

Title: Experiences of those who joined the Social Care Register as emergency workers during the COVID19 pandemic

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ACTION REQUIRED

This Paper is	For Information
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SUMMARY

To support the recruitment of temporary workers responding to the Department of Health COVID19 Workforce Appeal, the Social Care Council introduced short-term amendments to the processes for workforce registration in April 2020 and the setting up of the emergency register. These temporary arrangements, were in place until the end of September 2020.

In order to learn more about the people who joined the workforce in these very unusual circumstances, the Social Care Council sent a follow-up survey to all of the 3,327 Emergency Registrants in April 2022, asking them to describe their motivations for responding to the Workforce Appeal; to share their experiences of registering at that time; and to provide an insight into their decisions to leave or remain in this area of work. This report provides an extract from the survey responses.

BACKGROUND

To support the recruitment of temporary workers responding to the Department of Health COVID19 Workforce Appeal, the Social Care Council introduced short-term amendments to the processes for workforce registration in April 2020. These temporary arrangements, which were in place until the end of September 2020, included provision of a zero cost for registration and putting in place a shorter online registration process to minimise any delay to boosting the numbers of front-line staff. 3327 people joined the Emergency Register during this period.

In November 2021, delivery of the Emergency Registration policy and its impact on the Social Care Register was reviewed by the Board of the Social Care Council. Analysis included an overview of the profile of the 1606 'Emergency Registrants' (48% of the total Emergency Registrants) who opted to remain registered to work in social work and social care roles in Northern Ireland. 75% of these people were employed as Adult Residential Care Workers, or Domiciliary Care Workers. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the Emergency Registrants who remained on the Register listed according to Register Sub-Part and Employment Sector.

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The Emergency Registrant Survey was open from 5 – 25 April 2022. Personalised survey invites were emailed to all those who had applied to be registered through the Emergency Registration process between 1 April and 30 September 2020. The survey included questions about the individual's social work/social care role, their previous experience of social care, their motivation to apply to the Emergency Register and their reasons for remaining or leaving the Register. Participants were also asked to share their views on possible positive and negative factors that could affect a person's decision to choose to work in social work or social care. 203 people responded to the survey (6% of the target group) and 117 (3%) completed the survey in full.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

- Feedback from respondents illustrates that more than half of those who joined the workforce during the pandemic welcomed the opportunity to carry out a worthwhile role.
- A number of returners had extensive experience and recognised the need to support front line services during the pandemic.
- Job satisfaction and knowing that the people they provide services for are among the top motivators for remaining in social care. Public recognition for the role was viewed less positively.
- Work-life balance was commented on as a negative factor for social care, with one person commenting that social care was not a good option for those with a family.
- Terms and conditions were flagged by some respondents, along with references to inequity in terms of holiday entitlements, rates of pay and reimbursement for travel. Uncertainty about contracted hours and permanency were also reported as negative points related to social care.
- The difficulty of the role was referenced by some respondents and this was linked to the need to be paid appropriately for what is being asked of this workforce in terms of complexity and workload.

- Returning social workers experienced difficulty meeting the latest standards to bring their practice up to date.
 - Respondents valued the opportunity to learn and develop and the opportunity to progress in social care as a career was noted as a positive factor.
 - Experiences for new starts in social care varied considerably. Some respondents commented that they received minimal training or shadowing before they were required to work unsupervised. A small number reported they could not settle in to the role and did not stay.
 - Respondents valued the opportunity to have regular face-to-face engagement with colleagues and their manager as they settled in to their role.
 - There were a number of people who joined the workforce because they were out of work or furloughed and there were lots of job opportunities in social care at that point of the pandemic.
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ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

The paper is being presented to the Board for review. There are no Equality Screening implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The feedback from registrants who joined during the emergency period echo the critical issues which exist in social care before the pandemic and this will serve to provide additional assurance policy makers on what is required to support the social care workforce into the future.
 2. These findings will be presented to the Leaders in Social Care Partnership and will provide further assurance on the need to support the social care workforce
 3. Following consideration by the Board the findings will be shared with the Office of Social Services to support their work with respect to the Reform of Adult Social Care
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ATTACHED DOCUMENTS AND/OR LINKS HERE

Appendix I – Survey and Response Analysis

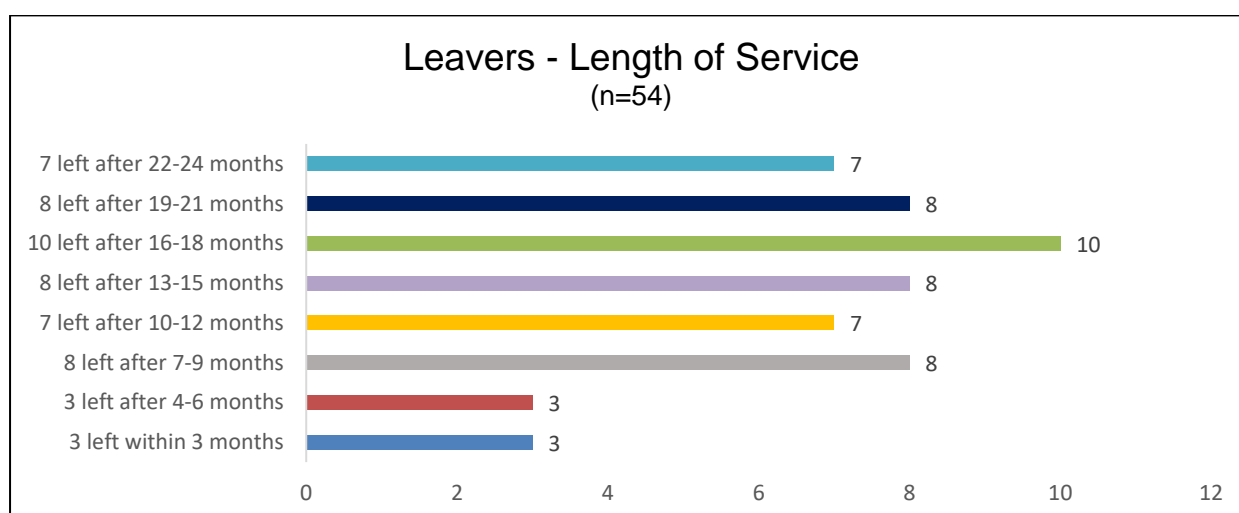
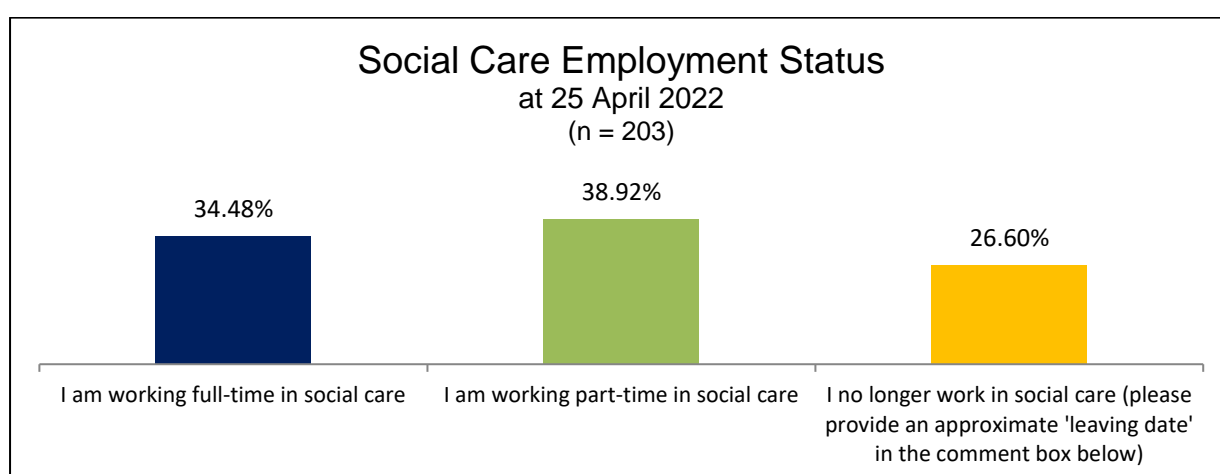
Appendix II – Profile of Emergency Registrants Remaining on the Register at 15 November 2021

Appendix 1

Survey and Response Analysis to the Emergency Registrants Survey

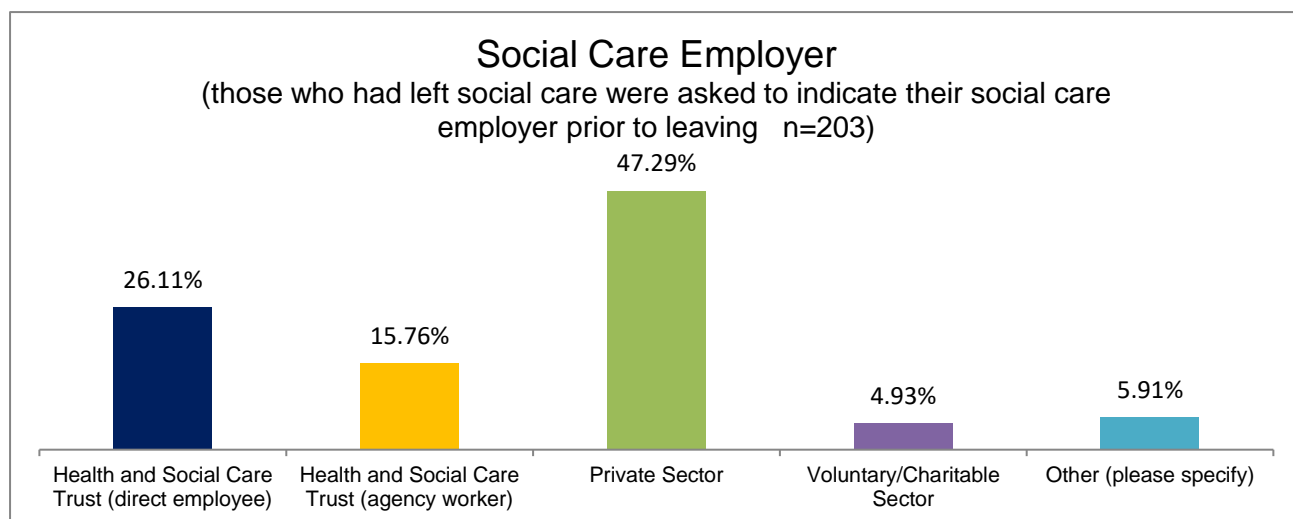
1. **Employment Status at 25 April 2022** – this question asked if the individual was still working in a social care organisation.

- 73.4% were still working in social work/social care
- Those still employed in social care were split almost 50/50 between full-time and part-time
- 90% of those who did not remain in the workforce had worked in their role for at least 6 months before leaving.

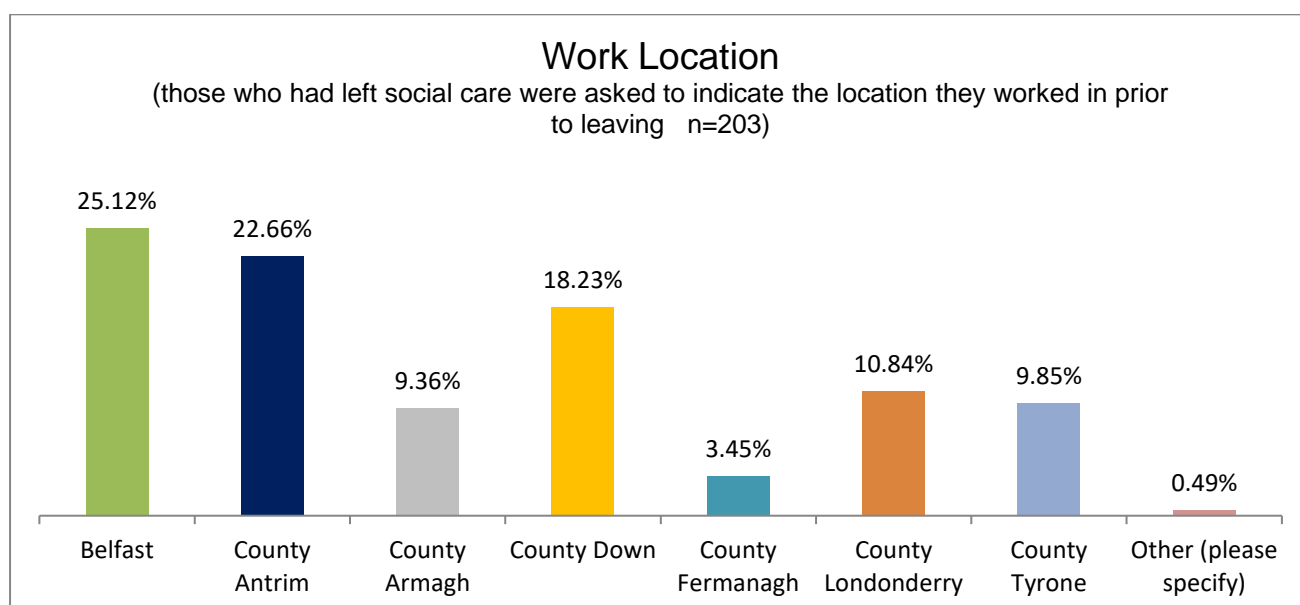


2. **Social Care Employer** – this question asked respondents to indicate the type of social care organisation they worked for.

- 47.29% were employed within the private sector
- 41.87% were employed within HSC Trusts (26.11% as direct employees and 15.76% as agency workers)

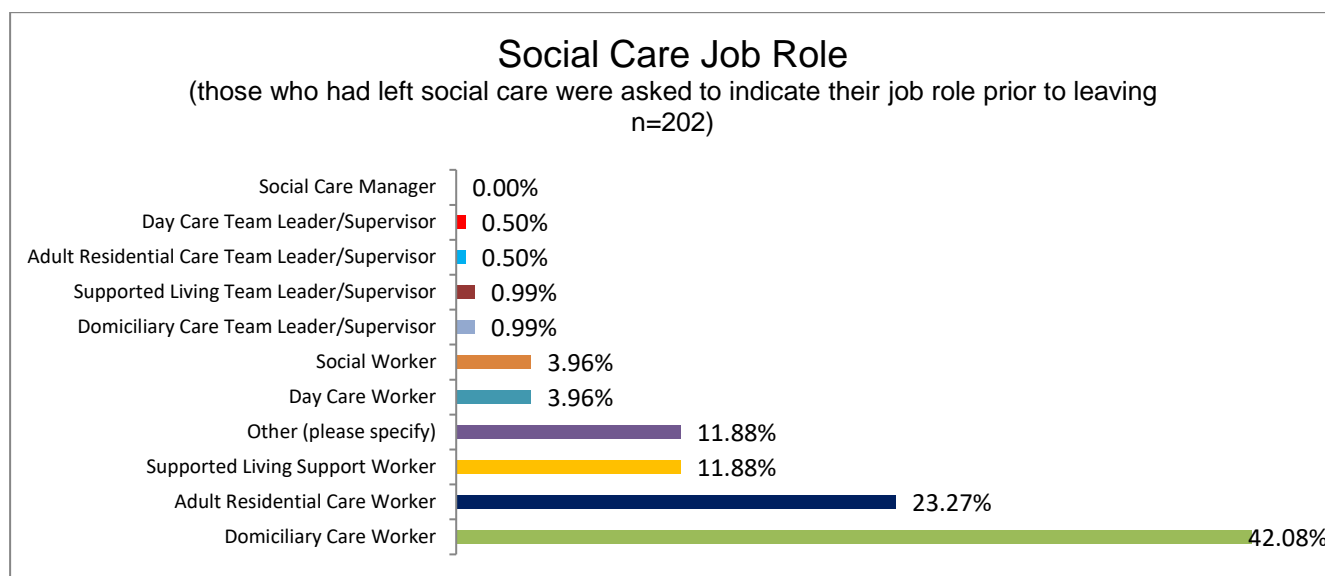


3. **Employment Location** – this question asked respondents to indicate the area of Northern Ireland closest to where they carried out their social care role. All counties were represented.



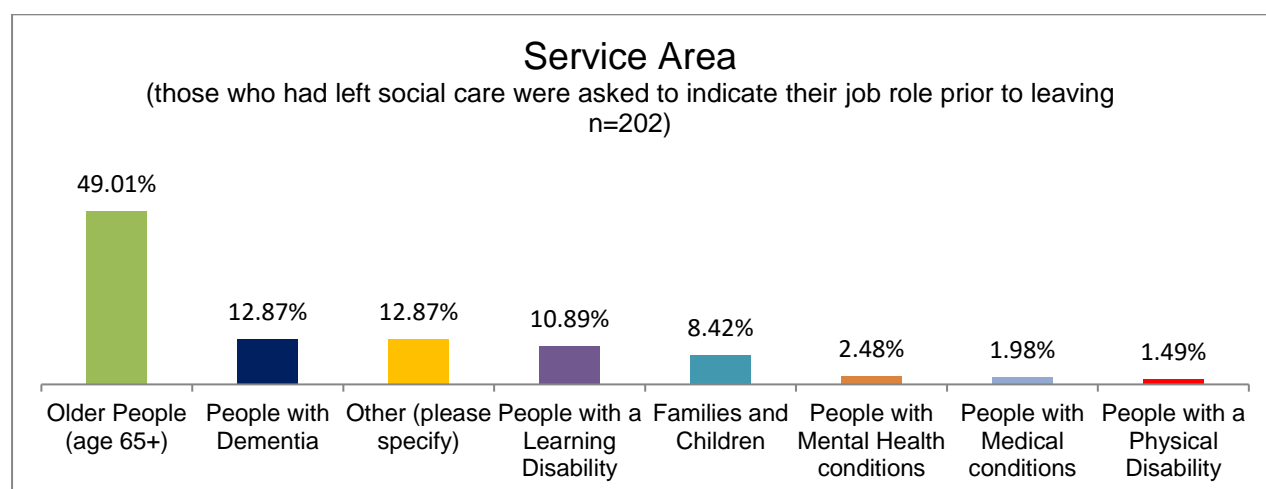
4. **Social Care Role** - this question asked respondents to describe their social care job role.

- Respondents roles reflected the range of social care roles on the register.
- 42.08% worked as Domiciliary Care Workers – one of the largest staff groups within the current register
- 'Other' roles included Nursing Assistants, Healthcare Assistant, Children's Residential Support Workers



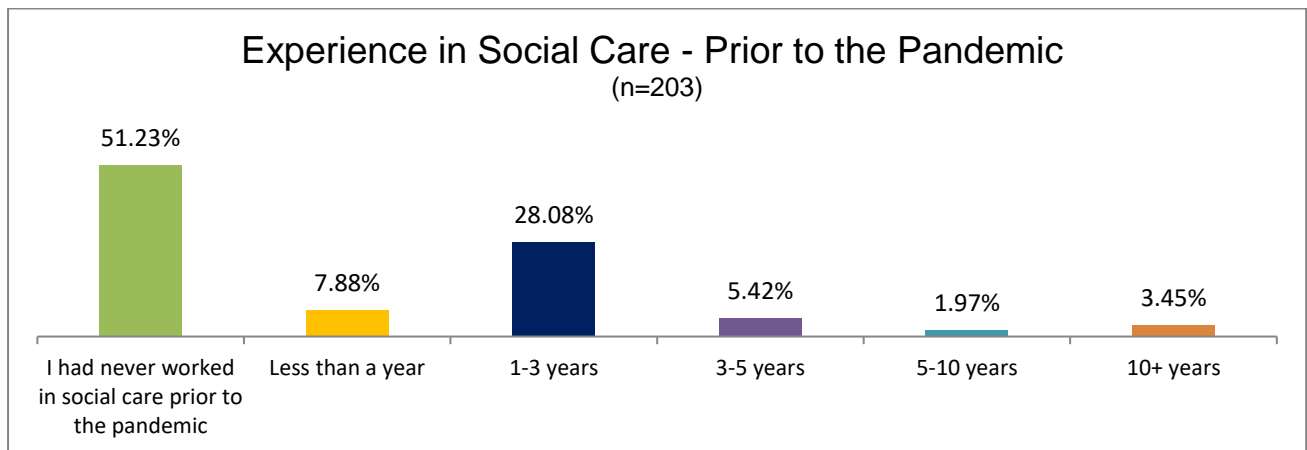
5. **Service Area** - this question asked respondents to describe the people they provide services for.

- 49.01% worked with older people (reflecting the high proportion of domiciliary care roles reported)
- 'Other' options included hospitals, mental health supports and prisons.



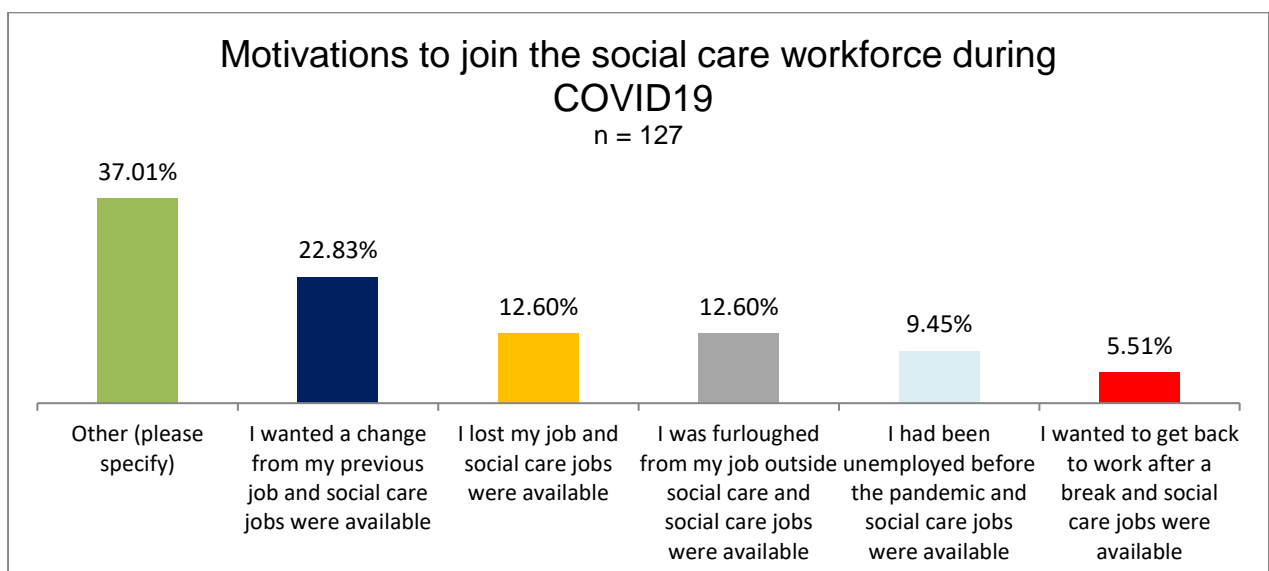
6. Experience in Social Care - this question asked respondents to indicate the length of any previous social care experience prior to the pandemic.

- 51.23% of respondents had never worked in social care before
- 3.45% of respondents reported they were returning to social care having previously worked for more than 10 years in social care

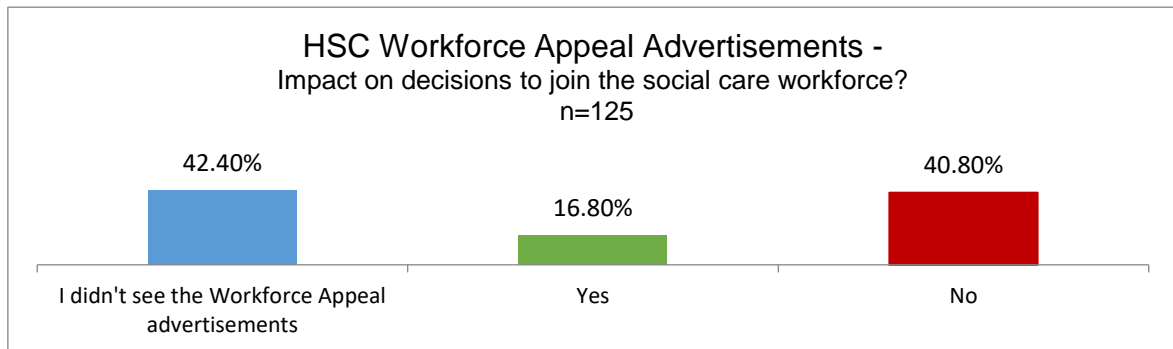


7. Motivation to Work in Social Care - this question asked respondents to describe their motivations to join the social care workforce during COVID19

- 41.16% were not working when they joined social care
- 'Others' included wanting to gain relevant work experience or transitioning from being an unpaid carer

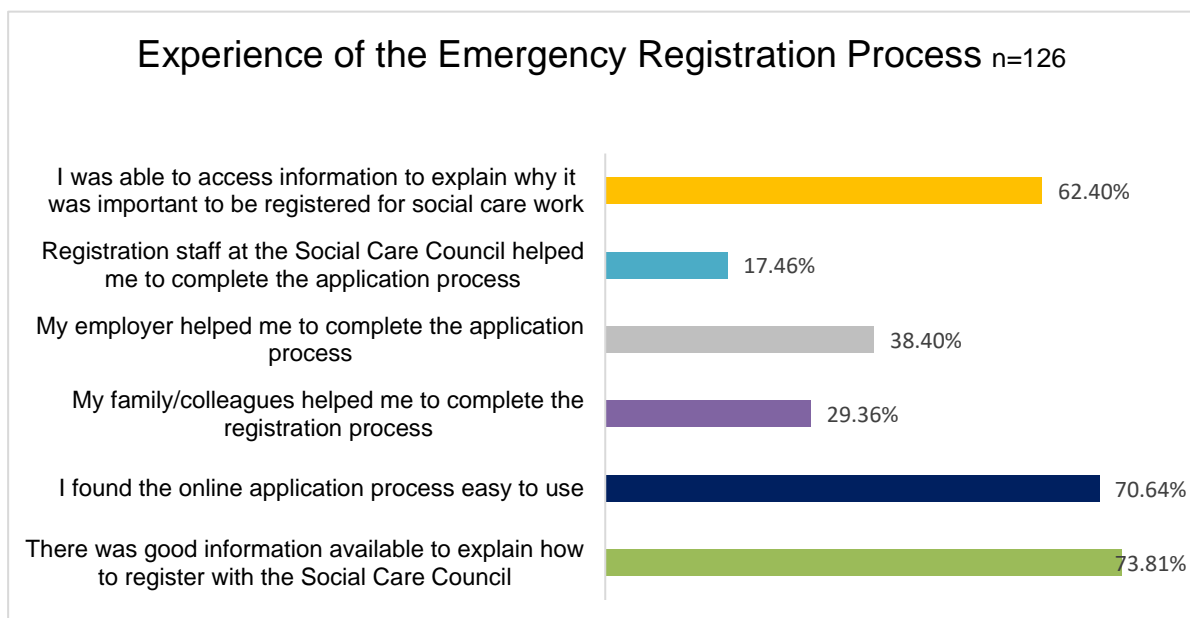


8. Impact of the Workforce Appeal Advertisements - this question asked respondents whether the Workforce Appeal affected their decision to work in social care.



- 16.8% agreed the appeal adverts motivated them to apply to work in social care
- 42.40% had not seen the adverts.
- 40.80% said the adverts had not affected their decision to work in social care.

9. Experience of the Emergency Registration Process - this question asked respondents whether they agreed with a range of statements about getting registered. The chart indicates how many respondents were positive about the statements.

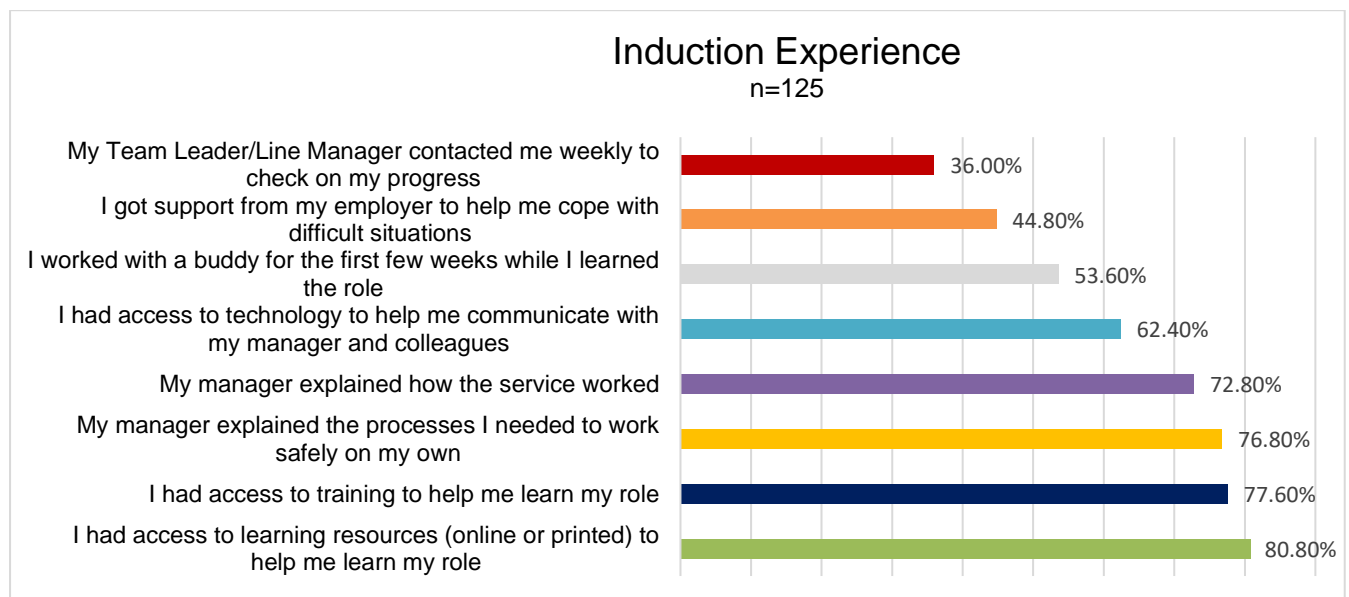


- 73.81% were positive about the information provided to help them with their application
- 70.61% found the online application easy to use
- Those needing assistance were helped by family, their employer and registration staff
- 50% of respondents reported their application was approved within 3 weeks

- Comments for improvement were made in terms of website navigation and links
- Respondents also noted that it was difficult not being able to contact registration staff to ask for advice by phone.

10. Experience of the Induction Process - this question asked respondents whether they agreed with a range of statements about induction into their new role. The chart indicates how many respondents were positive about the statements.

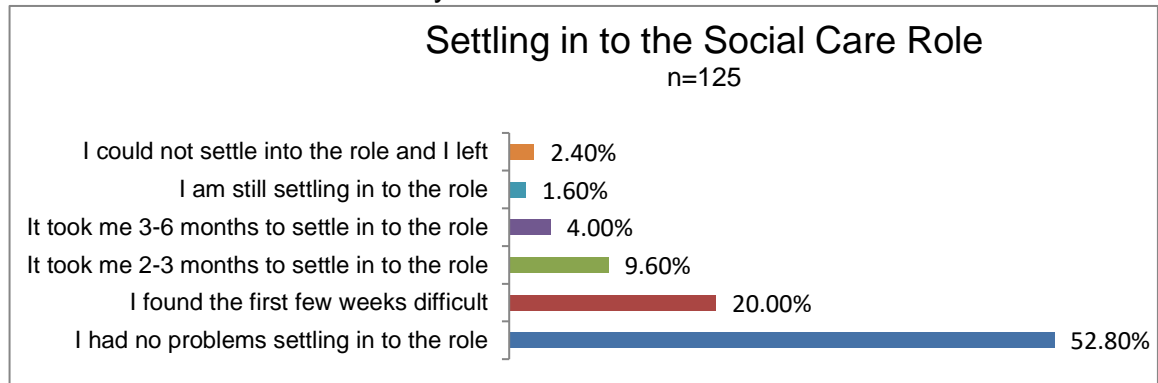
- 80.80% were positive they had access to learning resources
- 77.6% had access to training
- 72.8% were positive their manager explained how the service worked
- Lower levels of positivity relating to support with difficult situations or regular contact with their manager



11. Settling in to the Social Care Role - this question asked respondents to estimate how long it took to settle in to the new role (if at all).

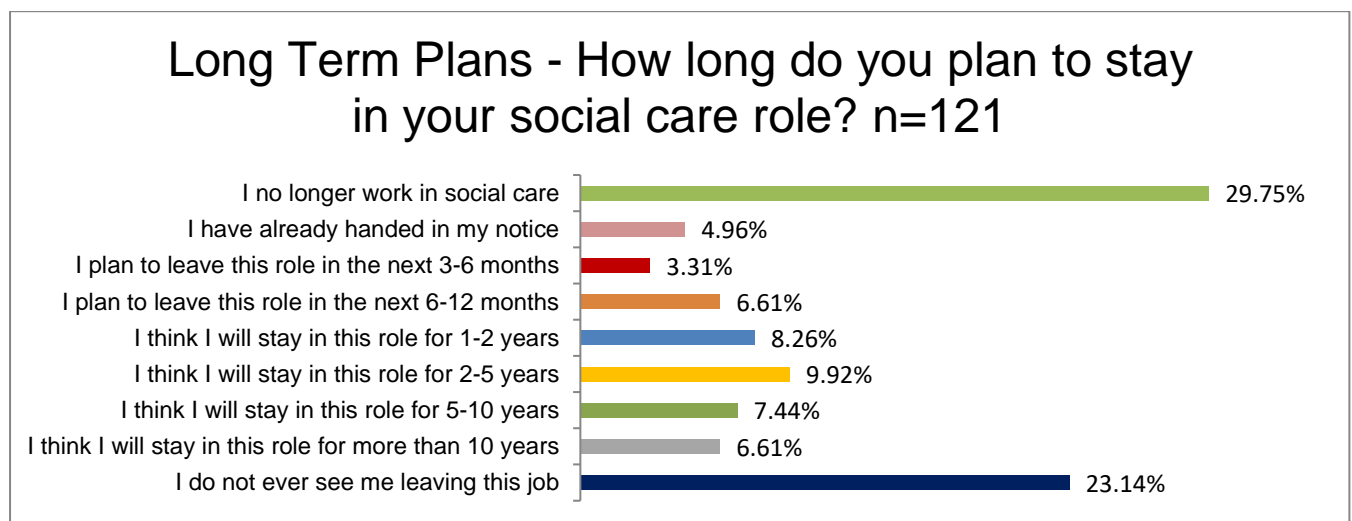
- 52.80% reported they had no problems settling
- 20% experienced difficulty in the first few weeks
- 9.6% took 2-3 months to settle in

- 2.4% left the role because they could not settle



12. Long Term Plans - this question asked respondents how long they planned to stay in their social care role (if at all).

- 37.19% planned to stay for more than 5 years
- 23.14% did not ever plan to leave
- 29.75% had already left social care
- 4.96% had recently handed in their notice and 6.61% planned to leave within the next 6-12 months

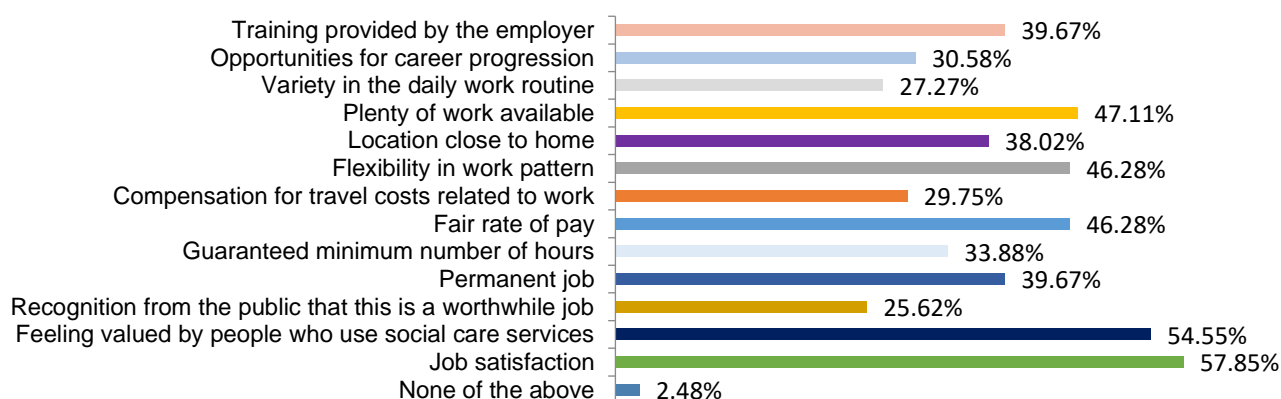


13. Positive Attributes of Social Care Work - this question asked respondents whether they agreed with a range of factors that could make social care an attractive career choice role. The chart indicates how many respondents agreed with the statements.

- Job satisfaction and feeling valued by people who use the services were most positive at over 50% agreement

Positive Attributes of Social Care Work

n=121

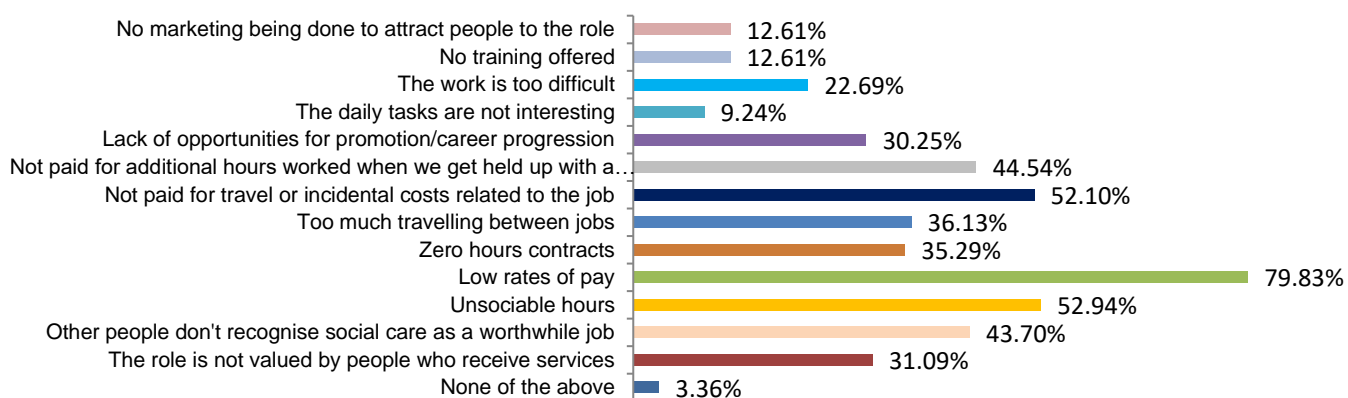


- Availability of work and Fair rate of pay also scored highly with over 40% agreement
- Permanent employment, location close to home and access to training scored high 30%

- 14. Negative Aspects of Social Care Work** - this question asked respondents whether they agreed with a range of statements factors that could make social care less attractive as a career choice. The chart indicates how many respondents agreed with the statements.

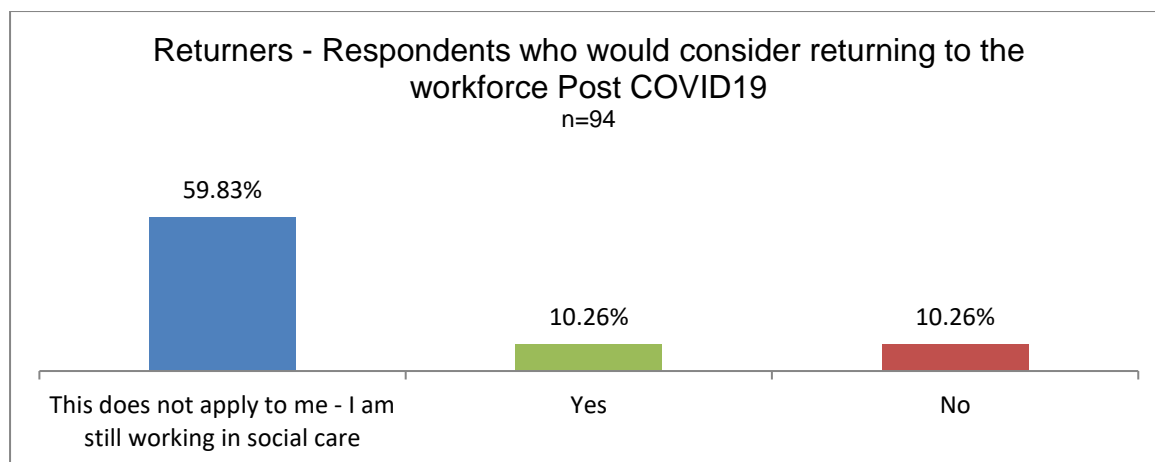
Negative aspects of social care work

n=119



- Low rates of pay was the most strongly acknowledged negative factor at 79.63%
- Unsociable hours and not being paid for travel costs for work also scored high at 50+%
- Working unpaid extra hours and lack of recognition for the value of the job scored 40+% agreements

- 15. Returning to Social Care** - this question asked respondents who had left social care whether they would consider returning to work in social care. Only a small number of those not currently working in social care answered this question (n=24) and their responses were evenly divided between YES and NO.



Final Comments

Hours

- Stop using private money making firms who can't organise a schedule. The extra calls on a shift are terrible and there is no way this is quality care. The missed calls are high and medication given in the pm when they are am because of lack of planning and organisational skills. Perhaps more policing of these companies audits quality control engagement.
- We are all overworked due to staff shortages and having to do the job of two people at times and massively underpaid. No overtime pay or compensation pay for when you are understaffed and doing the job of 2 people by yourself

Payment

- Payment I never received my recognition payment, and find it very unfair. I was advised by my employer I would get it in February and am still waiting.
- A fair rate of pay needs to be set. Minimum wage has now taken away any financial benefits we had. The government needs to invest heavily to be able to attract people to the sector. Employers need to pay the full sleepover rate.
- I loved my time as a care worker and will always look back and the people I met and the love I have for both carer and service user. But both were let down by the system. They need to be given more time and money to be able to give and be given basic care and respect.
- The cap on mileage has been a major issue for staff working in rural areas. I will reach the 3500 mile cap by August 2022 which considering the fuel costs currently will impact significantly on my take home pay.
- Prior to the current hike in fuel costs once I crossed the 3500 mile cap it was costing me an average of £170 per month over the amount I was reimbursed for travel"

- I worked for 12 weeks before receiving pay I had to request being paid on multiple occasions. I received no support or advice staff were unhelpful in human resources and payroll. I have since received one payment for 12 weeks work and am awaiting pay again with no response, this has influenced my decision to join an agency "

Terms and Conditions

- Make it easier for staff to apply and become permanent
- Employers need to stop employing people based on friendships as this leads to favouritism and ultimately staff become fed up and leave.
- I think we should be getting paid for bank holidays etc
- Family life doesn't exist in Social Care

Training

- I absolutely loved the opportunity to come back to social work after many years. Unfortunately, I had to complete my AYE and do IPDs which have caused me more stress than the work itself.

Engagement

- I would love to discuss more if I could on ways I believe in improving services across the UK.
- Thank you for the time that you put into the survey.
- Thank you for the service

Appendix II – Profile of Emergency Registrants Remaining on the Register at 15 November 2021

1. Emergency Registrants by Register Sub-Part

Register Sub part	Number	%
Adult Residential Care	543	33.81
Dom Care	663	41.28
Day care	56	3.49
Supported Living	240	14.94
Others	104	6.48
Total	1606	

2. Emergency Registrants by Employment Sector

The table below identifies the breakdown by sector, however this is dependent on registrants keeping their employment up to date. Employers can identify on their portal when registrants leave their employment, hence why there are registrants with no employment details in Table 2 below. These registrants had updated their new employment on their account at that point. The Social Care Council continues to follow up with all registrants who have “no current employment details” to ensure Register data is up to date.

Sector	Number	%
Statutory Sector	98	6.10
Non Statutory Sector	1249	77.77
No Current Employment Details	259	16.13
Total	1606	