



**CHARLES HUNTER
ASSOCIATES**

SALARY AND WORKFORCE INSIGHTS:

CHILDREN'S HOMES 2024

(ENGLAND AND WALES)





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INTRODUCTION

The Children's Home sector is under increasing pressure - and scrutiny. With calls for change coming from all levels, but little appearing to get done, it's important to us at Charles Hunter Associates to understand how the industry is dealing with this pressure.

To that end, we spoke to a variety of Children's Home companies and their staff to allow them to voice their thoughts and concerns, uncensored. You will see below a number of common complaints aired out both in the data and people's own words, and if you've been in the industry for a while, you will see the same calls for change as 10 years ago - just as prominently now as back then.

With the new National Minimum Wage having been introduced on April 1, the sector is at risk of falling behind. There are concerns that smaller Children's Homes won't be able to cover the new wages for staff, and other sectors are already pilfering recruits seeking higher pay and less stress. On top of the government still not providing funding or promoting the industry as a genuine career pathway, a lack of innovation to attract new talent into care, a consistently negative media stigma, and the demands of the role still classified as 'unskilled labour', people are worried about the future.

The opinions gathered in our Salary and Workforce survey highlight these key issues and more. We have compiled the biggest impacts affecting people's lives, mental health and the reasons they either joined or quit the industry - plus advice for employers hoping to make positive changes. We hope you can use these insights to benchmark your feelings about the job, and find new ideas to either implement in your organisations or take to your leadership teams.



Mark Beaver

Associate Director
Charles Hunter Associates

SUMMARY

Our findings reveal what a lot of workers in the Children's Home sector have been feeling anecdotally for some time - the pay is too low and the hours too long, but the work is highly rewarding despite that.

Employees are clamouring for greater support from management, more career pathway options and better advertising of the industry to new recruits - to reduce the culture shock. We also saw a lot of negative sentiment towards private companies; employees covet companies with strong values, but many believe their organisations are prioritising money over high-quality care.

Employers, meanwhile, desire better funding from the government, a professionalisation of the industry and an improvement to the status of the industry. On this last note, employees agree very strongly - wishing the Children's Home sector did not have a stigma about it.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The top-cited industry concerns among respondents are:
 - a. Low rates of pay.
 - b. Insufficient management support.
 - c. Poor advertising of the industry to new workers.
2. The median salary (pre minimum wage increase) for Children's Home workers is £26,100.00. Managers tend to earn 64% more than non-managers.
3. The average sleep-in rate is £50 per night. Employers said their sleep-in allowance was higher than this (£57.18), but most employees do not receive this amount.
4. The top three most common benefits received by workers are:
 - a. Paid holiday leave.
 - b. Pensions.
 - c. Company paid training.
5. The most important aspects of the job to employees are:
 - a. The work environment.
 - b. Salary.
 - c. Company values.
6. 50% of employees are happy in their work. 26% are not. Happy employees tend to work longer hours, but longer hours also produce more unhappy employees.
7. The biggest factors impacting employee mental health are:
 - a. Too many hours of work.
 - b. Bad company culture.
 - c. Bad relationships at work.
8. People tend to join the Children's Home sector out of a desire to help people.
9. People tend to quit the sector due to burn out, low pay and culture shock (not understanding the realities of the role before applying).
10. Employers believe the top three reasons for the industry skills shortage are:
 - a. Salary/pay.
 - b. Shift patterns.
 - c. Lack of career options explained in schools.

WHO WE SURVEYED

The Children's Home sector is a niche area of work, leading to a small pool of available survey respondents compared to other industries. We're enormously grateful to the workers and organisations who generously gave their time to us, so we could combine their thoughts with wider industry research and our own internal data.

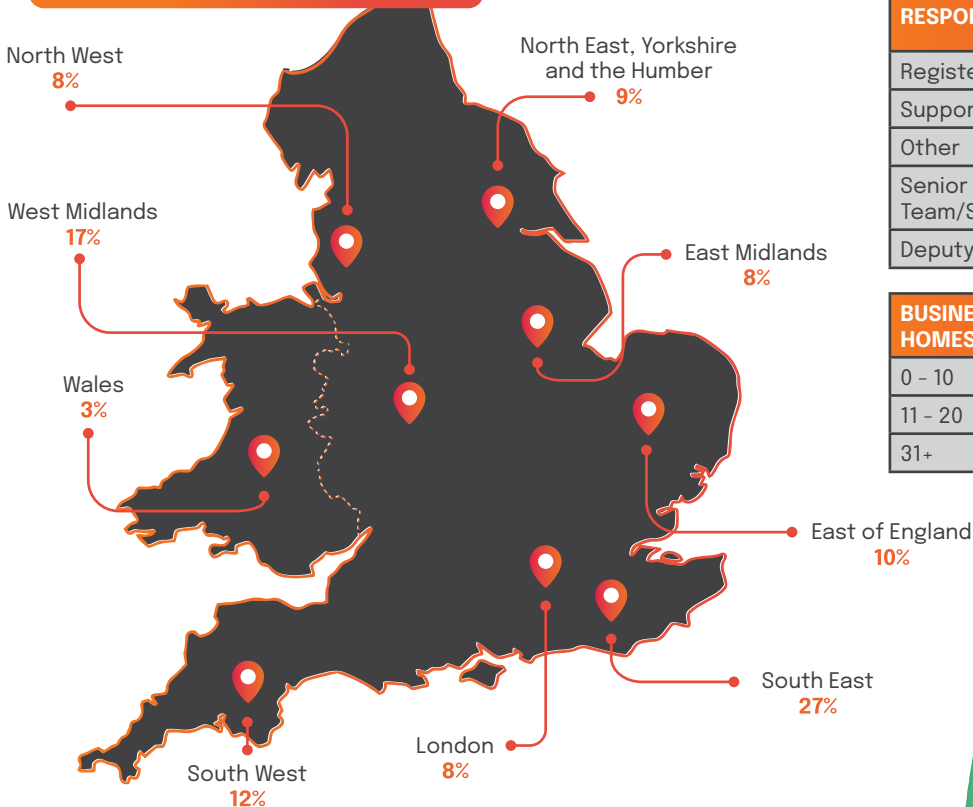
The majority (27%) of our respondents come from the South East of England, followed by the West Midlands (17%) and South West (12%). London comprises 4% by itself, and just 5% responded to us from outside of England.

Looking at the workers who spoke to us, a third are registered managers. Support workers make up the next-highest group (22%), with senior support workers and team/shift leaders (14%), and deputy managers (12%) rounding out the rest of the list. A large proportion (19%) responded 'other' to this question, mainly indicating they are in consulting, advisory or HR positions.

Of the businesses who responded, most (64%) operate between zero and 10 homes, with a further 18% operating 11-20 and 17% operating 31+ homes.



DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



RESPONDENT JOB TITLES	
Registered Manager	33%
Support Worker	22%
Other	19%
Senior Support Worker or Team/Shift Leader	14%
Deputy Management	12%

BUSINESS RESPONDENTS: NUMBER OF HOMES OPERATED	
0 - 10	65%
11 - 20	18%
31+	17%

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

The total number of Children’s Homes across the UK has grown, though so too have staff vacancy rates – putting pressure on organisations to maintain quality of care (recently rated very highly) despite lagging staff numbers. Turnover rates remain very high, even compared to other NHS sectors.

Number of Children’s Homes (of all types) in the UK	2,880 (up 9% in past year)
Average number of places per home	4

WHERE ARE THE MOST HOMES?	
North West	26%
West Midlands	16%
North East, Yorkshire and the Humber	15%



3% OF ENGLAND’S 12 MILLION CHILDREN ARE IN THE SOCIAL CARE SYSTEM



Percentage of homes run by private companies



Number of total places across the UK provided by private companies

Sources:

Gov.uk, Main findings: children’s social care in England 2023, accessed March 2024

Gov.uk, Reporting year 2023, Children’s social work workforce, accessed March 2024

ICHA, “State of the Sector” Survey 9 Spring 2023, accessed March 2024



EXAMINING PAY AND BENEFITS

Pay rates and staff benefits were top of mind among survey participants, with respondents raising both issues multiple times throughout their answers. But why are they an issue? Let's examine pay rates first.

Note: This data was gathered before April 2024, when National Minimum Wage rates increased. As such, hourly rates and salaries here do not reflect the updated minimum wage - though they remain an indicator of why our respondents felt the way they felt at the time of their responding.

For context, 10% of our candidates said their salaries were lower than what is now the minimum. Additionally, our internal salary data shows that 77% of organisations report average salaries which now sit below the minimum.

This is a significant sum of people whose pay will need to change as a result of the increase, which will likely have ramifications down the line. As you'll see further into our report, a lack of adequate funding is a common complaint among organisational leaders worried about ailing budgets - ailing budgets which now have higher salaries to accommodate.



• AVERAGE PAY

Pay rates and staff benefits were top of mind among survey participants, with respondents raising both issues multiple times throughout their answers. But why are they an issue? Let's examine pay rates first.

AVERAGE PAY IN CHILDREN'S HOME SECTOR

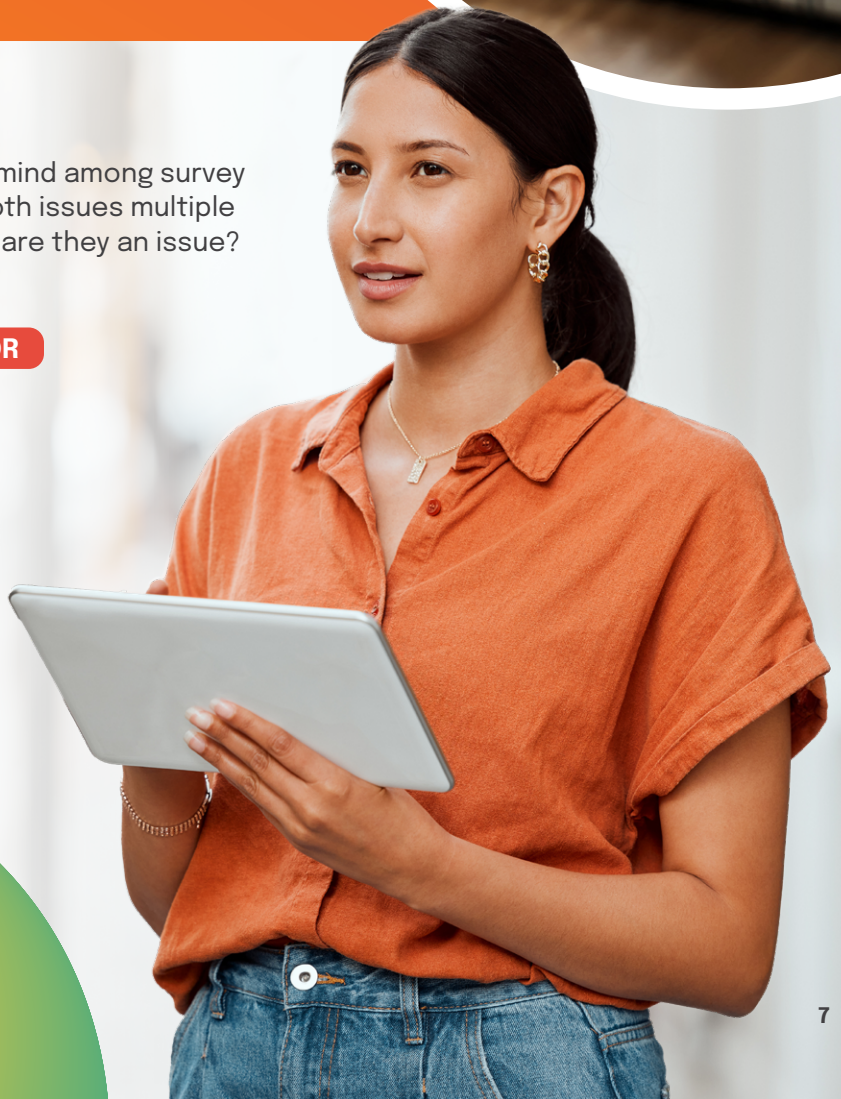
Pre-National Minimum Wage Increase



£26,100
Median
Salary



£11.12
Median
Hourly





• WORKERS VS. MANAGERS

Separating our data into non-managers and managers, median salaries become £26,100 and £42,800 – a 64% difference.

• CHILDREN’S HOMES VS. OTHER CHILDREN’S SERVICES

Workers in the Children’s Home sector tend to earn less than other children’s services – about 7% less than the starting band for paediatric nursing (39% less than the paediatric nurse average), and 73% less than children’s social workers.

CHILDREN’S HOME WORKERS vs. OTHER PUBLIC SECTORS



£26,100

Non-Managers



£42,800

Managers



£49,151

All Social Workers



£35,271

Teachers



£34,126

Nurses

Sources:

Talent.com, Childrens Social Worker average salary in United Kingdom, 2024, accessed March 2024

Talent.com, Paediatric Nurse average salary in United Kingdom, 2024, accessed March 2024

National Careers Service, Children’s nurse, accessed March 2024

• SLEEP-IN RATES

Sleep-ins are, of course, a part of the job, but pay rates for such work requirements don’t seem to be equal everywhere. We saw quite a lot of variation between organisations in terms of sleep-in rates, including some workers who earned nothing at all. That said, when combined, the median sleep-in rate amongst our respondents was about £50 per night.

ESTIMATING THE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE:

While 2024’s salary data is still very much rolling in, our initial estimates suggest that the median salary may be shifting closer to £28,000, with the median sleep-in rate unchanged. We’ll need to keep an eye on this over the coming 12 months to get a better idea as to the effects of the increase.





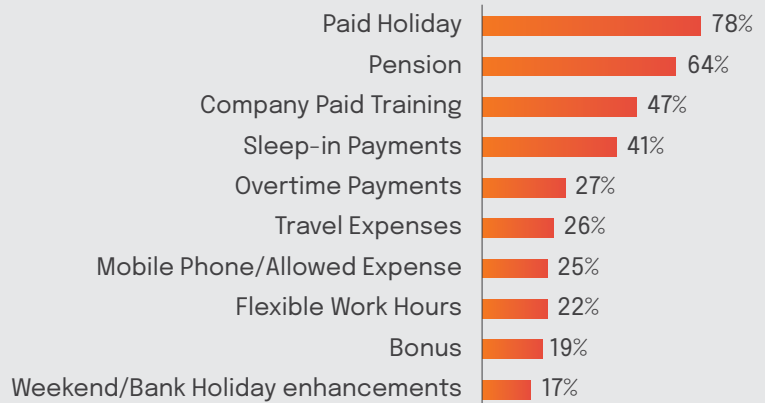
• BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES

Our respondents claimed the most common benefits they receive by far are paid holiday leave (78%) and pensions (64%). Company-paid training and sleep-in payments were also very common, at 47% and 41% respectively.

The least common bonuses were memberships - both professional and gym/sports, sitting at 4% and 3%. Just less than 10% of respondents receive no benefits at all.

Of those who responded 'Other', car allowances and private health insurance were relatively common.

TOP 10 BENEFITS OFFERED BY ORGANISATIONS

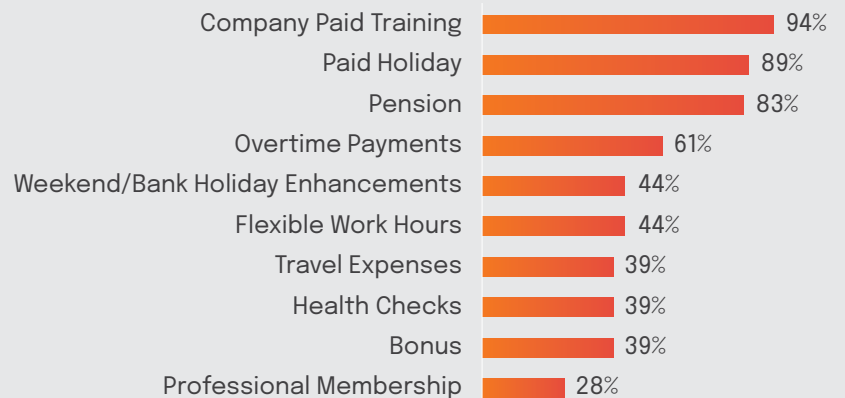


• NON-MANAGERS VS. MANAGERS

We asked organisations to tell us what benefits they tend to offer staff. While paid holidays (89%) and pensions (83%) were two of the top most common, organisational leaders tended to view company paid training as their biggest offering (94%) - no surprises, given that some training is mandatory. We'll examine training again later in this report.

Most employer respondents also said they offer overtime payments (61%), a result not reflected in our results from workers themselves (only 27% of whom claim to receive overtime pay). Part of this difference will be a result of lower respondent figures among organisations compared to staff, but the stark difference gives us a glimpse at what might be going on; much like sleep-in allowances, employers say they're offering one thing while employees say they're receiving less.

TOP 10 BENEFITS OFFERED BY ORGANISATIONS



WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO WORKERS?

Next, we asked some broader questions, to gauge not just the figures but also the mood.

First, we asked workers what's most important to them in a job - was it the money, or something more intangible? We expected pay would top this list, but the work environment came in as more important (74%). Basic salary was second (72%), followed by company values (58%), location (42%) and additional payments (17%).

On a note about location, we found most candidates appear to travel over 20 miles to get to their work (33%), with a further 29% travelling 11-20 miles. Work/life balance is another recurring theme you'll see brought up in this report, so it's perhaps not surprising to see a home's physical location come into the top five most important aspects of a job.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IN A JOB?



AVERAGE LENGTH OF COMMUTE



After these questions, we asked for respondents' own words about their situation. What is one thing they would change or improve in what their employers offer? These were the common threads:

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WOULD

CHANGE OR IMPROVE IN WHAT

YOUR EMPLOYER OFFERS?

- Better pay, or other incentives
- Career progression opportunities
- Improved quality of training
- More management support

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- A voice, to truly be listened to and valued, and better income.
- Basic pay!
- Better benefits and supportive management.
- Better pay, better management and more opportunities to earn more money/grow career.
- Employ people who can make a difference not just to fill a rotation.
- Look after the people that look after the kids!

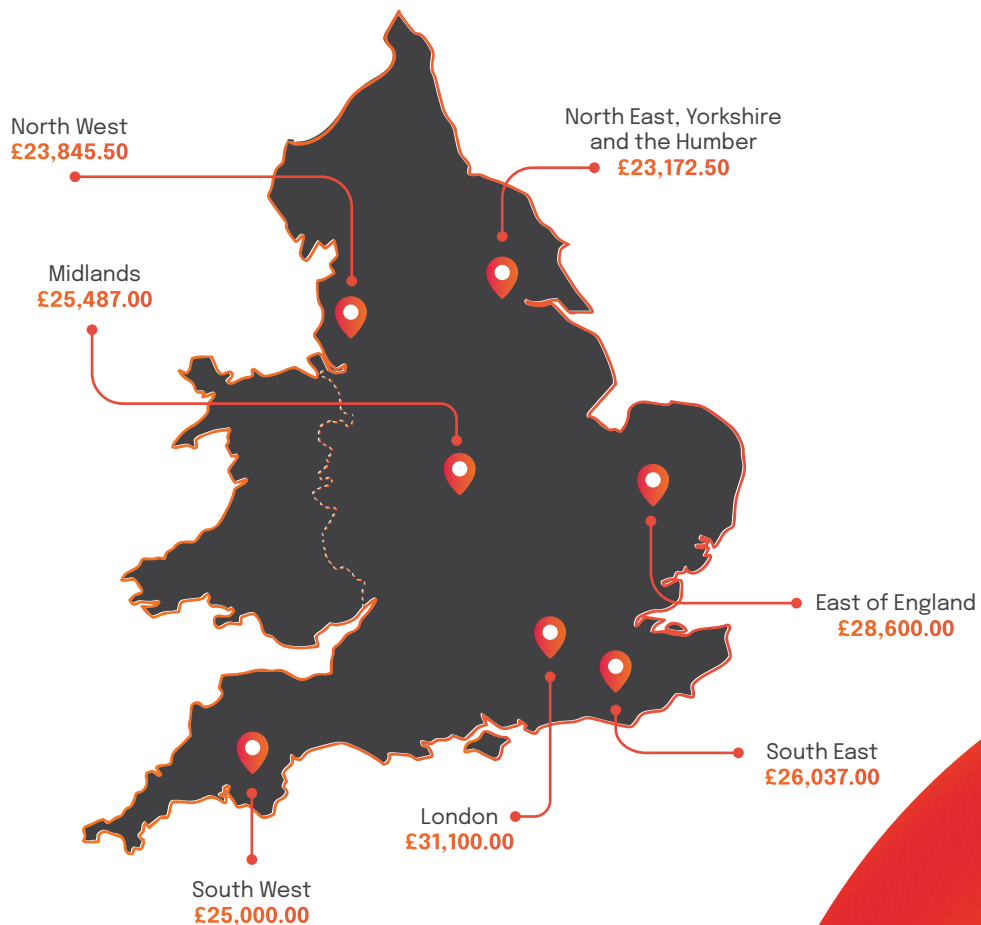
THIS SECTION SUMMARISED

Negative sentiment is brewing about pay conditions and perceived lack of benefits. Pay rates in the Children's Home sector appear very low, with demands for higher pay coming from most of our respondents. Additionally, there is a slight disconnect between employers and employees with regards to benefits. Employers could earn a quick win by double-checking how the packages they are offering are actually being received on the ground.



AVERAGE SALARIES ACROSS THE UK

- National Median **£26,100.00**
- Wales + Other **£23,253.50**



MENTAL HEALTH PRESSURES AT WORK

The Children’s Home sector is an anomaly compared to other areas of work. It’s common in workforce surveys to see a correlation between stress in the workplace and a lack of job happiness - but, amongst our respondents, Children’s Home workers tend to enter this workforce out of an extraordinary passion, or a feeling of doing something important. As a result, stress and happiness aren’t always aligned.



• HAPPINESS RATES

Overall, about half of respondents said that they are either very happy or happy in their workplace, leaving 26% to say the opposite (the remaining quarter feeling neutral on the matter).

Rates are fairly similar among managers and non-managers. That said, managers were slightly less likely to say that they were very happy, and more likely to state that they were slightly unhappy.

We also found happiness correlated with hours worked: those who were happier tended to work longer hours, though longer hours also produced more unhappy people. Presumably we’re seeing here a large group of very passionate people putting in the extra hours for the children in their care plus a group of workers who don’t want to be working those extra-long shifts, which is breeding unhappiness.

When we compare happiness to length of time in the industry, we see that happiness starts high, but dips as tenure increases. Meanwhile, the opposite is true for unhappiness. Eventually, for those with 7+ years’ experience, the two flip.

HAPPINESS RATES	
Very happy	16%
Happy	34%
Neutral	24%
Slightly unhappy	10%
Unhappy	16%

HAPPINESS VS. WEEKLY HOURS					
	35 or less	36 - 40 hours	41 - 45 hours	6 hours +	(Combined 41+ hours)
Happy	43%	44%	59%	50%	54%
Unhappy	14%	33%	14%	33%	24%

HAPPINESS VS. TIME IN INDUSTRY				
	<1 year	1 - 3 years	4 - 6 years	7+ years
Happy	50%	56%	54%	36%
Unhappy	18%	23%	15%	44%

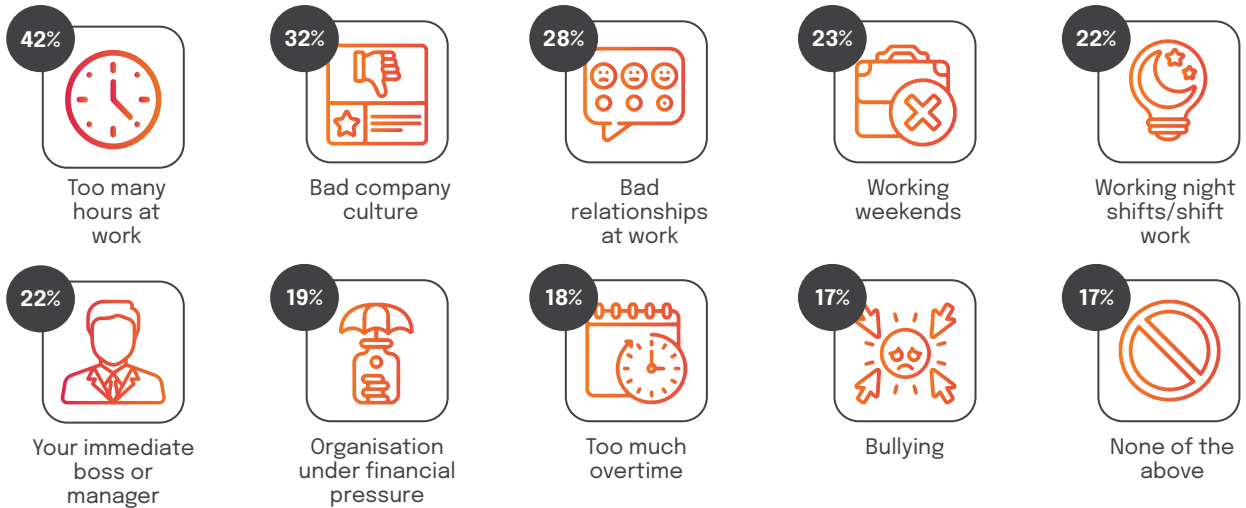


• IMPACTS TO MENTAL HEALTH

We also asked about the top factors impacting people’s mental health. Too many hours of work came in first place (42%), followed by bad company culture (32%) and bad relationships at work (28%).

While hours of work had a big impact, overtime specifically did not – sitting at only 18%. This suggests that the issue is shift lengths themselves, not the idea of staying past one’s scheduled finishing time.

TOP 10 IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH



• MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Employees indicated that their workplaces offer at least some support. For most respondents (51%), this was access to counselling or talking support. For 39%, access to helplines were an option, and occupational health services were available to 31% of respondents. A small number (16%) could get time off for mental health leave, and 14% of companies were promoting work/life balance initiatives.

For 15% of our respondents, none of the above were applicable.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OPTIONS	
Access to counselling/talking support	51%
Access to Helplines	39%
Occupational Health Services	31%
Time off for Mental Health	16%
None of the above	15%
Promotion of work-life balance initiatives	14%
Other	3%

THIS SECTION SUMMARISED

Children’s Home workers are dedicated to their jobs, and the children whose lives they impact. While employees indicated that too-long hours are a problem, this did not have the same impact on happiness levels as one would expect from a different industry – showing that the importance of the job itself tops many other factors. Still, burnout rates look higher among the industry’s veterans, suggesting the Children’s Home sector is at risk of losing its most experienced people.

We’ll see these trends pop up again in the next section of this report, when we examine the reasons that employees do eventually quit.

WHY WORKERS QUIT - AND HOW TO WIN THEM BACK

With staff vacancies at a seven-year high, employers are scrambling to keep their Children's Homes staffed - putting further pressure on an already high-pressure environment.

Next, we'll examine some of the reasons that people join this industry, and why they leave again. For employees, this is an opportunity to check if other workers across the UK feel the way you do. For employers, this is a chance to take notes - these factors directly impact job retention.

REASONS TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE

First, let's examine context - what draws people to this industry in the first place? This was a free-text question so respondents could answer how they liked. Here is what they told us:



WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO

WORK IN A CHILDREN'S HOME?

- Desire to do good
- Love of supporting young people
- Personal experience receiving care
- Tried it and fell in love
- Career change

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- I wanted to be the adult I needed as a child.
- Because all children deserve to be listened to, safeguarded and happy.
- Because I want to support children to have a better quality of life.
- Curious about what Children's Homes were like and ended up falling in love with the job.
- I care about the outcomes.



REASONS TO LEAVE THE WORKFORCE

Now let's compare the above to the reasons people back out again. We asked both why respondents feel fellow staff left their current employer, and why they feel people quit the industry entirely.

You'll see some common threads between both sets of answers, which also line up with what we've been seeing elsewhere in the report - people are struggling with low rates of pay, too many working hours and not enough support. There's also a perception that new employees aren't being told the realities of the job, finding out for themselves the hard way.

WHY DO PEOPLE QUIT YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER?

- Better pay elsewhere
- Issues with management
- Better hours elsewhere
- Mental health reasons/stress
- Better work-life balance elsewhere
- Lack of staff support and training

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- Bad managers Not understanding the impact the work has or demands of staff.
- Better pay and less hours elsewhere.
- Being assaulted regularly and not getting paid when needing time off.
- There are many cowboy companies out there that do not run safe services.
- Unsociable hours, increasingly complex children, scrutiny from Ofsted.



WHY DO PEOPLE QUIT THE INDUSTRY?

- Culture shock, did not understand realities of role
- Insufficient staff support
- Low pay
- Burn out

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- You will earn more money working at a supermarket where you have less stress.
- Work-life balance. Nature of the role.
- Not having a good understanding of the role.
- It wasn't what they expected and this wasn't explained in the interview.
- Because they did not have any support from management.



Thinking about the industry as a whole, we asked if respondents would recommend working in a Children's Home to other people. Despite the perceived issues, 52% still said yes - they were either likely or highly likely. Only 25% said they were unlikely.

Rates were similar between managers and non-managers, though managers were more likely to say they would recommend the industry, and less likely to say they wouldn't.

LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING THIS WORK TO SOMEONE ELSE	
Highly likely	17%
Likely	35%
Neutral	23%
Unlikely	15%
Highly unlikely	10%

• WHY IS THE INDUSTRY HAVING TROUBLE RECRUITING?

It's well-acknowledged right now that there's a skills shortage in the Children's Home sector, and our respondents have some thoughts as to why. We asked both employees and their employers to get a glimpse at both sides of the issue.

There's no disconnect here: you'll see that both employers and staff said much the same thing. Ofsted was also mentioned a few times in our results, with staff experiencing tough regulatory pressure that they believe makes their lives harder.



WHY DOES THE CHILDREN'S HOME SECTOR HAVE TROUBLE RECRUITING NEW STAFF?

EMPLOYEES

- Low pay
- Difficult, demanding role
- Poor work/life balance
- Negative industry stigma
- Not enough training

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- Because it is low paid job. Also, it is challenging and takes a lot of resilience and empathy to stay.
- Because some company's are not truthful about the difficulties that can be experienced in these roles with challenging young people.
- Because the salary does not reflect the work we do.
- Support work seen by the government as 'unskilled labour', and not enough investment in it as a career pathway.
- Ofsted, and the significant level of responsibility.

EMPLOYERS

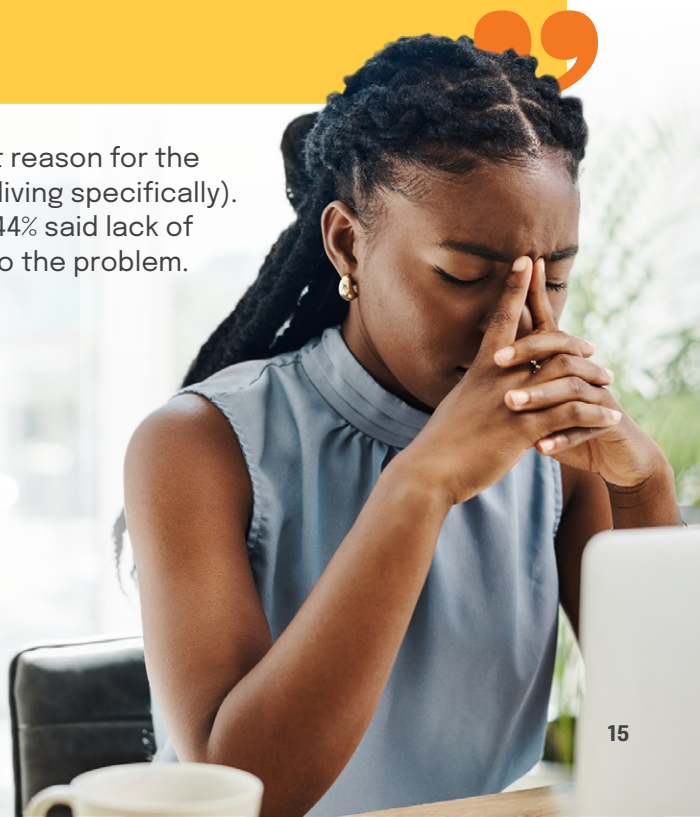
- Low pay
- Poor awareness as to realities of the role
- Difficult, demanding role
- Poor management and staff support
- Better pay, less stress, in other industries

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- Lack of awareness of what the profession entails.
- Because the role is like Marmite, not for everyone.
- Supermarkets pay well for a lot less stress.
- Unrealistic expectations and better pay options elsewhere.
- It is seen as an easy job for unqualified individuals, and is actually a hard and demanding role.

Indeed, 61% of employers felt that salary was the biggest reason for the worker shortage (with a further 39% blaming the cost of living specifically). Beyond that, half said shift patterns were an issue, and 44% said lack of career options being explained in schools contributed to the problem.

TOP REASONS FOR THE SKILLS SHORTAGE - AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE	
Salary/pay	61%
Shift patterns	50%
Lack of career options explained in schools	44%
Cost of living	39%
Other	33%
Fewer overseas workers	17%
Lack of flexible working	17%



• THOUGHTS ON THE INDUSTRY

The last question we asked workers on this issue was their general thoughts on the industry. We completely opened this question up, trying to see their true sentiment in their own words, and have included more comments here than previously in this report – to give you a broader look into the real worlds of real employees.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE CHILDREN'S HOME SECTOR?

- Difficult but rewarding role
- Better pay, bonuses for new starters
- More support for the children (including post-18)
- More employee support: physically, mentally, safety and training
- Ofsted no longer fit for purpose, not “realistic”
- Industry too profit-motivated

IN RESPONDENTS' OWN WORDS:

- It is failing the kids to keep investors happy.
- Children need more therapeutic input – workers should be trained to be able to deliver these.
- A very difficult but rewarding role.
- Finances now play a huge role in this sector.
- I love what I do, but it is a sacrifice to my own personal life. I don't think this is realised!
- It is broken. I and others are doing our best to support young people and staff alike.
- Too many people see childcare as a way to make money.
- Ofsted should have a far more prognostic approach to inspections, and come in as humans – not poker-faced, unfriendly people.
- Ofsted is no longer fit for purpose. Care is the most overregulated industry.
- The government needs to fund this important sector. Children are the pillar of this nation.

THIS SECTION SUMMARISED

Pay, stress and a lack of recognition – these are all common themes running throughout this chapter, and report. Employees feel their efforts are not recognised, leading to poor training, not enough management support and low rates of pay, while at the same time they believe Ofsted is over-regulating, making life even harder.

Adding to the negative sentiment is a common notion that private Children's Homes are more driven by profit than high-quality care, and new recruits aren't being taught the realities of the job before being thrown in to find out for themselves – and quitting when they realise it's not for them.



TRAINING & RECRUITMENT TRENDS



To round out our data, we looked closely at training and recruitment to see where there might be opportunities for improvement, or to recognise hard work which is already being done.

TRAINING

Many of our employee respondents said they didn't feel they were receiving enough training, and that their role was viewed as 'unskilled' in the eyes of the government. So, what training are employees actually receiving?

From a qualifications point of view, the majority of our respondents (45%) had a national vocational qualification (NVQ), followed by 33% with a degree. Just over 10% had a Masters degree. Results were similar between managers and non-managers.

HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS HELD BY EMPLOYEES	
NVQ	45%
Degree	33%
Masters	11%
HNC/HND	8%
School leaver qualifications	2%
A Levels	1%

On top of their educational background, 93% of Children's Home workers are offered additional training by their employer - mostly online training, rather than face-to-face, which some employees mentioned they weren't happy about.

For most, mandatory training and training towards NVQ levels 3 and 5 were common, with additional courses offered in first aid as well as other relevant knowledge areas such as safeguarding, ADHD/autism, trauma, PACE, and various therapeutic areas.

This was reflected by our employer respondents, who said they offered on-the-job training as well as training towards new qualifications as part of their offerings.

DOES YOUR EMPLOYER OFFER TRAINING?	
No	7%
Yes	93%



• RECRUITMENT

Every organisation we spoke to is planning to recruit new staff in the coming six months. With vacancies this high and a national shortage of available talent, this comes as no surprise.

For the majority of organisations (67%), a combined strategy of direct advertising and recruitment agencies was key to their recruitment strategy. Direct advertising on its own, without an agency's help, came in second place (61%). Job boards (50%) and recruitment agencies on their own (39%) were next, with advertising through recruitment agencies in last place at 28%.

If we contrast that data with how employees said they found their role, we can see that some of the above strategies are likely to be more effective than others. For instance, a third (the majority) of respondents were headhunted, followed by 28% who applied directly. A fifth came through an agency, leaving 13% who found their job via word of mouth and 6% for whom none of the above applied.

HOW EMPLOYERS INTEND TO FIND EMPLOYEES	
Direct advertising and recruitment agencies	67%
Direct advertising	61%
Advertising on job boards	50%
Recruitment agencies	39%
Advertising through recruitment agencies	28%
Other	22%

HOW EMPLOYEES ACTUALLY FOUND THEIR JOB	
Headhunted	33%
Applied direct	28%
Through an agency	20%
Word of mouth	13%
None of the above	6%



THIS SECTION SUMMARISED

While there are no great revelations in this section, it helps paint a clearer picture as to how the industry works - and continues to contrast the employee and employer experience.

Employees indicated repeatedly that they want more training and more opportunities to grow their skills. While some training is commonplace (and mandatory, to an extent), it's clearly not sufficient. Employers say they offer on-the-job training opportunities, but for employees to build their careers in this sector, more work needs to be done.

From a recruitment point of view, headhunting is the likeliest way an employer can get new recruits, suggesting a need for good industry connections to succeed in finding talent - and, as such, a continued need for the aid of recruitment agencies.





INSIGHTS FOR EMPLOYERS

In our final section, we're going to look at some final comments from our respondents and compare that with wider industry data, to put together a list of recommendations for employers. As an employer, this is a great place to get new ideas for your home or organisation. For employees, these could help spark ideas to take to your employer when requesting changes.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We asked both groups of respondents what they feel the industry could improve in order to attract more prospects, and retain existing staff.

Unsurprisingly, employees mentioned low pay most frequently. This is, simply, the biggest thing on people's minds, and has been throughout our report. But, there were more suggestions too, including:

EMPLOYEES SAID:

- Increase awareness of the sector generally.
- Increase support and empathy from management.
- Offer more career progression opportunities.
- Work to change the stigma around Children's Homes.

”

- A well structured, well paid, nationally recognised career path to rival that of teaching in the UK.
- Working collaboratively, instead of in competition, is the only way forward - to remove the negative stigma and lobby the government to change the way our sector is viewed.
- Make it a profession and a career that is highlighted in school, and through pathways in vocational and academic training.
- Increase pay, more flexibility in shifts and absence expectations, and better-quality recognised training.
- Offer a professional training course - same as social work and health services.
- Raise the salary, training relevant to the job you are doing, support and empathy from management.
- Things were better under CSCI as they were more collaborative in their approach.

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Employers are well-aligned on these points, hitting many of the same suggestions as their employees. Of course, many of their points target the government - suggesting that employers may need to consider not just what they can change within their own business, but whether they can collaborate to lobby the government for national change too.



EMPLOYERS SAID:

- Professionalise the industry.
- Collaborative approach to building this career.
- Increase government funding.
- Improve status of the industry.

- Professionalise the industry and make staff register. Discuss care work with schools and school job fairs.
- Make it seen as a professional career.
- We need to have a collaborative approach to building a nationally recognised career path which demonstrates the value we place in those who care, in the same way we place value in those who teach.
- Increase funding, increase salaries, improve status and reputation, allow more flexibility for alternatives to QCF3.
- Explain the realities of children’s homes, rather than just the negative aspects of the work.
- Showcase the good the sector does.
- Make social care an attractive option by ensuring it is treated as a professional career.

• IMPROVING RETENTION RATES

Moving away from government and thinking more about employee retention at the organisational level, what advice did employers have for other leaders?

- Offer more support from management.
- Build better career pathways.
- Listen to staff - give them an opportunity to contribute.
- Better advertise the role (and its realities).

Wider industry data says much the same. According to a recent government report, organisations with better career progression and staff training see higher retention rates. And the same goes for wellbeing initiatives - like flexible work, community engagement and more staff support (such as supporting staff with children or supporting staff going through menopause).

SMART INITIATIVES HIGHLIGHTED BY THE COMMISSION

- Pay an hourly rate above the living wage for the area.
- Provide free meals for staff.
- Encourage more staff feedback (and listen to it).
- Utilise reward and recognition schemes to show staff their value to the organisation.
- Champion workforce wellbeing more visibly, and be proactive - not just reactive.
- Treat staff as individuals - different people need different support.
- Nurture professional development through training and appraisals.

NEED HELP?

Charles Hunter Associates is an award-winning specialist recruitment agency with years of experience working in the social care industry, and with Children's Homes specifically.

Established in 2009, we have enjoyed incredible growth throughout the years, continually expanding and increasing our high-quality recruitment services. Since then we've helped place over 50,000 professionals into new jobs (with a 95% accuracy rate), and over 100 happy clients currently use us to fill their staffing needs.

Whether you're looking for a new recruitment partner, or to further your career within the Children's Homes sector, we can help.





CONTACT US TODAY

0118 948 5555 info@charecruitment.com
charecruitment.com



CHARLES HUNTER
ASSOCIATES





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ASSOCIATES