

Sona.

The Big Opportunity

Part 1: What motivates the next generation of Care professionals to stay with their employer?

76% of respondents under 25 yo plan to stay in Social Care for 12+ months, demonstrating reliability and passion.

However, at a macro level, there were 30k fewer domestic job applications in Social Care in 2023. Therefore, retaining every sector entrant is essential.

To this end, 8 in 10 respondents believe access to the latest Care technology matters when choosing to stay with an employer.

Achieving workforce sustainability then comes down to **HOW** providers deliver on their staff's top priorities: flexibility and a positive culture.

Hallmark Foundation is pleased to be working with Sona on this important research. The workforce is key to the future of quality care.

There will be more than half a million new Care sector jobs over the next decade, offering rapid career progression. But as recent research shows, we need to do much more to attract and retain young people.

That requires Care employers to be more flexible, make greater use of technology, and improve communication and culture in the sector. All that demands effective leadership and management. The Sona research points towards the key changes needed and the good news is that they're all within reach for many if not most providers.

Hallmark Foundation is also looking at how we build stronger links between Care providers and their local schools and colleges to give young people a taster of working in Care. Those young people are the future of the sector and coming together to support them is paramount.












Stephen Burke
CEO Hallmark Care Foundation



Most new joiners now come from Hospitality and Education, in addition to Healthcare.

What sector did you work in previously to Social Care?

	◆ UNDER 25	◆ 25 AND OVER
 HEALTHCARE	30%	37%
 HOSPITALITY	17%	18%
 EDUCATION	14%	8%
 RETAIL	13%	18%
 MANUFACTURING	5%	5%
 ADMINISTRATION	4%	8%
 TRANSPORT	2%	2%
 UNPAID CARER	2%	8%
 OTHER	1%	1%

When it comes to switching industries, Healthcare, Hospitality, and Education are the most common ones for respondents under 25 yo, most likely due to transferable skills.

Younger generations are also more driven by a sense of purpose (Deloitte, [2024](#)) and believe individuals can and should make an impact. Together these statistics point towards an opportunity for Care providers to advertise their vacancies to young people interested in switching by appealing to their strong sense of social consciousness.

Another encouraging result uncovered by this survey is an overwhelming tendency among under 25s to remain in the sector when their first job is in Care.

For the 12% of joiners for whom Care was their first job, 88% said they're likely to stay with the current employer for 12 or more months.

They also demonstrate high loyalty to their employer when they feel listened to and valued, as the majority of this segment also highlighted that when they offered feedback, it was well-received and acted upon.

This points towards an opportunity for providers to work on their outreach to schools and colleges, presenting Care as a viable career path but also as a volunteering opportunity. Whilst perhaps not every young person will choose a Care career, charity volunteering is a priority for young people (British Heart Foundation, [2023](#)), so they are still able to come into contact with the sector.



Hallmark Foundation – connecting young people to the Care sector.

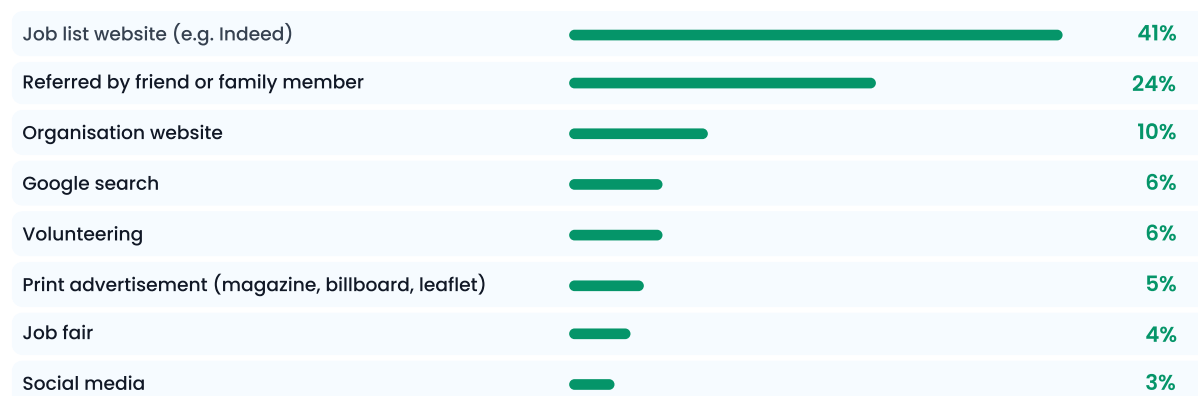
With only 12% of the under 25s surveyed having always worked in Care, it becomes an opportunity to ensure that young people's first job – be it part-time, volunteering, or full-time – is in the sector, as that can make a significant impact when they decide on their career.

One organisation active in this area is Hallmark Foundation. Founded by Avnish Goyal, Executive Chairman of Hallmark Care Homes, the foundation funds research, innovation, support, and promotion of better care, including by working to attract young people to the sector.



The 'Who Cares Wins!' annual event aims to promote the growing number of career options young people have in Care. This year, it promises an interactive conference, and is inviting providers across the UK to participate as exhibitors. Currently, the majority of young people find out about Care jobs via job boards, but events such as Who Cares Wins! can be an opportunity for diversifying application sources.

How did you find your current or most recent Social Care employer? (under 25 yo respondents)



Student attending 2023's
Young People's Care
Conference

“It really makes me more excited about Health and Social Care and Social Care in general. It was really eye-opening and it made me more confident that I wanted to go into the sector. It's inspiring and you can build a future there and what's better than that?”

Flexibility and empowering managers to build positive cultures make an employer stand out.

If pay is removed, why did you leave your last job in Social Care? (choose all that apply)

	◆ UNDER 25	◆ 25 AND OVER
Not enough flexibility to choose when to work	30%	36%
Relocation	27%	29%
Poor management	24%	37%
Issues with my physical or mental health	19%	18%
Not enough personal development opportunities	17%	30%
I didn't feel valued	16%	21%
Too much travel time	16%	24%
Retired	0%	1%

Removing pay from consideration was necessary to highlight how employers can stand out and improve retention through benefits and culture, particularly as pay levers are not a viable option for every organisation.

Both in The Big Exit (2022) and The Big Reshuffle (2023), more flexible work was in the top three reasons for leaving Social Care. Working from home might not be feasible for many Care professionals, but being able to receive schedules with 4+ weeks of notice, choose shifts, take time off, and work extra hours are all flexibility benefits. They mean people can fit in the school run, commit to their studies, or spend time with loved ones – all elements that contribute to a healthy work-life balance and reduce burnout.

With relocation being outside of an employer's control, the second biggest reason for leaving is poor management. Managers, however, often lack the time to focus on leadership and supporting staff members.

The common assumption would be that younger carers need more support, but it is mature staff that seems to struggle with this issue more.

Overall, empowering managers to focus on building positive leadership models by easing them of their admin burden can make an impact on the workforce as a whole, not just on younger employees.



Respondents think technology will enable flexibility and better care.

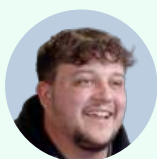
Does your current technology enable you to deliver good quality care? (under 25 yo respondents)

Yes	<div><div></div></div>	76%
We don't have any technology in place, but I would like to	<div><div></div></div>	12%
No	<div><div></div></div>	8%
Not applicable as I don't work in Social Care anymore	<div><div></div></div>	3%
We don't have any technology in place and I don't think we need it	<div><div></div></div>	1%

Positive attitudes towards technology are not limited to younger Care professionals. As seen below, all age segments highlighted improvements in areas previously mentioned as important reasons for leaving an employer, such as easier scheduling and better communication.

In what way had technology improved your Social Care job satisfaction?

	◆ UNDER 25	◆ 25 AND OVER
Easier management of my schedule	34%	41%
Improved communication with my team	34%	44%
Better access to company announcements, information and resources	30%	37%
More accurate time-tracking payroll	24%	34%
Less time spend on administrative tasks	19%	25%
Enhanced recognition and appreciation	17%	33%
Technology has not changed my experience at work at all	14%	18%
Technology has affected my work negatively	2%	2%



Jack Neighbour
Team Lead

“It's so much simpler and it's on my phone, so I can see it at all times, there's no issue with finding anything really on it. It's so simple to use. My personal wellbeing has absolutely benefited massively from it.”



Enabling work-life balance for teams is the preferred method of appreciation.

- ◆ How did your employer show appreciation while you were in your Social Care role?
- ◆ How did you wish your employer showed appreciation? (under 25 yo respondents)

	◆	◆
Words of affirmation e.g. awards or thank you cards	49%	15%
Offered career progression opportunities	35%	22%
Quality time e.g. holiday allowance or flexible hours	32%	37%
Small tangible gifts	28%	12%
Employee of the month/year award	18%	14%
They didn't show appreciation	12%	0%

Identifying discrepancies between how employers offer appreciation and how staff wish they did can show providers where to channel their efforts. For under 25s, quality time is a top priority. There is a concern that implementing technology that enables flexibility could alienate mature employees, but the responses below show high degrees of openness to new digital solutions across all age segments.

How open are you to using new technology solutions implemented by your organisation?

Very open	<div></div>	55%
Open	<div></div>	35%
Neutral	<div></div>	10%
Reluctant	<div></div>	1%
Very reluctant	<div></div>	1%



Emily O'Callaghan
Registered Manager

“ People used to spend 80h per week just creating the rotas. Now, the rotas are being looked at for 10h per week maybe, not even that.

Staff wellbeing has benefited [from a WFM solution]. It's improved massively. It's also improved the lives of managers that were dealing with rota systems before. Overall, and the individuals that we support, it's really benefited everybody because everybody now knows what's happening. There is that consistency of care. ”

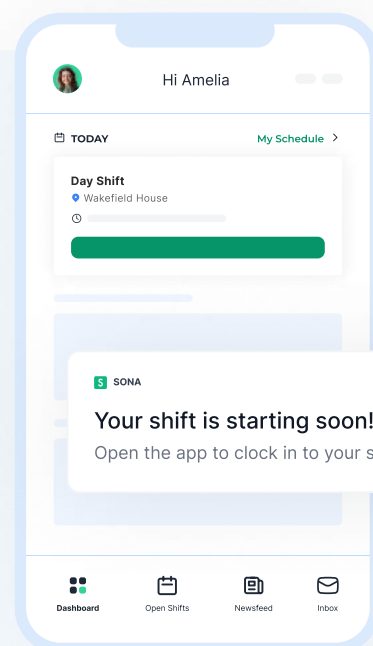


◆ **Organisations can support young people joining the sector via:**

- tech that enables flexibility and carries the admin load
- an employee engagement platform to foster a positive culture

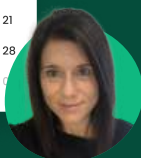
◆ **Without a wellbeing tracker, leadership is prevented from being proactive.** Anticipating churn underpins the ability to correctly staff each location when complemented by demand forecasts.

◆ **The final piece of the puzzle is a truly intelligent next-generation solution.** This delivers demand forecasts with maximum accuracy that leaders can trust when building long-term growth strategies.



September

m	t	w	t	f	s	s
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	01	02	03	04



How does your digital strategy stack up?

When intelligent AI-driven forecasting technology is embedded into an end-to-end WFM solution, it can help leaders truly reconcile employee wellbeing needs with business productivity demands.

Interested in seeing how your tech strategy compares to that of other Care leaders?

[Book a 15-minute consultant call](#)



"We've built a culture of aspiration and I think that's new. And Sona again helped with that because we said what could we achieve? Well, actually what we've got with Sona is so much better than what we had, but what can we have next? Rather than 'oh, no, you've changed something,' it's actually 'we've changed something and we'll change it again and we'll make it better and better.'

And I think that as a culture piece is, it makes it an amazing place to work."



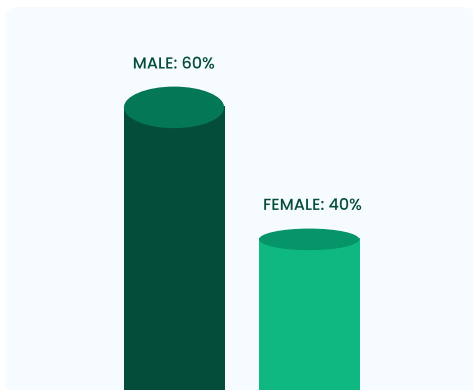
Claire Bunker,
Growth & Development Director



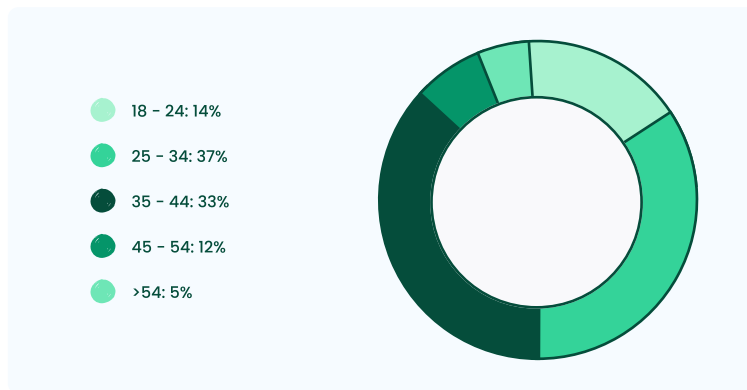
Methodology

We surveyed 1000 Social Care leavers and joiners in the UK over the course of July and August, 2024.

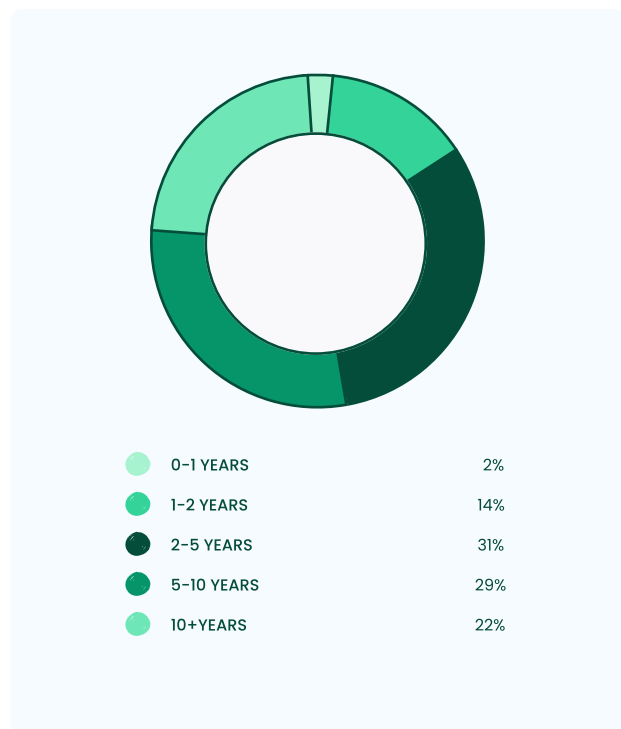
The polling audience was 60% male and 40% female.



The age ranges were as follows:



How long have you worked in the Social Care sector in total?



What type of Social Care setting did you work in?

