

# The *Big Exit* Interview →

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Why are health and  
social care workers  
leaving...and where  
are they going?

**Sona.**



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## Methodology

### **We surveyed 1000 people in the UK between 21 and 28 June 2022:**

- All participants were pre-screened to confirm they have left a job in health and social care in the last 12 months.
- The sample of 1000 responded to all 11 questions via an online survey conducted by an independent third-party research company.

### **Demographic breakdown**

#### **Age**

- 18-24: 19.9%
- 25-34: 39.9%
- 35-44: 24.9%
- 44-54: 9.5%
- >54: 5.9%

#### **Gender at birth**

- Female: 42%
- Male: 58%

# 03

## Why are health & social care workers leaving?

Let's start by acknowledging the role of pay. Salary will almost always be the main reason someone leaves their job, regardless of sector.

At the time of writing, the official UK inflation rate had already exceeded 9% – the highest rate in 40 years. That additional pressure on household budgets is causing as many as 3 in 4 people to think about a new role.<sup>1</sup>

A third of respondents said low pay was a factor in deciding to leave their last health or social care role. Almost twice as many people cited low pay as the most compelling reason for leaving as the next most cited reason.

### Most influential reasons for leaving health & social care

1. Pay was too low
2. I was working too many hours
3. I wanted a new challenge
4. Lack of opportunities to progress
5. Vaccination / COVID rules

### Overworked, underappreciated, understimulated?

Looking beyond pay, many other common reasons staff leave the health & social care sector are within employers' control.

The top two – working too many hours and lack of appreciation – often combine in a dangerous spiral. Employees feel they are going above and beyond, but their efforts aren't being recognised by their managers.

Similarly, wanting a new challenge and not getting opportunities to progress can be two sides of the same coin.

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1. [Three quarters of Britons want to change jobs due to cost of living crisis](#)

# 04

## **Most common reasons for leaving health & social care** *(once pay is excluded)*

=1 Working too many hours

=1 Lack of appreciation

=3 Poor management

=3 Wanted a new challenge

=3 Lack of opportunities to progress

Health and social care is a sector where you can start at the bottom and work your way up. But staff have to be clear about:

1. Which career paths are available to them
2. What their employer expects to see from them in order to progress
3. The support they should expect from their employer to help them get there

## And where are they going?

**Care is competing with other large 'deskless' sectors.** Nearly half (47.2%) of leavers now work in industries with significant numbers of frontline or 'deskless' roles:

### Leavers are moving to these industries:

1.	Finance & Insurance	14%
2.	<b>Retail, Fashion &amp; Apparel</b>	<b>13%</b>
3.	Information Services & Software	13%
4.	<b>Manufacturing &amp; Construction</b>	<b>9%</b>
5.	<b>Education</b>	<b>8%</b>
6.	<b>Hospitality, Food Service &amp; Leisure</b>	<b>7%</b>
7.	<b>Logistics &amp; Warehousing</b>	<b>5%</b>
=8	Government & Public Administration	3%
=8	Scientific / Technical Services	3%
=8	Telecommunications	3%

### Most **common** reasons for moving to a job in a new sector:

1. Better pay
2. Less stressful environment
3. Better hours
4. More flexibility
5. They make me feel valued

### Most **influential** reasons for moving once pay is excluded:

1. More opportunities to progress
2. More flexibility
3. Better hours
4. They make me feel valued
5. Less stressful environment

20% of our survey respondents were not currently in work due to unemployment, enrolment in further education, or retirement.

Current ONS estimates put the proportion of 'economically inactive' working-age people in the UK at 21.1%. 487,000 more people have joined this category since the pandemic started, presenting a further challenge for all sector employers, including health & social care.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [Employment in the UK: April 2022 \(ONS\)](#)

# 06

## When and how are staff raising their concerns?

### There won't always be warning signs

The vast majority of staff are raising concerns they have about their roles multiple times before quitting:

- 30% said they raised their concerns often
- 44% raised their concerns occasionally

However, around 1 in 4 (26%) spoke to their employer just once or not at all before handing in their notice.

38% of that group didn't ever voice their issues. In other words, **more than one in every ten leavers quit with zero warning!**

### Are more 'open door' policies needed?

Just 28% of respondents said they felt comfortable raising their concerns with their employer, compared to 50% who felt somewhat or very uncomfortable.

Staff who were uncomfortable giving feedback about their role were more likely to leave without telling their manager they were unhappy.

Only 20% said their employer had an 'open door' policy in place. This suggests that health & social care organisations need to ask if cultural barriers are preventing them from getting meaningful feedback from team members before it's too late.

### How are employees delivering feedback?

39%

Regular (scheduled) check ins

30%

Formal quarterly or annual review

33%

Informal (unscheduled) check ins

27%

Internal communication platform / app

32%

Company email

25%

Call or text

## How are employers responding?

### Staff want to feel heard

When raised, respondents generally felt their concerns were taken seriously by their employer (51% agreed / strongly agreed).

Although very few believed that their issues were dismissed entirely, around 1 in 4 leavers were unsatisfied with their employer's response.

There was also a strong correlation between staff perceptions that their organisation had failed to take appropriate action and lack of appreciation at work. 61% of respondents who said the main reason they left was not feeling valued said their employer didn't take their concerns seriously.

### But too many are being allowed to walk out of the door

28% of respondents said that their employer didn't try to convince them to stay.

Of course, in most cases, employers did make efforts to keep their staff onboard. The most popular counter-offers were:

1. More hours (31%)
2. Greater flexibility (29%)
3. Salary increase (28%)
4. Promotion or change of role (24%)
5. Change of location (18%)



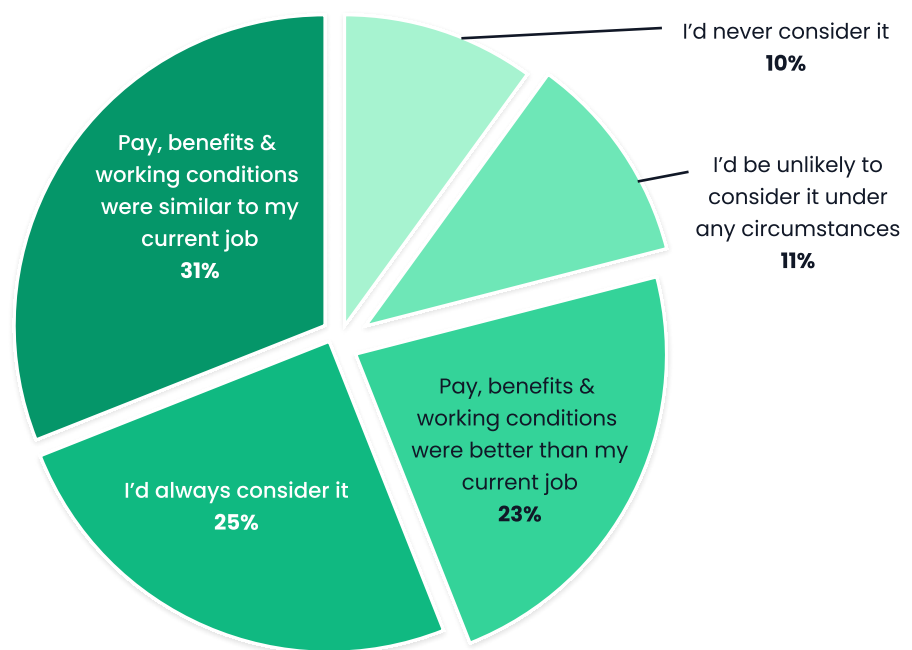
## Leavers aren't lost forever!

**79% of leavers are open to working in health and social care in the future.**

Most people work in the sector because they want to care for others and find the work rewarding. That's clearly reflected in the low proportion of our sample who would most likely rule out a return.

By offering competitive pay rates, benefits and working patterns, providers could entice more than 1 in 2 leavers to come back.

### I would consider returning to health/social care if...





# 09

## Practical tips for retaining and winning back more staff

### 1) Remove the barriers to getting timely feedback

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An annual survey can't break the cycle of employee demotivation, dissatisfaction and churn.

Instead, employers need frequent (ideally real-time) feedback on how staff feel at work to keep their finger on the pulse and reduce preventable turnover.

Today's technology means it's never been easier to ask your employees for feedback on a much more regular basis.

The right software will be able to automate a lot of the process as possible and avoid being overwhelmed by unstructured feedback. It's something we specialise in here at Sona.

### 2) Make staff recognition an organisational priority

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Showing appreciation is the highest impact – and probably the most cost-effective – retention method of all.

Good managers know they should be praising staff for their contributions. The most common problem is that other priorities often get in the way (see also tip 4 on the next page).

The key is to embed recognition as part of the organisation's culture and as part of the day-to-day routines of managers and team leaders. If that includes rewards, great! But simply remembering to say thanks can make a huge difference.

Again, dedicated software like Sona can help make encouraging and rewarding praise a cultural norm. From a private 'well done' via instant message to a public shout-out in a dedicated social newsfeed, digital recognition can help create a feel-good factor amongst your teams.

### 3) Find ways to make work more flexible

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90% of care sector employees would feel happier at work if they had more freedom to choose their working patterns.

Providers that offer greater flexibility have a competitive edge in the labour market and lower churn rates.

For now, true flexible working is nearly impossible to achieve in health and social care settings. But employers can give their staff more choice and control over their working hours.

For example, if you know your staffing requirements for an upcoming week, perhaps an employee contracted for 36 hours a week could be scheduled for 24 hours and free to pick the other 12 from the remaining shifts available.

We call this 'self-scheduling'. Increasing numbers of providers are turning to modern workforce management software to transition from traditional rostering to a hybrid approach that mixes in 'self-scheduling'.

### 4) Give managers time to manage

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Site and service managers are under a lot of pressure and have long to-do lists.

So giving them back time in their weeks is incredibly valuable. That time can be dedicated to improving service delivery and to recruitment, coaching and mentoring, and team building.

Do a thorough analysis of their tasks. Ask what can be eliminated. If it can't be eliminated, can it be automated? Saving an hour each day is a cumulative 25 to 30 extra working days over a year!

From rostering to communication and compliance, there is a wealth of technology designed to reduce manual admin and give managers more time to manage.

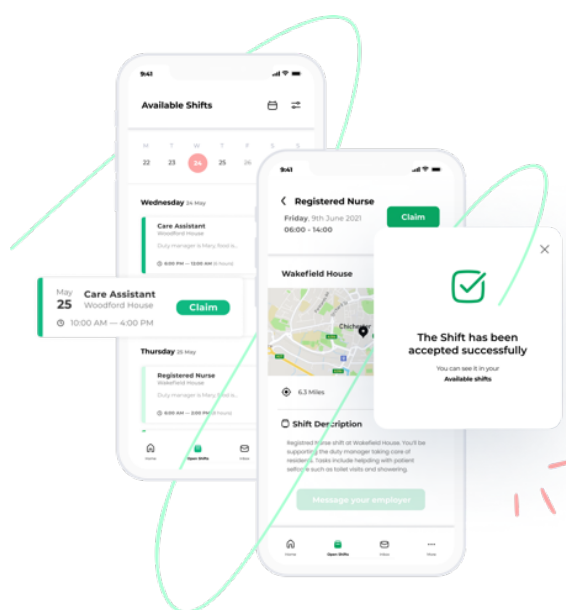
## Built to boost retention

Backed by Google, Sona is a modern workforce management company committed to helping health and social care providers address many of the staffing challenges covered in this report.

Our employee 'super app' and desktop platform are transforming how care providers organise, engage and optimise their teams. The results: happier staff, better quality care, and healthier bottom lines!

We've helped our customers, including Advinia Healthcare & Praxis Care:

- **Decrease staffing agency usage by up to 40%** by optimising how their staff books overtime shifts.
- **Save managers more than 5 hours every week** each as they no longer had to manage time-consuming manual rotas and rota changes.
- **Increase staff engagement** as staff felt much more connected with the company
- **Streamline payroll operations** by making it much easier for managers and finance teams to reconcile hours across systems.



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