



Trends Report

Care Providers 2023

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Introduction

A sector in crisis

Around 22% of the UK population is expected to be aged 65 years or older by 2031 – that's around 13 million people who will no longer be in the workforce, with more complex health needs and putting increasing demands upon the health and care sector. This isn't an issue that can be shied away from as it will affect almost everyone in the country, either directly in relation to their own care or that of relatives and loved ones.

Average life expectancy was brought down by around 1.3 years during the pandemic, from 79.9 years for males and 83.6 years for females in 2019, to 78.6 years and 82.6 years respectively and the over-65s now account for around 11% of the population. During these post-pandemic years, with a labour shortage and a cost-of-living crisis, the care sector is in a precarious position.

In order to understand the issues that are facing care and support providers now, Advanced commissioned a survey between 3rd and 13th January 2023. We took responses from 435 care and support provider owners, CEOs, managing directors, CFOs and COOs working in domiciliary care, residential care, supported living, extra care and retirement living to gain insights into the specific challenges they are facing and how they plan to face them.

The care sector is suffering a significant workforce shortage. Figures published by [Skills for Care](#) show there were 165,000 vacancies in 2022, with more than one in ten care worker posts unfilled. As the UK's largest employer by sector, this is hugely concerning.

The situation is expected to worsen. The ageing population means that each year brings more older people with more complex health and care needs, who are living for longer. Brexit has reduced some of the numbers of experienced care workers available to meet this need, and there are not enough new entrants to the sector. Turnover rates are high, at around 29% on average and nearly 53% for the youngest workers.

With a staffing crisis of this magnitude, it feels like managers are spending all their time fighting fires and have little time for forward planning. In order to build a more sustainable provision of service new solutions are urgently required. These must give care and support providers the time and space in their working week to confidently forecast what is going on in their business, across staff rostering and training, accommodation management, regulatory compliance, and business management and growth. These solutions must make it easier to attract and retain staff, meet mandatory and recommended training requirements, manage move-in and move-out processes for optimum occupancy, and manage business processes for greater efficiency and most effective use of available resources.





Staffing

97% of care organisations are facing issues with rostering.

46% say their employees are unhappy with payrates.

Almost one-quarter (**24%**) report that payroll errors are high.

60% identify a high number of unsuitable candidates as a challenge for recruitment.

Regulation changes present a challenge to retention, with **36%** of leaders saying staff are unhappy about these.

41% tell us it is difficult to fill training sessions due to planning and covering of shifts, and **37%** say co-ordinating training sessions is complicated.

More government support is desired to help with staffing issues. **59%** want an increase in funding to help with pay and conditions for employees and **57%** want to see more schemes and campaigns designed to specifically recruit care workers.

Managing accommodation

95% of care organisations have problems with void management.

52% tell us that visibility of move-in and move-out can cause difficulties in void management.

52% also say visibility of property readiness for move-in is a problem.





Business management and growth

99% of organisations have aspirations for growth, but face barriers including **33%** having difficulties in recruitment because of the lack of attractiveness/status of the role and **28%** because of high staff turnover.

98% have problems with management information.

58% have developed their own processes, including spreadsheets, to give themselves advanced visibility of their business, with **31%** saying their systems only give limited visibility.

Almost one-quarter (**24%**) of the leadership tell us they are stressed and unable to cope all of the time, rising to **66%** among those running an organisation of 1,000+ employees.

More than one-third, **36%** say they will have to take time off sick in order to cope with these pressures, rising to **70%** among those running an organisation of 1,000+ employees. On average this is higher for males, **39%**, than for females, **28%**.

On average, **7%** of care and support leaders say they plan to leave their role to deal with the stress. This is higher for females, **13%**, than males, **6%**.

Compliance

Care Quality, Compliance and Reportable Event Management is a real issue for organisations, with **48%** telling us their current IT systems are not adequate, potentially putting clients at risk.

Over one-third (**34%**) have had previous incidents of missing records.





1. Employee Attraction & Retention

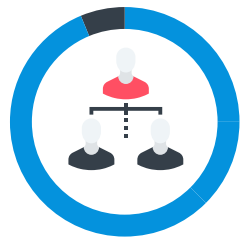
The Health & Care Sector is very much about people. Unlike many other kinds of work, it involves interactions of a private and personal nature with service users, and requires a particular set of skills, attitude and aptitude of its employees. It isn't a job for just anyone. When they are hiring, 60% of care and support providers say they get high numbers of unsuitable candidates, which begs the question, why?

Are the high numbers of unsuitable candidates people who are under the misconception that low-paid work is easy? Perhaps the low levels of pay reflects a low expectation for retention, encouraging jobseekers to give it a go with no real commitment to staying in post for long.

There is also a problem with time to hire, as 48% tell us that they have lost out on applicants who have gone elsewhere during the hiring process. We can't know whether these applicants accepted offers from other care providers, or were attracted into another sector

with better pay and less stress. However, this statistic highlights the importance of quicker, more candidate-focused recruitment processes that make people feel valued and sought-after.

People working in the care sector can often feel undervalued and payrates may suggest their work is not awarded a proportionate value. 46% of leaders tell us that employees are not happy with payrates and 32% say that organisational growth is hindered by their own inability to afford to pay higher wages.



97%

face challenges in recruiting staff and 98% face retention challenges.

Care, particularly in old age, is a universal concern and will affect almost all of us at some point, whether for ourselves or for our relatives and dependents. Many leaders believe there is a need for more government initiatives and funding to help the sector grow a more sustainable workforce. 59% would like to see more funding to enable improved pay and conditions for employees, while 37% think a higher minimum wage should be specified for care workers.

57% suggest that the government should develop schemes and campaigns directed at the specific recruitment of care workers and another 57% that it should incentivise greater uptake of the role by providing subsidised or free training.

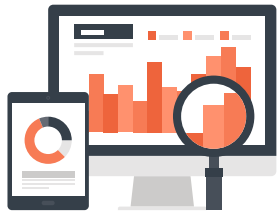
One of the biggest challenges with staffing is the allocation of hours. Not getting this right impacts on existing staff, who may leave for another employer that can offer the number of hours they want, and at the right times of day/days of the week. Being able to fulfil employee needs around hours is also an important element in successful recruitment. 36% of care home leaders tell us that despite the need for suitable people to fill roles they have difficulty providing the right number of hours for employees and 32% have difficulty providing hours at the right time of day.





2. Training & Career Development

Across all sectors, the availability of high-quality training and the opportunity for learning and development is a powerful factor in staff attraction. People want to work for an employer who is going to invest in them. The same is true in the care sector, with the added requirement for mandatory induction and training to safeguard vulnerable people.



98%

of care providers have problems with management information.

The 15 standards set out in the Care Certificate cover all areas where new starters to the sector are expected to demonstrate understanding and proficiency, from Duty of Care; and Awareness of Mental Health, Dementia and Learning Disabilities; through Privacy & Dignity; Fluids & Nutrition; Basic Life Support; Safeguarding; and more.

With each module taking at least 30 to 45 minutes to complete, the training represents a considerable investment in time. In our survey, 30% of leaders report that the induction and training process is not a great experience for employees. This can only harm staff attraction and retention, and 38% tell us that they have

a problem with new recruits dropping out during the induction period. More than one-third (34%) comment that induction training is too expensive and 25% say it takes too long. Unfortunately, the initial cost and time taken is multiplied further by the early drop-out rate and high staff turnover.

There is also a requirement for updating training as regulations change, and in line with recommended and mandatory timescales for refresher training. 36% of respondents tell us that staff are unhappy with the frequency of regulation amendments that hamper their availability to spend time delivering care to clients.

For providers, the day-to-day priority is delivering care and support and that requires having enough staff available at the right times to meet all needs. 41% tell us they have difficulty balancing the organisation of shift cover with training sessions, a figure that shoots up to 83% for the very smallest organisations with one to four employees. 37% of all respondents say that co-ordinating training sessions is complicated and more than one in ten (11%) say refresher training is complicated to manage or co-ordinate.

One of the biggest barriers to attracting and retaining good people in the care sector is the lack of status attached to the role, and specifically how this is reflected in pay. According to the [Skills for Care](#) Report 2022, on average, care workers with five years' or more experience are paid just 7p an hour more than a colleague with less than one year's experience. The average care worker is paid £1 per hour less than a newly appointed NHS healthcare assistant and four out of five jobs in the UK economy pay more than jobs in social care.

With such low expectations of salary, and the physical and emotional demands of a job caring for elderly, unwell and vulnerable people, it is no wonder that the most committed care workers see it as a vocation, and not a route to financial security. For others, it is only really a stepping stone to a better paid job in another sector, contributing to the high rates of employee churn. This needs to change. By identifying and implementing ways to reduce costs in other areas, care provider organisations may be able to increase salaries, at least for the more experienced workers.

It will be crucial in the building of a more sustainable workforce pipeline that new entrants can see care work as a viable long-term career. Starting salaries need to be sufficient for employees to have a reasonable quality of life, reflecting the often anti-social hours and demands of the job. In some cases, such as in domiciliary care, workers are only paid for the time they spend in a client's home, not for the time they take travelling between locations. This could potentially mean that without appropriate calculation intervention, care workers could earn less than the hourly minimum wage.





Promoting care work as a key future role will need to start in schools and colleges. We were surprised to see that less than one in five (17%) providers believe the government should work with Further Education colleges to support and promote careers in the care sector, although this figure rises to 29% for those working in larger organisations with 500-1000 employees. Developing apprenticeships that focus on the skills and experience that the care sector is so desperately short of must be a priority. That can only happen when pay, benefits, working environment, and learning and development opportunities all reflect the value that society should be placing on these critical workers.



3. Void Management & Referrals

Managing the allocation of accommodation is a major challenge for all care providers. 52% tell us visibility of accommodation for move-ins and move-outs is a problem and another 52% have difficulties with visibility of property readiness for move-in. This problem is even greater in extra care provision settings, at 57% and 71% respectively.



95%

of care organisations have problems with void management.

Maintaining optimum occupancy is crucial to ensure income stability and also to meet future rostering requirements. The care sector is largely still managed using manual processes such as spreadsheets and 58% of respondents tell us they have developed their own manual processes in order to try to have advanced visibility of the business. More than one in ten (11%) say they have no advanced visibility, meaning that effectively organising accommodation allocation is a constant challenge and they are always acting upon out-dated information.

More than one-third (39%) tell us that one of the void management challenges is the financial pressure caused by penalties for empty properties. Whether the contracts in place are for spot or block basis and whether they're directly with the local authority or maybe the ICB, it shows that the pressure to ensure that providers can supply the services requested is high. These commissioned services are not limited to residential (including nursing care) but also domiciliary, resulting in providers needing to be fully aware of bed/room readiness as well as staffing availability. The potential contract penalties with providers are an added complexity and therefore it is

in everybody's interest for the client to be receiving the service they need and at the right point.

One of the challenges for care providers during the Covid-19 pandemic was offering available accommodation to people who had tested positive for the virus. The alternative was to reject them, leaving them to 'block' hospital beds, precluding the admission of other, more critical patients with the care provider denying itself crucial income. Care homes became synonymous with super spreader events at this time, magnifying the existing issues around recruitment, retention and staff morale. The situation highlighted the impossible position that many care provider organisations found themselves in, deciding on the most responsible course of action.

Even now, although the pandemic is over, continuing Covid-19 cases and other infectious illnesses such as flu continue to put pressure on the sector.



97%

have challenges with client referrals and enquiries.



4. Compliance & Regulation

During the pandemic the public was encouraged to clap for the NHS, but many people working in care felt largely overlooked. Care workers in all settings showed remarkable resilience during and after this difficult time and continue to deliver outstanding, respectful, safe and effective care. However, a few bad apples have hit the headlines and public awareness of what can go on when the wrong people are working in care, when inadequate or indifferent leadership facilitates a culture of neglect or even cruelty.



48%

say their current IT systems are not adequate for Care Quality, Compliance and Reportable Event Management, potentially putting clients at risk.

All good care workers understand the importance of regulation and its role in safeguarding clients as well as offering protections to them as employees. When things go wrong, which can happen in any organisation, it is crucial that good record-keeping exists and can be referred to, particularly in situations where compliance and liability are under consideration. Over one-third (34%) of the organisations in our survey have had previous incidents of missing records. As well as the legal implications of not being able to provide correct documentation, missing records can also have a negative impact on the future care of an individual.

Safeguarding clients and staff is one of the key

considerations for care providers. When considering Care Quality, Compliance and Reportable Event Management almost one-quarter (23%) say their systems provide poor visibility of key events such as accidents, incidents and safeguarding concerns, and 21% need a better solution for capturing information including injuries, body maps, repositioning, hydration, nutrition and medication during point of care activities. The smallest organisations in particular struggle with this, and 17% of those with one to four employees say the recording of safeguarding processes is largely manual, either written down or entered into a spreadsheet. Modernising and speeding up these processes would also help ensure that the correct

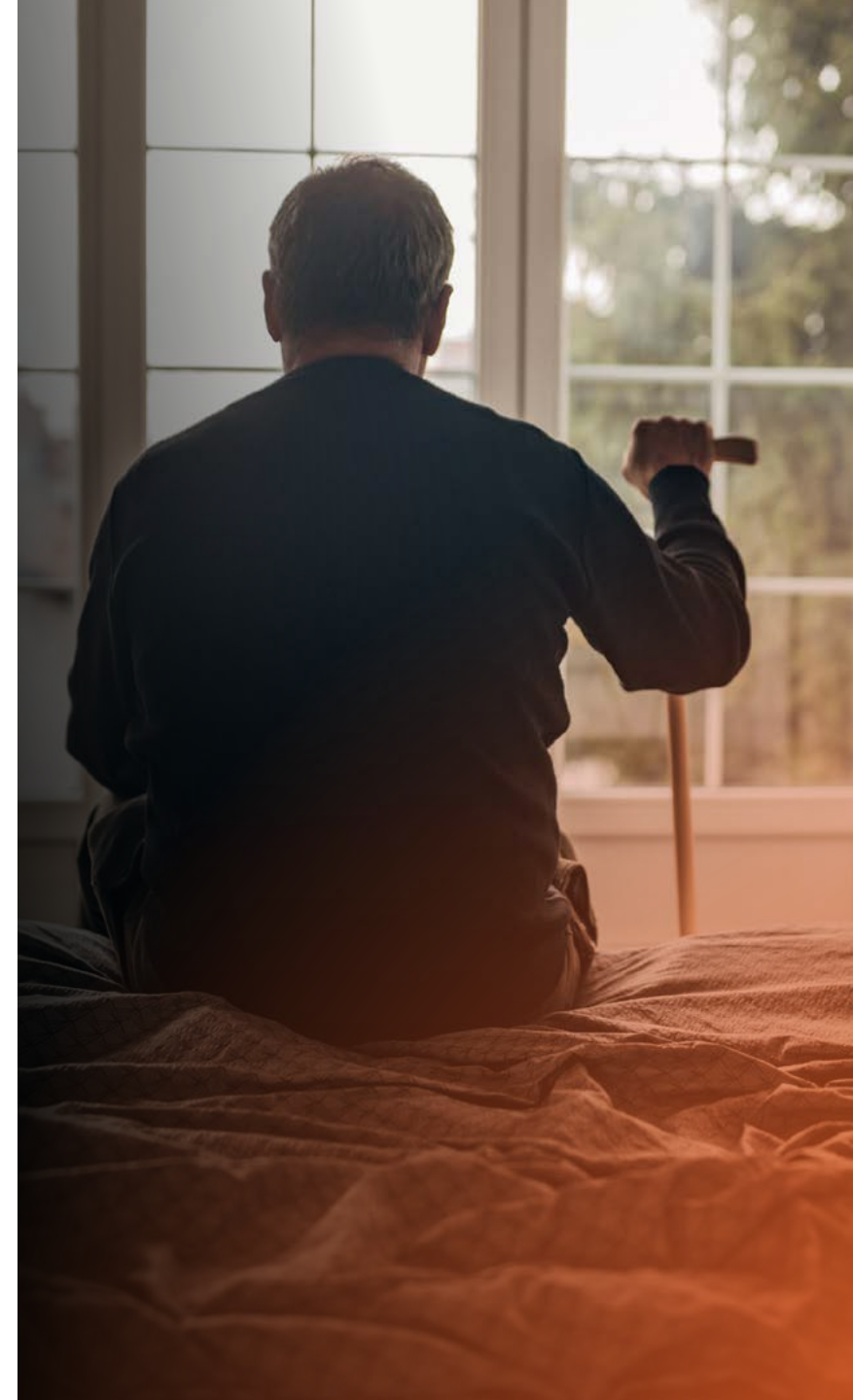
information was immediately available when required by the appropriate regulatory body, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for internal reviews and for staff development and learning opportunities.

Ensuring that all employees have the Care Certificate is one of the ways that providers can demonstrate compliance to the CQC and exemplify a commitment to operating best practice at all times. Finding the time within people's busy work schedules for training is difficult, and in many cases care workers are completing modules at home and in their own time. Bringing teams together for mandatory and recommended regular refresher training brings further challenge and complication to rostering schedules, but allocating the time is crucial in order to secure a positive rating from the appropriate regulatory body that attracts more referrals and enquiries from clients and local authorities.

The issue of void management is also linked to ratings and compliance as some councils won't place people in care homes that are rated poorly. This means that more hospital beds are 'blocked' by patients who ought to be able to be discharged and moved into available

accommodation, further impacting pressures on NHS resources. A further implication for care providers who are rated a below standard is the inability to generate income from vacancies, although they may be liable for their usual outgoings such as paying staff. Without tools that enable access to up-to-date information, helping organisations to forward-plan it is very difficult to marry staffing requirements with customer need, and there is little scope to achieve efficiency.

As a people-focused role, care workers want to spend their time delivering care to clients, and one-quarter (25%) of employers say their staff are unhappy at the amount of manual admin they have to do, that gets in the way of actual care and support. 36% also say their employees are unhappy with the frequency of regulation amendments. These will naturally require time to be invested in training, so that employees are confident in their understanding of updates and can apply any changes to the way they carry out their work. As previously mentioned, this time is a precious resource that many care workers and their employers find hard to schedule into an already over-committed roster.





5. The Daily Grind

Many sectors undertook digital transformation during and after the pandemic, implementing cloud-based technology that allowed for immediate access to an accurate and real time information about the state of the business. One of the big drivers for this was remote, and latterly hybrid working. Digital technology allows employees to collaborate and work productively from home – something that is not a feature of the majority of care work roles.



11%

of leaders say they have no advanced visibility of business processes

Instead, care provision is very hands-on and client-facing, and perhaps not surprisingly in many cases, people remain bound to the manual recording of events. They are using spreadsheets and other paper-based processes to manage business-critical functions such as cash flow, payroll, rostering, recruitment and facilities management. An example of this in our survey reveals that more than one-third (36%) say their staff use paper to record mileage and expenses. What happens to reimbursement if these records go astray?

Inadequate systems and processes invariably lead to mistakes. Almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents in our survey say that payroll errors are high – no wonder staff retention is a problem if, after a long week of demanding shifts, a care worker finds they haven't been paid in full. Consistent errors with payroll, including overpayments that have to be paid back, are very demoralising for staff and absorb a disproportionate amount of time and admin team resources to put right. 26% of organisations say they have a high number of central finance employees to cope with manual processes, but one might argue it would

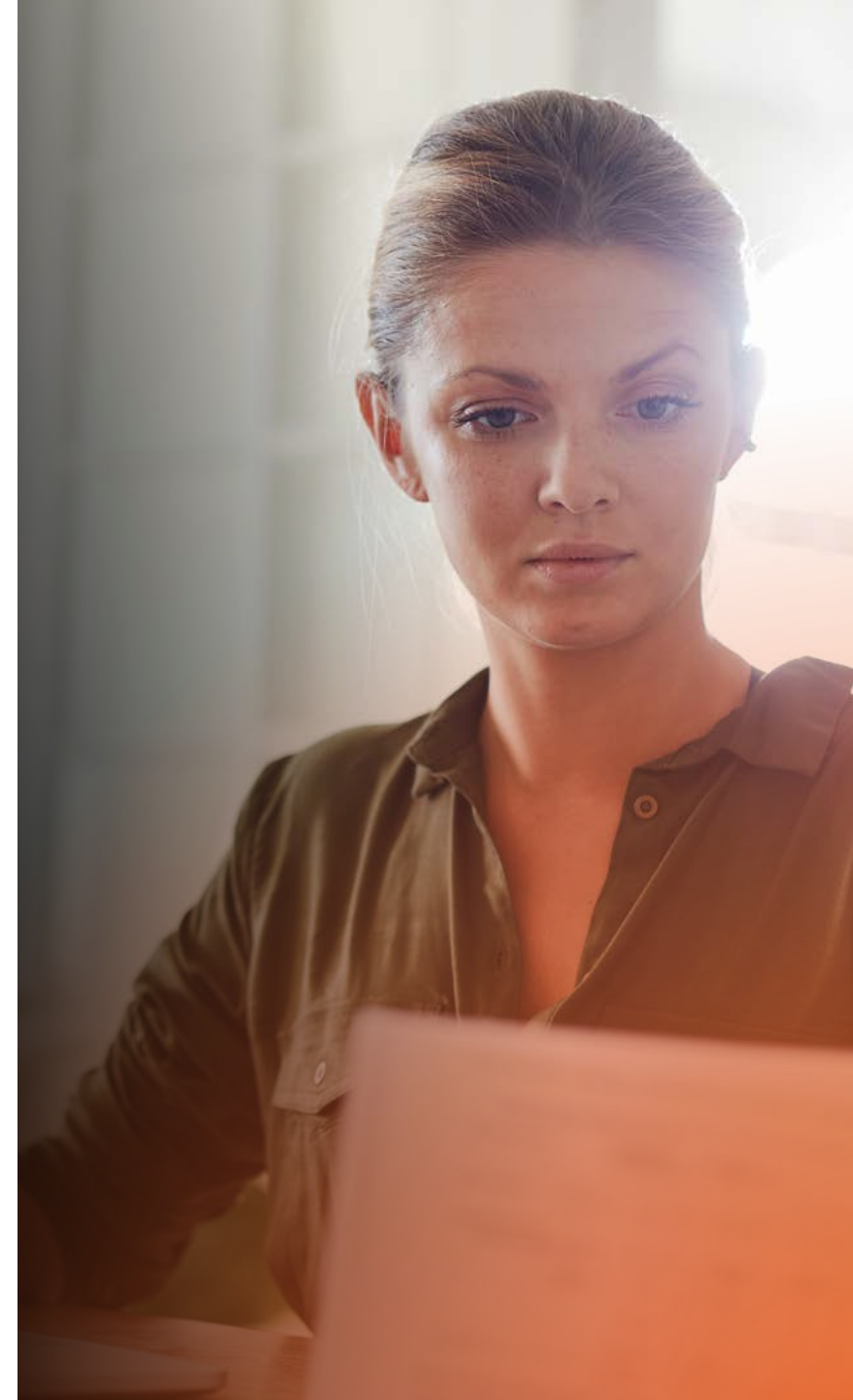
make better business sense to employ fewer admin and finance staff, deploy reliable digital processes and hire more, better-paid care workers.

The successful day-to-day running of any business is governed by the quality and accuracy of strategies and planning previously put in place, which requires tools that provide advanced visibility of operations. In order to try to achieve this 58% of care providers have developed their own processes, including things like spreadsheets, but 31% say this only gives limited visibility and 11% tell us they have none at all. It is virtually impossible to make informed plans on this basis.

Our survey also reveals insights about what is like to be in charge of a care provider business. Taking into account the massive challenges around staffing, void management and compliance, it still comes as a surprise to learn that almost one-quarter (24%) of leaders say they feel stressed and unable to cope all of the time, with 38% feeling this at least some of the time – that's 62% who are feeling the strain to some extent. Specifically looking at people who work in organisations of 1000+ employees, two-thirds

(66%) say they feel stressed and unable to cope all of the time, indicating that the challenges are magnified in the largest care provider businesses. Of the rest, an average 34% say they do feel stressed sometimes but are coping well.

It looks like something has to give, and soon. More than half (54%) of leaders say they plan to get some help with managing the business while 36% say they will have to take some time off sick in order to be able to cope. This rises to a shocking 70% of those in organisations with over 1000 employees. Aside from the detriment to their own health, any absences in the leadership will further impact negatively on the ability to cope for others in the organisation who have to try to pick up the slack.





6. Technology helps people help people

Half (49%) of those who responded in our survey say they have insufficient modern technology to support the running of their business. Helping cash flow and optimising resources are the main drivers for organisations that are deciding to invest in and deploy technology. 64% would invest in increased focus on the management of client accommodation and billing, and nearly half (47%) on financial management. More than one-third (35%) say they would deploy technology to help with employee rostering, rising to 44% for those working in Care Homes.



98%

of care providers have problems with management information.

In such a manually managed environment, there are a number of inevitable management information challenges. 36% of care provider organisations have difficulties with heavy utilisation of spreadsheets. One-quarter (26%) employ a high number of central finance staff to cope with manual processes and 26% say they have to work with a lot of information from different sources, while 10% spend a lot of time just collating information. Spreadsheets are vulnerable to human error with inputting and updating, and running reports is very time consuming. Just having to go back to amend one single entry can mean the entire reporting process needs to be repeated and once it is, the

data becomes old news within an hour or two. Care providers tell us that the process of submitting invoices and other information to local authorities and funders can be exacting. One-third (33%) of care providers say they struggle with providing timely invoices that meet funder requirements and 33% also find the requirement to submit invoices via a portal is a challenge. 37% struggle with manually changing invoices after initial creation, meaning any late updates or error amends take up a disproportionate amount of time, with the inevitable delay in receiving payment. Technology that provides flexibility as well as being easily integrated with third-

party website portals can make these processes much more joined-up and streamlined.

Our survey shows that 31% of organisations experience delays between systems in passing data in real time, and 14% find their data is out of date after the point of creation. Cloud-based care business management software gives all users immediate access to the same information in real time, ensuring there is only one true picture of the situation at any time. This is critical when dealing with things like rostering, when employees may go off sick or be unable to arrive for the start of their shift. A dynamic rostering tool will make sure that the right number of people are allocated to the right jobs, using customisable data fields that may include things like specific skills and training, or the distance between domiciliary care jobs in order to reduce time spend travelling and optimise care time.

We know that one of the main challenges for employers trying to attract and retain staff is being able to offer them the number of hours at the times they want, so not having the ability to see this availability instantly can mean good candidates are lost. 48% tell us that one of

their hiring challenges is candidates going elsewhere during the recruitment process, and 47% say they have a lack of visibility of staff for specific times of the day or week. Having this information immediately available in real time could secure the best candidates at interview stage and ensure employees are happy with their hours, increasing staff retention rates.

Staff retention matters so keenly in care work not just because the cost of repeatedly advertising, hiring and onboarding new staff erodes profit margins, but because clients come to depend upon the people who look after them. 34% say maintaining the same staff visiting the same clients is difficult, but this is one of the key elements that can make a real quality difference for clients and their families. Particularly in cases where the client has dementia or problems with their memory, as well as those who struggle with the idea of trusting a stranger in their own homes, being looked after by the same people day in, day out, matters for their sense of wellbeing and security.

28% of care providers say they cannot optimise the total travel/care time required for care workers to effectively





deal with residents or patients with their current IT systems. As managing calculations for items like paying travel time between visits can be complex and difficult for care providers to manage without accurate software, errors can make it less attractive to work in a domiciliary type care setting. Optimising care time is also crucial in residential care settings such as care homes and supported living, and 37% of leaders working in extra care provision highlight this as a challenge. Using digital technology that automates admin tasks and speeds up the recording of events or patient care, frees staff up for client-facing care and support delivery.

HR functions can also be improved considerably using digital technology that gives a real time view of the facts. On average 17% tell us they have problems with 'surprise' unspent leave at the end of the year. This is a particular problem for very small organisations and one-third (33%) of those with just one to four employees struggle with this. Discovering that members of such a small team need to take leave when the year is running out means they either have to be given time off, creating staffing shortages and additional pressure on leaders to fill in, or be paid in lieu which adds to the overall cost of delivering care to clients.

Being able to customise the way data is collected and viewed empowers care providers to gather important information that can help make significant cost savings. For example, when accommodation becomes available, there are a number of processes and actions that need to take place, such as cleaning, before it can be made available to a new client. More than half (52%) of respondents have difficulty knowing when property is ready for move-in, but those using cloud-based technology can confidently know in real time that every required action has been taken.

Despite the myriad of challenges facing care provider organisations, 99% have aspirations for growth. They face barriers including 33% facing difficulties in recruitment because of the lack of attractiveness/status of the role and 28% say it is because of high staff turnover. Surprisingly, only 12% cite the cost-of-living crisis as a barrier to growth, but for 37%, lack of access to finance is the biggest barrier. The figure is higher at 50% for the smallest organisations with one to four employees and at 59% for the very largest with over 1000 employees.



Closing the Gap

We don't just have a social responsibility to fix social care, there is a society-wide imperative to make sure there is sufficient, high-quality care available for everyone now and into the future. If not, the problem will only get worse. With around 11 million people in the UK aged 65 and over, equating to 19% of the total population, predictions are that this will have risen to almost 13 million or 22% of the population by 2031. Data published by [The Kings Fund](#) reveals that the number of years a person can expect to live in good health is 62.4 for men and 60.9 years for women and it is declining.



In ten years' time there will be almost 13 million people aged 65 and over in the UK

22 %
of the population.

There is technology that can help alleviate this increasing pressure in the sector. Taken together, a range of initiatives by government, education and training providers, and the general public themselves will have an effect over time.

There are also more immediate steps that care provider organisations can take to better equip themselves and enable more efficient working and management processes now. They need to adopt technology that helps them to do more, with less.

According to Government figures, around [1.5 million](#) people worked in adult social care in 2021-22 – more than

in the UK's biggest employer, the NHS. While the NHS has adopted digital technology to help improve processes, creating more efficiencies that combine to provide more time for patient care, the social care sector appears to be lagging behind. Unlike the NHS this sector is made up of many employers, some of which are large corporate groups while many others are small and run by owner/managers. Problems with staffing mean that many leaders are working ridiculously long hours, covering for absent staff and unfilled posts. They have little time to take a step back to look at the bigger picture and devise strategies that can improve day-to-day working and enable future growth.

Implementing designed-for-purpose digital technology is key to creating more time for forward planning, giving leaders more insights into their current business processes such as cash flow, payroll, void management and capacity planning.

For care staff, this may require a shift in mindset as paper-based records and processes are replaced with digital alternatives. Using technology on their own devices or similar tablets and smartphones provided by their employer will help them adapt quickly to new practices. One-quarter (25%) of leaders say their employees are unhappy as they want to spend more time delivering care and less on manual administration and cloud-based care business management software can deliver that time. Finding the solution to the staffing problem - the attraction and retention of suitable, skilled, motivated staff who feel valued and appropriately rewarded for what they do will be the step change towards closing the gap between supply and demand in the care sector. Care workers want to spend more time delivering care to clients, and less time completing manual admin tasks. They want to spend less time in the car, or going back and forth across town, with optimised journey planning that takes full account

of the time they spend in clients' homes too. They want to work the hours they have signed up for, and they want well-structured induction and on-going training that keeps them compliant with legislation as well as building more value into their jobs. They want job satisfaction, to be paid accurately and to be recognised as an important part of a growing sector in the UK.

Cloud-based care business management software is the enabler for all of this. Besides, digital processes can help ensure better management, provide transparency and data to protect care providers and employees when issues around compliance, quality of care and reportable events occur. When the day-to-day management can run more seamlessly, working in the care sector will become less complicated and more rewarding for managers and for staff.



About Advanced

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We encourage our customers to think differently and adapt to the changing needs of their business. Powered by our Cloud-first software, they streamline processes, boost productivity, make insightful decisions and provide their people with the right tools to excel.

We work with organisations in all sectors and of all sizes - from healthcare to legal, education to not-for-profits. Whether they want to move to the Cloud, invest in ERP, manage core business functions, adopt leading sector-specific solutions or modernise their legacy applications, we can deliver immediate value.

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