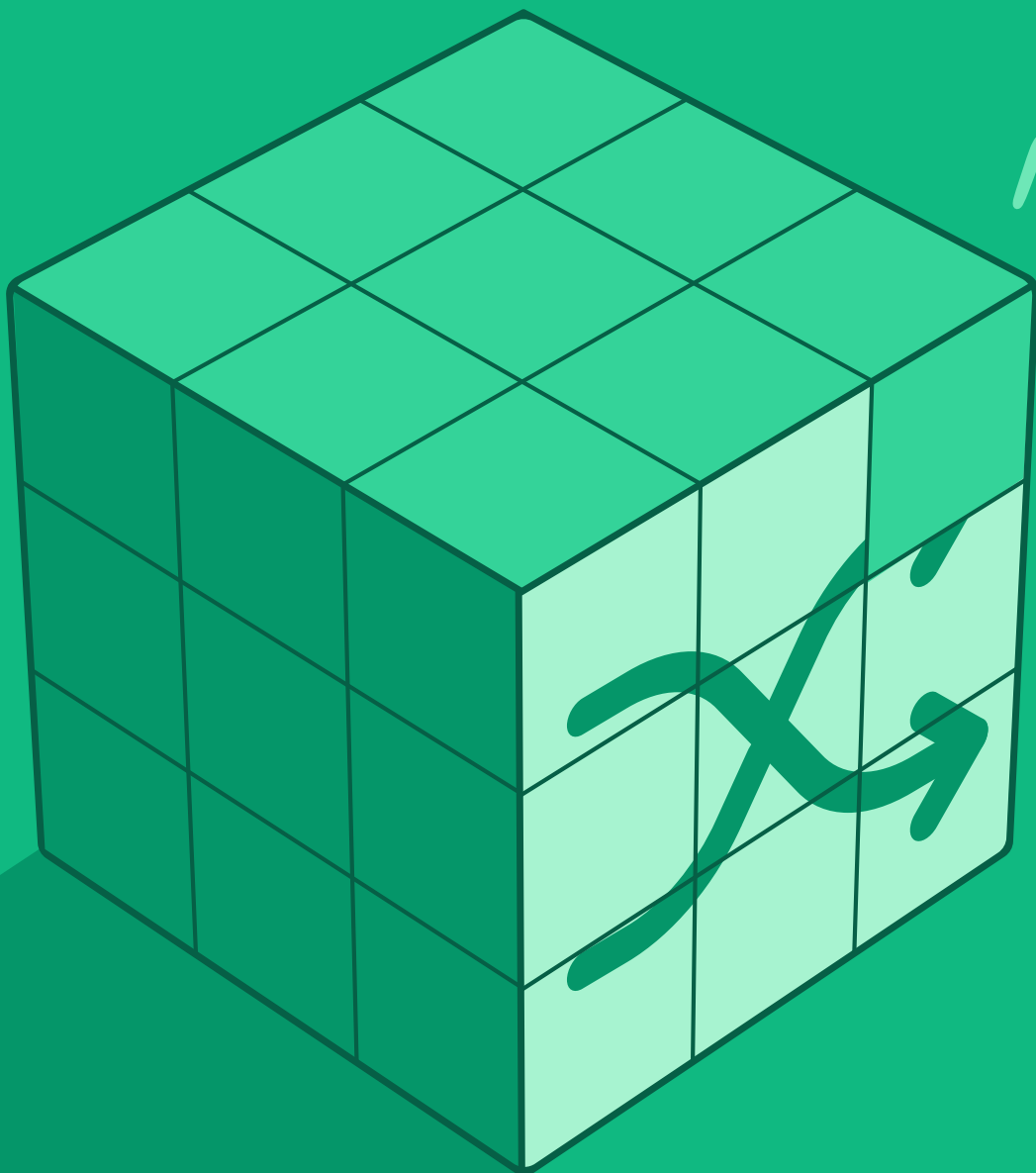


Sona.

The Big Reshuffle (Part 1)

What 1000 Health and Social Care employees are saying about leaving the sector... and how to win them back!



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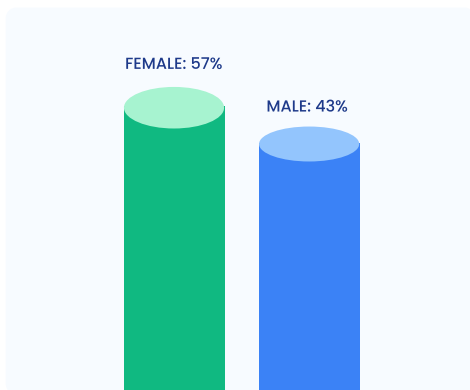


Methodology

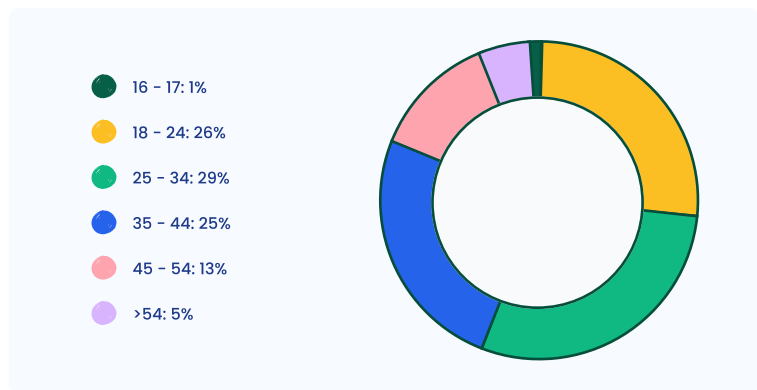
We surveyed 1000 people in the UK over the course of July, 2023.



The polling audience was 57% female and 43% male.

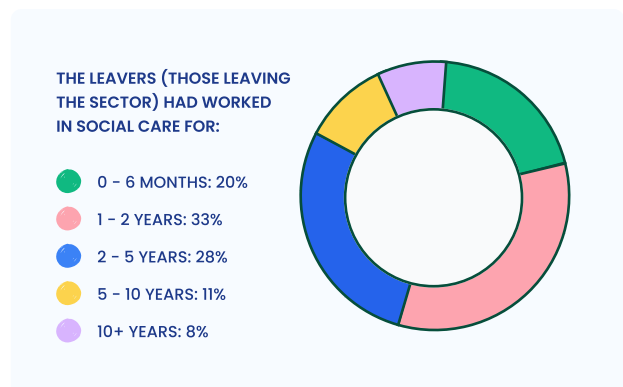
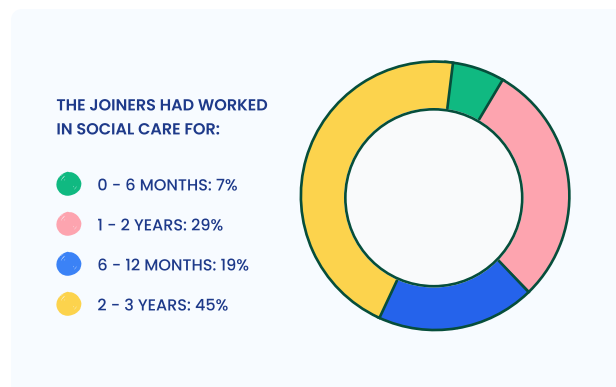


The age ranges were as follows:

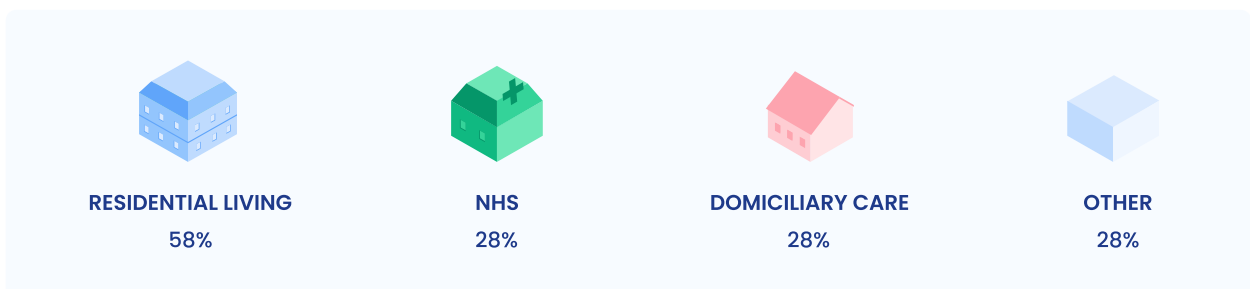


Additionally, to gather accurate insights into the Social Care sector we included joiners' and leavers' data.

Those with more than one year of experience had previously worked in Social Care and after a period outside of Social and Health Care decided to come back.



And lastly, here's the type of Social Care setting those polled worked at:



A note from Oli, Sona Co-Founder

At Sona we understand that Social Care is going through a lot of change. When we published The Big Exit poll results in 2022, we set out to answer key questions:

- Why are people leaving the sector?
- Where are they going?
- What are the most influential factors for leaving, staying in, or starting care work?
- And what can organisations do to improve retention and attract new employees?

These responses can shift with time, as working trends change, new collective issues come to the forefront, and people's priorities adjust. We committed to running this poll yearly because we wanted to shed light on the most relevant topics influencing Social Care and develop solutions that are truly needed by the industry. There are so many amazing new insights, but one that stood out to me was how 46% of leavers were not asked to stay at all!

46% of leavers were not asked to stay at all!

There is a reason to celebrate however. As per Skills for Care, vacant posts have finally decreased to an extent, so retaining new staff becomes more important. However, realistically, many organisations will continue to struggle with recruitment. The Big Reshuffle contributes to this conversation and offers practical insights and solutions that help leadership take action and implement relevant changes to improve efficiency and wellbeing in their organisation.

Sona believes in collaborating closely with our care customers. We want to know as much as possible about every influencing factor, so that we can give them the best software we can for their needs. Over the last year, we have consistently built new features and functionality in direct response to feedback and collected insights.

In this report, we will look at the trends seen in the last year, the meaningful changes compared to 2022, then highlight how Social Care organisations can improve recruitment and retention, and better target the needs of those who receive care.



Oli Johnson,
Sona Co-Founder

Leavers data: Why are Health and Social Care workers leaving the sector?

Pay plays a huge role when it comes to whether or not people stay in a job. For Social Care leaders and managers, this can feel like a repetitive conversation, but it does need to be addressed. When working with budgets every day, it becomes easy to lose track of the fact that not all employees have the same insights into the costs of running a care home.

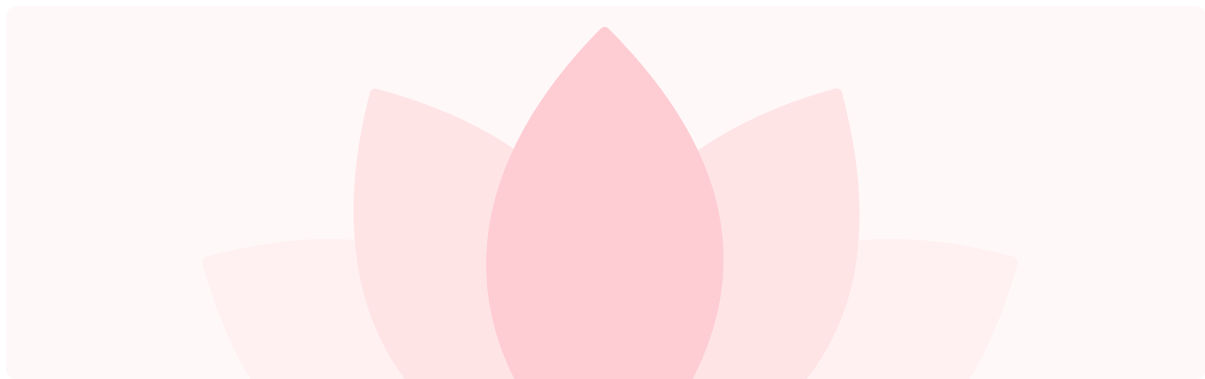
Honest communication with staff is essential here because most are aware of the rising costs of electricity, insurance, and other bills at a personal level, but not at an organisational level. So, to employees it may look like funding comes in, but their own pay remains stagnant, without realising that the costs of simply keeping the lights on, for example, have increased by orders of magnitude, just like their household bills.

The good news is that pay is not the be-all, end-all for many employees. In fact, plenty of other factors may influence an employee's decision to leave, many of which can be addressed more easily than pay.

Most common reasons for leaving the health and Social Care sector:

1. Pay was too low	28%
2. Issues with my physical or mental health	14%
3. Not enough flexibility to choose when to work	11%
4. I didn't feel valued	10%
5. Poor management	10%
6. Too much travel time	8%
7. Relocation	7%
8. Not enough opportunities to progress	7%
9. Not enough personal development opportunities	5%

+ Issues with physical and mental wellbeing



Compared to [last year's report](#), there's a new reason for leaving the sector: issues with physical and mental health. The pandemic and its aftermath are still affecting those working in health and Social Care. As The Health Foundation points out:

“With all-economy unemployment touching historically low rates and the pandemic having led to increased workload and burnout pressures for the health and care workforce, there is mounting concern that both the NHS and the adult social care sector are losing staff they desperately need.”

Combined with the added mental load of the cost of living crisis, this means that the physical and mental health of carers must be a top priority for employers.

How can employers better support carers' mental health? The UK government and [the CQC](#) recommend a few measures, including:

● Being **proactive**, making time to talk about wellbeing and checking in with staff

● Encouraging **open and honest conversations**

● Putting **sufficient support in place** for staff and managers

A successful case when it comes to helping its staff's physical and mental wellbeing is [Sanctuary Care](#), which recently won a national award for outstanding employee support.

Part of this success is down to Sanctuary Care's strong communication with their staff. In 2021 the company began to put out a wellbeing survey across their care teams, using this data to inform the changes to implement.

These changes included mental health support training, workshops, one-on-one meetings with managers and mental health specialists, and overall creating a culture of openness and support of mental health issues.

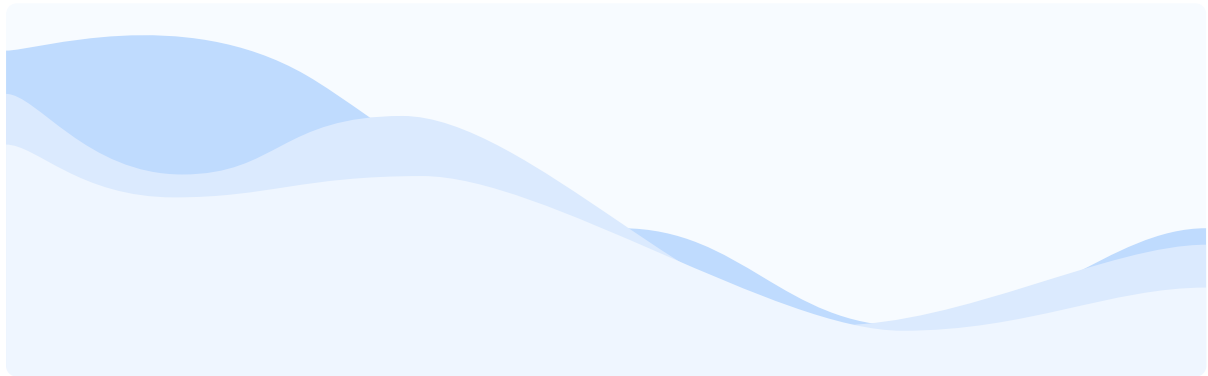
Implementing feedback tools can help Social Care managers address issues early on by creating a safe space for honest, regular conversations. This way, employees feel heard and organisations stand to reduce churn, saving time and money in recruitment costs.

Learn [how wellbeing check-ins can transform the way you retain staff](#).



Different age groups have different preferences

- ✦ Mature staff values flexibility and good management more than younger employees



The biggest difference between under 35s and older staff is that longer tenured employees value flexibility and being aligned with senior management most, while the younger generation wants to be appreciated and feel heard.

For the latter, limited flexibility came in fifth place, after factors such as low pay, issues with physical and mental health, feeling undervalued, and too much travel time. In contrast, those over 35 placed lack of flexibility as the second most influential factor, after low pay.



Q: Which of these reasons was the most influential in your decision to leave?

	● UNDER 35	● 35 AND OVER
PAY WAS TOO LOW	1	1
ISSUES WITH MY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH	2	3
I DIDN'T FEEL VALUED	3	5
TOO MUCH TRAVEL TIME	4	7
RELOCATION	5	8
NOT ENOUGH FLEXIBILITY TO CHOOSE WHEN TO WORK	5	2
POOR MANAGEMENT	7	4
NOT ENOUGH OPPORTUNITIES TO PROGRESS	8	6
NOT ENOUGH PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	9	9

Offering the flexibility people want via efficient rostering and recognising valuable employees is easy with the right tools in place.

Sona lets staff pick up the shifts they want, when they want, as soon as they're available, while also offering a Newsfeed feature, where an organisation can celebrate both big milestones and small wins in a more personal and engaging manner. This frees up time for managers to focus on staff wellbeing and gives people flexibility and ownership over overtime shifts, leading to greater employee satisfaction and improved retention.

+ Social Care employees under 35 want more recognition and to feel valued



} The third most influential reason for leavers younger than 35 was not feeling valued.

In 2022, Skills for Care published research asking Health and Social Care employers, with a turnover rate of less than 10%, what they believed contributed to their success. 86% of responders said 'celebrating the achievements of both the organisation and the individual.'

However, feeling valued at work isn't just about award ceremonies and public recognition (though these add an important feel-good factor). In fact, it's something that is most effectively done when an organisation nurtures a culture of recognition. So, how can businesses do that?

An employee recognition strategy needs to be holistic. There are many ways to identify and create opportunities to show appreciation to care staff, such as:

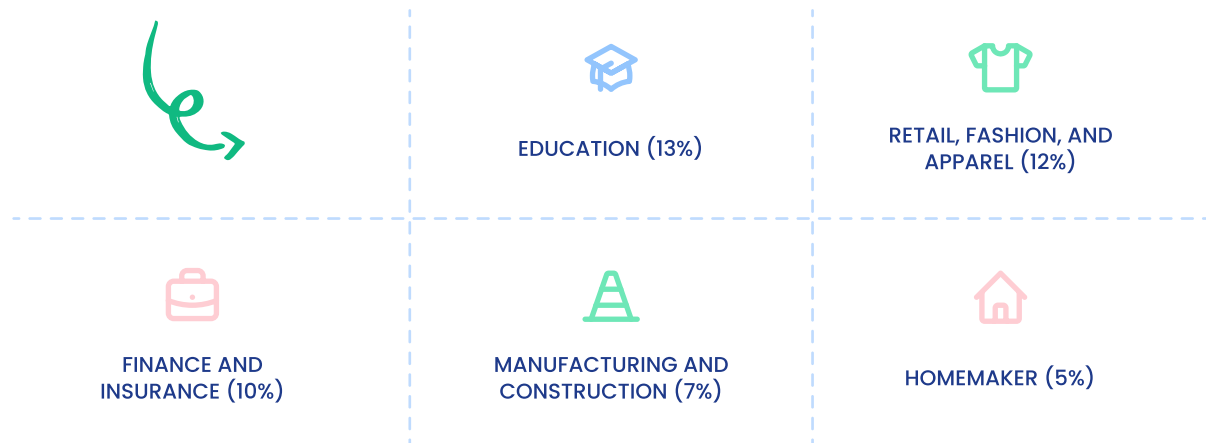
- Sharing positive feedback
- Organising morale-boosting activities
- Remembering and celebrating birthdays & work anniversaries

In our recent webinar, "Does Social Care need a new culture of recognition", we expanded the recognition conversation to include:

- Substituting a culture of complaints and inspection for a more positive, leadership-fueled environment
- Tailoring positive feedback to each person by praising them in a non-generic way
- Safeguarding communication space and time for employees to feel safe and encouraged to talk to their managers without repercussions.

Where are leavers going?

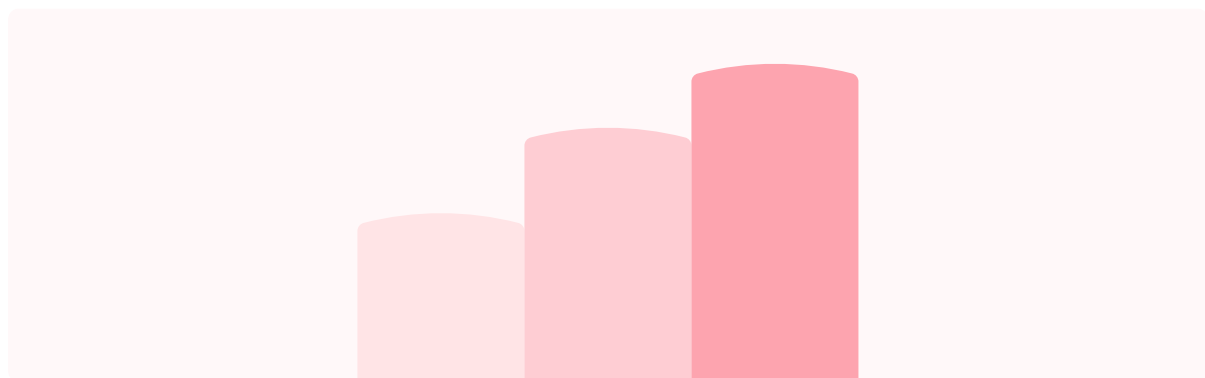
When asking those leaving, removing those switching between Health and Social Care, where are they going, these were the top five industries they're moving to:



In comparison, last year's report showed that the top five industries were:




✦ The Education sector is looking increasingly appealing



We noticed that Education made a massive jump and now sits on top of the list of new job opportunities after health and Social Care.

Why are Social Care leavers interested in the Education sector?

First, the most common reasons for moving to a job in a new sector are: 

1. Better pay	38%
2. More flexibility to choose when to work	13%
3. Better hours	11%
4. More opportunities to progress	10%
5. Less travel	9%

This rise in people deciding to move to Education could be due to the similar soft skills that are used—as well as the fact that both sectors tap into a desire to help others.

The Education sector has also been increasing the flexibility it offers to its workforce. The Department of Education set out a [Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#) focused on flexible working conditions in the UK back in 2019, which may have influenced these changes.

The Education sector still struggles with some vacancies, but it is currently enjoying lower turnover rates than in previous years.

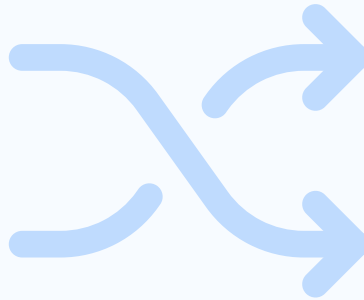
// “The school workforce continues to increase, and the teacher full-time equivalent is the highest since the school workforce census began back in 2011”, according to the School Workforce Census.

Education wages have also increased in 2022/2023 as a result of The School Teachers' Review Body's recommended [pay award of 6.5% across all pay scales](#), which was accepted in full by the Education Secretary. This award comes on top of the record pay rise in 2022/23 of 5.4% on average. Meaning that over two years, teacher pay has increased by more than 12% on average—something that the Social Care sector has [unfortunately not seen](#).

Better pay, improved flexibility, longer holidays, and better working hours are likely the leading reasons why Social Care workers now look at Education as a possibility when leaving.

Learn more: [15 top employee retention tactics for social care](#). 

+ Employees care more about flexibility than opportunities to progress



In 2022's report, once pay was removed, 'more opportunities to progress' was cited as the most influential reason for leaving. However, this year it comes almost in last place.

Additionally, when asked, most experienced staff (those with 5+ years experience) where they were going, their top answer was 'homemaker' with 17%.

Both of these answers point to one thing:

} Carers want better flexibility and an improved work-life balance.

One leading care provider who has implemented benefits related to the above is Kingsley Healthcare. They usually offer:

• Welcome bonus

• Employee Assistance Programme

• Blue Light Card offering over 15,000 discounts on holidays

Supporting and empowering staff helps increase retention rates, but it also helps improve the lives of the carers—and those receiving their care.

How are teams giving feedback and communicating?

Communication in the health and Social Care sector is essential. After all, employees deal with people all day long, including employees, residents, and the people they support. So, let's see what respondents have to say about communication.

How did they communicate feedback to managers?

- Company email was the most frequent avenue for feedback, with 30% of those surveyed using it regularly
- Face-to-face meetings were next in terms of checking-in method
- Only 14% of leavers could give feedback to their manager via a company messaging app or platform

// Like Digital Social Care points out, communication apps are great for “*keeping everyone up to date, offering shifts out rapidly, emergency information communication, and morale-boosting.*”

Delivering a high standard of care relies on effective frontline communication. Our webinar on The Big Reshuffle also supported the learning above, with most attendees mentioning informal face-to-face communication.

Learn more: [Neil Eastwood, author of Saving Social Care & CEO of Care Friends, joined Sona for a webinar discussing The Big Reshuffle](#)



Digitalisation can transform internal communications. For example, Sona's Engagement Cloud offers:



1. **Newsfeed:** where any company updates can be quickly and easily shared
2. **Standard reporting:** identifying patterns among staff, including those at risk of churning
3. **Workplace messaging:** a simple way for employees to get in touch
4. **Wellbeing check-ins:** facilitating communication to prioritise employee satisfaction

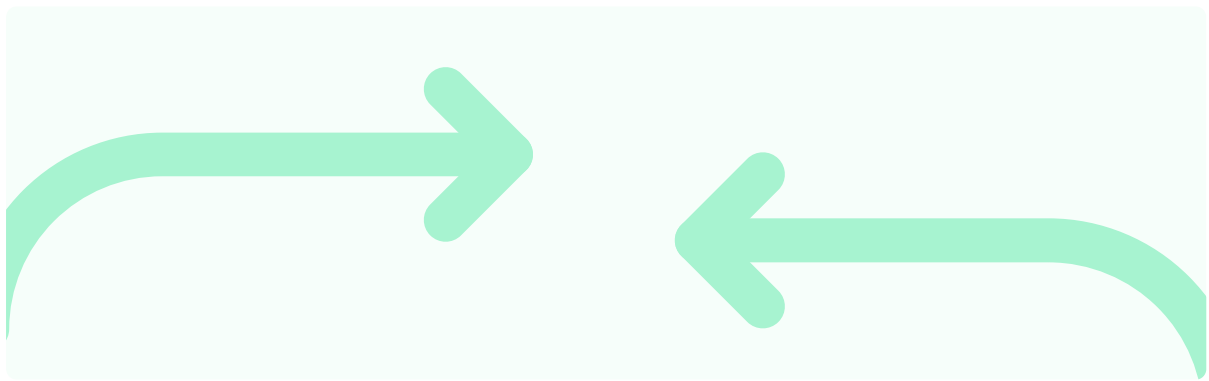
Were workers asked to stay by managers?

Last year, only 28% of leavers reported that their employer asked them to stay. However, this year almost half (46%) said this.

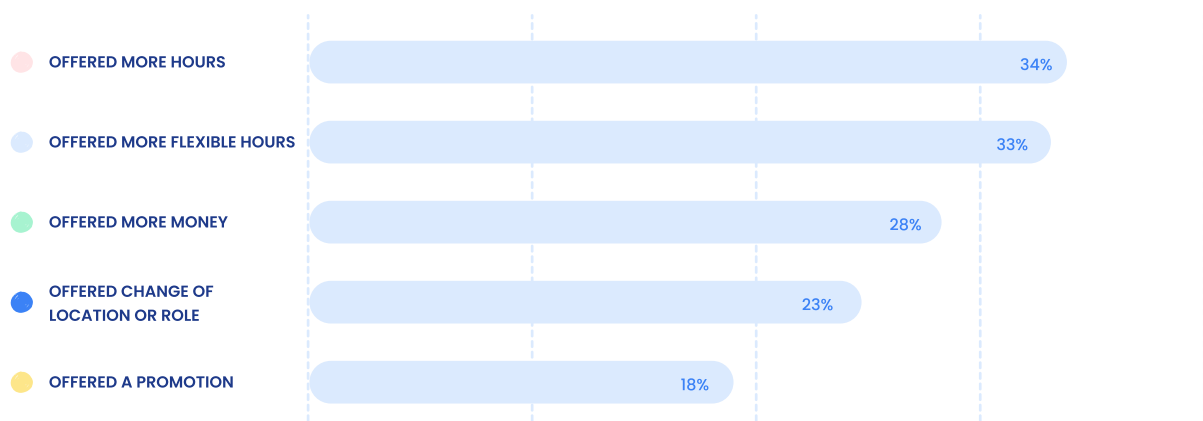
Surprisingly, given the current staff shortage and retention crisis, managers are asking only half of their leaving employees to stay. Here are some possible reasons why this could be:

- Care managers are under a lot of pressure and might not have the tools, processes, or means to ask workers to stay
- It could also indicate a misconception about the reasons that workers have for leaving—thinking that the only reason is pay can make managers feel like it is outside of their control
- Managers might feel that they simply can't offer more flexibility to their workers

+ Most popular counter offers



Out of those that were asked to stay, these were the most used counter offers:



This data is very similar to last year's and highlights the need for increased visibility of schedule and more flexibility around it for workers. Sona offers a solution which tackles both of these issues. The accessible, all-in-one app enables staff to pick extra shifts easily, using multi location features, and real-time updates.

As well as streamlining your team and producing happier employees, working with Sona can also help you reduce your dependency on agency workers—which in turn helps you better manage and allocate your resources.

Learn more: [What is 'self-scheduling', and how can it unlock greater flexibility in care workforces?](#)



Leavers aren't lost forever!

77% of leavers are open to working in Health and Social Care again in the future.

What would make leavers consider returning?

1. I'd only consider it if the pay, benefits, and working conditions were similar to my current job	28%
2. I'd only consider it if the pay, benefits, and working conditions were better than my current job	28%
3. I'd always consider it	21%
4. I'd be unlikely to consider it under any circumstances	12%
5. I'd never consider it	11%
6. Retired	>1%

Interestingly, data collected by [Harvard Business Review](#) shows that up to 20% of employees are returning to their previous employer within 36 months of having left them. These are called 'boomerang employees,' a trend which is sharply on the rise in the post-pandemic world.

At any point in time, there are certain steps organisations can take to help retain employees. Here are some top tips, based on an article above and applicable to the social care sector:

- **Align recruitment promises and employee experience:** new hires are often promised various benefits during the recruitment process, but these incentives aren't always carried through once a new employee starts work. Consistency will inspire trust and reliability among staff.
- **Don't forget post-onboarding engagement:** the one-year mark is the most common time for employees to go back to their previous jobs, so it's important to have solid engagement programmes that start after onboarding and at the start of the employee's second year.
- **Goodbye doesn't mean forever:** maintaining a positive relationship with those leaving ensures that the door is never closed to them, should they decide to come back.

Top tip: Exit Interviews can help you learn as much as you can about those leaving to improve your retention—here's a [free exit interview template](#) for you.

Don't forget that leavers already have experience and an understanding of the sector which makes onboarding and fulfilling their roles easier—and less expensive for organisations.

Built to boost retention

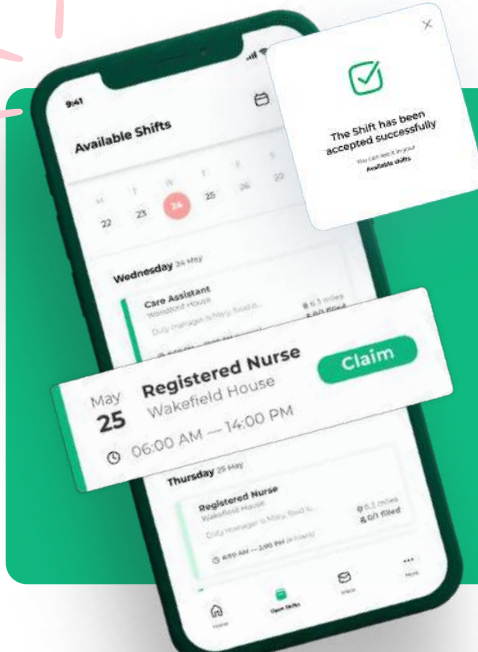
Backed by Google, Sona is an innovative workforce management company committed to helping Social Care leaders address many of the staffing and operational challenges this report covers.

Frontline staff have been underserved by technology for decades. Much of what they currently use wasn't designed with them in mind and this often results in operational inefficiency, higher costs, and frustration for staff and managers. Our mission is to change all of this with our Frontline Operating System, purpose-built for today's frontline workforces.

Sona combines the functionality you expect from any workforce management software – including scheduling, time & attendance, HR and payroll – with dedicated features to empower staff and solve the unique challenges in frontline work, all in one easy to use platform. ✨

Customers agree, including Advinia Healthcare, a top 20 UK care home operator with 36 homes and over 3,500 staff across England and Scotland. After partnering with Sona, they saw the following results:

- Easier and fairer **access to extra shifts**
- Ability to earn more through **enhanced pay rate incentives for overtime**
- **Greater flexibility** to choose when and where they work
- Up-to-date rotas instantly **available** on the app
- **Increased staff engagement** thanks to communication and feedback channels that facilitate trust, teamwork, and connection



Available Shifts

Wednesday 24 May

Care Assistant
Wakefield House
Duty manager is Mary Good...

Thursday 25 May

Registered Nurse
Wakefield House
Duty manager is Mary Good...

May 25
06:00 AM — 14:00 PM

Claim

The Shift has been accepted successfully
You can view & accept available shifts

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