



Staffordshire  
Social Care  
Workforce

CMDT  
Care Market Development Team

# Retention Support Pack

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## Introduction

Retaining staff is a key challenge in adult social care. High levels of staff turnover impact on how services meet present and future demand, and affect the quality, continuity, and sustainability of care provision.

This support pack considers the benefits of good retention, reasons for poor retention and how you may turn this around.

Question: How much does it cost to replace a member of staff?

Answer: a) £1,053 b) £2,577 c) £3,642 d) £5033

Source: WMADASS: Developing an Operating Model for a Social Care Apprenticeship Academy July 2023 - Correct answer is c

What can affect a worker's decision to leave?



## Benefits of good staff retention

- Staff build trust and rapport with your service users and their loved ones
- Improved quality and continuity of care provision
- Reduces management time and money spent on:
  - Recruitment
  - Onboarding
  - Staff training
- Skilled and motivated staff team, developing their skills and experience thereby adding value to your organisation
- Staff progressing and moving into more senior roles as opportunities arise
- Good team working
- Loyal and stable workforce
- Supports a positive and attractive workplace culture / working environment
- A better work-life balance for the whole team with reduced pressures to cover absences
- Manager less stressed, has confidence in and able to delegate to their team
- Skills for Care have determined that services with higher CQC scores had lower turnover rates

### Skills for Care links

- [What our latest data tells us about factors that affect CQC ratings](#)
- [Recruitment and retention in adult social care: secrets of success](#)
- [What is retention and why is it important?](#)
- [The Care Exchange podcast:](#)
  - 3.3 I compare being a care home manager to a football manager

## Factors currently affecting staff retention in Adult Social Care (ASC)

[The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England](#) report (Skills for Care October 2023) identifies five key factors in retaining staff:

- Being paid more than the minimum wage
- Not being on a zero-hours contract
- Being able to work full time
- Being able to access training
- Having a relevant qualification

Where none of these factors apply 48.7% of care workers are likely to leave, compared to only 20.6% when all five factors are in place.

Other factors identified in the report:



### Skills for Care links

- [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England](#) report, published October 2023
- The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in the Midlands region - [recorded webinar](#), [presentation slides](#) and [West Midlands breakout session](#)
- [Understanding the reasons care workers move on and their future intentions](#)

## How to identify your retention challenges

Identifying why people leave, or stay, will help you decide how to encourage more people to stay.

You can find out through the use of:

- **Staff feedback:**
  - Conversations in team meetings, supervisions, and performance appraisals
  - Talk to people who are thinking of leaving about what might help them stay
  - Staff feedback surveys
    - Consider including an eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score) question to measure how likely employees are to recommend your service as a good place to work, and then a follow up questions to unpick their answer. For example:
      - On a scale of zero to ten, how likely is it that you would recommend working for our company?
      - Please indicate your reason for this score (provide a list of reasons and the option to choose “other” and provide further detail)
  
- **Exit surveys and interviews:**
  - Enable you to ask their reasons for leaving and gives leavers an opportunity to provide constructive feedback
  - May provide an opportunity to convert the exit of an asset into a retention win
  
- **Data analysis:**
  - Use data to understand how well you retain staff and reasons why they stay or leave, to inform improvements to policies and practices.
 

Examples include:

    - Staff turnover rate - the % leaving over a specified period of time
      - Voluntary e.g. new job, retirement
      - Involuntary e.g. dismissal, redundancy
      - Regrettable - those you would have preferred to keep
      - Non-regrettable - those you do not regret leaving
    - Retention rate - the % who stay over a specified time period
    - Turnover cost - how much it costs to replace a leaver
  - Use of the [Adult Social Care - Workforce Data Set](#). Maintaining an ASC-WDS account will assist you to:
    - Monitor and identify your workforce trends, e.g. turnover and vacancy rate

- Benchmark against other organisations enabling you to see how you are performing in your local authority area, e.g. vacancy rates, turnover and pay
- Access the [Workforce Development Fund \(WDF\)](#), to claim funding towards staff training and qualifications  
Visit [our CMDT website](#) for more information and support

#### Skills for Care links

- [How we use ASC-WDS to support our organisation](#)
- [Seven ways ASC-WDS can help social care employers](#)
- [How data can help you think about your staff's health and happiness](#)

## How to improve staff retention

Retention can be impacted by many factors, some of which are hard to change as they are outside of your control (e.g. pay, funding, cost of living). Focus on those factors over which you have some control - those relating to the organisation, role, and relationships.



*"Retention is all about the quality of relationships at work, we can't pay what we would like to pay and therefore it's about that experience you have. People are already choosing the job if they have a calling for care, they love the work. So, it's about the role of the employer and making it an experience and an environment people want to work in."*

Neil Eastwood, [Skills for Care Webinar: Maximise Recruitment](#)

### Skills for Care links

- [Retaining more people](#)
- [Retaining your workforce](#)
- [How we reduced turnover from 92% to 3% in two years](#)
- [Six top tips to support staff retention](#)



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## Recruitment

It is not just about recruiting someone; it is about recruiting the right person.

Use values-based recruitment to find suitable candidates.

Be clear about required standards of behaviour, role requirements and expectations. Make sure the job description is robust, well-structured, and easy to understand. Use plain English.

Offer potential candidates the opportunity to talk with you and ensure you give them a clear understanding of the role and your organisation. New starters having realistic expectations of the role will be less likely to leave within the first few months.

Ensure all communication with candidates is timely and of excellent quality. Even with those who are unsuccessful - whilst unsuccessful on this occasion they are a potential pool of future candidates. Good communication and offering feedback will influence their future application decisions.

Do not be afraid to not appoint. It is better to have a hole to fill than to employ the wrong person, investing time and money, only to see them leave in a few months or even worse impact negatively on your service users or staff team.

### Skills for Care links

- [Recruitment support](#)
- [Skills for Care Values-based recruitment toolkit](#)
- [The Care Exchange podcast:](#)
  - [4.1 What is your favourite chocolate bar](#)

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## International Recruitment

Recruiting staff from outside of the UK has additional considerations. These include:

- What support you provide outside of work to someone living in England for the first time, wellbeing, and pastoral care
- How to facilitate integration with the existing team
- Cultural awareness training, for existing staff and the international recruits
- Making best use of their skills and experience, building this into their career and development plan
- Modern Slavery awareness training
- How you ensure they feel safe to raise concerns
- Legal requirements

### Skills for Care links

- [International Recruitment](#)
- [Modern Slavery](#)
- [Ethical international recruitment: what you need to know](#)
- [Settling international employees into your organisation](#)
- DH&SC: The ASC International Recruitment Process, [recorded webinar](#) & [presentation slides](#)

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## Onboarding

Skills for Care estimate that the turnover rate of adult social care staff was 28.3% in 2022/23. Staff with less experience in the sector are more likely to leave, in 2022/23 47.5% of new starters with less than 1 years' experience left. ([The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce 2023](#))

The onboarding process is therefore important, starting from your contact with the candidate during the selection process/interview, and continuing through:

- Offer communication
- Pre-employment checks
- Formal offer of employment
- Agreeing starting arrangements
- Issue of contract
- Day 1
- Induction
- Check ins/review meetings
- Post induction support

Ensure you have effective processes for recruitment and pre-employment checks, as delays and issues may result in good candidates taking a job elsewhere.

Establishing and maintaining meaningful contact and communication with successful candidates, between offering them the post and their start date, will engage them in what is happening in your organisation and help reduce post offer dropouts.

Planned and robust inductions (corporate and local) provide new staff with the support and practical information they need to settle in, work effectively and feel part of the team.

Have regular catch ups or one-to-one meetings to assess progress and offer management support.

Consider using a buddy system. Experienced staff acting as peer mentors and providing pastoral support can reduce staff leaving in their first few months. It also provides the buddies with development opportunities and feeling valued.

Utilise new starter surveys to gather feedback on your recruitment and onboarding performance, to support continuous improvement and development of your processes.

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### Other things to consider:

- Provide a nominated contact of whom they can ask any questions before they start
- Introduce them to key colleagues before they commence in post, so they can feel part of the team as soon as they accept their offer
- Invitations to planned team social / fundraising events
- Greeting them personally on their first day, smile, make them feel welcome
- Ease them in gently, help them to walk before you expect them to run
- Prompt and easy access to key information and e-learning when they start
- Structure their induction to reinforce your expectations of values and behaviour (e.g. absence, appearance, language, behaviours, and habits)
- Involve the wider staff team in their induction
- Regular reviews and check ins to monitor progress and provide management support where needed (e.g. to address behaviour issues or training needs)
- If a new starter fails their induction, do not be afraid to let them go

### Skills for Care links

- [What to cover during induction for new social care staff](#)
- [Please don't go! Why the first 90 days of employment are so important](#)
- [Interview: creating a learning culture starts with induction](#)
- [Interview: how we provide a flexible approach to inducting new staff](#)
- [New starters' experience Phase 1 research report](#)
- [Buddying Vs Mentoring](#)

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## Training & Development

Being able to access training and having a relevant qualification are two of the key factors in retaining staff, as identified by Skills for Care in [The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce 2023](#).

### Areas for consideration:

- Induction training, local and corporate
- [Core and mandatory training requirements](#), as recommended by Skills for Care
- [Care Certificate](#)
- [Apprenticeships](#) (for new and existing staff)
- [Qualifications](#)
- Developmental / specialist training
- English, maths, and digital skills

### Other opportunities for staff development:

- Champions (e.g. Infection Prevention, Continence, Falls Prevention, Medication, Moving & Handling, Dignity, Nutrition & Hydration, Engagement/Activities, Social Media, Newsletter)
- New starter buddies / peer mentors
- Secondments
- Shadowing
- [I Care Ambassadors](#)
- Soft skills training (e.g. active listening, managing conflict & stress)

Think about internal career pathways and progression opportunities for members of your staff team. How can you make use of existing qualifications, skills, and experience. Identify their development needs and share development opportunities with your team. Develop their skills and leadership capabilities, support their career progression.

### Training support accessible via Staffordshire County Council:

- Care Market Development Team support adult social care providers, delivering care across Staffordshire:
  - to access the [Workforce Development Fund](#) (WDF), through which you can claim funding, of up to £2,000/learner/financial year, towards staff training and qualifications.

- with a range of commissioned training and events, accessed through our current [Eventbrite page](#).
- [Staffordshire Community Learning Service](#) offer a wide range of courses, most funded, for adults aged 19 and above across Staffordshire (e.g. English, English for speakers of other languages, Maths, Digital Skills, Employability, Wellbeing)

#### Skills for Care links

- [Developing your workforce](#)
- [Planning opportunities for our team to grow with us](#)
- [Funding available to support learning and development for social care workers in 2023](#)
- [Workforce Development Fund](#)
- [I Care...Ambassadors](#)
- [Interview: how supporting digital skills and confidence can support retention](#)

For further support with Training & Development, Apprenticeships or the Workforce Development fund, please [visit our website](#) for more information.

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## Staff Support & Wellbeing

Providing consistent and effective management support to your staff team includes:

- Regular meetings:
  - Team meetings
  - One to one meetings / [supervisions](#)
- Meaningful objectives and learning/development plans
- Annual appraisals / conversations about performance and development
- Provision of post incident support (e.g. after the death of a service user)
- Pastoral support
- Being visible, approachable and a compassionate leader
- Open and honest two-way conversations, giving staff opportunities to feedback their views, make suggestions and ask questions, to contribute to changes and decisions to improve the service

Support for managers must not be forgotten:

- The Nominated Individual should work in partnership with the registered manager and ensure that the registered manager has professional supervision and support. ([CQC Nominated Individuals Handbook](#))
- Skills for Care offer support and information for all registered managers and front-line managers, including:
  - [Registered manager membership](#)
  - [Local networks for managers](#)
    - [Staffordshire Registered Managers Network](#)
  - [Deputy manager networks](#) (for deputies, team leaders and aspiring leaders)
  - [Registered manager webinars](#)
  - [Social Care managers Facebook group](#)
  - [The care exchange](#) podcast where managers can listen to other managers sharing ideas
  - [Advice line](#)

Promoting and supporting staff wellbeing:

- Make wellbeing a focus of your workplace culture, in verbal/written communications and by example
- Get the basics right - regular breaks and a suitable space, access to facilities (e.g. toilet, changing area, hot water, microwave, fridge), secure storage for personal belongings)
- Consider Wellbeing Champions & advocates to spread key messages
- Ensure staff are aware of the benefits and wellbeing resources that are available to them, through effective communication regarding internal and external resources and opportunities

- Achieve a good work-life balance for all staff and management, this will have a positive impact on staff sickness, morale, job satisfaction, quality of care and staff retention
- Use staff feedback surveys and follow up on feedback given. Ask long-term members of staff why they have stayed
- Talk to staff and complete exit interviews/surveys to determine why people leave
- Consider flexible options to support experienced staff to stay in work if they so wish, e.g. flexible retirement and flexible working
- Consider how to best use peoples' skills and experience to
  - keep them in your workforce
  - support and inspire other staff
- How can you support those with health conditions or challenges in the workplace, such as menopause? (e.g. Policies, awareness raising, workplace environment)
- How can you support those with protected characteristics? (e.g. LGBT+ staff - awareness training, impact of misgendering)
- [Staffordshire Community Learning Service](#) offer a wide range of courses, most funded, for adults aged 19 and above across Staffordshire (e.g. English, English for speakers of other languages, Maths, Digital Skills, Employability, Wellbeing)
- [Wellbeing & Recovery College](#) offers wellbeing and recovery-focused education courses, free for adults aged 18 and above living in Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford & Wrekin & Shropshire

#### Skills for Care links

- [Managing people](#)
- [People performance management toolkit](#)
- [Supporting a diverse workforce](#)
- [Support for leaders and managers](#)
- [Support in your area](#)
- [Wellbeing](#)
- [Why compassion matters in leadership](#)
- [The Care Exchange](#) podcast:
  - 3.5 It doesn't matter the colour of the cat...
  - 3.3 I compare being a care home manager to a football manager
  - 3.8 Our aim is to break down barriers



## Positive Workplace Culture

*"Organisational culture is the "water" in the fishbowl. If the water is clean, nourishing, energising the fish will thrive and if the water is toxic the fish will die leaving the infrastructure value-less."*

Ranjan De Silva, 2018

Having a positive workplace culture is important for the attraction and retention of good staff. Nominated individuals, managers and leaders are pivotal in developing and maintaining the organisational culture.

Components of a positive workplace cultures include:

- Management / leadership:
  - compassionate
  - visible and approachable
  - lead by example
  - engage with staff at all levels
  - consult staff about changes that may affect them
  - involve staff in decision making
  - embed values and behaviours - for the service and individuals
- Clear and honest communication
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Prioritisation of staff health & wellbeing (physical and mental)
- Support for work-life balance
- It being a good place to work, making work (or some elements of it) fun
- Recognition and rewards
- Support for career progression & pathways
- Trust and respect
- Commitment & loyalty

### Skills for Care links

- Spotlight on... [Developing a positive workplace culture](#)
- [A positive culture toolkit for adult social care](#)
- [Nominated individuals' handbook: a practical guide](#)
- A caring culture - Practical ways to set and promote a positive workplace culture, recorded [webinar](#) and [supporting resources](#)
- [The Care Exchange](#) podcast
  - 1.9: Just try to add lemon curd
  - 3.4: Be less British, be more American
  - 3.9: With good culture you can achieve anything
  - 4.2: Would you dance in the rain?

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## Recognise and Reward Your Team

Skills for Care research has shown that good working conditions, such as fair pay, guaranteed working hours, flexibility, input to rotas and assistance with childcare costs are important to staff and will impact on your staff retention:

*"Employers who have a lower staff turnover go beyond the minimum requirements which means it's worthwhile enhancing the benefits package on offer to retain staff."*

Skills for Care, [Positive Benefits](#)

If you are not able to amend pay and conditions, focus on areas where you do have control:

- Use of a friends & family referral scheme, such as the [Care Friends](#) app. This employee referral app was launched in partnership with Skills for Care and can also be used to recognise and reward staff. The manager can award bonus points to recognise and reward staff performance.
- Signpost and promote access to staff discounts and benefits:
  - Those specific to your service. For example, you may have negotiated preferential rates with local taxi firms or other local businesses
  - [Blue Light Card](#)  
Social care workers are eligible and for £4.99 can register for 2-years access to more than 15,000 discounts from large national retailers to local businesses across categories such as holidays, cars, days out, fashion, gifts, insurance, phones, and more
  - [Discounts for carers](#)  
Free access to exclusive discounts, cashback & vouchers for Carers & Care Workers
  - [Vivup](#)  
Staffordshire County Councils employee benefits offer, designed to improve physical, financial, and mental health wellbeing, is available to ASC staff working for our commissioned services across Staffordshire. Includes access to various savings and discounts, and health & wellbeing resources

- Celebrate achievements and show appreciation of staff contributions:
  - Individual and team, such as:
    - on receipt of positive feedback
    - career promotions and milestones
    - long service anniversaries
    - nominations for awards
    - inspection outcomes - IPC, Environmental Health, CQC, Local Authority (and use any inspection reports with staff constructively as a catalyst for improvement)
  - Practical examples:
    - say thank you in staff meetings and one-to-ones
    - thank you notes or cards
    - “Employee of the Month” schemes, with nominations from management, staff, and service users
    - internal employee awards and events, certificates
    - take part in local/national recognition awards and awareness days
      - [Staffordshire Dignity in Care Awards](#)
      - [Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care Awards](#)
      - [Great British Care Awards](#)
      - [The National Care Awards](#)
      - [The Caring Awards](#)
      - [Home Care Awards](#)
      - [The National BAME Health & Care Awards](#)
    - allocate staff an annual budget to spend on health & wellbeing
    - gifts and incentives (e.g. wellness treats, gift vouchers)
    - public recognition through your staff intranet, service newsletters, social media, website communication, team communications on your digital care system

#### Skills for Care links

- [Rewards and recognition](#)
- [Secrets of Success](#)
- [How can reward and recognition support a positive workplace culture](#)
- [Recognition scheme supports positive workplace culture for nurses](#)
- [Home Instead Maidenhead, Henley & Wallingford share how they've developed a #PositiveWorkplaceCulture](#)
- [Care coordinator wins award](#)

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## Summary

There is no single solution or easy answer on how to improve staff retention, it is an ongoing multi-faceted challenge. However, investing in retention will directly impact on your provision of sustainable high-quality person-centred care, staff wellbeing, save both time and money and support the achievement of positive CQC ratings.

*“Nothing is impossible; the word itself says, ‘I’m possible!’”*

Audrey Hepburn, actress & humanitarian

This support pack has reviewed the benefits of good retention, factors affecting staff retention in ASC and how to identify your service specific challenges.

Ways to improve staff retention have been considered and presented in the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Onboarding
- Training & Development
- Staff Support & Wellbeing
- A Positive Workforce Culture
- How to Recognise & Reward Your Team

Focusing on the factors over which you have some control and implementing and embedding appropriate initiatives in the above areas will improve your staff retention.

*“Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don’t want to.”*

Richard Branson, British billionaire, entrepreneur, and adventurer

## Feedback

We would welcome your feedback on this support pack and suggestions for any additional content. To access the feedback form you can either scan the QR code below or access the form [directly](#).



Thank you.

**For further information, please  
contact  
[cmdt@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cmdt@staffordshire.gov.uk)**