

# WORKFORCE

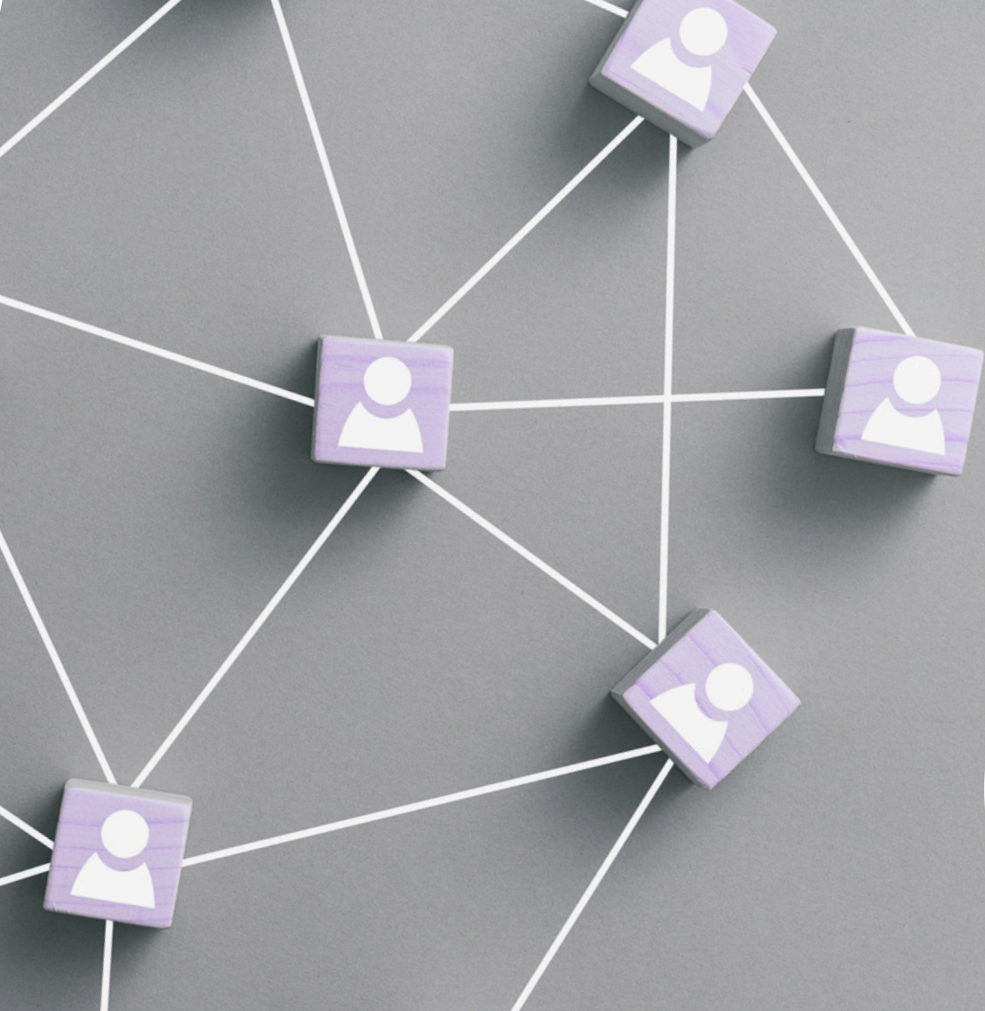


---

## WORKFORCE SURVEY

Understanding Current Workforce  
Challenges and Retention Strategies

**OCTOBER 2025**



## Workforce Survey October 2025



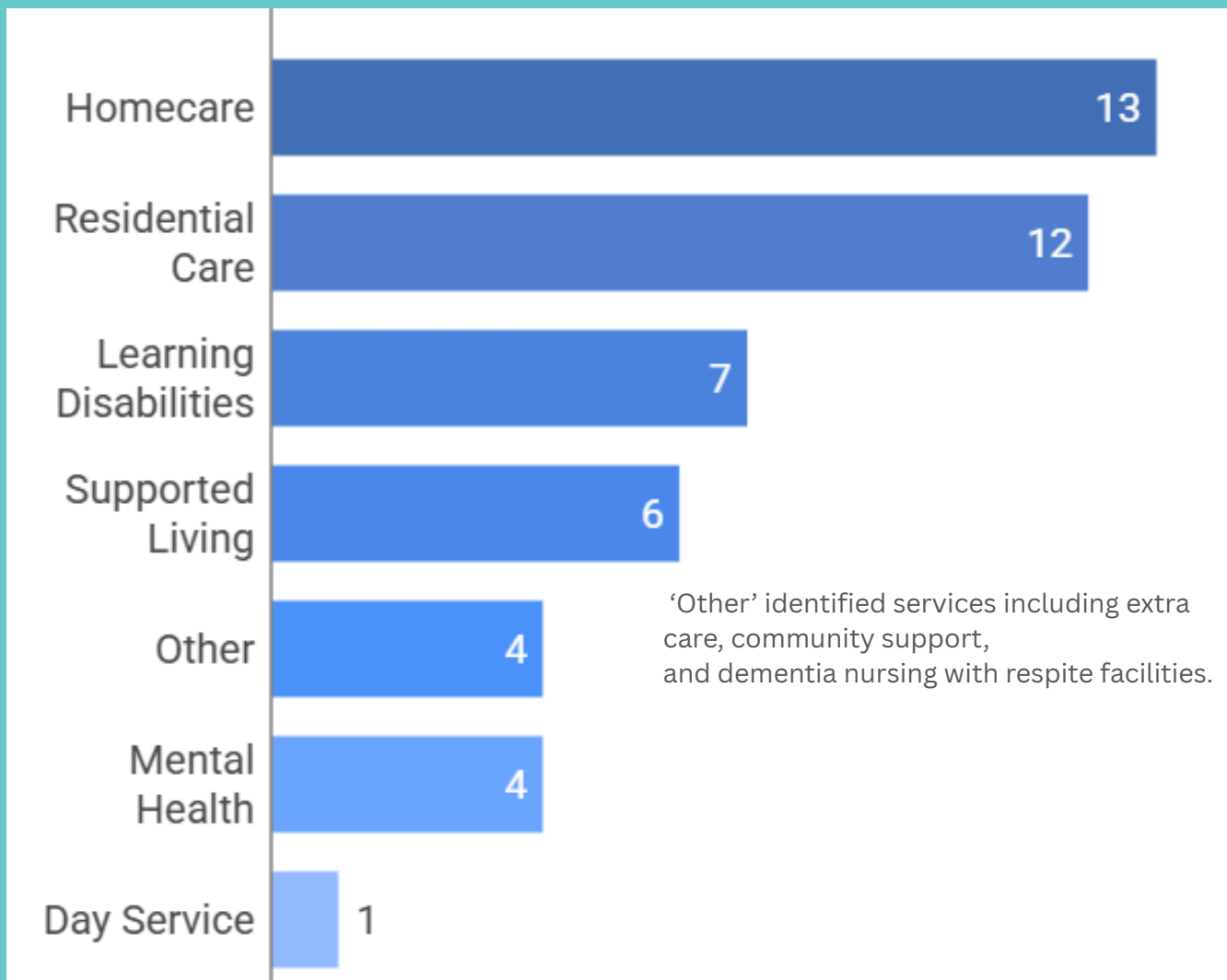
As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in the Suffolk care sector, Care Development East carried out the Workforce Information Survey to better understand the real challenges, experiences, and needs of those working across local care services.

Our findings closely reflect the themes highlighted in Skills for Care's recently published State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England report, reinforcing the shared challenges and opportunities across the wider sector. The insights gathered provide a valuable snapshot of the Suffolk care workforce today.

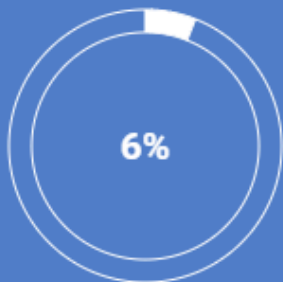
# Type of Service



We received responses from a range of service providers, representing various sectors of Health and Social Care

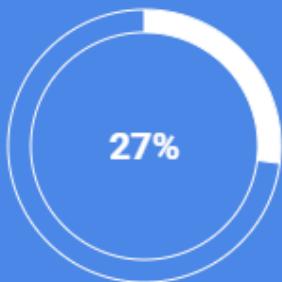


# Size of Organisation



**Micro (fewer than 10 employees)**

Two companies have fewer than 10 employees.



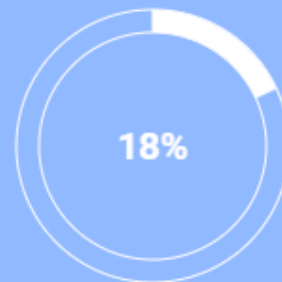
**Small (10-49 employees)**

Nine companies have between 10 and 49 employees.



**Medium (50-249)**

Eleven companies have between 50 and 249 employees.



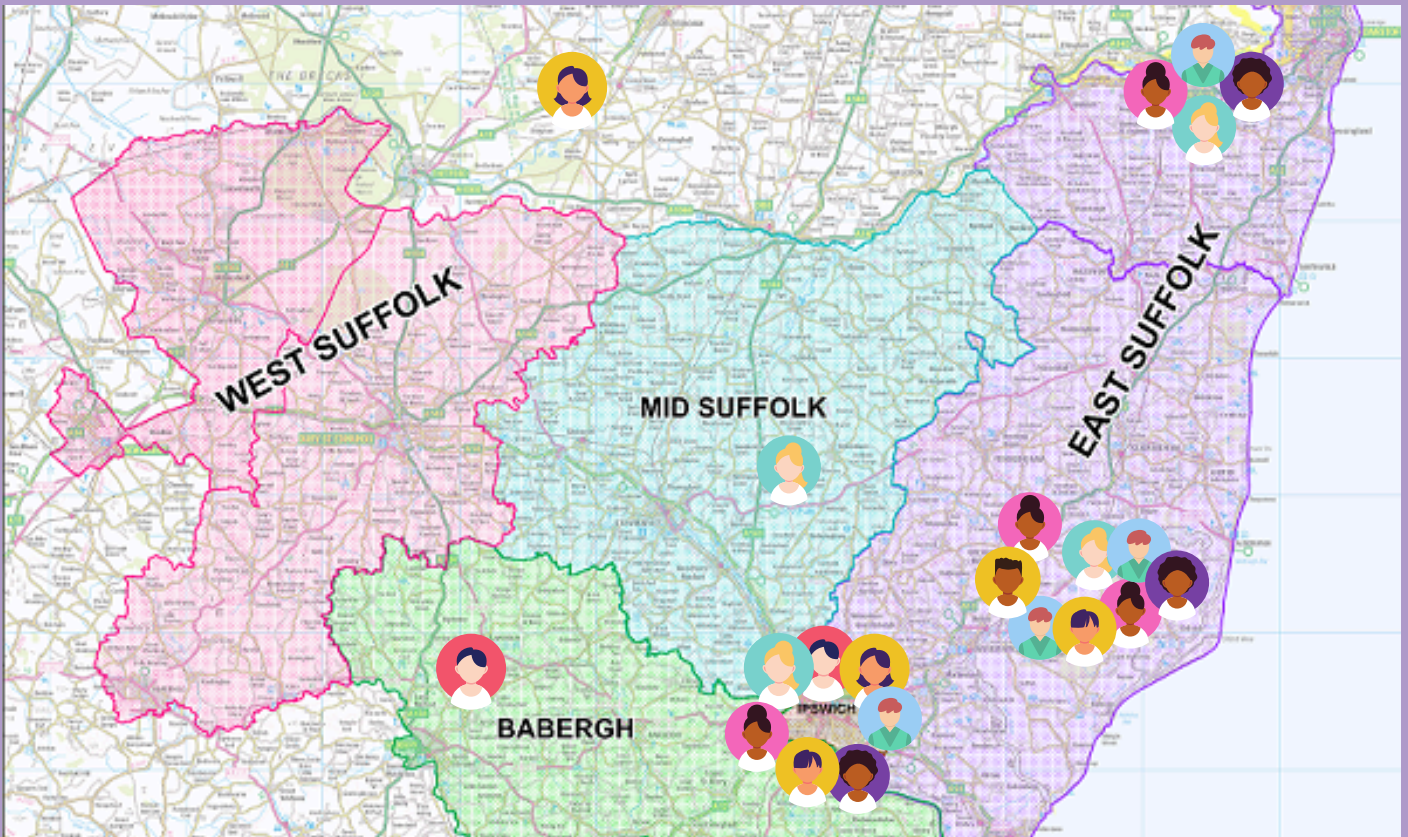
**Large (250+)**

Six companies have 250 or more employees.

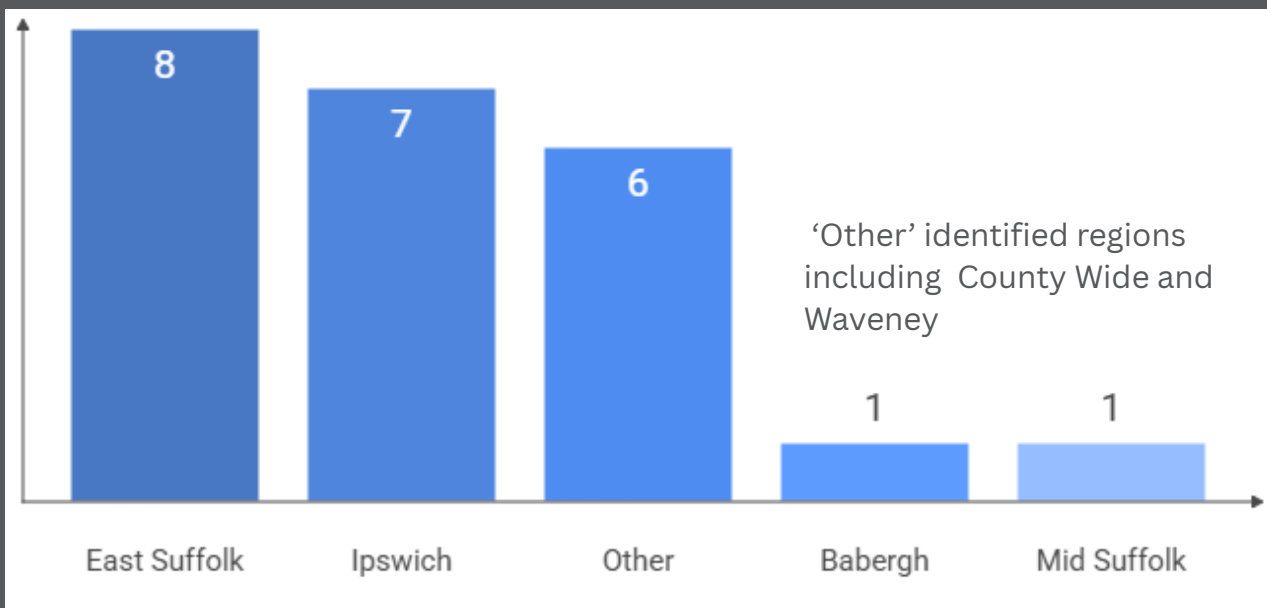


Survey responses were predominantly provided by representatives of small and medium-sized organisations.

# Service Provider Location



To date, service providers from Ipswich and East Suffolk make up the majority of respondents, with West Suffolk yet to be represented.



# Number of FTE staff and current vacancies

Business Size	Total Vacancies	Number of Organisations	Average Vacancies per Organisation
Micro (<10 Employees)	2	2	1.0
Small (10-49 Employees)	11	9	1.2
Medium (50-249 Employees)	41	9	4.6
Large (250+ Employees)	124	5	24.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7.1</b>

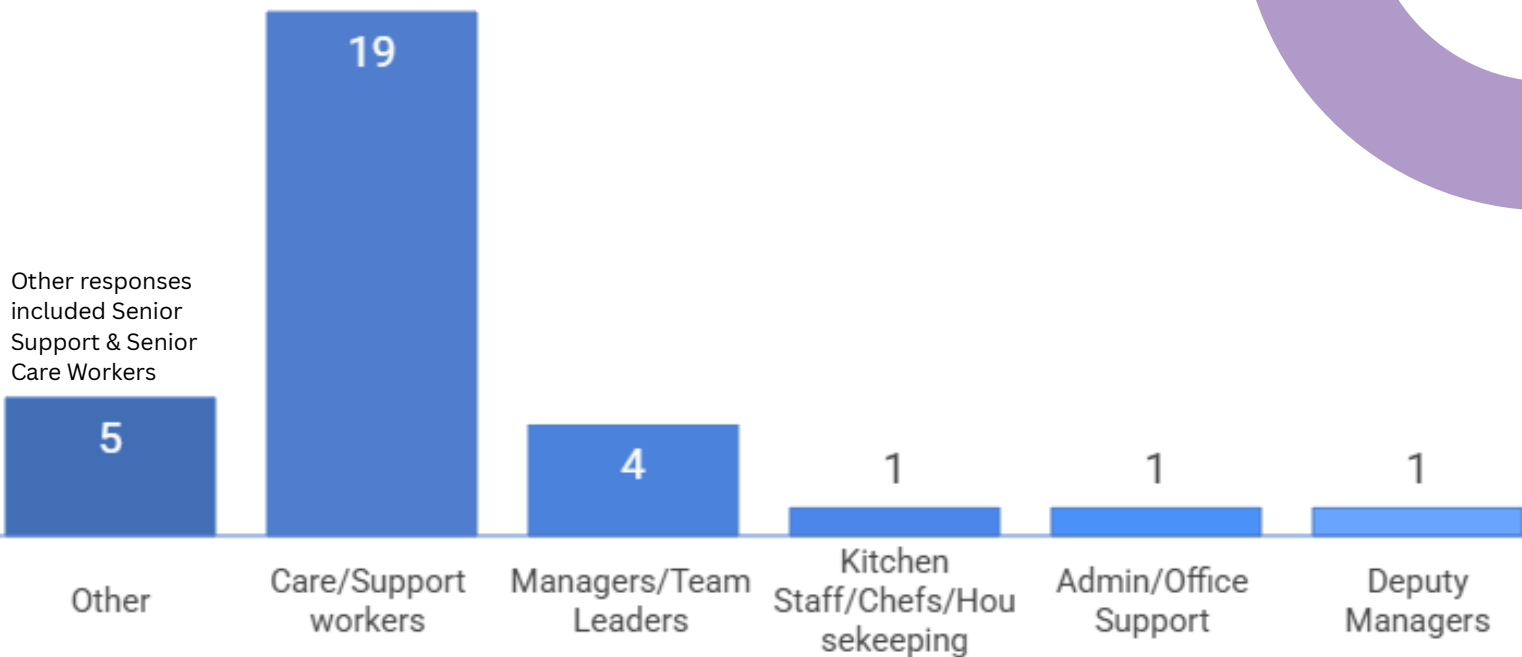
- As would be expected, vacancies increase sharply with organization size.
- Large firms account for ~70% of all vacancies.
- Medium-sized businesses also have notable shortages (avg. 4-5 per firm).
- Micro and small firms report fewer vacancies both in total and per firm.



# Roles Where Recruitment Is Most Challenging

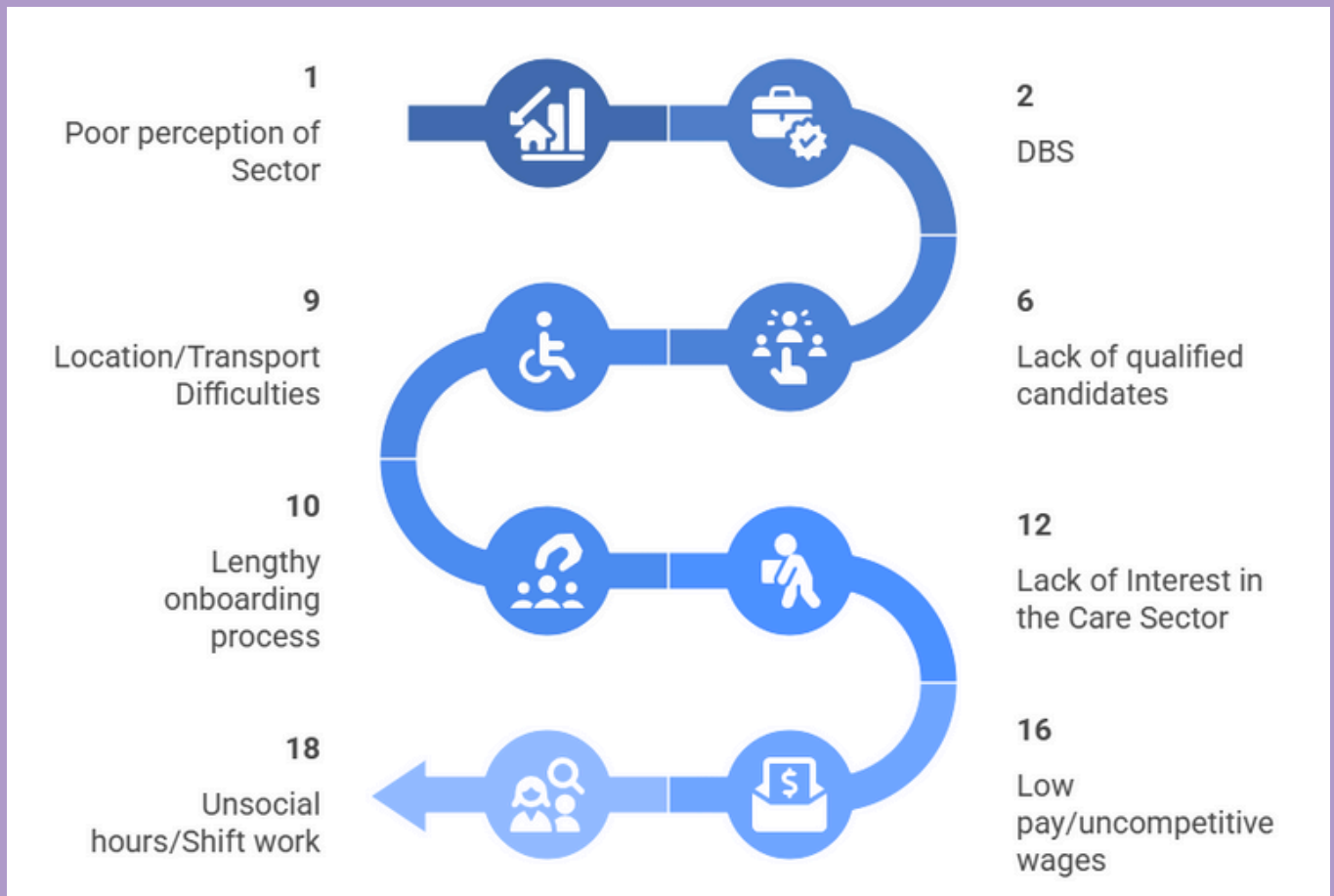


Workers



When asked which roles they were most struggling to fill, respondents consistently reported that carer and support worker roles were the most challenging positions to recruit for.

# Key Barriers to Recruitment



- There appears to be many factors that prevent recruitment into the care sector. **Lack of interest** in the sector, **transport & location difficulties**, and the perception of **unsociable hours**, and **low remuneration** are the main themes.
- Some mentioned the number of **overseas** applicants, together with sponsorship issues as a barrier to effective recruitment.
- **Our findings are in line with those in recent Skills for Care, State of the Adult Social Care report.**

# Recruitment Strategies

We enquired as to which strategy the providers chose to follow:

- All the respondents used a variety of methods for recruitment.
- The **most popular** method was advertising via **Social media** platforms.
- **Jobs fairs** and **Local events, partnerships with colleges/universities** and **employee referral schemes** are equally utilised resources for recruitment.
- Some respondents use **recruitment agencies**, and **overseas** recruitment to help fill their vacancies.
- Other platforms mentioned included **Indeed**, and **word of mouth**.



## Staff Retention

When asked how they would rate their current staff retention, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

- **44.44%** rated the employment retention at their organisation as **VERY GOOD**
- **40.74%** rated the employment retention at their organisation as **GOOD**
- **7.41%** rated the employment retention at their organisation as **FAIR**
- **7.41%** rated the employment retention at their organisation as **POOR**
- **0%** rated the employment retention at their organisation as **VERY POOR**

# Effective Practice for

# Employment Retention



We asked for the providers thoughts on the most **effective methods** for **retaining staff** and sustaining an **effective work force**.

- The survey highlights that the respondents most value a **positive workplace culture** (85%) and **strong induction and support** (81%).
- Closely followed by **regular supervision and appraisals** (74%).
- **Competitive pay** (67%) and **clear career progression** (56%) remain important.
- Factors like **flexible working** arrangements (44%) and **recognition schemes** (41%) also play a meaningful role in shaping a supportive and engaging work environment.



# Additional Insights on Workforce Challenges and Support Needs



In response to an open-ended question, employers shared further reflections on the workforce challenges they face and the types of support that would be most valuable. Their comments highlight a range of ongoing issues, including recruitment costs, staff retention, workforce demographics, diversity, and employee wellbeing. The feedback below provides qualitative context to the quantitative findings, offering direct insights into the experiences and priorities of local care providers.

**Recruitment Costs:** Employers are seeking reduced or subsidised costs for advertising vacancies on major job platforms to make recruitment more affordable.

**Staff Retention and Limited Hours:** Difficulty retaining good staff due to insufficient contracted hours and limited access to clients, particularly for providers not on the SCC framework.

**Employee Welfare and Engagement:** Positive feedback where employers are proactive in supporting staff wellbeing and providing opportunities for input and communication.

**Aging Workforce and Younger Recruitment:** Concern about an older workforce profile and the need to attract, recruit, and retain younger staff to ensure sustainability.

- It would be beneficial for a reduced cost in advertising care worker vacancies with popular platforms, such as Indeed.
- We seem to have difficulties in recruiting staff with a Full UK driving licence.
- We struggle to retain good staff who would have loved to continue with us, because we do not have enough hours to keep them. We are not on SCC framework for adult care, so it is a great struggle to get clients.
- There is a big challenge in recruitment at the moment, we are very lucky to have sponsorship licence. 99% of the applicants require sponsorship or currently on post graduate visa or dependent. Recruitment is not very easy at the moment.
- How to support a diverse workforce.

- We have an aging workforce. We are actively looking at any opportunity to recruit and retain younger staff.
- I understand some of my colleagues are afraid of another changes to Visas and Certificates of Sponsorship and some of them were looking into relocating to Canada as there is no need for COS and they can legally work and live.
- The remuneration in the sector remains low given the working hours and type of work. local authorities do not pay for bank holiday but we pay time and half for bank holidays in order to retain staff. Travel and waiting time also remain a cost, further eroding our margins
- To be fair, Get Set are very much a company who are always looking at Employee Welfare and we have many opportunities to add what we would like in surveys + meetings.

# Survey Summary



This survey captures care providers' perspectives on workforce challenges and support needs. Key themes include recruitment difficulties, staff retention, workforce demographics, employee wellbeing, and diversity. Respondents also highlighted effective practices already in place, offering a clear snapshot of both pressures and opportunities across the sector.

Employers reported significant recruitment and retention challenges across the care sector. A key barrier to recruitment is the shortage of applicants with a Full UK driving licence, compounded by geographical mismatches between applicant locations (e.g., Ipswich) and service needs in West and North Suffolk.

Many applicants require visa sponsorship, and ongoing uncertainty around Visa and Certificate of Sponsorship (COS) regulations has created additional anxiety and instability within the workforce.

Retention remains difficult due to low remuneration relative to the demanding nature of the work, as well as limited client hours for some providers not on the SCC adult care framework.

Local authorities do not fund bank holiday pay—although some employers offer enhanced rates to maintain staff morale.

Financial pressures are intensified by the high cost of recruitment advertising on platforms such as Indeed, with providers expressing a need for reduced or subsidised advertising options. Several employers highlighted the importance of staff wellbeing, citing initiatives such as regular meetings and surveys to promote engagement.

Overall, organisations would benefit from support to stabilise visa and sponsorship processes, attract and retain younger and more diverse workers, and strengthen financial sustainability through improved access to clients and affordable recruitment channels.

# About: Care Development East

Care Development East is dedicated to promoting excellence across the social care and health workforce in the east of England. We provide impartial advice, support, guidance and information to the sector operating as an independent, non-profit making organisation. We work with a range of organisations and partners to deliver a high quality service, develop new initiatives, improve access to training, and to promote rewarding careers in care.



## Our Contact



### Phone :

01449 720400



### Address :

Unit 9 Norfolk House,  
Williamsport Road,  
Lion Barn Industrial Estate,  
Needham Market, Suffolk.  
IP6 8RW



### Website :

[www.caredevelopmenteast.co.uk](http://www.caredevelopmenteast.co.uk)

### Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/care-development-east-29945087503>

### LinkedIn:

[www.linkedin.com/company/care-development-east](http://www.linkedin.com/company/care-development-east)

