It’s not the money – why work in the care sector?
Recruitment & Retention: Emerging findings from the Longitudinal Care Work Study (LoCS)

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Retention

• ‘Chronic’ problems with recruitment and retention (CSCI, 2009)

• Average rate of turnover is 17%
  – Highest in private sector
  – Lowest in local authority sector (Hussein, 2009)

• Contrasts between social care and rest of economy (Moriarty, 2011)
  – Less likely to be made redundant
  – ‘Personal’ reasons more common (Hussein, 2010)
Background

• Extensive literature on recruitment and retention (Breaugh & Starke 2000), but little on social care

• A tradition of small scale/one-off studies of recruitment and retention in long term care workforce

• In UK, majority is guidance (e.g. Skills for Care, 2014)
Why are some employers successful in retaining workers?

“combining good communication, training and worker independence creates motivating and rewarding environments which leads to higher level of staff satisfaction and loyalty. The research found that addressing these issues should see an increase in retention levels.” (Skills for Care, Sept 2014)
Findings from qualitative interviews with employers and care staff
Employers’ perspectives on recruitment

the LoCS USP
Process (1)

- **Multiple strategies (old & new)**
  - Job Centre
  - Website
  - Local newspaper
  - Word of mouth (existing employees)
  - Leaflets/cards

- **Key issue was cost/quality**
  - Job Centre free but applicants variable
  - Employment agencies better but costly; only in emergencies
Process (2)

- **Manager control over selection process**
  - Influenced by company size and culture

What happens is the recruitment consultant will... (before advert goes in) meet up with the relevant manager... She will (then) go through with the manager the applicants they have received and... follow the criteria they are asking for... So then we’ll organise interviews, and we’ll have a set of interview questions. *(Female HR Director, large private home care agency)*
Process (3)

- Procedures vs Gut instinct

I look for their references being correct. I look for - if they haven’t had experience and knowledge - a willingness to learn. I look for their manner and approach. I rely a lot on how I feel, that at the end of the day it’s sort of gut instinct, you know, as they say. But I do encourage them to talk to me a lot. They come in thinking they’re gonna answer questions and actually, I ask very few questions and I expect them to tell me an awful lot. It’s how they talk. It’s how they talk about people. I love to hear them talk about the last job that they were in because that tells me an awful lot. Not what about they did but how they feel about it. (Female Registered Manager, small private not for profit care home for older people)
Extrinsic motivations – Pay (1)

• Recognised this issue in terms of attracting and retaining workforce
  – Mainly attributed to local authority contracts
  – But also local competition

• Key was: lack of differentiation
  – Unsocial hours
  – Those with NVQs/QCF and those without
Extrinsic motivations – Pay (2)

- Family businesses/small medium enterprises ability to be flexible/creative e.g. using pay to promoting attendance and retention

We pay higher than minimum wage. I don’t mind telling you what we pay. We have what we call an attendance bonus scheme, so someone who is a care assistant or a housekeeper will earn a minimum of £6.10 per hour, but with the attendance bonus, they’ll get £6.85 per hour. (Male Proprietor, small privately owned care home for people with dementia)

- Contrast with homes owned by large private equity companies
Intrinsic motivations

• Vocation and altruism frequently mentioned

I think, without sounding too patronising, it’s a vocation, isn’t it? I think a lot of people that want to come into social care actually want to come into it because they do want to support people or maybe care for people as part of their own personality. *(Care home manager)*
Why do people choose to work in care work?

Staff perspectives on recruitment / motivations

The LoCS USP
Extrinsic motivations (1)

• Perceived as an ‘easy’ area to gain employment as recession kicked in
  – Geographical location
  – Limited qualification demands

I moved back to my home town here. I was unemployed for six months and then this opportunity came up through contacts. No experience and no qualifications in social care and just walked straight into it. (Young male support worker in first social care job)
Extrinsic motivations (2)

• Perceived as flexible employment
  – For health reasons (less demanding)
  – Fitting in with lifestyle & family
  – Fitting in with tax & benefits

My wife works in domiciliary care. When I finish here and go home, she then goes to domiciliary care ... at the moment we are expecting our second child. She has cut back on the work load and she’s just doing the domiciliary care in the mornings and in the afternoons ... When one of us is at work, one of us has got the little three year old ... It fits in with life. (Part-time male support worker, day centre)
Intrinsic motivations

- Role of personal experience
- ‘Caring nature’ recurrent phrase

And then obviously from looking after my Nan and granddad to doing nothing, I felt a bit like I wanted to do something for other people to help them as well. That is how I got onto care. My mum used to be a carer as well. I’ve followed her (LAUGHS). She is a lovely person. She is very caring and I think that’s where I get my nature.... Just helping people in general is what I want to do. (Female care worker)
Employers’ perspectives on retention

the LoCS USP
Limited career progression

• Mixed views on opportunities for career progression
  – Some managers started out as care workers
  – But not the common trajectory of most participants

The people that you get working in care are usually mothers and that sort of thing and people without much qualifications ... It isn’t very well paid. You don’t get the career type of people going in there. We have one girl here that’s 22 years old and... She is a lovely little girl; old head on young shoulders, will make a very, very good support worker. But she won’t stay, because she wants to progress. (Male support worker, home for people with learning disabilities)
Staff perspectives on retention

- Reasons to stay
- Reasons to leave
Reasons to stay – for clients

I could have retired last June. I stayed on and last October I was taken ill... was off work for a couple of months ... I went on the relief (bank staff) ... I do miss it though. I came back specifically to do one to one with (resident)...I miss working with all of them (Male support worker, residential home for people with learning disabilities)
Reasons to stay – Management culture that is respectful (to users and staff)

I personally, on a daily basis, come in and I do the morning medication run. That enables me to support my staff team and also enables me to see the clients regularly ... to make sure that I could be part of that feedback as well on a day to day basis with them ... We treat them all as we would like our loved ones to be treated - I expect nothing less from my staff... we do respect what they do and what is asked of them each day when they walk through the doors. (Female manager, residential home for older people)
Sunday the medication is supposed to be (renewed)… She (the last day shift nurse) didn't do it… (My manager later said) I could take it from the morning… There was some complaints and procedures done, which was quite stressful… I was telling to my manager, I said, not to punish us but to teach us. (Female care worker, nursing home for people with dementia)
I’m now a part time foster carer. Started doing that as well. I started doing that because of all the changes. Our contract has expired. It expired last September and they said, ‘okay, carry on until December’ … now they are saying, ‘carry on until September’. There is no kind of long term job security. I’m aware they have to give me two months notice, but even so, I kind of needed to start looking ... (Female support worker for people with learning disabilities living independently (full time at T1, part-time at T2))
I still do three nights ... I used to do Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, which was very difficult for me to have any family time on the weekend. It’s (finally) better, because I can take the kids to school... If I move to another place, that is, you have to be flexible ... if you come to a new place and you say, ‘I just want to do this’, nobody is going to tolerate you. *(Female care worker, nursing home for people with dementia)*
Summary

• Recruitment: Poor pay but external motivations such as easy, flexible jobs. Intrinsic factors ("vocation") as motivator for some.

• Retention: Sustained or newly developed motivations, such as care for clients. Good, supportive, trusting management and organisational stability valued. Some may stay for lack of alternatives – maybe scope to refresh motivation?

• LoCS suggests:
  1. The value of two-way commitment
  2. Identifying the ‘offer’ to staff?
Questions for discussion

• Recruitment: What features of the recruitment process need further exploring?

• Retention: What do employers think works best in retention and why? How should we explore this?

• General – Have the scandals of social care affected R&R - how can we get beyond the anecdote?
Thank you for listening!