Retention Support Pack

VERSION 2.1 FEBRUARY 2026

Contents

Introduction

Retaining staff can be 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?**

Pay & Conditions

Recognition & Appreciation

Support & Training

Culture & Values

Personal & Professional Satisfaction

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
  - 4.9 We have a few lifers and don't spend any money on recruitment!
  - 5.2 Is it a 'hell yes'?
  - 5.4 Outstanding does not mean perfect

Factors affecting staff retention in Adult Social Care (ASC)

The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England report 2023 identified 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 applied 48.7% of care workers were likely to leave, compared to only 20.6% when all five factors were in place.

Other factors identified in the report:

Less likely to leave
- those with fewer sick days
- enhanced sick pay / pension contributions
- increasing pay levels

More likely to leave
- little experience in the role / sector
- under 25 years old
- led by a new registered manager
- greater distance to travel to work

Skills for Care links

- **Understanding the reasons care workers move on and their future intentions**
- **Why we can't recruit our way out of a retention crisis**
- **Why learning and development matters**

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:**
  - o **Conversations in team meetings, supervisions, and performance appraisals**
  - o **Talk to people who are thinking of leaving about what might help them stay**
  - o **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:**
  - o **Enable you to ask their reasons for leaving and gives leavers an opportunity to provide constructive feedback**
  - o **May provide an opportunity to convert the exit of an asset into a retention win**

- **Data analysis:**
  - o **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**

  - o **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 Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme, to claim funding towards staff training and qualifications

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
- Workforce intelligence
- Learning and development funding for adult social care

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, <u>Skills for Care Webinar: Maximise Recruitment</u>

Skills for Care links

- <u>Keeping the right people</u>
- <u>Retaining more people</u>
- <u>Retaining your workforce</u>
- <u>How we reduced turnover from 92% to 3% in two years</u>
- <u>Top tips for adult social care workforce retention</u>
- <u>Nursing recruitment and retention</u>
- <u>The care exchange podcast:</u>
  - 5.6 It's good to connect

Recruitment

Good recruitment is vital for the quality and sustainability of adult social care services. By attracting and retaining the right staff, care services can improve staff morale, help to create a positive work culture, provide continuity of care and reduce staff turnover.

It's not just about recruiting someone; it's about recruiting the right someone.

"People are not your most important asset. The right people are."

Jack Welch, Former CEO and chairman of General Electric

The **CMDT Recruitment Support Pack** reviews the tools and resources available to care providers. Information has been considered and presented in the following areas:

- **Values Based Recruitment**
- **The recruitment process**
    - **Identify the need**
    - **Advertise and attract**
    - **Screen and shortlist**
    - **Interview and assess**
    - **Make the offer**
    - **Communication**
- **Recruitment platforms**
- **The Social Care Hub**
- **Sources of guidance and resources**
    - **National**
    - **Regional**
    - **Local**
- **Legal frameworks**

The CMDT Recruitment Support Pack can be accessed through our **Workforce Support Packs webpage**.

International Recruitment

International recruitment is an option that has been used to address workforce challenges, such as skills shortages, high turnover and increasing demand. However, it is not a quick, cheap or easy solution, and requires careful planning, preparation, and follow-up to ensure that it is successful, sustainable and compliant with Home Office compliance requirements.

The Government published the Immigration white paper, [Restoring Control over the Immigration System](#), on 12 May 2025 and following [immigration rule changes published in July 2025](#), recruitment from abroad via the Health and Care Worker visa route ended on 22 July 2025.

The UK does have a significant pool of displaced international care workers and care providers are encouraged to continue to engage with these displaced workers.

West Midlands Adult Social Care providers and international care workers can access support from the regional partnership through the [West Midlands Social Care International Recruitment Hub](#).

The [CMDT International Recruitment Support Pack](#) reviews the tools, support and resources available to registered managers and owners of adult social care services who are considering or already engaged in international recruitment. Information has been considered and presented in the following areas:

- **Quick Reference – What to do if you have concerns**
- **Overview of the risks, issues, and benefits**
- **International recruitment toolkit for social care**
- **Compliance and Home Office audits**
- **Pastoral care and training support**
- **Sources of guidance, support and resources**
    - **National**
    - **Regional**
    - **Local**
- **Legal frameworks**

The CMDT International Recruitment Support Pack can be accessed through our [Workforce Support Packs webpage](#).

The [CMDT International Recruitment Support Information webpages](#) also bring together information, guidance and resources, for both adult social care employers and international care workers.

Onboarding

Skills for Care estimate that the turnover rate of adult social care staff was 24.2% in 2023/24. ([The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce 2024](#))

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
- Pre-arrival and induction planning
- Day 1 Welcome
- Induction process
    - Week 1
    - Month 1
    - Months 3-6
- 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.

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

- [Induction toolkit](#)
- [How to use our new induction resources](#)
- [Why it's important to deliver a good induction](#)
- [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](#)
- [The care exchange podcast:](#)
  - 4.1 What is your favourite chocolate bar?
  - 4.9 We have a few lifers and don't spend any money on recruitment!

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
- [Statutory and mandatory training requirements](#), as recommended by Skills for Care
- [Care Certificate](#)
- [Apprenticeships](#) for new and existing staff. (The CMDT Apprenticeships Support Pack can be accessed can be accessed through our [Workforce Support Packs webpage)](#)
- [Qualifications](#)
- [The Care Workforce Pathway](#)
- 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
- Soft skills training (e.g. active listening, managing conflict & stress)
- Department

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:

- **Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC)**
  - [Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme](#) (LDSS)
    - This funding is intended to support the adult care workforce. It allows eligible employers to reclaim expenses incurred for specific courses and qualifications for their staff.
    - Regulated staff, including registered nurses, nursing associates, allied health professionals and occupational therapists are not eligible for this funding.
    - To qualify the employer must:
      - Provide an adult social care service
      - Directly employ care staff in England
      - Have an up-to-date Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set account
    - To be eligible the staff member must:
      - Be non-regulated care staff in England, including deputy and Care Quality Commission (CQC)-registered managers and agency staff
      - Be legally employed in England and have a UK National Insurance number
    - International staff who meet these criteria are also eligible for the funding.

- **Staffordshire County Council**
  - [Care Market Development Team](#) offer a range of free commissioned training and events, accessed through our [Social Care Academy](#).
  - [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

- [What data tells us about how learning and development supports retention](#)
- [Developing your workforce](#)
- [Planning opportunities for our team to grow with us](#)
- [Interview: how supporting digital skills and confidence can support retention](#)
- [The impact of learning and development in retaining support staff](#)
- [My journey to becoming the youngest CQC registered manager](#)
- [The care exchange podcast:](#)
    - 4.9 We Our aim is to break down barriers have a few lifers and don't spend any money on recruitment!
    - 3.8 Our aim is to break down barriers
    - 5.5 We want colleagues to take ownership of their careers

For further support with Training & Development please [visit our website](#) for more information.

Staff Support & Wellbeing

Providing effective management support to your staff and having a focus on their wellbeing are key components of staff retention, and impact significantly on staff health, happiness, and performance.

"Whoever is happy will make others happy too."   Anne Frank, Diarist

The **CMDT Staff Support and Wellbeing Support Pack** reviews the benefits of supporting staff and promoting their wellbeing and how to identify your support and wellbeing challenges. Information has been considered and presented in the following areas:

- **Benefits of supporting staff and promoting their wellbeing**
- **Identifying your support and wellbeing challenges**
- **Support for staff**
- **Support for managers**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
    - **Promoting and supporting staff wellbeing**
    - **Wellbeing Resources**
    - **Recognise and Reward Your Team**
    - **Staff Discounts and Benefits**

Further information can be accessed through the **CMDT Staff Support and Wellbeing webpages**.

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 have produced "A positive culture toolkit for adult social care" which includes information, guidance, practical activities you can use in your workplace and examples of services who have established and improved their culture as a priority and have achieved good and outstanding ratings in recognition of their positive workplace culture.

Skills for Care links

- **Leaders' role in developing a positive workplace culture**
- **Nominated individuals' handbook: a practical guide**
- A caring culture – Practical ways to set and promote a positive workplace culture, recorded **webinar** and **supporting resources**
- **How workplace culture supports equality, diversity and inclusion for staff**
- **What you can do as a nominated individual to ensure your service has a positive workplace culture**
- **How to audit and improve your company culture**
- **Creating cultures that retain staff**
- **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?
  - 5.4 Outstanding does not mean perfect

Legal Frameworks

Care Sector Specific

- [Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014](#) ([CQC guidance to regulations for service providers and managers](#))
  - Relevant Regulations
    - 7   Requirements relating to workers
    - 12   Safe care and treatment
    - 17   Good governance
    - 18   Staffing
    - 19   Employment of fit and proper staff
    - 20   Duty of candour

General Employment

- [Employment Rights Act 2025](#): Introduces reforms including new rights for zero-hours workers, strengthened protection against unfair dismissal, day-one eligibility for parental and paternity leave, enhanced Statutory Sick Pay without waiting periods or earnings thresholds, significant updates to collective redundancy rules to ensure better consultation and protection, and the establishment of a new Fair Work Agency to oversee and enforce core employment rights.
- [Employment Rights Act 1996](#): Provided a range of employment rights to workers, such as the right to a written statement of employment particulars and protection against unfair dismissal.
- [National Minimum Wage Act 1998](#): Ensures that all workers, including migrant workers, are paid at least the national minimum wage.
- [Equality Act 2010](#): Protects individuals from discrimination in the workplace and wider society, including discrimination based on race, which can apply to migrant workers.
- [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#): Addresses issues of forced labour and human trafficking, ensuring that migrant workers are not subject to exploitation.
- [Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023](#): Provides the right of employees and other workers to request variations to particular terms and conditions of employment, including working hours, times and locations.
- [EU Settlement Scheme](#): Under this scheme, EU, EEA, and Swiss citizens, and their family members, can apply to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021.
- [Skilled Worker Visa Regulations](#): Govern the process for employers to sponsor non-UK residents to work in specific skilled roles.
- [TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006)](#) protects employee rights when a business, part of a business, or service transfers to a new employer in the UK.

General

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UKGDPR/DPA 2018 gives extra protection to criminal offence data (under Article 10)

Immigration Specific / International Recruitment

- Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules published on 1 July 2025
- Immigration Act 1971: This is the primary legislation controlling immigration to the UK, including the rules around the entry and stay of non-EEA nationals.
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999: This act includes provisions for the management of the asylum process and the enforcement of immigration controls.
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- Immigration Act 2016: Introduces measures to tackle illegal working and incentivize compliance with immigration laws by employers

Code of Practice

The UK Code of Practice for International Recruitment, published by the Department of Health and Social Care, is the set of guidelines and principles that health and social care employers and recruitment agencies in the UK must follow to ensure ethical international recruitment.

Legislation is subject to change. It is recommended to refer to the latest government guidelines or seek legal advice as appropriate.

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**
- **International Recruitment**
- **Onboarding**
- **Training & Development**
- **Staff Support & Wellbeing**
- **A Positive Workforce Culture**

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.

For further information, please contact cmdt@staffordshire.gov.uk

Staffordshire Social Care Workforce

CMDT
Care Market Development Team