



# Care worker retention: can we fix the leak?

**Executive survey - results and insights**

November 2019

In partnership with  
 CARE ENGLAND

## Executive summary



- The main purpose of this survey is to compare notes on **what works and what doesn't, and what more can be done**, to radically reduce staff turnover, as one of the most serious threats to the sustainability of the UK care sector
- The scale of the issue among the care providers in our survey is staggering: 81% of respondents are experiencing staff turnover in excess of 16%, while **nearly one in two (43%) are affected by turnover in excess of 25%**
- Furthermore, for the majority of providers it is not getting better: **over the last three years, 55% of respondents experienced increased or significantly increased staff turnover**, with only 18% of respondents managing to improve retention
- **Many soft factors** have been mentioned, alongside pay, **as the main causes of turnover**: toll on personal life of care workers, unsupportive management styles, even a negative spiral of vacancies and pressure on front-line staff, leading to further turnover
- **Personal factors**, such as **insufficient communication skills (61% of respondents)**, **lack of resilience (52%)** and even **motivation (57%)**, contribute to care workers leaving their jobs, albeit very often to go to work for another care provider
- **The impact of excessive staff turnover is widespread**, on the same front-line staff experiencing increased pressure (70% of respondents) and low morale (65%), on the management team (65%), on service users (61%), as well as on the finances of care providers, affected by agency (61%) and recruitment costs (26%)

## Executive summary



- So, what works and what doesn't to improve care worker retention?
- According to our respondents, **providing regular feedback (95% effective)**, **investing in personal development of front-line staff (79%)**, **introducing welcome programmes for new recruits (75%)**, proves more effective than maximising pay within limits of affordability (60%)
- **There is room for innovation:** 32% of respondents have not yet tried to give more responsibility to front-line staff but those who tried largely find it effective (52%)
- Going forward, to maximise retention, the care organisations in our survey are planning to **improve culture and leadership styles (91%)**, **explore new ideas and innovation (77%)** and **invest in personal development (77%)**, ahead of increasing pay and non-pay benefits (73%)
- At the same time, coordinated actions across the care sectors should continue to include **improvement of the perception of care work (95%)**, **sharing retention best practices (82%)**, **driving innovation (77%)**, as well as **securing improved funding (77%)**
- In summary, retention remains a substantial issue but **innovation, improved leadership and investment in personal development** of front-line staff could help to turn it into a **major opportunity**

## About us

- We created **Talent for Care ([www.talentforcare.uk](http://www.talentforcare.uk))** to bring innovation and sustainability to recruitment and retention of care workers
- More of the same will not work, **innovation is required to improve care worker retention**
- Our retention approach, originally developed for A+E staff, is **specifically designed for a pressured and stressful working environment**
- **We invest in each care worker**, in the person, to create resilience, an experience of community and a sense of belonging to the organisation – **retention is the outcome**
- If you are considering **innovative, cost-effective ways to radically improve care worker retention**, please do not hesitate to contact us for an informal introduction:  
**[alessandro.alagna@talentforcare.uk](mailto:alessandro.alagna@talentforcare.uk)**, 07950 345 274 or 01494 702 712

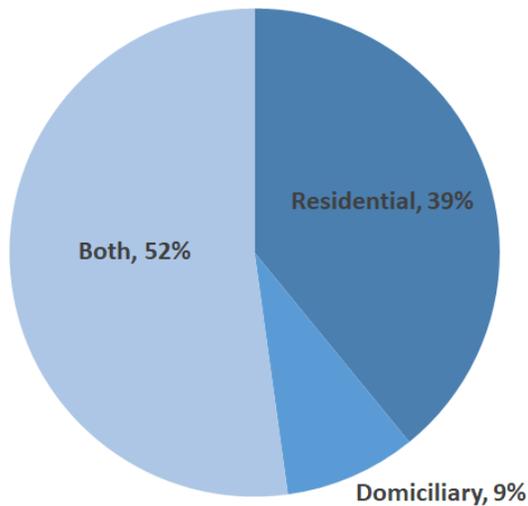


# Profile of survey respondents

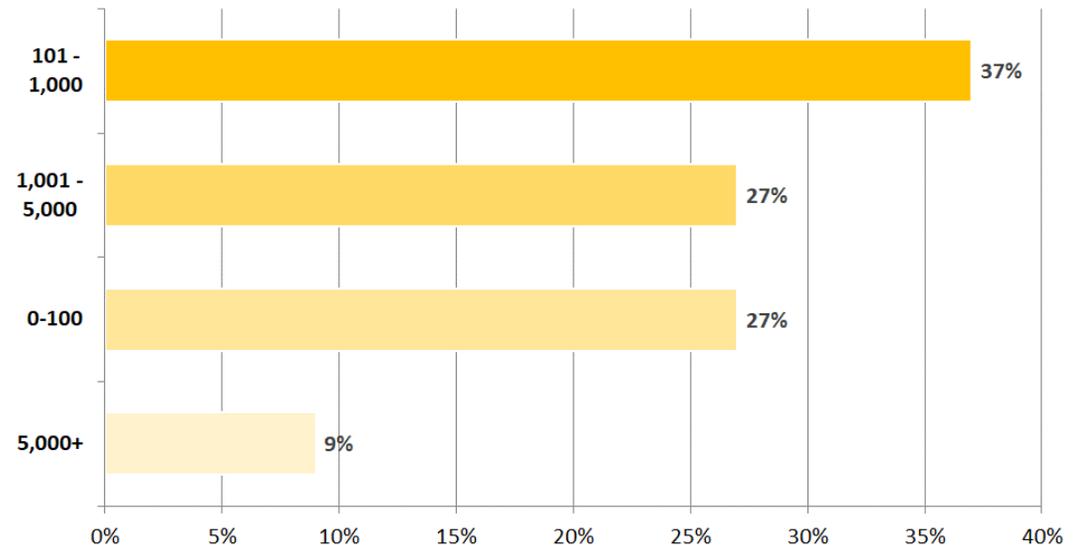


- **23 residential and domiciliary care providers** took part in our executive survey, with 37% of respondents employing up to 1,000 staff and 36% over 1,000
- The profile of respondents included CEOs/Owners, Operations, HR executives and Care managers

What type of care does your organisation provide?



How many people are there in your organisation (FTEs)?

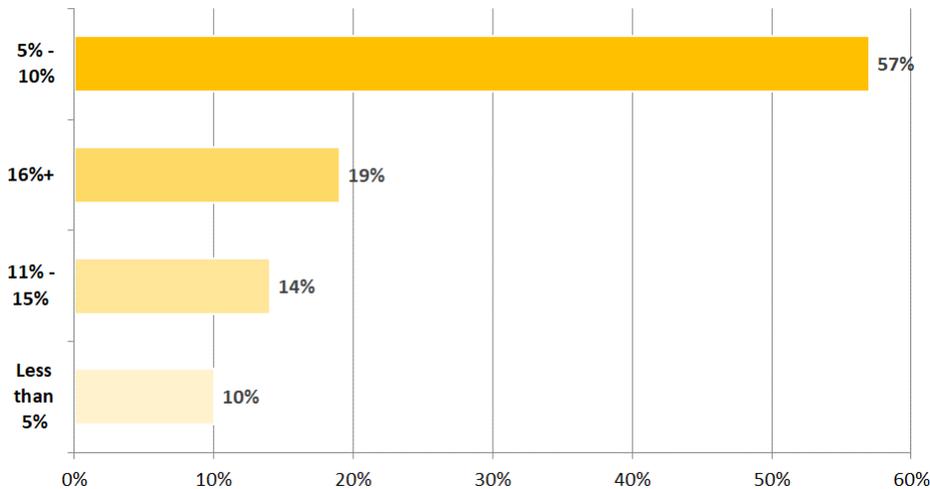


# Recruitment and retention challenges

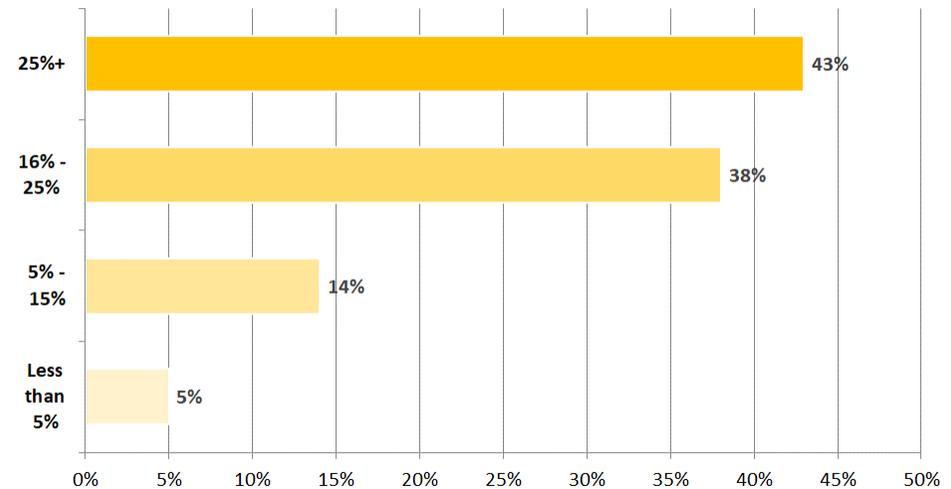


- The **majority of respondents (57%)** are experiencing **5-10% vacancies**, while **nearly one in five providers in our survey (19%)** are reporting vacancy rates of **over 16%**
- The scale of the retention challenge is confirmed by **43% of the sample, currently experiencing over 25% staff turnover**, and a total of **81% of respondents affected by turnover in excess of 16%**
- On a positive note, lessons can be learnt from the **5% of providers** who are succeeding in **keeping staff turnover below 5%**

What is the current level of care staff vacancies within your organisation?



What is your annual staff turnover?

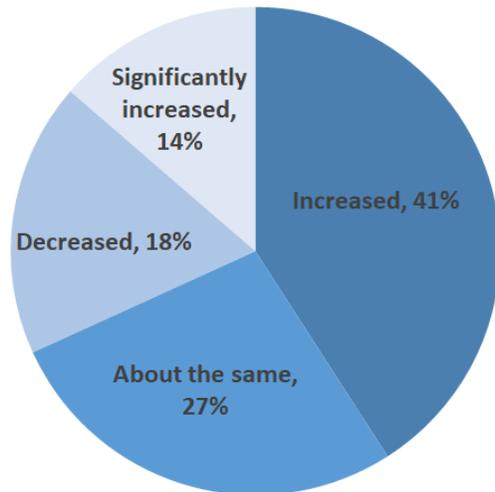


# Trend and impact of staff turnover

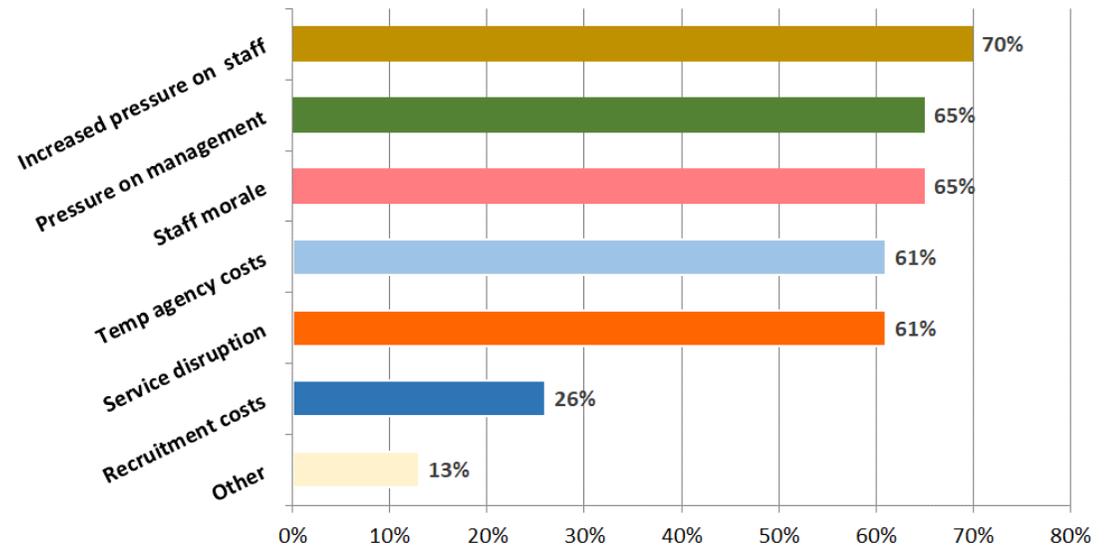


- **55%** of respondents reported **increased or significantly increased staff turnover**, while only 18% managed to reduce it, over the last 3 years
- Excessive care worker turnover has a **major impact on staff (70%)**, **management (65%)** and causes **service disruptions for users (61%)**
- The impact of turnover on **agency costs (61%)** seems to be more relevant than on **recruitment costs (36%)**

Has your staff turnover changed over the last 3 years?



What is the main impact of staff turnover on your organisation? (\*)



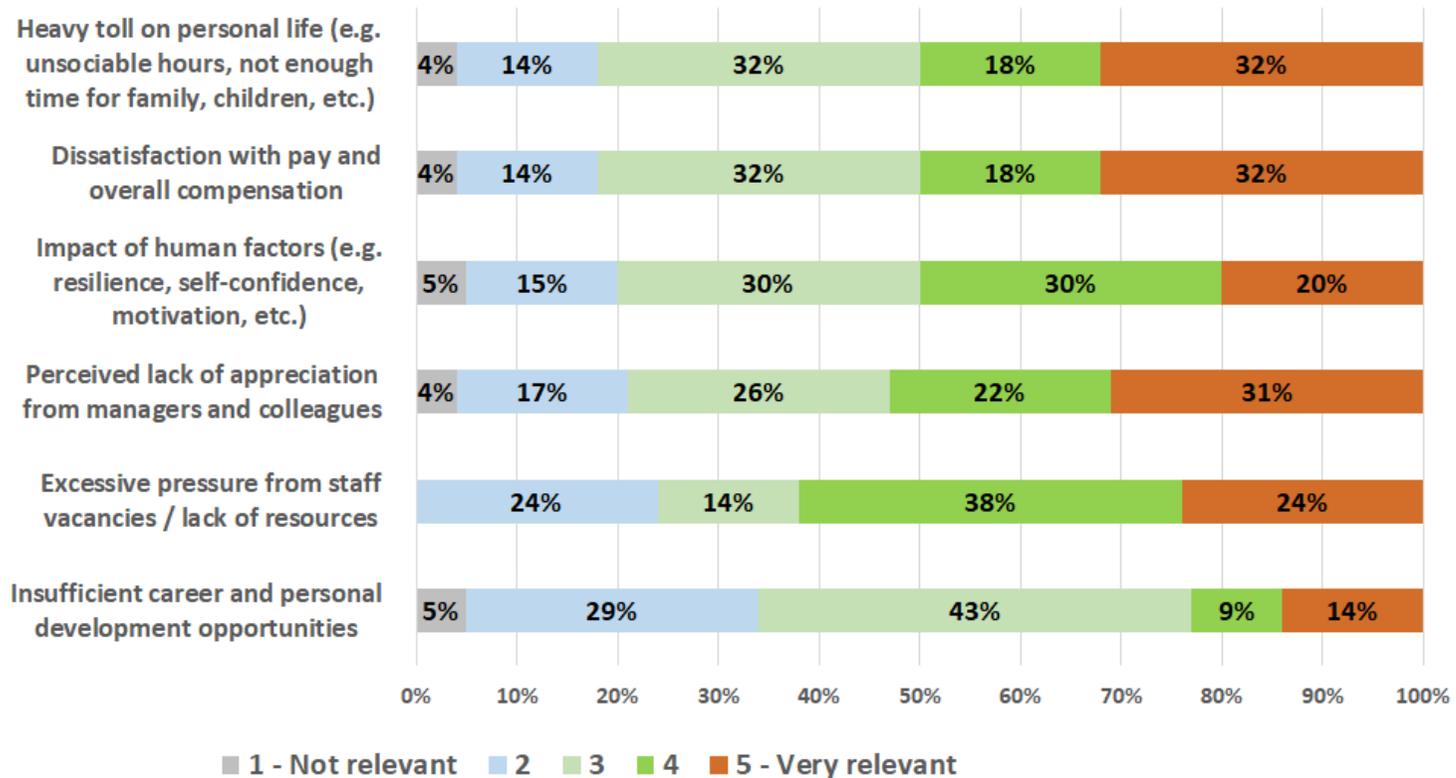
(\*) Multiple answers allowed, therefore the total can be greater than 100%

# Causes of staff turnover



- **Plenty of softer factors** (e.g. toll on personal life, lack of appreciation from managers) **rank alongside pay**, as equally critical causes of staff turnover
- Staff turnover can also generate a **negative spiral**, leading to increased vacancies that, in turn, put additional pressure on front-line staff, further increasing turnover

**In your experience, how relevant are the following causes of staff turnover?**

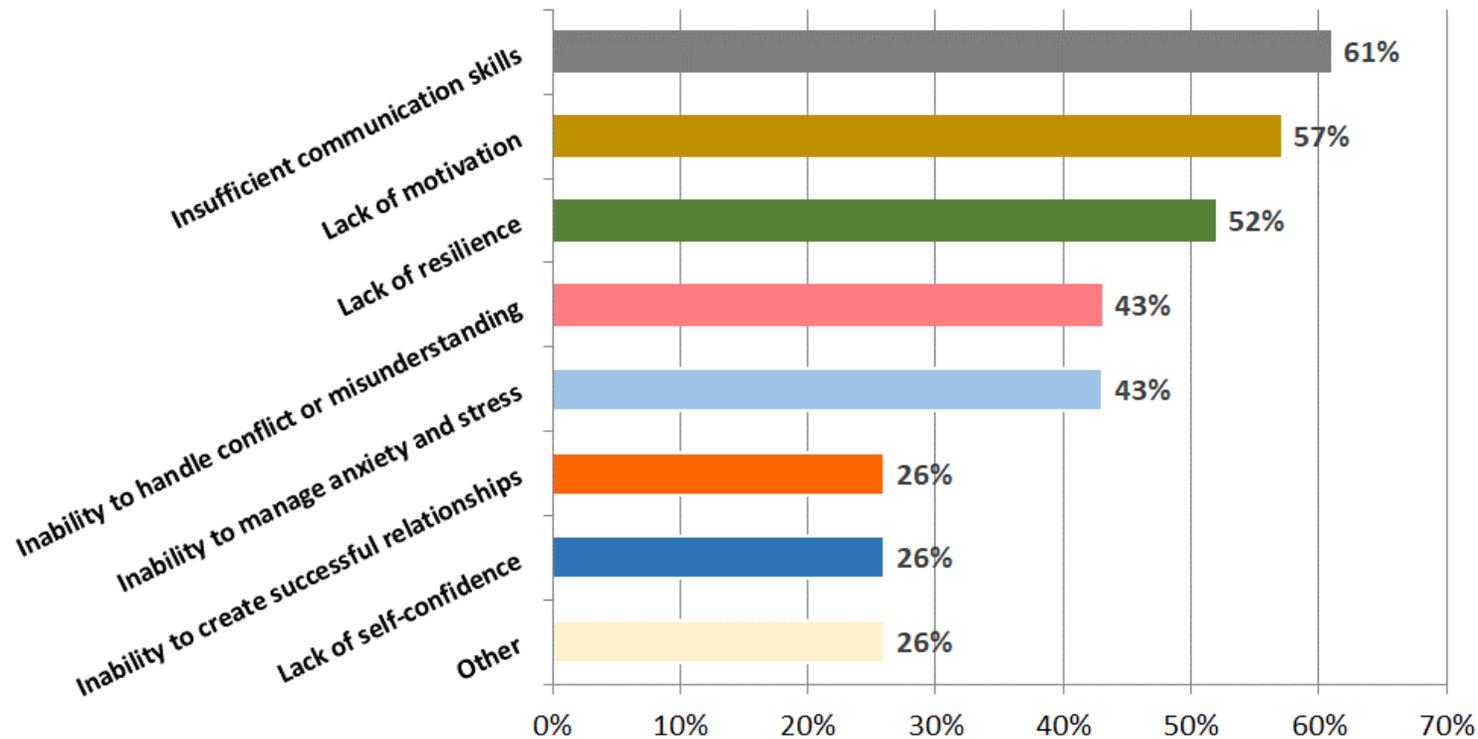


# Human factors behind staff turnover



- **Lack of communication skills, motivation and resilience** have been suggested as the most critical human factors behind care worker turnover, alongside **inability to handle conflict, anxiety and stress**
- **On a positive note**, they are all addressable factors, through **personal and professional development** of care staff

In your experience, which of the following human factors contribute to care worker turnover? (\*)



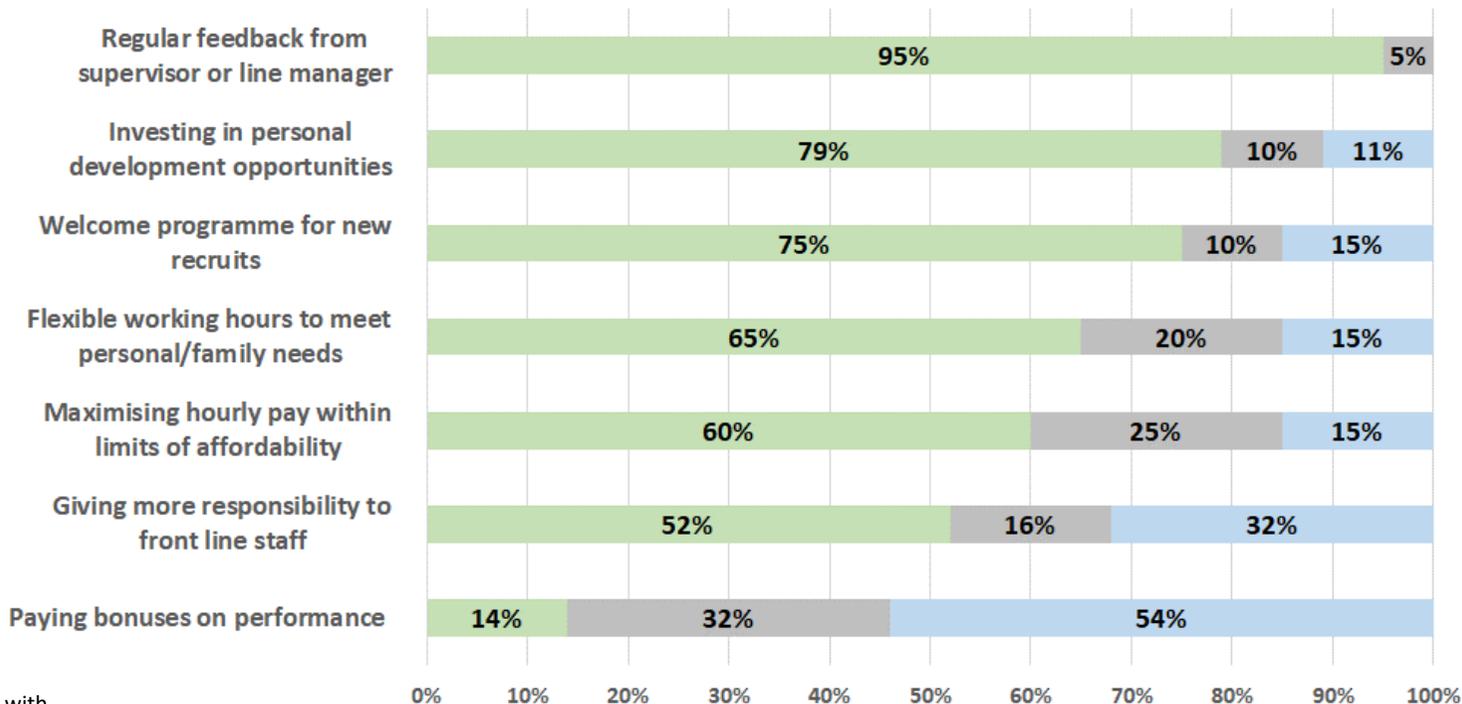
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# What works and what doesn't to tackle staff turnover



- Interestingly, **regular feedback from line managers and investment in personal development** are deemed **more effective than maximising hourly pay**, to drive care worker retention
- There is also room for **sharing best practices and innovation**, with initiatives, like **giving more responsibilities to front-line staff**, considered effective by the majority of organisations who introduced them but yet to be fully tested by a third of respondents

Which of the following initiatives have you tried and found effective in minimising staff turnover?

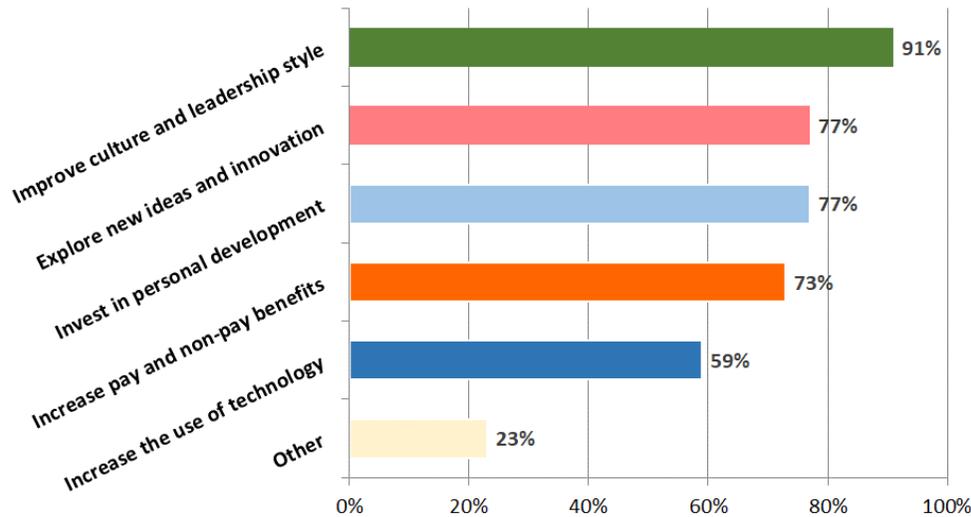


# Future retention plans

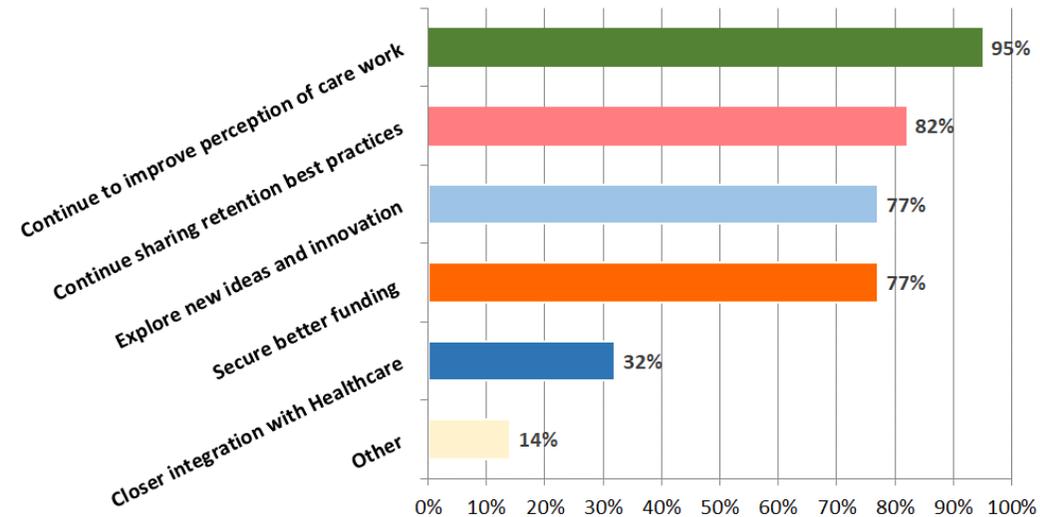


- **Improving leadership styles (93%), investing in care worker personal development (77%) and exploring innovation (77%)** are the top initiatives that organisations are planning, to drive staff retention
- At the same time, respondents highlighted the need to continue **improve the perception of care work (95%), share retention best practices (82%) and search for new ideas and innovation (77%),** across the care sector
- **Increasing pay (73%) and securing better funding (77%),** while of course relevant, were not the top choices

Which of the following are you planning, in your organisation, to maximise retention of care staff? (\*)



In your opinion, what needs to happen, across the care sector, to significantly increase retention of care staff? (\*)



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



## We would be delighted to hear from you

At Talent for Care ([www.talentforcare.uk](http://www.talentforcare.uk)) **we are changing care worker retention, through innovation and investment in personal development** of front-line staff. As confirmed by the findings of this executive survey, retention is about much more than pay. We need a **retention approach that works for each care worker, for the person as well as for the team and the organisation.**

We see **retention as a major opportunity**, very often missed because of quite basic and addressable factors, as confirmed by our respondents. We need to **invest in resilience, motivation**, ability to manage the pressure of a stressful but potentially **very rewarding working environment**. We have therefore implemented a fresh, **innovative approach**, originally developed for A+E nurses, to the retention of care workers across the country. We invest in people, **retention is the outcome.**

Please do not hesitate to contact us to share your thoughts and experience, **we would be delighted to hear from you for an informal introduction:**



**Alessandro Alagna, Director – Talent for Care**

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**A special thank you** to all of those who responded to the survey and to Care England – **great to work with you all!**

