



Workforce retention in social care and other low-wage labour markets

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Disclaimers

This study is part of the Retention and Sustainability of Social Care Workforce (RESSCW) project, funded by the Health Foundation's Efficiency Research Programme. The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK. The views expressed are entirely those of the authors.

This work was produced using statistical data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

Motivation and research questions

Motivation:

- High rates of job separation have negative implications for quality of care (e.g. Allen and Vadean, 2021)
- Low wages often thought to be at the root of the problem (e.g. Moriarty et al, 2018), but limited empirical evidence
- Concerns about number of people leaving to work in other sectors (ibid.), but again, evidence is limited

Research Questions:

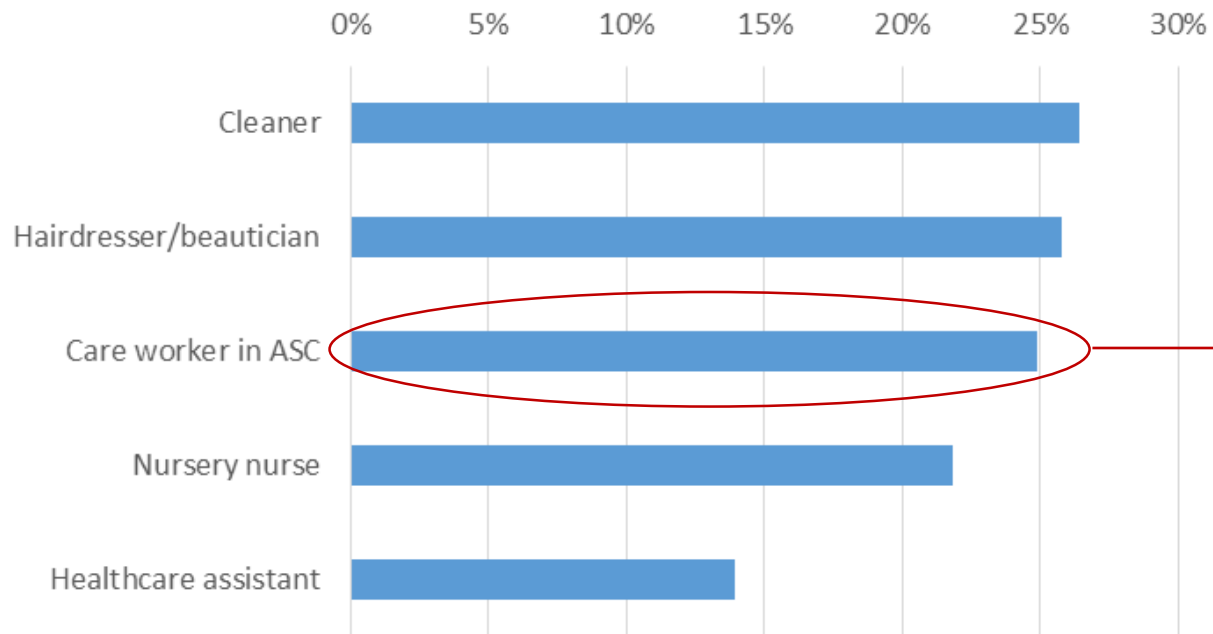
- How important is pay vs other terms in explaining job separation among care workers in ASC?
- To what extent are care workers being attracted into other, competing occupations/sectors?
- How does social care differ from similar settings where separation rates are low?

Data:

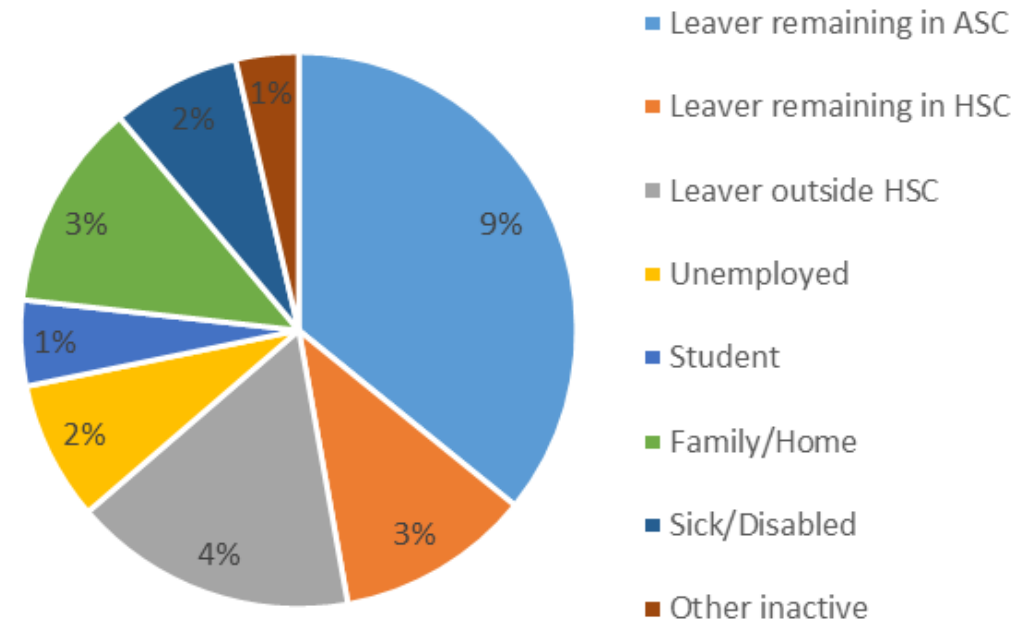
- Survey data from around 4,000 care workers in ASC, interviewed on two occasions, 12 months apart
 - 5 waves of the Longitudinal, Two-Year Annual Population Survey, 2012/13 – 2017/18 (ONS, 2021)
- Observe all types of destination following job exit + can compare with other, similar occupations

Care workers' high rates of job separation not unusual...

12-month job separation rate



Separation destinations for care workers in ASC

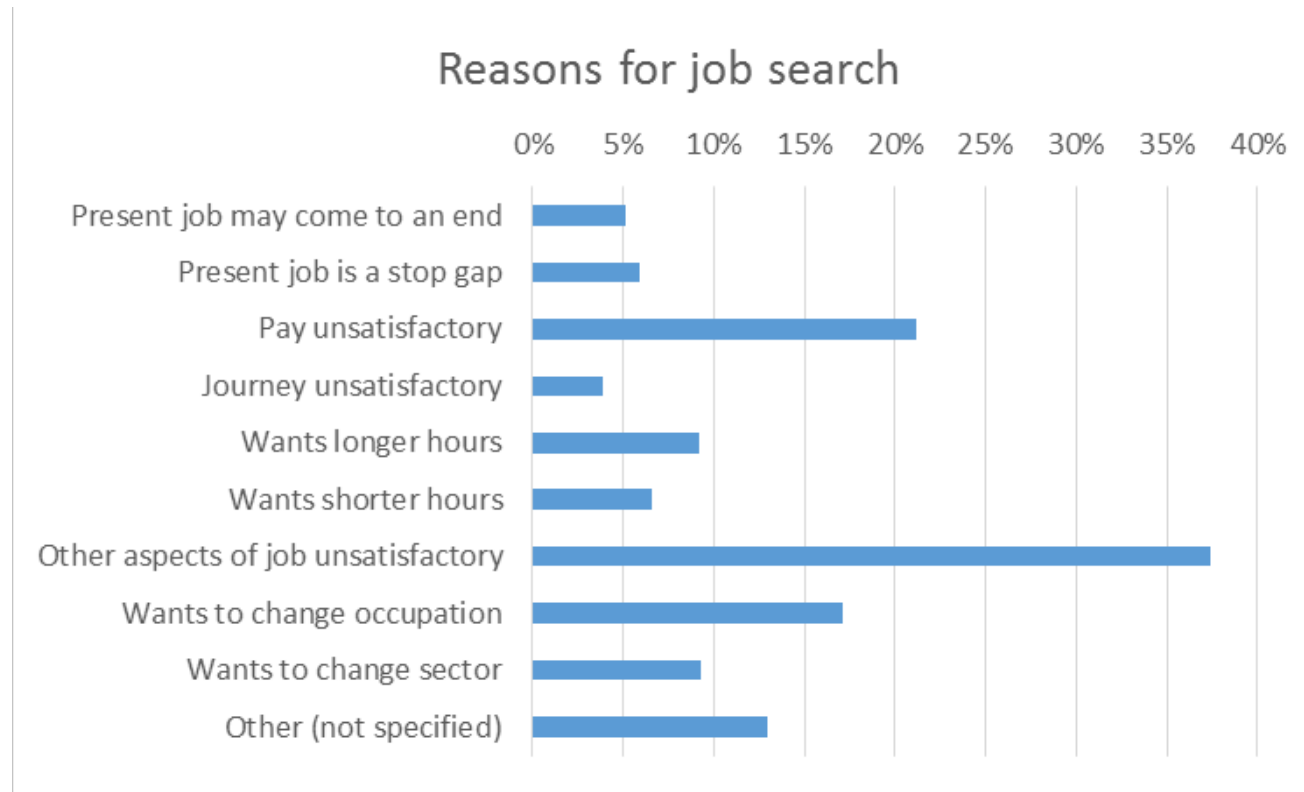


Base: Employees aged 16-58

Source: Two-Year Longitudinal Annual Population Survey, 2012/13 - 2017/18

Pay, hours and contracts not the only push/pull factors...

- Around 10% of care workers in ASC are searching for another job at a given point in time



Base: Care workers aged 16-58, employed in Adult Social Care, who are looking for a different job
Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2017-2021 (pooled)

Pay has an impact, but other factors are salient...

- Regression analysis to identify independent association between job characteristics and job separations among care workers in ASC
- Controlling for differences in care workers' personal characteristics (gender, age, health, qualifications, family circumstances) and employer characteristics (e.g. local labour market in which workplace is located)

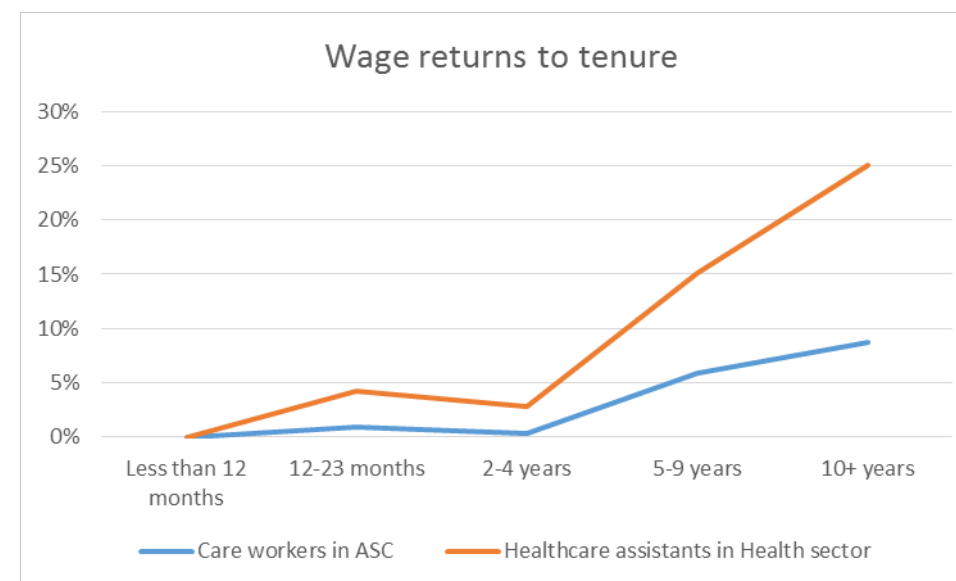
Change in p(job separation) in ppts:	Coefficient	Std.Error	P-value	Stat. sig.
Temporary contract (ref. Permanent)	0.097	0.050	0.051	*
<i>Usual working hours:</i>				
1-29 hours	0.072	0.024	0.002	***
30-47 hours	Ref.			
48+ hours	0.022	0.034	0.511	
Log hourly wage	-0.090	0.038	0.018	**
Job-related training in last 13 weeks (Ref. None)	-0.072	0.020	0.000	***
<i>Type of setting:</i>				
Residential nursing care (87.10)	Ref.			
Residential care for mental health (87.20)	-0.001	0.029	0.978	
Residential care for elderly/disabled (87.30)	0.021	0.025	0.408	
Non-residential care (88.10)	-0.004	0.041	0.930	
Public sector workplace	-0.054	0.028	0.059	*
<i>Number of observations</i>	3,713			
<i>R-squared</i>	0.086			

Base: Care workers aged 16-58, employed in Adult Social Care

Source: Two-Year Longitudinal Annual Population Survey, 2012/13 - 2017/18

Why do care workers value training more than pay?

- Seemingly not a gateway to pay progression: training doesn't bring higher wage growth in the coming year
- Internal labour markets seem very weak in Adult Social Care
 - Job entry across the age range; low returns to tenure
- A stark contrast to the situation for Healthcare Assistants in the Health sector
 - Job entry typically when young; employees enjoy substantial wage progression if they stay
 - Creates a strong incentive to remain with your employer



- Training may be an indicator of a good working environment (investment in people)
- May be a form of employer support that enables care workers to cope with the demands of their job (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Key points

- Job separation rates among care workers in Adult Social Care are high, but not unusual for similar personal service roles
- Many care workers who leave their job, but remain in work, stay in the Health and Social Care sector
- Pay, hours and contracts play a role in job separation decisions, but the provision of training is associated with a particularly notable reduction in job separations
- Little evidence that this is due to future wage returns:
 - No pay hike for those who receive training
 - Low returns to tenure: a contrast with the Health sector, where low separation rates can plausibly be attributed to strong ILMs
- Training may be a signal of broader investments by the employer (investment in people), or may help the employee to cope with job demands
- These issues remain for further research
- Food for thought: Half of ASC workers report no recent training. Are there opportunities to increase the provision of training as a retention device, even though it may not bring wage returns for workers?

References

- Allen S and Vadean F (2021) “The Association between Staff Retention and English Care Home Quality.” *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, in print.
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