



Catalyst Care Group

White Paper Publication

2024

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INTRODUCTION

This year's White Paper publication presents the results from the second annual Catalyst Care Group survey conducted in 2024. The survey provides insights from 150+ respondents, including people and families receiving care, support workers, social workers and commissioners, describing the current state of care in the UK.

In our second publication, we explore the current state of care, highlighting both the progress made and the remaining challenges. While there have been improvements over the past year, significant gaps remain. Building the right support is essential to address immediate needs and empower people to participate fully and meaningfully in society.

The publication also highlights the need for stronger community-based services, which are essential for a more compassionate and inclusive care model. This will help to encourage independence and personal growth, helping to reduce reliance on restrictive practices and institutional care. Addressing system fragmentation is key to creating a care system built on heart, compassion, and unity, ensuring everyone receives the support they deserve.

Are health and social care services improving?

Is there progress in retention rates?

Are we moving towards a better state of care?



Demographics

Presents information on survey participants, along with details on response numbers and rates.



Family feedback

Covers the type, location, and quality of service delivery, along with the challenges faced regarding the health and social care services provided.



Carers and healthcare staff responses

Highlights their current experiences, challenges, and the advantages of working within health and social care.



Commissioners and local authorities

Shares insights on personal experiences, ongoing challenges, and service gaps within the health and social care sector.



EXPERT COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

Throughout the publication, we have added commentary and expert opinion from health and social care practitioners and professionals. We are deeply grateful for their contribution.



**Christopher
Watson**

Founder of Self Directed
Futures and Chair of the
SDS Network England



The findings from the Catalyst Care Group survey highlight significant challenges and priorities in social care commissioning, aligning closely with themes in recent sector reports such as those from Skills for Care and the Local Government Association (LGA). Central to the responses is a pressing need for increased funding and integrated, person-centred approaches that bridge gaps between health, social care, and community resources. Commissioners pointed to funding constraints and fragmented service systems as persistent barriers that often lead to reactive care, delayed discharges, and hospital readmissions—issues frequently noted in broader social care analyses (Skills for Care, 2023; Local Government Association, 2022; Ham, 2023).

Leadership support and cross-sector collaboration also emerged as critical priorities, reflecting sector-wide calls for strengthened multidisciplinary partnerships to improve outcomes and system efficiency. Echoing recent discussions in social care policy, commissioners noted that the lack of flexible, purpose-built housing severely limits options for individuals with complex needs, underscoring the importance of investment in adaptable accommodation to foster community integration (Department of Health and Social Care, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings reaffirm the workforce challenges, including high vacancy rates and insufficient training, underscored in national reports. Addressing these challenges will require coordinated policy shifts to support fair wages, enhanced training, and workforce stability—core recommendations that align with broader social care papers calling for a resilient, well-supported care workforce (Skills for Care, 2023; Local Government Association, 2022).

EXPERT COMMENTS AND REVIEWS



**Ashleigh
Fox**

Transforming Care
Director



The Catalyst Care Group's 2024 White Paper is more than a document - it's a blueprint for understanding the current reality of the care sector and the evolving needs of those with a learning disability and/or autism.

It's a heartfelt acknowledgment of the incredible work being done across the sector, but it also paints a clear picture of the challenges we still face. This paper isn't just about highlighting issues; it's about offering practical insights and solutions that can guide us towards a more inclusive and effective care ecosystem.

Through extensive research and collaboration, the White Paper uncovers key insights into the LD and autism care landscape. Its focus is on how we can better enhance community-based support, and prioritise workforce wellbeing to improve outcomes. These insights reflect the complexities of the care ecosystem and provide a roadmap for how services can be adapted to meet the unique needs of individuals and their families. It's about making sure that every part of the system works together seamlessly to provide the best possible care.

This White Paper also focuses on actionable insights; it empowers us to work collectively towards a future where everyone with LD and autism receives the support they need to lead empowered, dignified lives.

Thank you to all participants for your individual contribution – your voice matters, and we hope this paper serves to create insight and change.

About Catalyst Care Group

Catalyst Care Group is a family of organisations that offer CQC-regulated, integrated care and support and community transition services.

We are committed to building the right support for people in the UK by encouraging dialogue and shifting perspectives across the sector. Our goal is to support people in moving out of long-stay institutional care and strengthen community resources to meet emerging needs. For people living with a learning disability, autism, and/or mental health needs, holistic care-at-home should always be the first choice. We also strive to ensure equal access to care and actively involve people in decision-making processes.

We partner with people who share our passion for transforming health and social care. At the heart of our organisational culture are the values of Family, Impact, and Teaming, which inspire us to come together and support a care model that promotes human rights.

The journey toward excellence is about learning, growing, and continuously improving as we adapt to changes within our organisation, led by the health and social care landscape.



FAMILY/ INDIVIDUAL INSIGHTS

The survey gathered responses and experiences from people and families accessing health and social care services across the UK. The data analysis provides an overview of service quality and highlights areas for improvement to ensure inclusive and accessible care for all. The findings also explore the care environments, challenges faced, and the positive outcomes experienced by those receiving care and their families in both private and public sectors.

Hospital Admissions with / without a Formal Mental Health Diagnosis

Based on the responses, **20%** of participants received care in a hospital, while **80%** experienced community-based care, including at-home support and care homes. Additionally, **40%** of respondents reported being admitted without a formal mental health diagnosis, compared to **60%** who had been admitted with a diagnosis.

Similarly, **60%** of respondents indicated they were not adequately informed about the admission process and follow-up discharge plans, while only **20%** felt they received appropriate information.

Assessment Challenges

In England, the waiting times for mental health diagnoses are a significant concern, with many people facing delays in accessing the support they need. Reports indicate that about **40%** of people waiting for mental health support may find themselves **relying on emergency or crisis services** due to the lack of timely support. This situation emphasises the pressing need for improvements in mental health services to ensure timely assessments and appropriate care for everyone.

Also, it's estimated that up to **1.2 million autistic people and 2.2 million people with ADHD** live in England, making it more crucial than ever to provide the right support. As awareness and understanding of neurodiversity continue to grow, many are seeking assessments for autism and ADHD, reflecting a **rising demand for care and understanding**.

Based on our responses, **half of our participants** experienced **assessment challenges** which indicates that timely assessment for mental health remains an ongoing issue.

Understanding the Mental Health Act

The survey examined how well respondents were informed about the provisions outlined in the Mental Health Act 1983.

In analysing the results, we discovered that only **40%** of respondents were **aware of their rights under the Mental Health Act**, while 60% reported having limited or minimal understanding of its provisions outlined in the Mental Health Act 1983.

If you'd like to learn more about the specifics of the Mental Health Act and its implications, you can explore our [Resource Page](#) available online.

We further explored the distance of out-of-area placements from people's communities. Over 60% reported a distance within 50 miles of their local area, while 30% were placed within 300 miles.

Impact of Distance from Home

When asked about the impact of being placed far from home, respondents expressed **feelings of isolation and the need to start over in building new connections**. This highlights the emotional impact that distance can have on people and their families, particularly in creating barriers to maintaining existing relationships and support systems.



I felt isolated and starting all over again to build connection."

Compassion, Dignity, and Respect

According to the survey, none of the respondents indicated that they or their loved ones consistently felt treated with compassion, dignity, and respect during their care experience. This suggests that respondents may not have always felt fully acknowledged in terms of emotional or personal needs.

Involvement in Care Decisions

The survey also reflected that **40%** of respondents felt actively involved in decisions about their or their relative's care, while **60%** expressed feeling less involved. This highlights a need to ensure **better communication and engagement with families** to help them feel more included in the decision-making process.

Effectiveness of Treatment Plans

Responses regarding treatment plans were split, with half of the participants indicating that the treatment met their or their loved one's needs and improved overall well-being, while the other half felt the outcomes may not have fully addressed their expectations. This feedback points to the importance of individualising care plans to align more closely with people's personal needs and goals.



Recovered from mental health crisis and now engaging in lots of activities - quality of life greatly improved."

Consideration of Personal History and Cultural Needs

The survey revealed that **50%** of people/families receiving care felt their or their loved one's care plan adequately considered their past trauma and history, while the other half expressed concerns that these important aspects were overlooked. Additionally, only **33.3%** believed their ethnic, cultural, and race-related needs were considered, indicating a significant gap in cultural sensitivity within care planning.

Regular Review and Adaptation of Care Plans

All people/families receiving care felt that their care plans were not regularly reviewed or adjusted based on evolving needs. This absence of ongoing assessment could hinder the effectiveness of the support provided, highlighting the importance of continuous evaluation to ensure care remains relevant and effective.

Experiences of Delayed Discharge

25% of people/families receiving care reported facing delayed discharges, while 50% did not experience this issue. Delayed discharges can complicate transitions back into community settings, potentially impacting recovery and people's overall well-being.

Consequences of Delayed Discharge

All respondents reported experiencing anxiety and depression as direct consequences of delayed discharge. Similarly, they also indicated feelings of isolation stemming from this delay. These emotional impacts highlight how prolonged hospital stays can significantly affect mental health and social well-being.

Views on Bespoke Care and Support

When asked about their experience of bespoke care and support, all people/families receiving care expressed high levels of satisfaction, indicating that the personalised care provided met their needs effectively. This positive feedback suggests that tailored approaches to care can significantly enhance the overall experience for people and their families.

Main Barriers Faced

Respondents identified a lack of community provision as the primary barrier encountered during their care journey. This indicates that insufficient local resources may contribute to challenges faced by people and their families, particularly in accessing necessary support.

Views on Complex Support at Home

Only **20%** of people/families receiving care reported having received bespoke support at home, while a significant **80%** indicated they had not. This disparity suggests that many families may be missing out on valuable in-home support that could enhance their overall care experience and well-being.

Experience with Support Workers/Nurses

People/families receiving care shared that their initial experience with support workers and nurses in the home was challenging, but they ultimately found it worthwhile. This reflects a common sentiment among families who may initially struggle with the transition to receiving in-home care but go on to recognise the long-term benefits as relationships develop and support systems become more integrated into their daily lives.



It was good for the short period of time while it lasted. I was dealing with a lot of dark things in my mind and had experienced a lot of horrible trauma so when I was at home I just wanted to be left alone and remember cancelling some appointments because of this. Home was my safe place and I didn't want to talk too much about things when I was at home. I did feel sometimes they were in a rush and never wanted to get too comfortable and I found it more relaxing when I visited their centre instead of my home. It's just a matter of opinions for this question but I did feel like I was able to open up more when I visited their centre for my therapy sessions instead of at home as I didn't really want my family to hear what I was talking about."

Impact on Quality of Life

All people/families receiving care reported improvements in their quality of life as a result of receiving support services. Many indicated that they recovered from mental health crises and are now engaging in various activities, significantly enhancing their overall well-being. This underscores the positive role that community care can play in supporting mental health recovery and promoting active lifestyles.

Independence and Support Hours

Despite the improvements in quality of life, all respondents noted that they did not achieve a level of independence that would allow for reduced hours of support. This indicates that while care services have been beneficial, there may still be a need for ongoing support to maintain stability and progress.

Recommendations for Improving Family Experience

People/families receiving care provided several recommendations to improve experiences with care services:



Training for Staff

100% emphasized the need for more highly trained staff, suggesting that enhanced training could lead to better care quality.



Community Capacity

75% advocated for further investment in community resources to improve support systems.



Social Inclusion

50% highlighted the importance of more opportunities for social inclusion to foster community connections.



Tailored Care Plans

75% suggested the development of more personalised care plans to meet individual needs more effectively.



Communication

100% called for better communication between families and care providers, indicating that clear, ongoing dialogue is essential for effective care.



Be more person centred. Understand the trauma that the individual has experienced and work more on facing the trauma and dealing with it head on to help the individual learn how to cope with the trauma. The truth is always the best way forward and sugar coating things never work they make things worse in the long run. Also do not categorise an individual for their experience / trauma. The word "vulnerable" is not a word I agree with when talking about mental health and comes across very patronising."

Comparison 2023/24

How has care evolved to better meet people's needs?

The comparison of 2023 and 2024 results showcases modest improvements in care services. However, fundamental aspects remain unchanged, including the proportion of people adequately informed about their rights under the Mental Health Act.

The Mental Health Act is currently under review, and we hope this will improve the delivery of mental health services, and ensure people's voices are truly heard.

The new Mental Health Bill responds to the evolving understanding of mental health conditions, acknowledging that outdated laws no longer meet people's needs. Modernising the Bill aims to reform the existing Mental Health Act, improving individual experiences and mental health outcomes while strengthening protections for people, staff, and the public.

It requires each person to have a personalised care and treatment plan outlining the steps to support their recovery and progress toward discharge. The Bill also gives people the right to appoint representatives and access advocacy services while detained. These reforms are designed to improve individual/family engagement, ensure continuity of care, and support a smoother journey toward recovery and discharge.

Similarly, the number of people reporting admission to a mental health hospital without a formal diagnosis, as well as those not adequately informed about the admission process and follow-up discharge plans, remains the same as last year.

When it's time to leave a hospital or care facility, it's essential for people to be informed of their rights. This helps ensure they receive the necessary support and are treated with dignity and respect during the discharge process and beyond.

SUPPORT WORKERS

Over the past twelve months, the adult social care workforce capacity has reached its highest recorded level, with **notable reductions in both vacancy and turnover rates**, as well as progress toward a more balanced gender representation. However, a significant number of vacancies remain unfilled each day, and the **sector's vacancy rate** continues to be nearly **three times higher than** that of the wider economy.

While the growth in the workforce is encouraging, we still need to work on the persistent challenges in overcoming staffing shortages in adult social care.

According to the latest State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England 2024 report by Skills for Care, the adult social care workforce still faces persistent gaps. However, unlike last year, there is now a clear and encouraging reason for optimism, signaling positive change within the sector.

Yearly Trends in Adult Social Care:

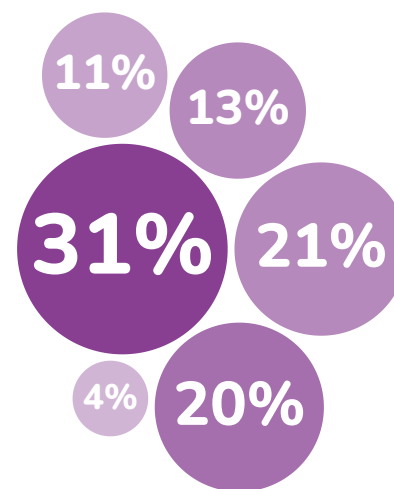
2022/23 to 2023/24

- The overall number of filled positions in adult social care increased by **70,000 or 4.2%**, across all sectors.
- In the **independent sector**, filled posts **increased by 5.0%**, primarily due to a 7.5% increase (42,000 positions) in domiciliary care services.
- **Local authorities** saw an overall increase of **3.0%** in filled posts, particularly in community care services, which increased by 3.9% (2,800 posts).
- Among specific job roles, **social worker positions** saw the most significant increase, with 1,800 additional filled posts (7.7%), followed by **care workers**, whose numbers increased by 48,000 (5.6%).

- The number of filled positions for personal assistants decreased by 7,000, marking a decline of 5.4%, the largest decrease among job roles.

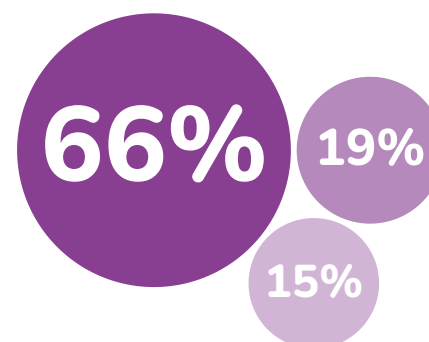
Main Care Services

In 2024, the majority of respondents were employed in people's homes (31%) and supported living environments (21%), with a notable percentage (20.3%) also working in office settings. Additional work environments included residential homes, hospitals, and domiciliary care, with some professionals engaging in multiple settings, such as community care or hybrid roles.



- Client/Individuals own home: **31%**
- Supported living: **21%**
- Office: **20%**
- Domiciliary care: **13%**
- Hospital: **4%**
- Other: **13%**

Based on the responses, most support workers and healthcare professionals responding to our survey work with adults, while a smaller percentage provide support to children and young people.



- 0-18: **19%**
- 16-25: **15%**
- 18-65: **66%**

The Motivation Behind the Profession

The survey responses reveal **profound personal motivations** for pursuing a career in the care sector, highlighting themes such as passion, a commitment to making a meaningful impact, and individual experiences. Below is a summary of the key reasons provided:



Passion for Care:

Many respondents articulated a profound personal passion for assisting others, driven by empathy, compassion, and an inherent commitment to supporting people.



Desire to Make a Difference:

A common sentiment expressed was the aspiration to effect meaningful change in people's lives, particularly those encountering challenging circumstances.



Personal Experiences:

Several respondents referenced personal or family experiences related to care, such as providing support to family members during illness or observing inadequate treatment of loved ones.



Rewarding Career:

Many respondents find their work both challenging and rewarding. They feel satisfaction from directly interacting with and helping others, improving their quality of life.



Career Change & Growth:

Additionally, many respondents noted their transition into the care sector from other careers or personal vocations, discovering a sense of fulfillment in supporting others. Some have advanced into leadership positions to enhance their impact within the field.



Influence of Family:

Several respondents were inspired by family members working in care or had experiences with families who needed care, which spurred their own passion for making a positive difference in people's lives.



It was a calling for me. I love working with people and found that I was good with people we support and progressed to leadership to make more of an impact."



I found my passion when I was supporting my grandmother and my mother during their illnesses. Seeing them smile and the impact I made by just listening, supporting and sitting with a cup of tea made me rethink my journey and start working in care."



To make an impact in people's development both physically and mentally."

Comparison 2023/24

In the 2023 survey, most health and care professionals highlighted their motivation to positively impact lives, finding fulfillment in supporting people with complex care needs and seeing improvements in well-being.

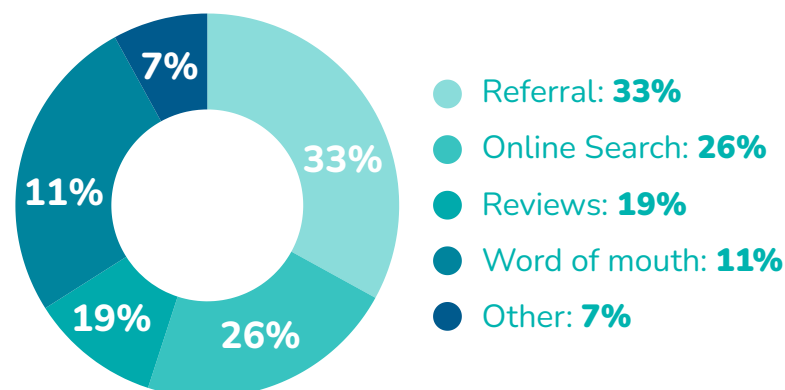
Personal experiences, such as **caring for loved ones and a deep commitment to compassionate care**, were common motivators.

Similarly, 2024 responses continued to emphasised a **passion for making a meaningful difference**, with a greater focus on personal satisfaction and experiences like supporting loved ones. There was also increased interest in **career development and leadership opportunities**, reflecting a desire to expand their impact, which is encouraging.

Both years reveal a **strong commitment** to the care profession, driven by personal values and a heartfelt dedication to improving the lives of people in need.

How do you select the organisation/care provider for which you work?

Referrals and word-of-mouth recommendations are the primary factors influencing the selection of employers.



Support Workers' Challenges



Time Constraints in Delivering Person-Centred Care:

Many respondents feel they lack sufficient time to provide the quality of care required, particularly for people with higher level physical and mental health needs. This leads to frustration and burnout, as support workers are unable to offer the compassion and attention they know is necessary.



Lack of Leadership Support:

Nearly 19% of respondents reported inadequate support from leadership. This creates a sense of isolation and low morale, leaving workers without the guidance or resources to navigate challenges or advance in their careers.



Insufficient Training:

Supporting people with higher levels of need requires expertise; however, some carers feel underprepared due to a lack of training, which contributes to feelings of overwhelm.

Comparison 2023/24

In 2023, key challenges in the care sector included heavy caseloads (25.4%), lack of leadership support (34.1%), and insufficient wellbeing support (31.2%). Additionally, 29.0% of respondents cited not having enough time for person-centred care. Other concerns included inconsistent care, poor communication, and limited resources.

By 2024, the main issues had shifted, with 22.2% highlighting the complexity of supporting people with multiple needs and insufficient time for person-centered care. Although fewer respondents reported lack of training as a challenge, new concerns such as racism, funding shortages, and feeling overlooked, particularly related to racial issues, gained prominence.

While both years show ongoing challenges in leadership support and personalised care, the 2024 survey reflects a growing focus on diversity and systemic challenges within the sector.

Positive Experiences

What has had the most positive impact on your quality of work from your employer?

The factors contributing most positively to the quality of work, as reported by care workers, include:



The Supportive Nature of the Employer

Many respondents emphasised the importance of having a supportive employer who provides support, understanding, and recognition.



Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements, allowing for a healthy work-life balance, were identified as a significant benefit.



A Collaborative Work Environment

Collaboration within multidisciplinary teams (MDT), transparency, and constructive feedback contributed to improved work quality.



Opportunities for Growth

Many valued the opportunity to grow personally and professionally, seeing their aspirations realised with support from their leaders and a sense of being part of a larger purpose.



Training and Development

Investment in staff training, continuous professional development, and coaching were frequently cited as key factors that enhance job performance and overall satisfaction.



Supportive Management

Having supportive managers who promote evidence-based practice and provide guidance was regarded as a major positive influence on their work experience.



A Positive Work Culture

A positive work culture, characterised by alignment in purpose and intent, along with expressions of appreciation, contributed to a greater sense of belonging and motivation.



Recognition and Gratitude

Receiving appreciation and acknowledgement for hard work, though not always frequent, was recognised as enhancing job satisfaction.

What do you find most rewarding about your role?

The most fulfilling aspects of the role, as expressed by care workers, include:



Person-Centred Care

Providing person-centred care and witnessing its positive impact on people's lives is regarded as highly rewarding.



Self-Satisfaction

Many find personal fulfilment and satisfaction in their work, particularly from observing the difference their efforts make.



People's Progress and Success

Watching the people they support achieve their goals, regain independence, or overcome barriers brings a strong sense of reward.



Positive Impact on Lives

Seeing the tangible effects of their work—such as people transitioning to community living or making positive changes in their lives—is deeply satisfying.



Building Relationships

Developing trust with people and their families, and witnessing smiles and expressions of happiness, are valued aspects of the role.



Team Collaboration

Collaborating with a supportive team and contributing to collective success is recognised as rewarding.



Learning and Growth

Engaging with new people, learning daily, and sharing knowledge are also seen as fulfilling parts of the job.



Seeing the difference person-centred and coproduced support can make.”



Watching the progress people make, knowing they are beginning to take control of their lives and don't need us anymore.”



Most rewarding would be supporting a person who was institutionalised for over 23 years, transition into the community and enabling them to understand and build independence and making decisions for themselves. Seeing them in the community and going shopping, having lunch etc. is a huge reward and succession!”



Seeing smiles on those around me and the families we support. Building trust with a team and having to learn about the clinicians and what they enjoy. Supporting them to provide as much as possible.”

What Do You Find Most Rewarding About Your Role?

2023/24 Comparison

In **2023**, care workers highlighted various rewarding aspects of their roles. Many expressed personal satisfaction from **seeing positive changes in the lives of those they support**, often mentioning the joy of watching people achieve independence and reach their potential.

Specific responses highlighted the **fulfilment of providing emotional support, advocating for people, and supporting them to be active participants in the community**. The focus was often on building strong relationships and contributing to life-changing outcomes, whether through direct care or collaborative teamwork. The **sense of accomplishment and appreciation** from both the people they support and management served as key motivators, along with opportunities for personal growth and skill development.

In **2024**, the emphasis on the impact of person-centred care continued, with many respondents highlighting the satisfaction derived from **seeing people live the lives they choose and overcome obstacles**.

A powerful example involves supporting a person's transition from 23 years of institutionalisation to community living, emphasising the profound emotional rewards of the job. In 2024, a new focus emerged—a greater appreciation for

teamwork and collaboration in delivering care. While leadership support was still valued, many noted its decline, likely due to financial pressures.

Both years highlight a **strong sense of purpose**, but 2024 emphasises **collaboration**, reflecting the increasing complexity and challenges within the care sector that necessitate adaptation and innovation.

Do you feel safe, heard and valued in your job role?

Most care workers **77.8% feel safe, heard, and valued** in their job roles. However, **22.2%** expressed concerns, citing issues such as:

- Lack of communication and insufficient explanations for changes.
- Feeling unheard by management.
- Instances of poor communication and microaggressions, with one respondent specifically mentioning racial discrimination as a factor.

Overall, while most respondents feel supported, a notable minority face challenges related to communication, recognition, and discrimination.

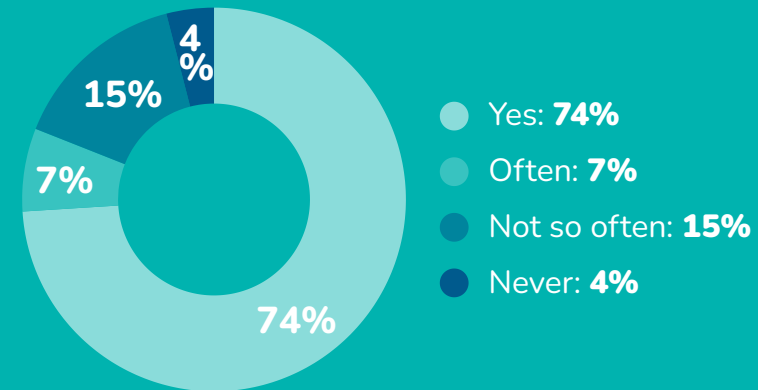
Desired Benefits: What would enhance your experience?

- **Financial Support:** Low-interest loans, reimbursement for work-related expenses, and improved pension plans.
- **Healthcare:** Access to private healthcare and dental discounts.
- **Work-Related Perks:** Contributions towards company cars, funding for external training, and coaching opportunities.
- **Time Off:** Options to purchase or sell additional holiday leave.
- **Discounts:** Access to a Blue Light Card for retail discounts, gym memberships, and wellbeing-related discounts.
- **Childcare Support:** Especially during school holidays.

Additionally, some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their current benefits packages and felt their compensation should better reflect the demands of their roles.

Learning Opportunities and Professional Growth

The survey shows that most care workers (74%) feel their employer offers valuable learning opportunities for personal and professional growth. However, 15% reported less frequent access, and 4% stated they "never" receive such support, which may affect employee satisfaction and development.



What additional training would you benefit from in your current role?

In 2024, professionals' training needs have shifted notably compared to 2023. Autism Awareness training, previously the most requested at 50% in 2023, has dropped to **12.5%** in 2024, suggesting that the launch of the Oliver McGowan mandatory training is rolling out effectively, and there is now a greater emphasis on other training areas.

Demand for PBS training has risen to **20.8%**, and Soft Skills training increased to **16.7%**, reflecting a growing recognition of

the need for practical skills and non-violent crisis intervention strategies.

Additionally, responses for specialised training needs surged to **45.8%**, indicating a broader range of interests that include advocacy, dementia training, clinical skills, and leadership. This shift demonstrates that professionals are seeking more tailored and comprehensive training to tackle diverse challenges in their roles.

What soft skills should a support worker possess to provide high-quality care and positive outcomes for people?

To provide high-quality care and achieve positive outcomes, support workers should possess a range of essential soft skills:



Communication:

Effective verbal and written communication is crucial for clear interactions, thorough documentation, and building rapport with people.



Active Listening:

Attentively listening to people about their needs ensures appropriate and effective support.



Adaptability and Problem-Solving:

Flexibility and the ability to address issues as they arise are important for meeting diverse needs.



Empathy and Compassion:

Understanding and responding to the emotional needs of the person is fundamental to delivering person-centred care.



Emotional Intelligence:

Recognising and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding others' feelings, enhances the overall quality of care.



Teamwork and Collaboration:

Working well with others and contributing to a cohesive team environment supports effective care delivery.



Time Management and Organisational Skills:

Efficiently managing time and handling multiple responsibilities are essential for maintaining high standards of care.



Professional Boundaries and Resilience:

Maintaining appropriate boundaries and coping with the demands of the role are key to providing consistent, high-quality support.

Overall, a combination of these skills enables support workers to respond effectively to client needs and contribute positively to their well-being.

Do you work with a consistent team?

In 2023, just over half (**51%**) of care workers reported working with a consistent team, while **38.1%** indicated that this was rarely the case by 2024, a larger majority (**77.8%**) consistently worked with the same team. This increase may reflect changes in staffing, team organisation, or workplace structures over time.

What is the impact on the people you support when there isn't a consistent team?

In both 2023 and 2024, care workers highlighted the negative effects of inconsistent teams on the people they support, including increased anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and disrupted routines. In 2023, responses focused more on the emotional impact, mentioning agitation, confusion, and a lack of trust. Respondents also noted that inconsistent care disrupts progress and creates a sense of instability.

In 2024, **the emphasis shifted slightly toward operational issues, with more mentions of increased incidents, staff pressure, and communication challenges.** Respondents highlighted problems like delayed response times, unfamiliar staff leading to incidents, and added stress for both individuals and caregivers.

Despite these differences, the core impact of inconsistency remained consistent in both years, affecting the quality of care and the well-being of the people being supported.

“

No consistency of care, difficulty to build relationship.”

“

No major improvements when there is inconsistency in staffing.”

“

Less ability to implement strategies, more time training teams than practically implementing.”

“

Less opportunities to promote their independence and goal achievements.”

What is the impact on your quality of work when you are not in a consistent team?

When not working with a consistent team, the impact on quality of work includes:

Increased Stress and Burnout

The need to constantly adapt to new team members can lead to heightened stress levels, overworking, and burnout.

Poor Quality of Care:

Inconsistencies can result in lower quality care, leading to increased incidents and diminished overall performance.

Lower Motivation and Morale:

Unstable teams can decrease motivation, foster fear of change, and negatively impact team dynamics and individual morale.

Decreased Effectiveness:

There is often reduced ability to implement strategies effectively, as more time is spent training new staff rather than focusing on direct care.

Communication Issues:

Uncertainty about team roles and a lack of established relationships can cause poor communication and fragmented care.

Overall, inconsistency in team composition can significantly affect both the effectiveness and quality of care provided.

Support Workers - Delayed Discharges

The impact of delayed discharges on people, their families, and support workers reveals a growing complexity over time, as highlighted in both 2023 and 2024 data.



Impact on Families

In 2023, prolonged hospital stays led to a noticeable decline in emotional well-being, causing distress, deterioration in health, and behavioural changes, creating feelings of hopelessness and anxiety. By 2024, the effects deepened, with further extended discharges contributing to a loss of independence, amplified trauma, and an increased risk of mental health deterioration.



Families bear the brunt of these extended hospital stays, as 2023 data shows their stress intensifies due to practical and emotional pressures, including financial strains. By 2024, the ongoing uncertainty surrounding discharge plans only deepens their frustration and anxiety, leading to further disruptions in their lives and increased tension within family relationships.



Impact on Staff Members

In 2023, support workers reported experiencing challenges with heavier workloads and resource constraints, compounded by the emotional toll of caring for people unable to be discharged. By 2024, the strain appeared to escalate, affecting work-life balance and potentially compromising care quality as care workers struggle to manage extended stays and their broader impact on hospital operations.

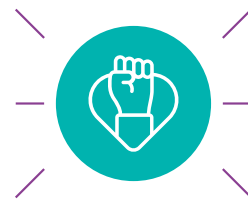
Overall, the data from both years underscores the far-reaching emotional, practical, and systemic challenges associated with delayed discharges. The need for improved discharge planning, better communication, and more effective resource allocation becomes even more apparent as these impacts grow more severe over time.

The Future in Care

The responses from 2023 and 2024 regarding people's commitment to remaining in the care sector over the next five years highlight a strong sense of dedication and passion, with evolving reasons for staying.

A notable majority (**87.3%**) of respondents indicated that they saw themselves continuing in the care sector for the foreseeable future. Their answers reflected a commitment to the work, viewing it as meaningful and necessary. The responses were straightforward, with people expressing their belief in the importance of their roles within the sector.

In contrast, the 2024 responses, while fewer in number due to a smaller sample size, provided more detailed and personal insights. Many respondents shared a deep emotional connection to the care sector, considering it more than just a job but a life path or calling. Key themes from 2024 responses included:



Personal Fulfillment:

Many individuals emphasised how rewarding they find their job and expressed that they couldn't imagine working in another sector. Their roles brought a sense of meaning and purpose that they were unwilling to give up.



Long-Term Commitment:

A significant portion of respondents expressed clear intentions to stay in the care sector until retirement or pursue career growth within the sector, such as advancing into leadership roles, becoming nurses, or gaining further specialisations.



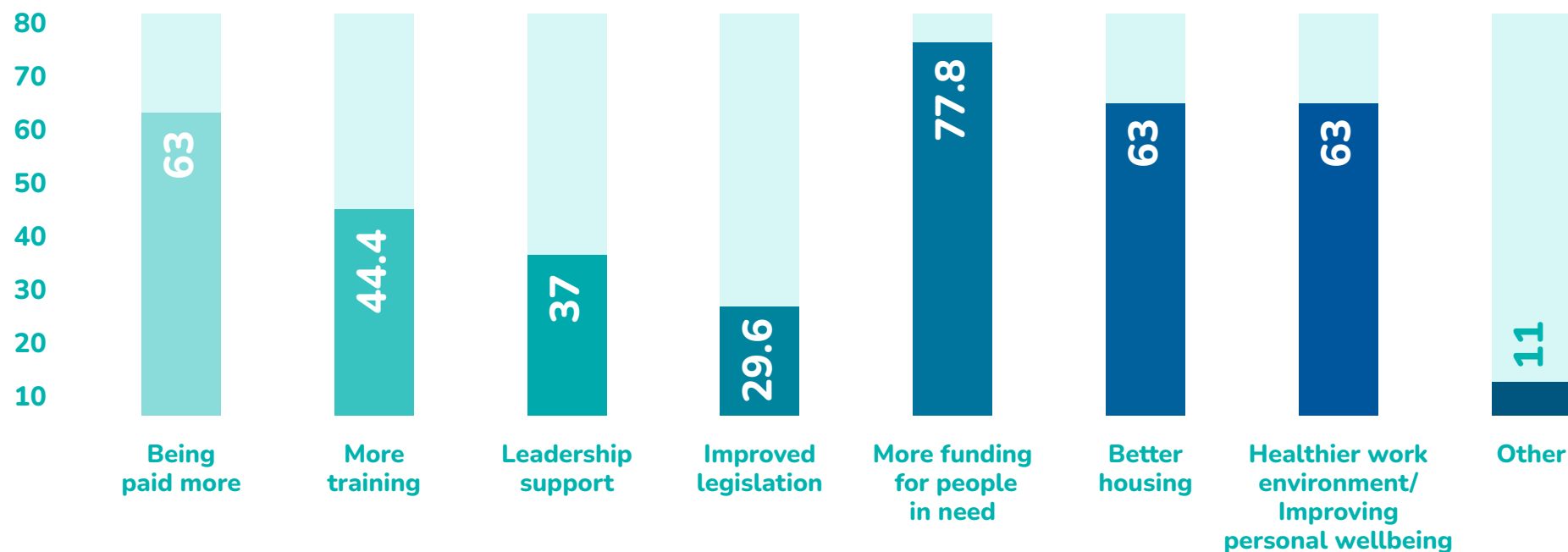
Passion for Change:

Some respondents viewed their roles as part of a lifelong mission to improve the lives of others. Their sense of purpose was intertwined with a drive to make positive changes within the sector, reflecting a long-term emotional commitment.

Both years' data show an unwavering dedication to the care sector, with 2024 revealing a deeper emotional connection and more individualised expressions of passion for the work.

Challenges in Care

What do you think needs to be improved in the care sector?



In 2024, the emphasis on improvements in the care sector continues, with a focus on several key areas and some notable shifts from 2023. The demand for increased funding has risen to **77.8%**, reflecting a heightened awareness of financial constraints. The importance of better housing and a healthier work environment remains significant, both at **63%**, highlighting ongoing concerns about the basic conditions for care recipients and staff well-being.

While the need for higher pay remains prominent at **63%**, there has been a slight decrease in the emphasis on leadership

support and improved legislation compared to 2023. This suggests a shift in priorities towards more immediate and tangible changes, such as funding and working conditions, rather than structural or policy-related improvements.

In 2024, there is also a new focus on **professionalisation** and **effective communication** within the sector, with specific mentions of the need for greater recognition of the sector's challenges and improved communication practices. This reflects a growing acknowledgment of the need for systemic changes to support both care recipients and staff, alongside a call for increased respect for the sector.

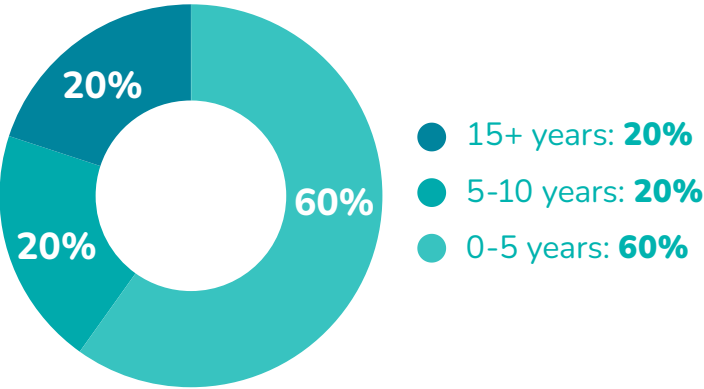
COMMISSIONERS

Our survey provides direct insights from commissioning teams, outlining the current challenges and opportunities within the health and social care sector. It also compares the progress made over the past twelve months for an up-to-date perspective.

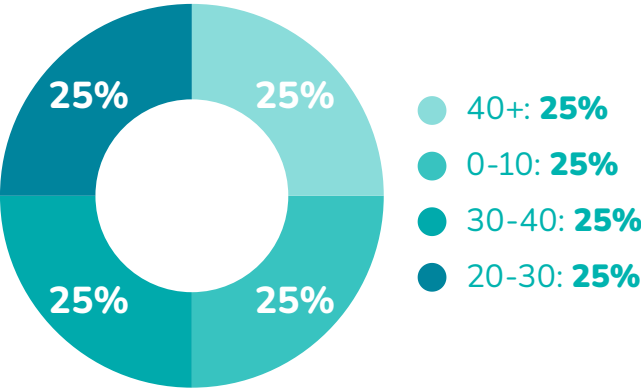
Based on the responses, **60%** of our participants have been working in individual case commissioning for up to five years, while **40%** reported over 10 and 15 years of experience in health and social care.

This diverse experience helps us gain better understanding of the changing nature of the health and social care sector. Further, this also supports our efforts in identifying the improvement that has been made throughout the years.

How long have you been a commissioner?



How many people are you currently supporting?



Half of our respondents indicated they work with up to 30 people or families requiring care, while the other **50%** support more than 30 people.

Based on the age demographics, the survey indicates that **75%** of commissioner respondents primarily work with people in the 18 to 65 age range, while **25%** work with those aged 16 to 25. This suggests that the majority of participants focused on adult services.

What was your profession before you decided to become a commissioner?

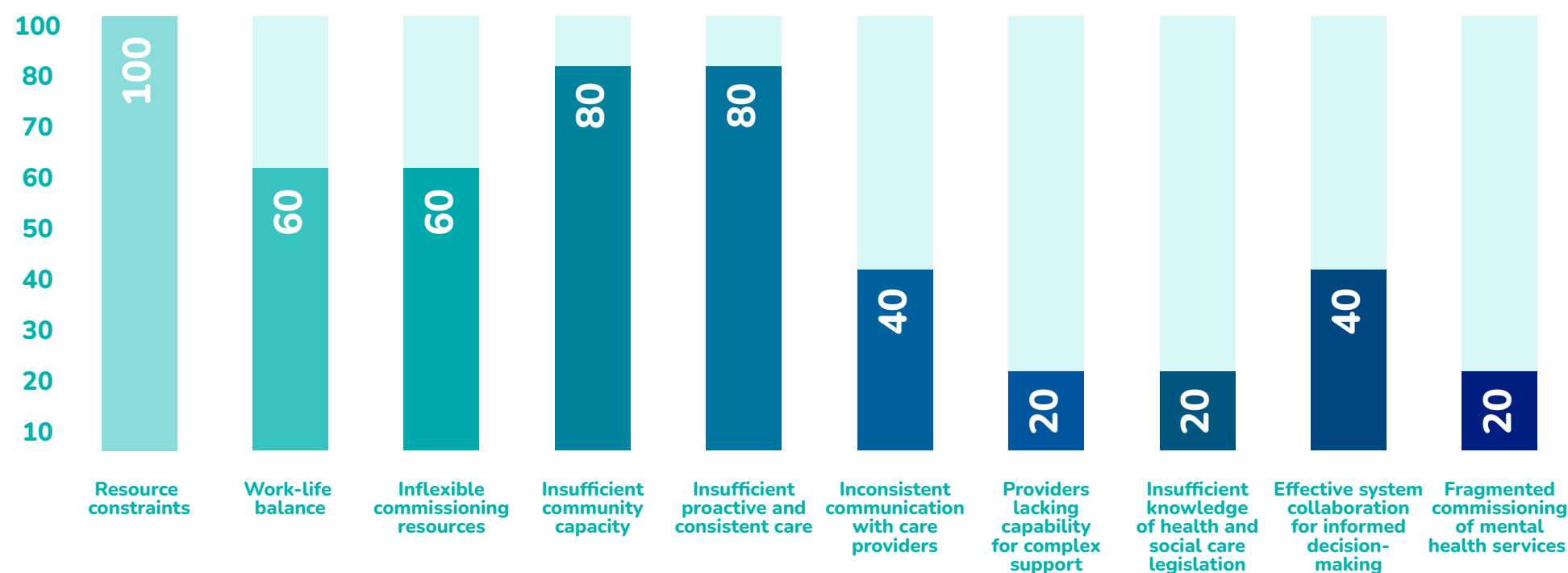
This question reveals the professional background of our participants. Based on the responses, **60%** of our respondents have worked as registered nurses, and **20%** reported having worked as support workers.

The answers showcase that **80%** of case commissioners have personal experience in supporting people with physical and neurodevelopmental differences.



What challenges do you face?

We analysed the most prevalent challenges commissioners face in carrying out their duties, and the feedback provides a comprehensive view of the current state of the UK health and social care system. The survey results show the following data:



Compared to last year, resource constraints and lack of community support have remained major challenges for commissioners. Lack of community capacity is still a high-level issue, immediately followed by lack of collaboration across the system for informed and effective decision making.

What needs to be improved in health and social care?

Commissioners face the challenge of navigating a complex and fragmented system where services across health, social care, and education often operate in isolation. Limited funding resources and a lack of coordination between providers create gaps in care, leading to unnecessary hospital admissions and delayed discharges, amongst others.

The lack of strong and trusted collaboration with providers further affects efforts to deliver truly person-centred care. Addressing this requires more integrated and collaborative approaches to ensure people receive the continuous, coordinated support they need across all sectors.

In your experience, what is the impact of delayed discharges on people and their families?



80%

of the responses outlined stress and trauma



60%

indicated isolation and lack of trust in the health and social care system

This highlights the need to change how health and social care is delivered. There has been progress over the last decade, but improvements still need to be made.

How can providers improve their local services?

Based on the responses, **40%** of commissioners suggested more training for care staff, and the other **40%** look for increased capacity. The remaining **20%** would like to have better communication with care providers in their local communities.

How easy is it to find accommodation in your region for the people you support?

According to the responses, **60%** of commissioners find it very difficult to secure appropriate accommodation for people, while 40% find it challenging but still manageable with some options available.

Two main challenges emerged in the responses. Around 20% of commissioners identified the high cost of properties suited to people who might display behaviours of concern. Also, **65%** emphasised the difficulty in securing properties that can accommodate necessary adaptations.

These adaptations are critical to meet the needs of physical health and risk management for people. This suggests a broad consensus that, while costs are a factor, the physical and logistical suitability of properties remains the more pressing factors across the UK.

What do you think needs to be improved for people working in the care sector?

The survey responses regarding improvements needed for people working in the care sector reveal several critical areas. Leadership support emerged as the top priority, with 80% of respondents emphasising its importance for those in caregiving roles. Additionally, 60% highlighted the need for increased funding to support care services, directly impacting the workforce.

Improved workplace conditions, along with better legislation, were noted by 40% of respondents each, indicating the need for a healthier work environment and supportive regulatory frameworks. Additionally, 20% called for more training opportunities, and the same percentage suggested that commissioners should receive coaching to enhance their management of providers. Lastly, 40% expressed the need for higher wages to recognise better and compensate for the work of care professionals.

“

Various within trust - key worker development - SCFTs & FOLS to support community providers and individuals“

“

Property's requiring adaptations to meet individual's needs due to their physical health as well as risk presentations.“

“

By working with services together to balance challenges in all areas - having good service managers who can manage budgets and ask the difficult questions to ensure wastage not happening.“

Final words

To all the participants, thank you for being an integral part of our White Paper survey. Your involvement has made a meaningful contribution to driving lasting change in the state of care. Every voice matters, and every meaningful change begins with small steps. Together, we have taken those steps toward a more compassionate, effective, and people-centred approach to care. Your dedication to this cause will continue to inspire progress and transformation in how care is delivered. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of our collective efforts unfold.

At Catalyst Care Group, we are committed to shaping a future where care is truly personalised, reflecting the unique needs and experiences of each person. Through collaboration, innovation, and a shared passion for improving care, we are working together to transform the lives of the people we support and the services we provide.



What key areas should we focus on in our next White Paper?
Scan our QR code to share your thoughts. Your input matters.