

Building a Better Workforce Survey The Findings

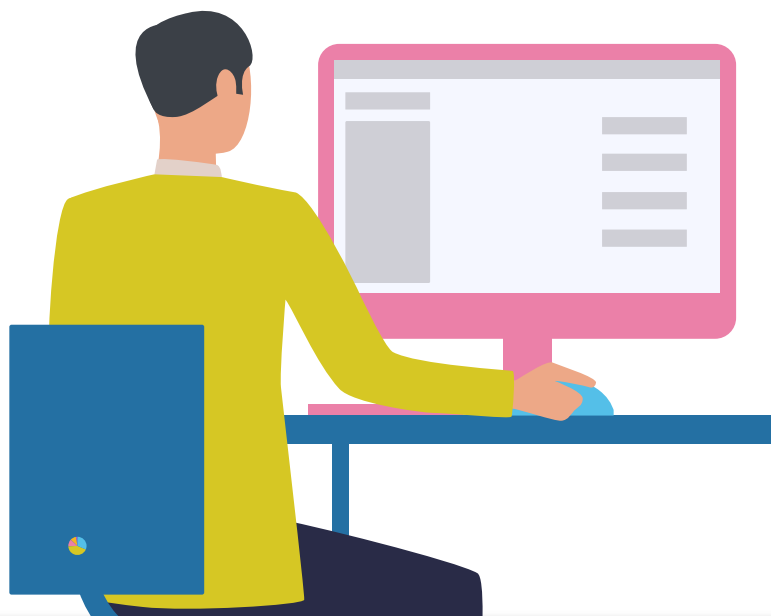


Executive Summary:

In early November 2021, Quality Compliance Systems (QCS) launched our Building a Better Workforce Survey. The aim was to seek the views of people working in the sector on issues that were really important to them. QCS is very grateful to almost 200 people that found the time to respond and share their opinions. These views have been invaluable in adding to the 'rich picture' of what is important to the social care workforce.

QCS has analysed the results of the survey and it is pleasing to note that there is still a high level of satisfaction with the roles people are performing, and this is despite the huge challenges of COVID-19, mandatory vaccinations, Brexit and recruitment faced over the last two years.

The positivity displayed in responses to the survey does reaffirm how brave, robust, dedicated and unflinching staff that work in social care are. We should all be proud of their commitment and continued perseverance to 'do the right thing' and to support the most vulnerable people in our society with professionalism and empathy.



The survey further reveals:

- When people start working in social care, they tend to stay, with 48% of respondents stating that they have worked in social care for more than 10 years
- Almost 90% of respondents were 'happy and satisfied' with the work they do. This is a reflection on how rewarding social care can be as a job
- A large majority of respondents (86%) felt that their manager and team supported them well
- Over 80% of people thought that technology and the increased use of electronic systems were good things and improved the way they could do their job. It is widely felt that the increased use of technology in care has been stimulated by COVID-19, and the need to be innovative in the way care is provided and communicated. It is highly unlikely that we will go back to paper processes, and indeed the range of tools and resources to support social care is increasing all the time
- It was perhaps surprising that over 70% of respondents felt that they had a 'good work life balance'. This is especially true, bearing in mind the challenges faced by the workforce over the last two years, and the additional pressure and expectations placed on them
- Career development was an area that it was felt could be improved for social care staff with 14% reporting that they felt that opportunities to further their career in social care were very limited. This could partly be due to the fact that social care is not seen as a 'professionalised' area of work, with limited qualifications available and no recognised career path, and in addition, no registration of care workers. When people describe themselves as 'just a carer' it devalues the work they do
- The survey asked what career staff would pursue if they left social care, with the majority of responses stating that jobs in the fields of animal care, teaching, nursing and hospitality would be preferred
- One key area that respondents felt could be improved was the provision of benefits by employers, with a feeling that they were, at times, expected to do their role without recognition of what they are experiencing or having the work rewarded beyond a pay cheque

It is proposed that this survey will inform developments in the QCS system, in the hope of addressing concerns raised or to provide more of what makes people's jobs easier and more rewarding. We are also planning to conduct the survey on a regular basis so we can 'benchmark' people's views and provide further insight into the issues that are important to the social care workforce.

Introduction:

At Quality Compliance Systems (QCS) we are keen to support and empower people working in social care, and to help staff to deliver great outcomes to people using services. To help us do this, we shared a survey with care workers to ask them about their current roles, how well they feel supported and what would make their work more satisfying and rewarding.

We want to use the results of the survey to gain a better understanding of what is important to people working in social care, how the pandemic has affected the work that you do and what employers and others could do to make you feel more valued.

We are very grateful to the more than 190 people that took the time to complete and return the survey. In this report we will share the headlines from the survey, and provide some analysis of what the results mean for us at QCS, and also how the results reflect on the wider feelings of those people working in social care.

We are planning on making this survey a regular event so that over time, we can more clearly understand the challenges faced by staff working in social care. What you tell us will help us make developments and put forward ideas that are proactive, targeted and responsive to your need. Our objective is to make lives easier, and more fulfilling for you and the people you support.

Please email us at: marketing.team@qcs.co.uk if you would like to be involved with future surveys.



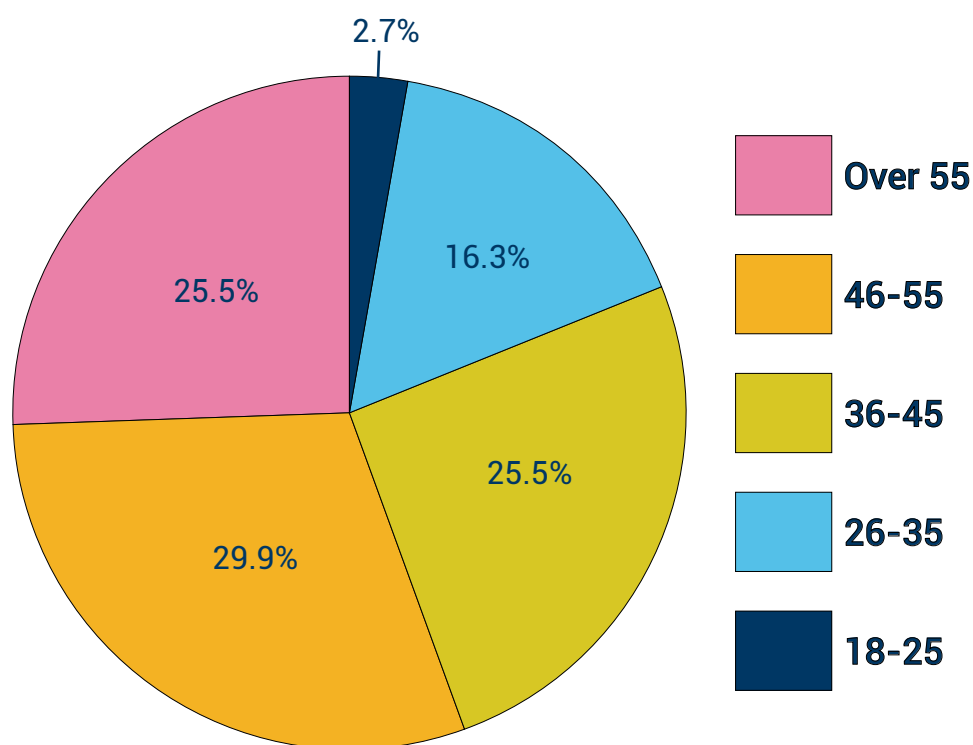
Author: Ed Watkinson
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Findings:

#1 What age are respondents?

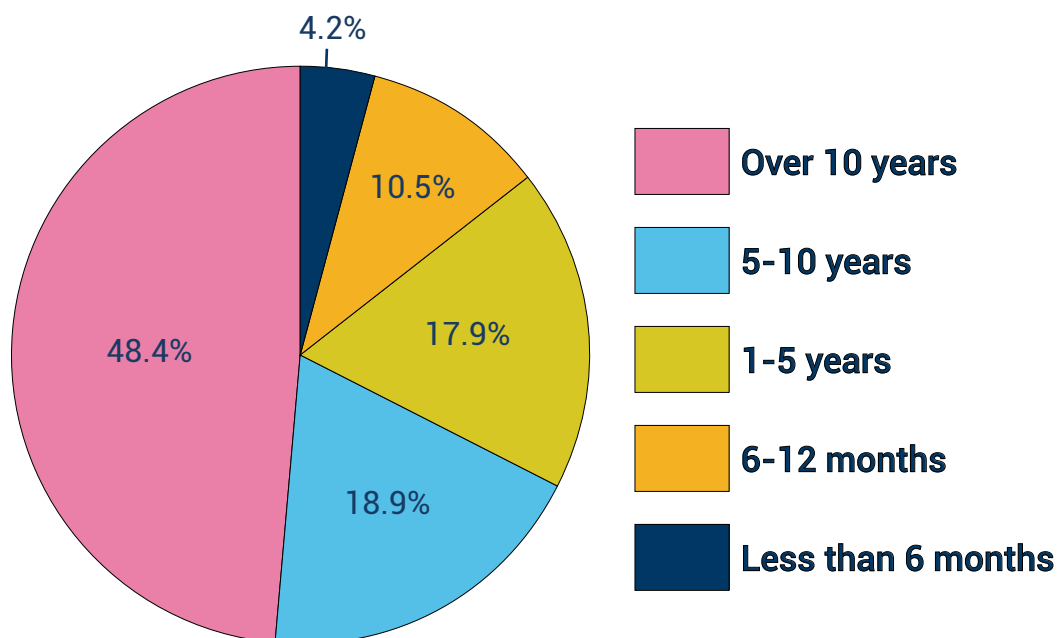
The responses indicated that less than 1 in 5 staff were under the age of 36 and more than 1 in 4 staff were aged over 55 years old. This indicates that the demographic of staff working in social care is higher than may be expected and does raise questions about how younger people could be attracted to a career in social care, be this through more attractive and recognised career progression, higher wages, improved benefits or a broader recognition by society of the skills needed to be a carer.

However, the demographic of the staff is across social care and includes management and administration as well as direct care staff so this may have resulted in an older workforce than would be expected as managers tend to be older as they have more experience.



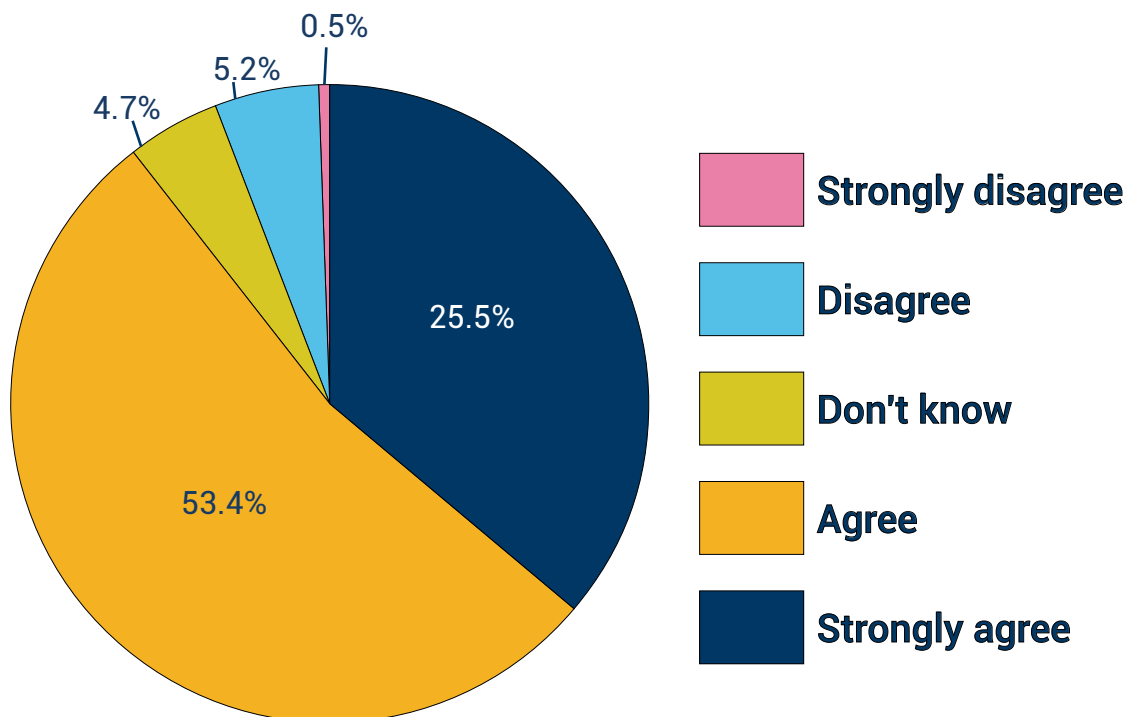
#2 How long have staff worked in social care?

Nearly half the respondents had worked in social care for over 10 years, and only 15% had worked for less than 1 year. These figures suggest that when people start working in social care, they stay. This is contrary to the wider perception that care is a ‘transient’ role, and a job that people do because they cannot get another position. To build on this we need to ensure that staff that join the social care workforce are valued, respected and encouraged to continue to be part of the workforce, that they are given the opportunities to progress and are presented with a clear career pathway that is ‘hardwired’ into the care system and supported by government.



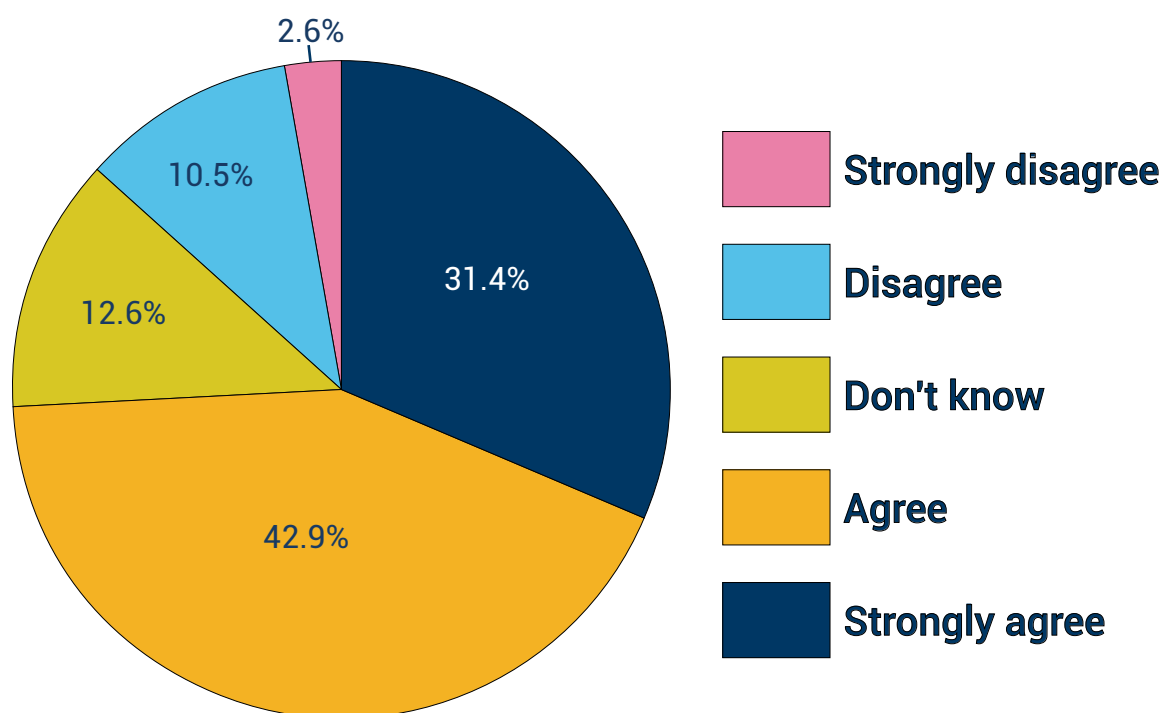
#3 Happiness with the role?

It is reassuring that almost 90% of respondents stated that they were happy and satisfied with the work that they do. In other questions that were focused on the support for staff, the results again reported a high satisfaction, with 83% stating they were supported well by their manager, 90% stating they were supported by their team and 90% stating that they received the training that they needed to do their jobs well.



#4 Is career development supported?

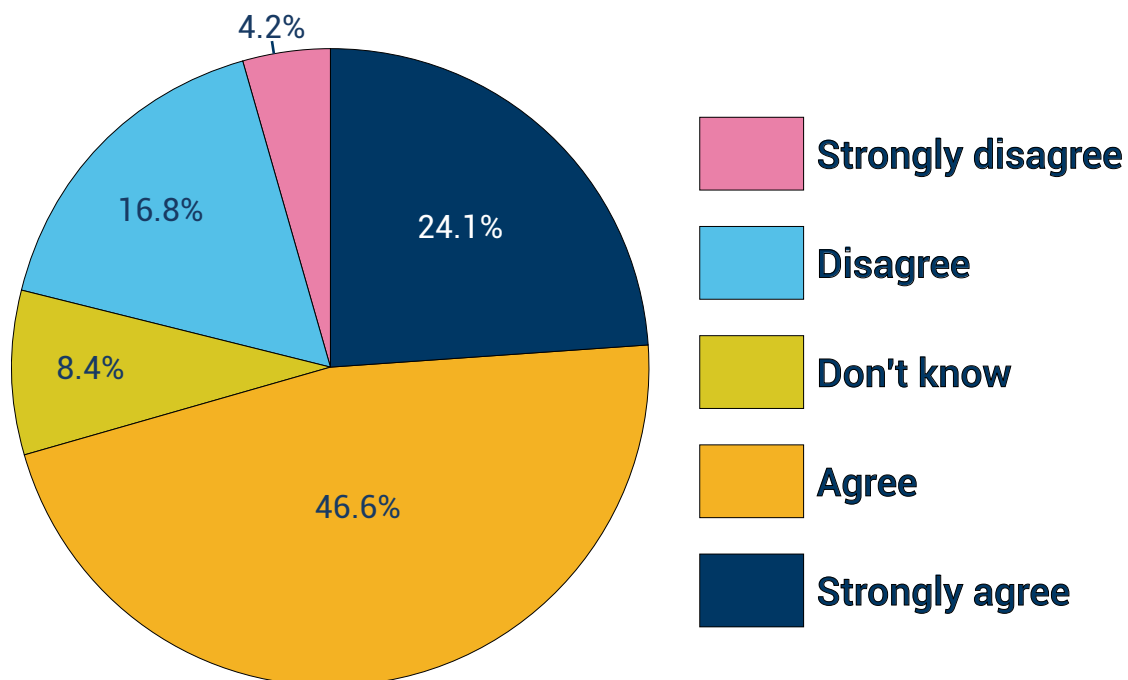
Just under 14% of respondents did not agree that their employer invested in career development, and a further 13% did not feel that they could respond. The answer to this question maybe a reflection of wider social care, and the current lack of recognised qualifications, career pathway or the registration of care workers with an approved body. Providers probably feel unsupported by the sector and that most career development is down to the individual provider to manage, which some will embrace and others will have difficulty delivering.



#5 How well does social care support a good work-life balance?

The findings reveal that 71% of respondents agreed that they had a good balance. This is a reassuringly high percentage considering the impact of the pandemic on workload, the expectations placed on staff to cover shifts and the need to continue to provide care for people. In addition, the challenges posed by the requirement for vaccinations, Brexit and covering for staff who are 'self-isolating' have all added to the pressure on those staff available for work. Credit must be given to providers for recognising the need to ensure that they value their staff and support them during difficult times.

However, 21% disagreed that they had a good balance. There has to be learning from this and ensuring that all staff have an opportunity to have the time away from work that they need, as what the sector doesn't need is committed, valuable and dedicated staff to leave care work due to lack of support or recognition of the efforts they have made during such challenging times.

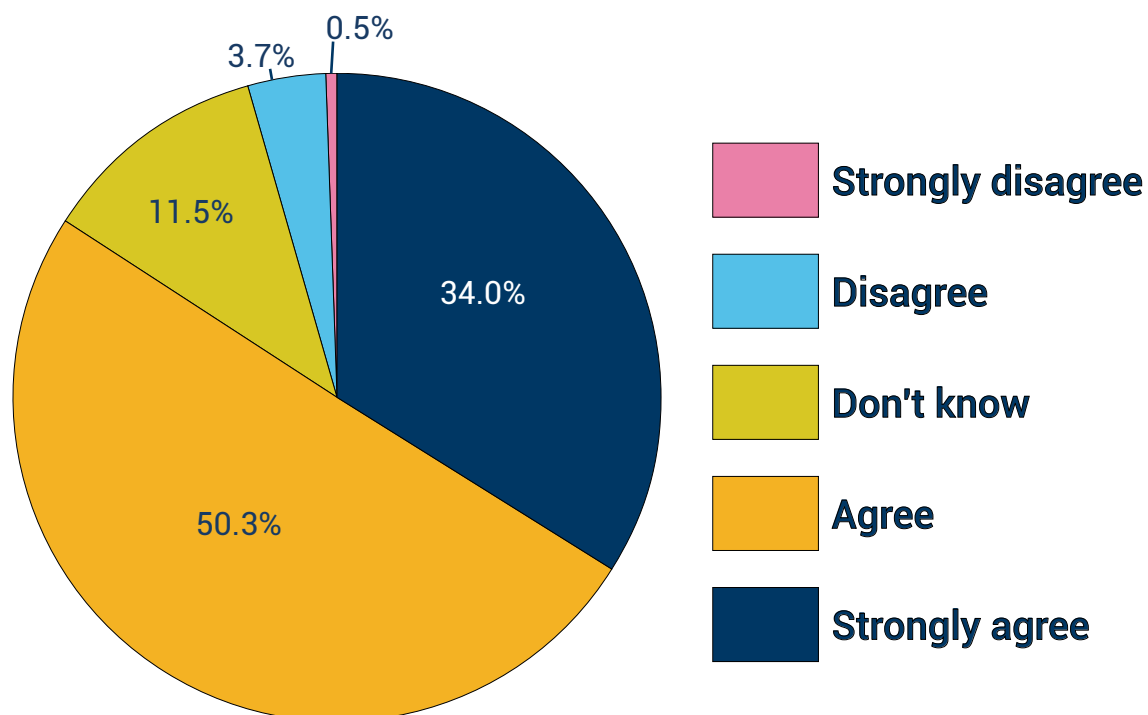


#6 Does the use of online paperwork and processes help you?

Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that the use of electronic systems has helped to improve the quality of the service provided. Only 5% of people disagreed and preferred traditional paper processes. The pandemic has really pushed the use of digital systems and processes. It has forced providers to embrace technology whether that is to communicate with staff, maintain relationships with family members or to record people's needs more clearly.

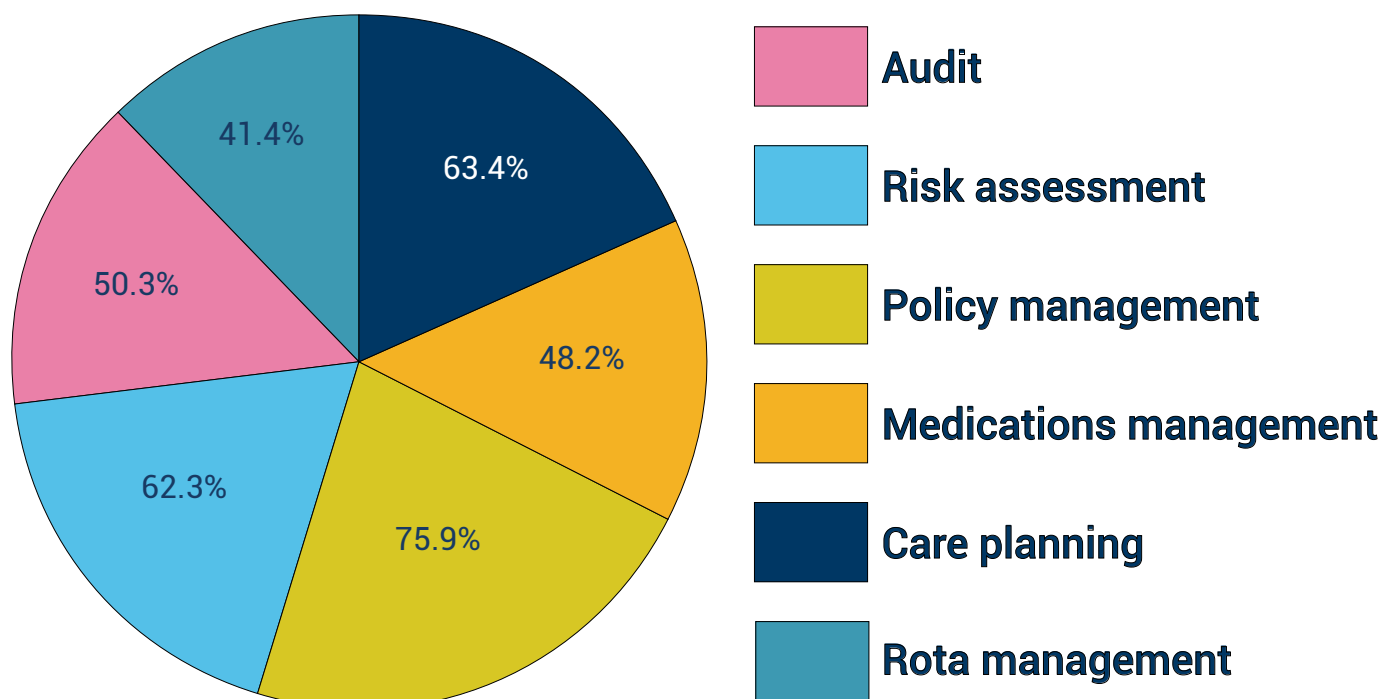
The pandemic has opened people's eyes to the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and security of electronic processes and technology providers have rushed to fill the gaps in the market – whether that is for care planning, rotas, auditing, policies or communication. Social care will never go back to pre-pandemic processes, and the future is only going to open up more opportunities for innovation, creativity and support for care staff to deliver high-quality, person-centred care. The CQC and the Government are in favour of digitisation and have embraced changes. There are big drives and support available for providers wishing to explore opportunities further.

QCS is determined to be at the forefront of these changes and will guide and support customers on their journey towards full digitisation, whether this is through resources, policies, templates or guidance.



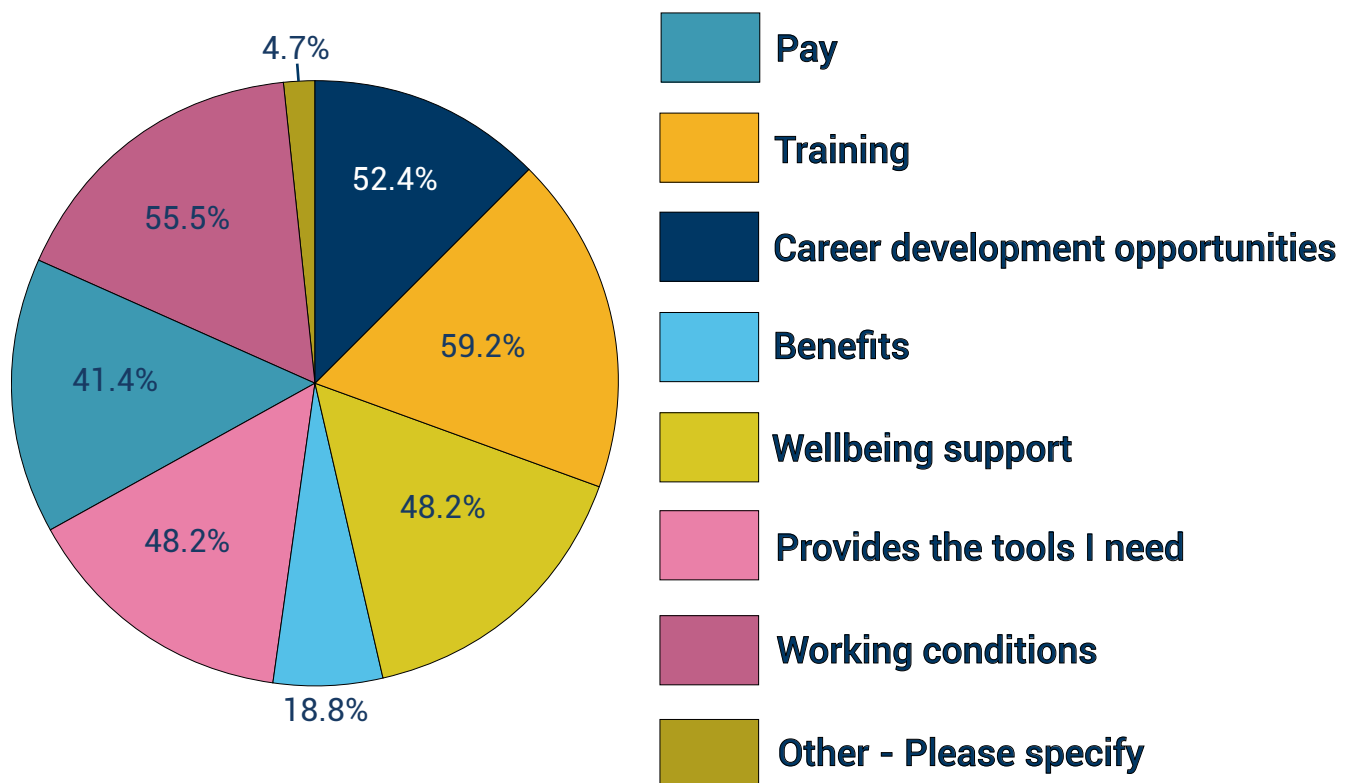
#7 What electronic tools do you currently use?

Care planning, medication management, audit and risk assessments all ranked highly in the survey responses, but the highest response was 75% for policy management. The purpose of an electronic system should not be to replicate the paper process, but provide added value, indicate where you should focus activity and remove the time-consuming elements of recording. Over time, these electronic processes will undertake more of the 'thinking' for you and identify where you need to act and focus. Indeed, in the next 20 years the concept of artificial intelligence (AI) will become more prevalent and will provide, as yet, unknown benefits for social care.



#8 What does your company do well as an employer?

Respondents were generally complimentary about their employer with working conditions, training and wellbeing support coming out on top. This is good to hear and a positive reflection on what employers provide for their staff. However, the area that scored the lowest was the provision of 'benefits' for staff. The importance of employee benefits should not be underestimated. According to HR specialists, CIPD, 'benefits offer a way to attract and keep people, contribute towards improving wellbeing and encourage required behaviours, achievements, values and skills'. Benefits are not just about money either. They can also be about recognising when staff need ways of expressing themselves, rewarding or recognising them for doing a good job, or providing opportunities to do things outside of work. QCS understands that to make staff feel valued, welcome and supported there needs to be a holistic approach to employment and the provision of 'benefits' that reflect a person's 'whole life' – whether that is gym membership, discounts for entertainment, opportunities to meet up outside of work or an external helpline to provide support on matters important to them.



#9 What could the company do better?

There were some varied responses to this question, with a large number stating that increased pay would be helpful. Another theme was about improved communication between management and care staff. It was also frequently reported that 'more staff' would help with workload and make the job easier, but there was also the recognition that this was not always possible and that the company has financial limits that it needs to work within.

A selection of quotes from the survey:




'More, more, more, training'



'Listening and hearing more'



'Team communication'



'To appreciate staff and listen to them'



'Implementation of digital tools'



'Continue to reduce paperwork'



'Better pay rates'



'More face-to-face training'

#10 What about changing jobs?

A third (33%) of respondents stated that they were happy in their role and were not considering or looking for any alternative employment. Of those people that were considering leaving their current role, only 18% stated that they would look for a job outside of social care. This figure is reasonably reassuring for the sector as it implies that staff are not disillusioned with care and that the vast majority would be looking for similar work. However, it must be recognised that staff may not feel that they have the skills or experience to seek alternative careers, and to a degree, feel tied to social care.

Staff were also asked about what other sectors of employment they would consider if they left social care. The responses were varied, but there were some themes that emerged. There was a strong feeling that people wanted to stay in a 'caring' role such as nursing, animal care, teaching, hospitality or childcare. This does indicate that, to a degree, the intrinsic quality of caring is inbuilt, and staff will take that with them in whatever career choices they make. Whether that quality was there before working in social care, or has been developed during the time in social care is unknown, but it has to be good for society that people in social care do care and want to use that gift in whatever they do.

#11 What would most tempt staff to leave their role?

Unsurprisingly, the biggest response was 'better pay' with 38% of respondents stating that more money would be the main factor in encouraging them to leave their role. But it is reassuring for the sector that 'career progression' was also listed as an important factor and, therefore, staff would like to stay, see themselves having a career in social care, want to progress and share their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the sector. However, it could be seen as disappointing that so many staff feel that they have to seek alternative employment to make this a reality, and the opportunities seem to be limited in their current situation.

