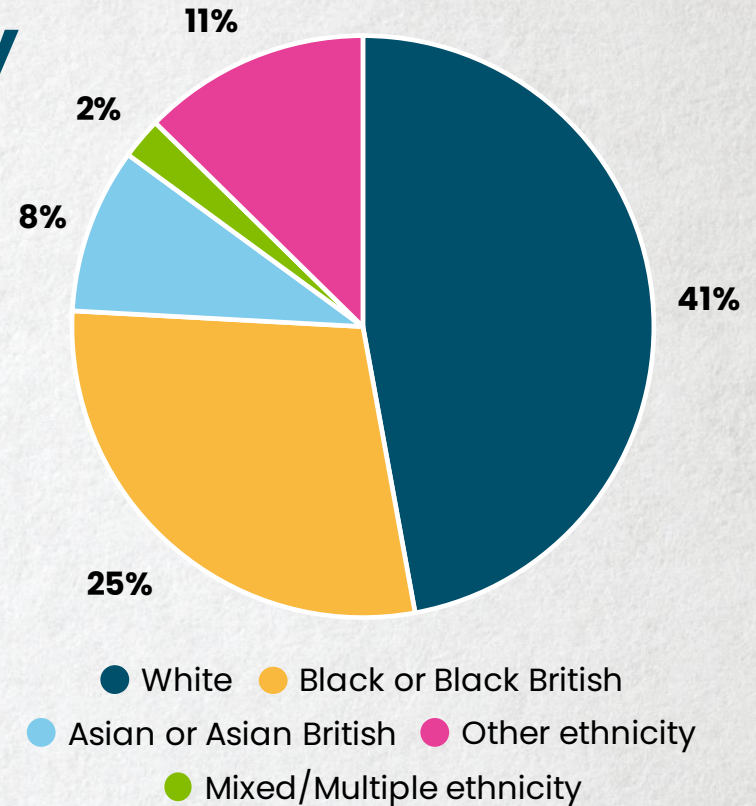
In addition, HWS will share insight into the experiences of people delivering home care, to understand the issues and challenges they face. The findings will be used to inform workforce strategy or plans to support recruitment and retention within the care sector.

This report is based on responses from the carer workforce survey, about experiences of being a home-carer in Suffolk. It is important to note that respondents didn't share which provider they work for, and so findings should be interpreted with it in mind that these findings may not reflect experiences of staff at all homecare providers.

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Demographics Summary

- **168** responses were recorded.
- **76% (128)** of respondents identified as female and **20% (33)** as male. The remainder preferred not to say.
- The age of respondents ranged from **18 to 69**, with an **average age of 37**. Most were aged 25 – 44 (**54%**). Nearly a third were aged between 45 and 65 and over.
- Of respondents who shared their ethnicity, most were White (**41%/68**) and Black or Black British (**25%/42**).
- Most respondents were permanent staff members (**57%/ 96**) or on zero-hour contracts (**24%/40**).
- The largest proportion of responses were from people working in Ipswich (**42%/ 70**) and Waveney (**17%/ 29**).



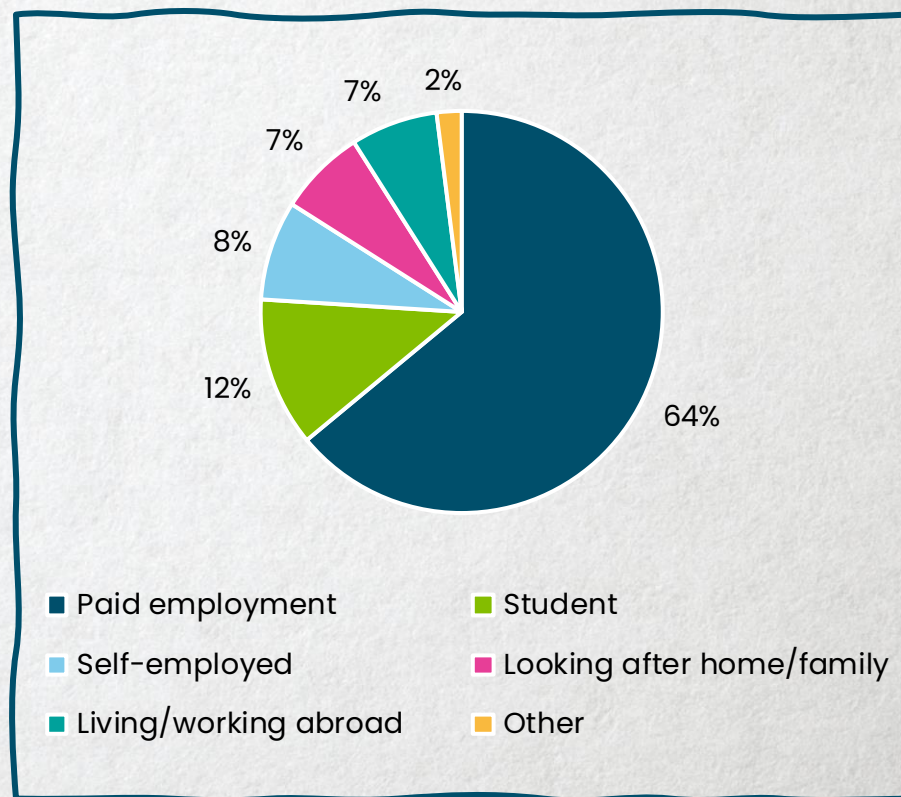
Employment History

We asked, 'Please tell us how long you have worked as a carer?'

- Respondents had worked as carers for varying time periods, from as little as **2 months to 52 years**.
- The average employment length of respondents was around **6 years**.

We asked, 'Which of the following best describes what you were doing prior to your current care role?'

- **167** people answered the question, of which **64% (108)** had worked in paid employment.
 - **17** had worked in education and childcare (including as Teachers, Teaching assistants, Supervisors, Child minders).
 - **15** had worked in social care.
 - **14** had worked in hospitality (particularly within the food and beverage industry).
 - **12** had worked in healthcare (including nursing, nursing assistants, healthcare assistants, midwifery).
- Carers also reported being previously self-employed (**8%/13**), looking after home or family full time (**7%/11**), living or working abroad (**7%/11**), and **12% (20)** had been students.



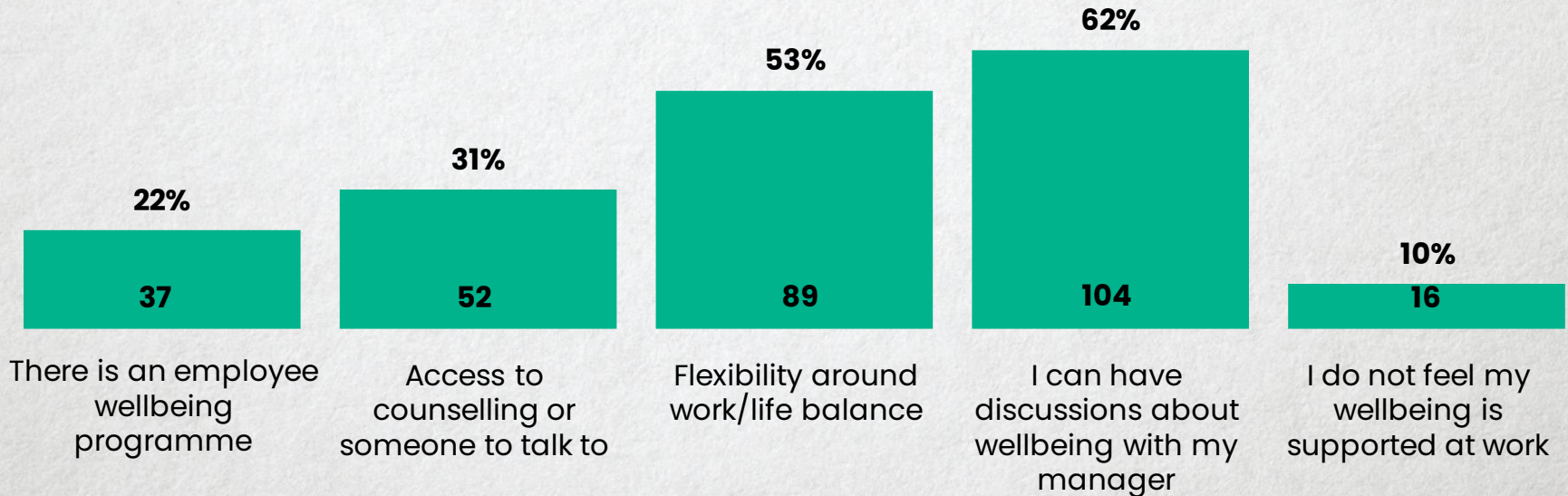
Wellbeing at Work

We asked home carers 'How does your employer support your wellbeing at work?' – **167** responded and ticked the statements that applied to them.

- Most (**62%/ 104**) could discuss their wellbeing with a manager, and just over half (**53%/ 89**) had flexibility regarding work/life balance.
- When considering wellbeing support at work, there were no meaningful differences regarding the ethnicity of respondents.
- Aside from flexibility around work-life balance, carers on zero-hour contracts were more likely to say their wellbeing was not supported (**13%**) than permanent staff members (**8%**).



10% (16) did not feel their wellbeing was supported at work.



Breaks

We asked, 'How often are you able to take an uninterrupted break during each of your working days?'

- **10%** of people were not entitled to a break because they worked less than six hours a day.
- **147** respondents were entitled to a break during their working day.

Of those entitled to a break:

- Most could take an uninterrupted break daily (**76%/112**). However, 22 carers reported this was possible less than half of their working days (**8%/12**) or never (**7%/10**).
- Taking regular breaks (always or over half) was more common among West Suffolk carers (**95%**). In other areas, between **10%** and **20%** said never or less than half.

| Frequency of Uninterrupted Breaks | Count | % |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Never | 10 | 7% |
| Less than half of my working days | 12 | 8% |
| Over half of my working days | 13 | 9% |
| Every day | 112 | 76% |



- **Uninterrupted less than half of working days (8%/12)**
- **Uninterrupted break 'Never' (7%/10)**

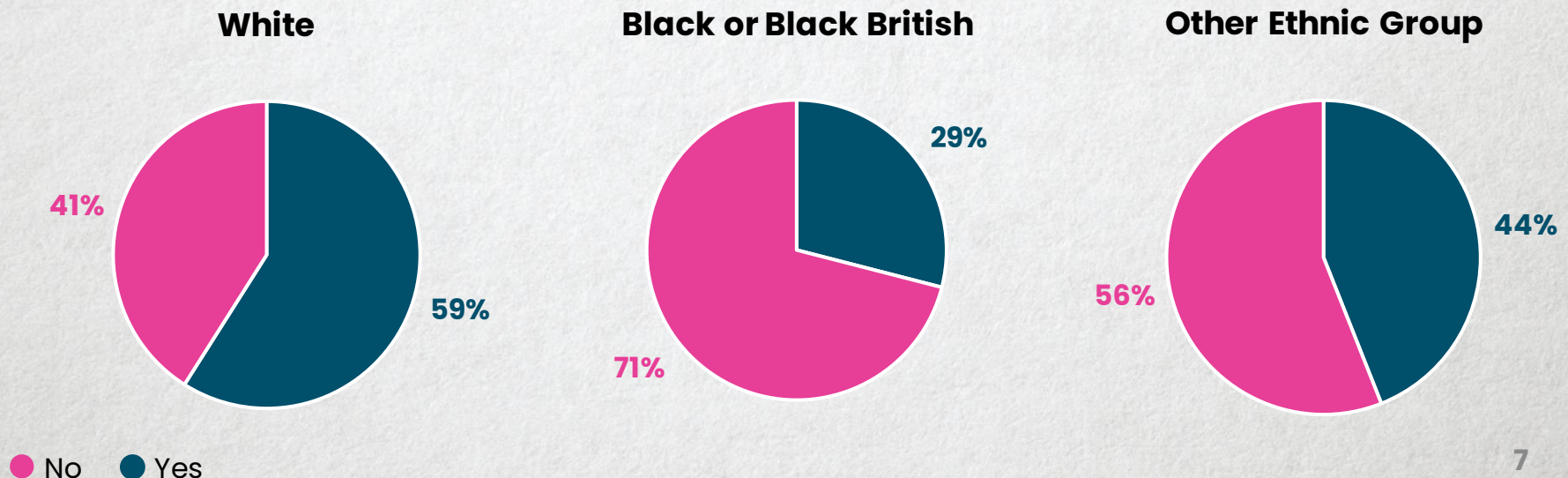
Additionally:

13% on zero-hour could 'never' take an uninterrupted break at work. A smaller **4%** of permanent contract staff said this, but **9%** felt they could 'rarely' take an uninterrupted break.

Complaints

We asked respondents 'Has a customer (or their family) ever spoken or acted in a way that has made you feel uncomfortable at work?'

- **168** people answered the question.
- **43% (73)** said '**yes**'. Of these, **92% (67)** had **reported this to their manager, supervisor or team leader**.
- More than half of White respondents reported that a customer had spoken or acted in a way that made them feel uncomfortable (**59%**).
- Additionally, **44%** of people who reported 'other ethnic group', and **29%** of those identifying as Black or Black British had been made to feel uncomfortable at work by a customer/client.
- **71%** of respondents working in Mid-Suffolk (including Babergh) said that this had happened to them. This was the highest percentage compared to Suffolk Coastal/Waveney (**51%**), West Suffolk (**37%**), and Ipswich (**29%**).



Complaints

We asked carers who had reported an incident, 'how satisfied were you with how your complaint was handled?'

- **67** people answered.
- Most respondents were very satisfied (**58%/39**) or quite satisfied (**25%/17**) with the way their complaint was handled by their manager, supervisor or team leader.
- **Eleven** respondents were either not very satisfied (**12%/8**) or not satisfied at all (**5%/3**).

| Satisfaction with complaint handling | Count | % |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Not at all satisfied | 3 | 5% |
| Not very satisfied | 8 | 12% |
| Quite satisfied | 17 | 25% |
| Very satisfied | 39 | 58% |

8% (6) of respondents who had been made to feel uncomfortable at work did not report it. We asked those people to tell us why:

- **Three of the six** people who did not report said, *'I didn't feel I would be believed/supported.'*
- **Two** people said, *'I didn't feel confident enough to report it'.*

Qualitative insights

About... Improvements to Wellbeing

There were **98** comments about things that employers could do to improve carers wellbeing at work.

1. > Regular check-ins and support

Twenty-eight carers said that they would like regular check-ins with their employer centred around listening to and supporting carers wellbeing and ideas. This can be facilitated through team or 1:1 meetings, telephone check-ins, and/or systems such as confidential in-house counselling or suggestion boxes.

| Themes | Count |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Regular check-ins and support | 28 |
| Better quality and quantity of breaks | 13 |
| Reduced time-pressure during shifts | 10 |
| Pay-related incentives | 9 |

"Listen to what we have to say. Speak to us personally, listen to our problems and try and help rather than just shoot us down." – **1 to 5 years**

"More regular contact with the staff to let them know that managers are there if they need them." – **10 to 20 years**

"Due to our type of work there should be a person that we could talk about anything, some unfair aspects of work, without being afraid of running out of hours in the following week, and make it confidential." – **1 to 5 years**

"Regular team meetings and confidential supervision sessions between managers and their staff" – **1 to 5 years**

Continued...

2. > Quality and quantity of breaks

Fifteen people wanted the quantity and/or quality of their breaks and rest time to improve. This included ensuring carers had adequate time between shifts to relax, having undisturbed breaks, shorter shifts, and reducing pressure to work.

"Employer should actively encourage the team to adopt healthier working habits by working sensible hours, taking lunch breaks, taking annual leave and resting and recuperating after busy periods" – **6 months to 1 year**

"Care more, making sure people have the rest time between shifts. 6:30am starts and 11pm finish everyday is too much with only 1hr or 2 max a day." – **5 to 10 years**

"I believe having a day off on weekends sometimes can help me to get more relaxed and be better at my work." – **Less than 6 months**

3. > Reducing pressure during visits

Ten people felt more realistic rotas could reduce pressure on carers and improve wellbeing. For example, through employing more staff and allowing more travel time.

"Give us more time to travel between calls which would cause a lot less stress." – **5 to 10 years**

"Recruiting enough carer drivers to ease up the work tension, lateness to client's homes and late hours of getting home after work" – **6 months to 1 year**

"Be more realistic with commuting times, especially when travelling in between towns" – **1 to 5 years**

One person shared **the positive impact this could have on service users**, allowing carers to complete all tasks and spend more time with customers.

"Employ more staff so we can do our job properly and spend more time with customers." – **Over 20 years**

Continued...

4. > Pay-related incentives

Nine people said better financial incentives would improve carers wellbeing. Most importantly, carers want to be paid back for work-related expenses such as parking and travel time.

"Parking reimbursement when parking is difficult at some client's residence" – 1 to 5 years

"Paid travel time!! I work 40 hours a week but approximately 10 of these hours are unpaid travel between visits" – 1 to 5 years

Other suggestions included increased salary or benefits packages such as private health insurance.

"Offering competitive compensation and benefits packages to alleviate financial stress and incentivise productivity." – Less than a year

"A lot of carers feel overworked and underpaid. The pressure from calls and texts every single day about working more is relentless" – 1 to 5 years

Training

We asked, 'Have you received all the training you need to be able to provide care for your customers?' – 167 people responded.

Most respondents said they had received all the training they needed to provide care **(92%/154)**.

We also asked, 'What further training do you need?'

Stoma care and peg feeding was most frequently reported as a need for further training **(9%/15)**, followed by training specific to customers' needs, such as dementia care **(8%/13)**. Other responses are shown in the table below.

| Need for Further Training | Count | % |
|--|-------|----|
| Medication management | 9 | 5% |
| Infection control | 8 | 5% |
| Care certificate | 8 | 5% |
| Basic first aid | 7 | 4% |
| Mental capacity | 7 | 4% |
| Training to use specific items of equipment (e.g. hoist) | 7 | 4% |
| Safeguarding training | 7 | 4% |
| Food safety | 6 | 3% |
| Manual handling training | 6 | 3% |
| Record keeping | 5 | 3% |

Delivering care

We asked, 'If you were concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a customer would you know who to report this to?'

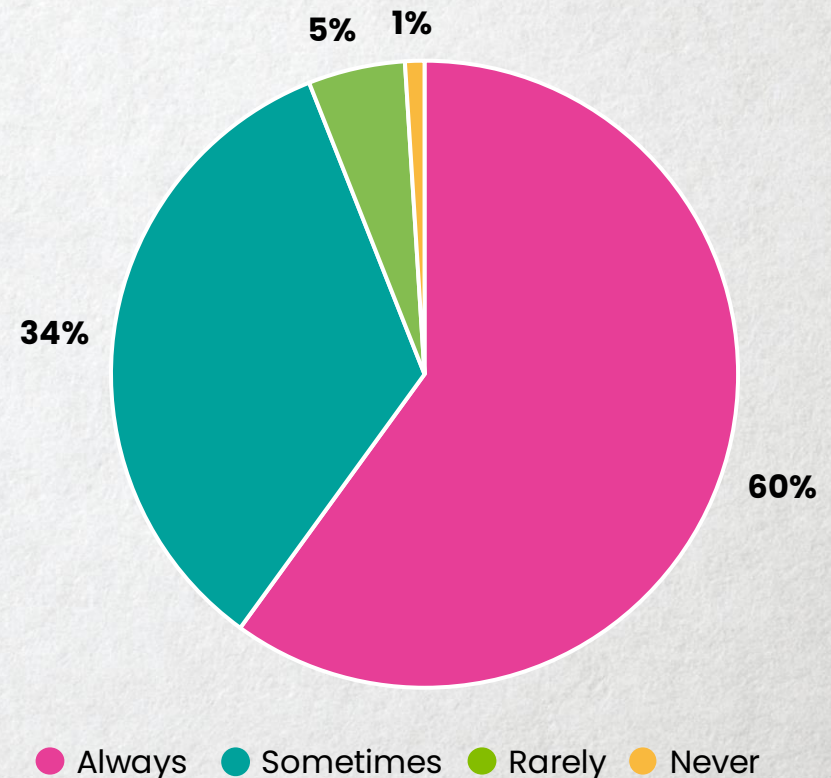
166 people answered.

- Nearly all home carers (**98%/163**) knew who to report concerns to about the safety and welfare of their service-users.

We also asked, 'When delivering care to customers, how often do you have enough time to complete all the tasks required?'

164 people answered.

- Most home carers said they had enough time 'always' (**60%/99**) or 'more than half the time' (**34%/55**).
- **6%** said they had enough time to complete all of their tasks 'rarely' or 'never'.



Delivering care

We asked, 'When completing a care visit, how often do you feel satisfied that you have delivered good quality care?'

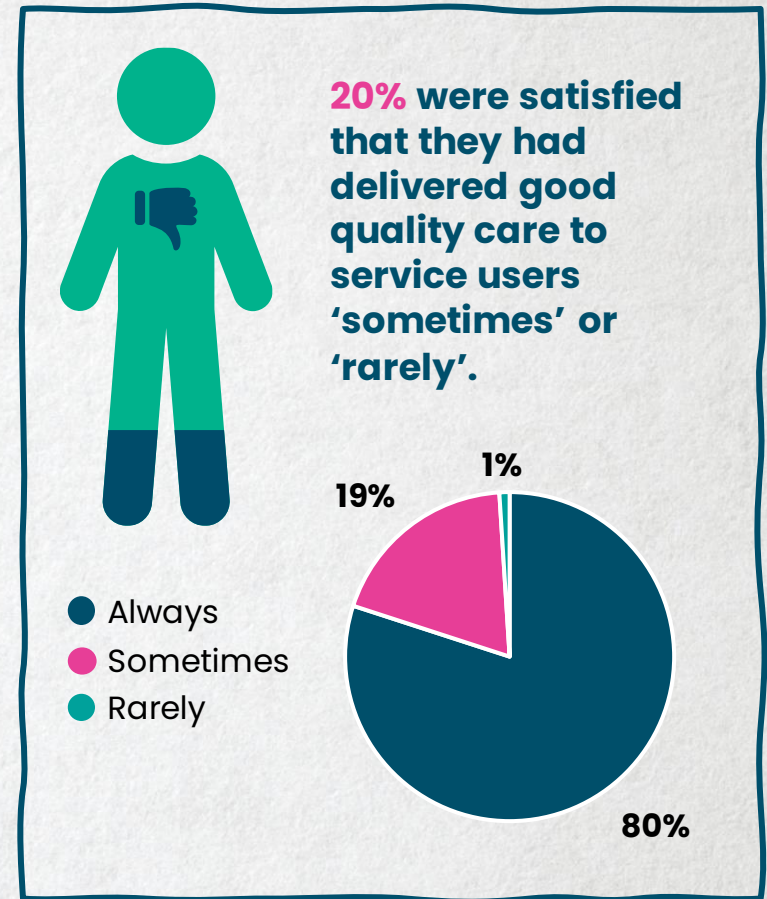
165 people answered.

- **No respondents** said they were 'never' satisfied about having delivered good quality care to customers. Only **1% (2)** of respondents said were 'rarely' satisfied (in less than half of visits).
- **80% (132)** of carers were 'always' satisfied that they deliver good quality care to customers, and **19% (31)** were satisfied 'more than half the time.'

We then asked, 'What are the issues and challenges you experience as a home carer?' Specifically, we asked about issues specific to delivering good care to customers.

Themes revealed the following challenges:

- Lack of time in a customer's home **(24)**
- Lack of time allocated for travel and admin **(11)**
- Service-user attitudes **(11)**
- Feeling burnt-out **(6)**
- The environment **(3)**



Qualitative insights... about challenges

1. Time in customers' home

24 carers described feeling rushed during some care visits, which causes the service-user to feel rushed too. Carers say they either leave late or feel like they could have done more.

"I feel frustrated with the fact that sometimes I feel I do not have sufficient time to complete all the tasks required, have quality time with the customer and record everything to my employer's expectations". – 1 to 5 years

"Sometimes commissioned care isn't assessed correctly to allow enough time to provide all care needed. I would never rush a client so end up going over my time." – 5 to 10 years

"Not everybody's needs are the same, they do not all fit in 30 mins visits. We have the same amount of time to deal with everyone and when we ask about extra time we are never given it." – Less than a year

2. Time allocated for travel and admin

11 respondents mentioned time allocated outside of care visits, such as for travel and admin tasks. Traffic and roadworks were specifically mentioned, as unpredictable delays can interrupt the flow of the day.

"Getting stuck in traffic and roadworks is a pain as it delays you for the whole day or interrupts your lunch break." – 1 to 5 years

"It takes time to fill out the notes and to document visits and this time is not really included in the visit (customers expect you to assist during the full length of the visit, which is fair). This means that notes are usually done in a bit of a rush within the commuting time, which is not ideal." – 1 to 5 years

A large, pink, stylized number 6 in the top left corner.

*"The time pressures mean I cannot
do my job as well as I hoped when I
first started."*

A large, dark blue, stylized number 9 in the bottom right corner.

3. Service-user attitude

11 carers highlighted that some service-users respond negatively to the carer or their care. Service-users sometimes don't understand the carer's role. Some carers describe receiving anger, harshness, or abuse. Three respondents from the Black/Black British demographic also described instances of racism.

"Some of the service users maybe violent or angry at some times." – **Less than a year**

"Sometimes a client can ask for something we should not be doing and saying no can cause an uncomfortable situation." – **Less than a year**

4. Feeling burnt-out

Burn out due to bad work-life balance was described by **six** carers as a barrier to delivering good care.

"Issues is not eating or drinking properly becomes mentally draining and exhausting." – **10 to 20 years**

"Lack of time off cover due to funding; therefore, this leads to burnout and potential inconsistency in rotas." – **10 to 20 years**

5. The environment

Three carers said it can be difficult to deliver care due to the environment, in terms of cleanliness and limited space.

"Small spaces, such as very small bathrooms to wash or shower in or to do any care." – **10 to 20 years**

"Some houses are dirty and uncomfortable." – **1 to 5 years**



“Some individuals, at first, aren’t welcoming to the idea that they need a little help so building trust and making a friendship is sometimes difficult.”



Qualitative insights

About... What carers enjoy

On the other side, we wanted to know what carers enjoyed about their work. There were **145** comments.

1.



Being able to help others

People often said being able to help service-users is a significantly positive aspect of home caring roles. This was acknowledged in most of the comments, with carers sharing how they had felt satisfied leaving a service users house knowing that they had made a positive difference for them.

"I've always been interested in work that involves helping others and making a positive impact. I enjoy being an active member of my community and helping people."

"Being able to directly impact the lives of your clients by providing essential care and support can be incredibly fulfilling."

"I've recently become a carer after considering it for a long time. I had a steady job so was scared to leave it. I'm so glad that I have, I love being able to help people to live life and stay in the comfort of their own homes. I love how grateful they are, I love how you can make their days. I love being able to make sure they're OK."

Making a positive difference:

"Oh I love it when I manage to put a smile on my client's face."

"I really enjoy the feeling that I'm going to check on a friend. I like to catch up talking during the visit and to have the feeling I have helped someone have a better day."

"I feel I make a difference. I gave up on office work as I wanted to feel I was helping people, I wanted a more fulfilling job. I try very hard to make my clients happier and more comfortable everyday"

"I love my job and I would never change it for anything else, to see people happy it's the best reward ever."



*“Feeling appreciated and valued by
your clients and their families can be
immensely rewarding”*



2. > Building friendships and connections

Carers describe how interacting with and getting to know their clients is enjoyable. Carers particularly value conversations and friendships built with regular clients, *“you can really build a friendship and get to know the person you care for”*.

“It is delightful meeting people in their own environment, getting to know them and their families”

“Getting to know the clients. What they have done in their life and work, being kind and patient. Leaving the client happy is so rewarding”

3. > Variety

A few carers say they enjoy the variety offered by work as a home-carer, *“different daily challenges and experiences”*

“Each day brings new challenges and opportunities to learn, making the job dynamic and interesting”

“The variety of the job, seeing different people with different needs.”

4. > Job flexibility

Carers said that the role gives them better job flexibility and work-life balance than other careers. Some carers said they get to choose their own work-hours and work around their children.

“Flexibility to work around my children.”

“Flexibility. Wonderful clients. Freedom to care in the way I wish around the necessary tasks”



"I always love seeing people keep their independence and reaching set targets. I also love doing different activities one on one with individuals, like taking them shopping or going for a drive, painting their nails, colouring or painting and going for walks."



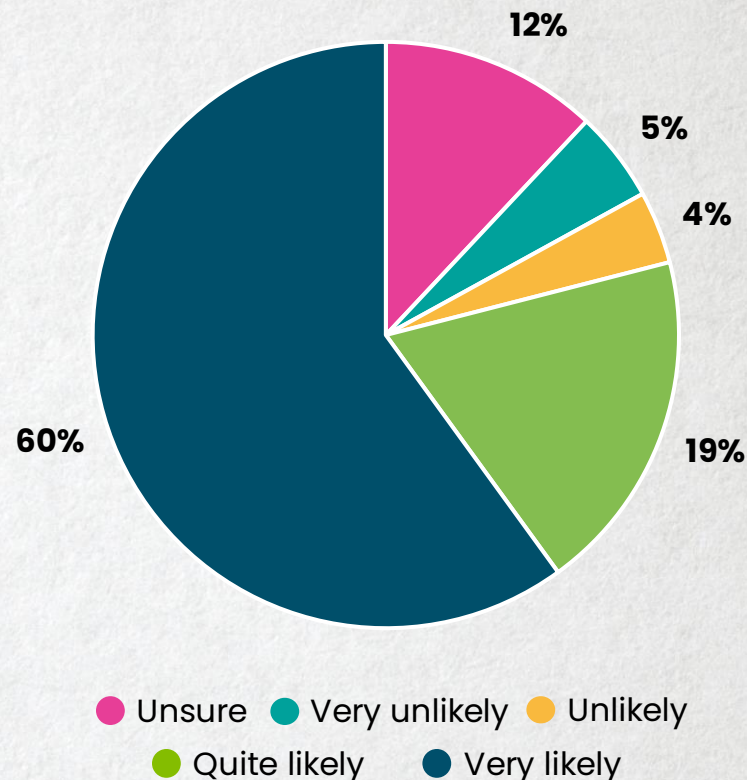
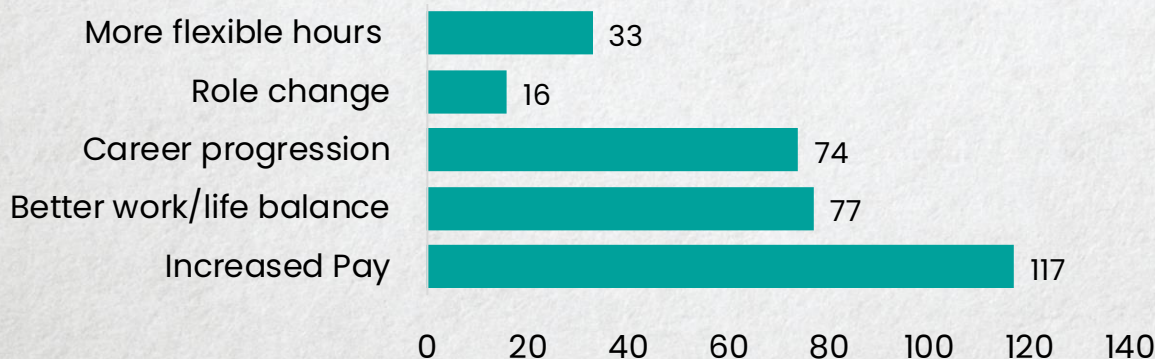
Staff retention

'Thinking about the next five years, how likely are you to stay working in the care sector?' – 166 people answered.

Most said they were 'likely' or 'quite likely' to continue working in the care sector **(79%/131)**. However, over **20%** were either 'very unlikely', 'unlikely', or 'unsure' about the future of their career in social care over the next five years.

'Which of the following, would encourage you to stay working within social care/keep you working in the care sector?'

Increased pay, alongside better work-life balance and career progression, were the most important factors reported by home-carers to encourage them to continue working within the care sector.



Three carers also said to address factors relating to **time-to-care**, such as allowing more time for visits **(2)** and hiring more staff so that there is more time **(1)**.

'Be given time from local authority care visits more than 30 minutes.'

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