Report

Home Care Sector Report 2019

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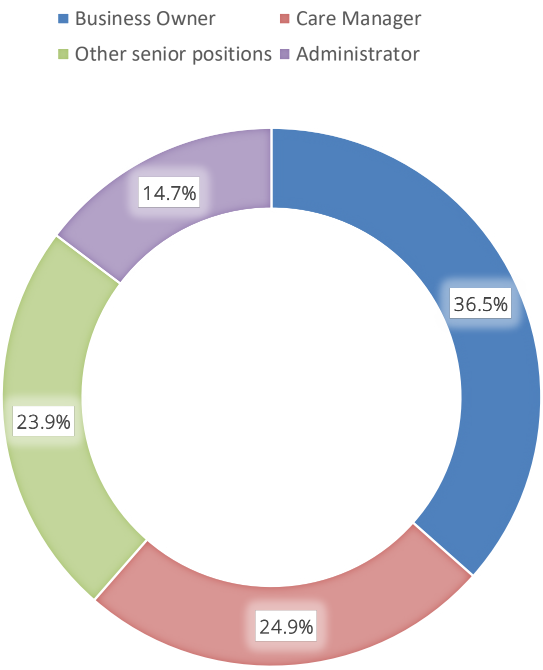
Introduction



Job titles of survey respondents

Our 2019 Home Care Sector Report is based on a survey of 197 individuals representing 176 home care agencies across the UK and Ireland.

The survey was run to better understand the challenges facing the sector and how technology is being used to address them.

References and insight from external sources have been included to provide additional context to the empirical findings of the survey.

Our hope is that it will furnish the sector with a broader understanding of each challenge and the solutions being used to address them.

Survey Audience Responsibilities

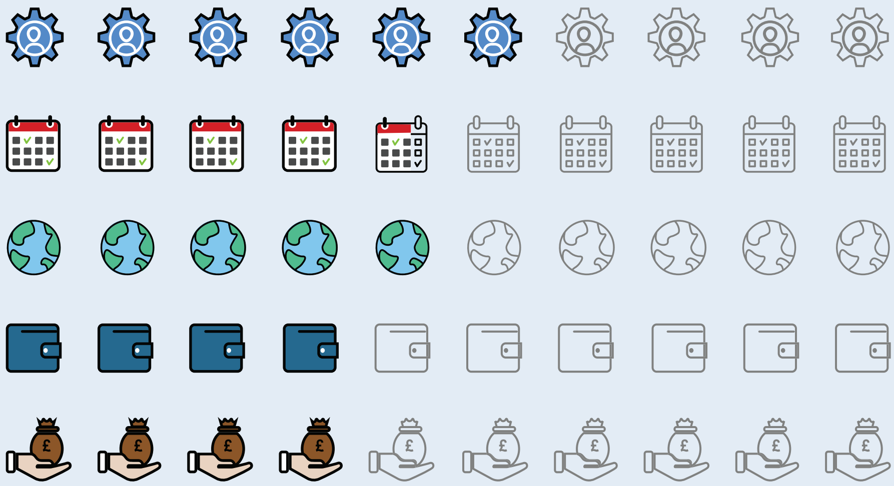
60% Staff Management

58% Appointment Management

49% Owner/MD/Overview of all areas

41% Payroll

40% Invoicing



Business Challenges

Recruitment and Staff Retention

Recruitment and retention dominated the survey responses. Recruitment was flagged as the biggest business challenge by 48.5% of respondents, and retention of staff was flagged as the biggest business challenge by 21.6%.

Even more telling is the fact that 80.7% of respondents voted for either recruitment or retention in their top two business challenges.

These findings will shock few of you. After all, social care has the highest turnover of any sector in the UK[1], with one in three workers leaving it every year - twice the average rate across all other sectors[2].

In a recent APPG Inquiry report[3], Skills for Care estimated that 8.0% of roles in adult social care are vacant, an average of approximately 110,000 vacancies at any one time. The vacancy rate rose by 2.5 percentage points between 2012/13 and 2017/18. This is expected to rise further still, to at least 500,000 empty posts by 2030.

So what is driving this?

One of the biggest factors is low pay across the sector. Research published in the Hft Sector Pulse Check 2018[4] found that; "when asked what [respondents] saw as the main factors fuelling the recruitment crisis, low pay stands out as a major factor. 80% of respondents in our survey stated that low pay had the biggest impact on their recruitment efforts."

References

[1] https://www.homecare.co.uk/news/article.cfm/id/1607171/staff-turnover-in-socal-care-cited-as-thehighest-of-any-sector-in-the-uk

[2] https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/newsletter-features/stemming-the-tide-retaining-the-social-care-workforce

[3] https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c6219939-c33a-4460-a71e-4df262903498/downloads/SC%20Inquiry%20Final%20%20.pdf

[4] https://www.hft.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Hft-Sector-Pulse-Check-2018.pdf

[5] https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c6219939-c33a-4460-a71e-4df262903498/downloads/SC%20Inquiry%20Final%20%20.pdf

[6] https://blog.totaljobs.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Totaljobs-social-care-report.pdf

It is worth noting that the sector is not simply being affected by the low rates of pay at the entry level, but by *flattened pay differentials* between inexperienced and highly experienced care workers.

Research by Independent Age[5] indicates that with the introduction of the real Living Wage the salaries of at least 500,000 workers, previously below this threshold, were uplifted. But many more experienced staff earning just slightly more saw no increase in pay.

The result of uplifting lower paid workers, without any requirement to apply similar measures to higher paid staff, has flattened the pay differentials between lesser and more experienced workers.

To provide an example taken from Independent Age's research - as of September 2015, a care worker with over 20 years of experience could expect an hourly rate just 26p higher than a care worker with *less than a year of experience* (equivalent to 5% higher). Furthermore, the experience pay gap has reduced each year to only 15p (2%) in March 2018.

Retention may be an even more complex challenge, where rates of pay certainly play their part, but employees require more sustenance than a simple paycheque.

Total Jobs and Care UK recently produced a joint report[6] indicating 1 in 3 social care workers plan to leave the industry in the next 5 years. When the same report asked what could be done to enhance their careers, 59% of respondents indicated that they could feel more valued by their employer. This goes to highlight the need for greater respect and recognition for those working to deliver care - a concern more easily addressed than finding extra pay.

Routes Forward

- Improve the quality of your candidates when recruiting by asking your existing team for referrals.
- Improve interview attendance rates by making them less formal and offering more flexibility on interview times.
- Retain staff for longer by making them feel more valued and providing career progression through structured training.
- Provide recognition of carers through initiatives such as The Care Badge and call for a National Care Service to be established.
- Reduce staff frustrations through using technology to reduce repetitive tasks, improve scheduling and reminders and better allocate carers to appointments which match their skills and preferences.
- Allow carers to fit work around their own lives and commitments, through greater flexibility in working hours and scheduling.

Working with Tight Budgets

Budgetary challenges were the third biggest challenge (5.7%) highlighted in the survey, although undoubtedly contributing to challenges #1 and #2 as limited budgets restrict what agencies can viably pay their staff.

Limited funding has to stretch further as living wage, travel costs and office overheads increase year on year. Home care agency budgets need to be carefully balanced to meet essential operational costs and yet also invest in areas, such as technology, which will save costs in the longer term.

The UKHCA estimates[7] that the statutory sector purchases over 80% of all homecare delivered in the UK, so state funding should be the primary focus of financial concerns. Broad findings in the UKHCA report[7] '*The Homecare Deficit 2018*' indicate a huge disparity between council payments to home care agencies and the expectation of these agencies to pay the National Living Wage. This deficit alone ran to an estimated £402 million in 2018.

The UKHCA recommend funding beyond this deficit, both to elevate the role of care workers above a minimum wage occupation, and enable additional services to be delivered to the 1.4 million people currently believed to be living with unmet needs, many of whom would benefit from home-based care[8]. The UKHCA calculated this funding deficit to be nigh on a billion pounds (£921 million) in 2018.

Routes Forward

- Recognise the funding deficit between the value of local authority contracts and the expectations for care delivery, and fund appropriately.
- Improve backend efficiency through automation of manual processes - such as invoicing and timesheet production - to reduce office overhead costs.
- Improve carer scheduling, reduce waiting time between calls and ensure allocated carers always have the required skills/qualifications; preventing waste of each carer's time and the associated cost of this.
- Move to electronic systems for scheduling, document management and payment processes to reduce paper, postage and storage costs - as well as improve efficiency.

Growing Pains

On a more positive note, 5.7% of respondents to the survey said that their number one business challenge in 2019 is *managing growth*. This is perhaps unsurprising when considering that 85.9% of all survey respondents indicated that they expected their business to grow in 2019.

It's not just the opinion of those responding to the survey which indicates growth; the political climate suggests a greater emphasis on caring for people in their own homes. Combine this with the expectation of social care demands in line with population growth and it's easy to see why the vast majority of respondents are anticipating growth in demand for their services.

Whilst this may sound like a positive challenge, the reality is that poorly managed growth can easily result in diminished care quality and CQC rating. Sustainable, well managed, growth is key to long term success.

Worryingly, there has been a growing trend in home care organisations handing back contracts to local authorities. Whilst they may look like 'big packages' to win, many turn out to be unsustainable to manage as ongoing contracts without significant reductions in care quality.

Happily, care delivery costs are being brought down through better use of technology to automate and improve backend efficiency by many home care providers. As demands on resources grow, these technology-enabled efficiency gains will become ever more important to sustainable growth.

References

[7] http://bit.ly/32S6R3g

[8] http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/ articles/2018/july-2018/new-analysis-shows-numberof-older-people-with-unmet-care-needs-soars-torecord-high/

[9] https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20190605_medicines_in_health_and_adult_social_care_report.pdf

[10] https://www.care-planner.co.uk/case-study-continuity-healthcare/

[11] https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-2181640715?referer=widget3

Balancing Quality and Growth

A cautionary tale is told by Barry Stephenson, General Manager at Continuity Healthcare (full case study downloadable from the CarePlanner website[10]).

"We started off small and could run around balancing plates, but as we grew, firefighting as an approach to running a business became untenable. Our second CQC inspection moved us from *Good* to *Requires Improvement.*"

Barry initiated an 82-step recovery plan to address the shortfalls in service quality and management. Working systematically to win back control over the management and tracking of call scheduling, as well as automating various repetitive tasks, Barry was able to steer Continuity Healthcare back on track.

Selecting the right technology to support the 82-step recovery plan was key to enabling a rapid recovery. Barry explains the benefits of their new care management solution below.

"We now have a comprehensive view of our schedules and call-time adherence by our carers, we can track carer performance in areas like punctuality and cancelling shifts at short notice."

Barry Stephenson, General Manager at Continuity Healthcare

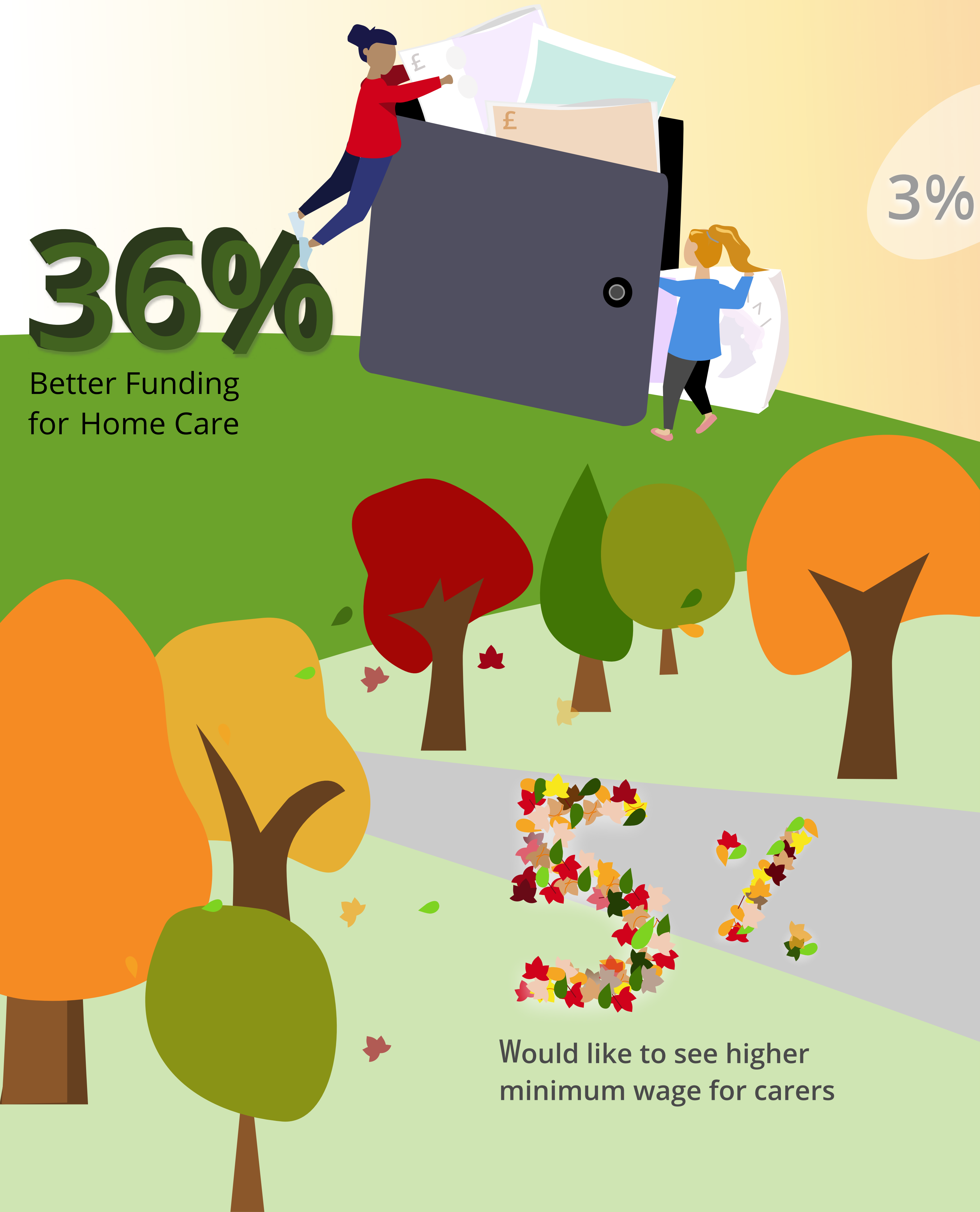
"We can match up carers easily with the skills individual service users require, and CarePlanner can prevent us from sending inadequately trained carers to service users with complex care needs. It can prevent us from inadvertently sending carers to calls where the service user prefers not to have that carer."

"We can invoice our councils and CCGs with almost one click, automatically calculating staff hours worked. This has saved us an incredible amount of time and is more accurate than us doing it manually."

The result of all this hard work was validated by the CQC at the end of May 2019. Continuity Healthcare was awarded an overall *Good* rating[11].

Top Request for Change to

Government Policy



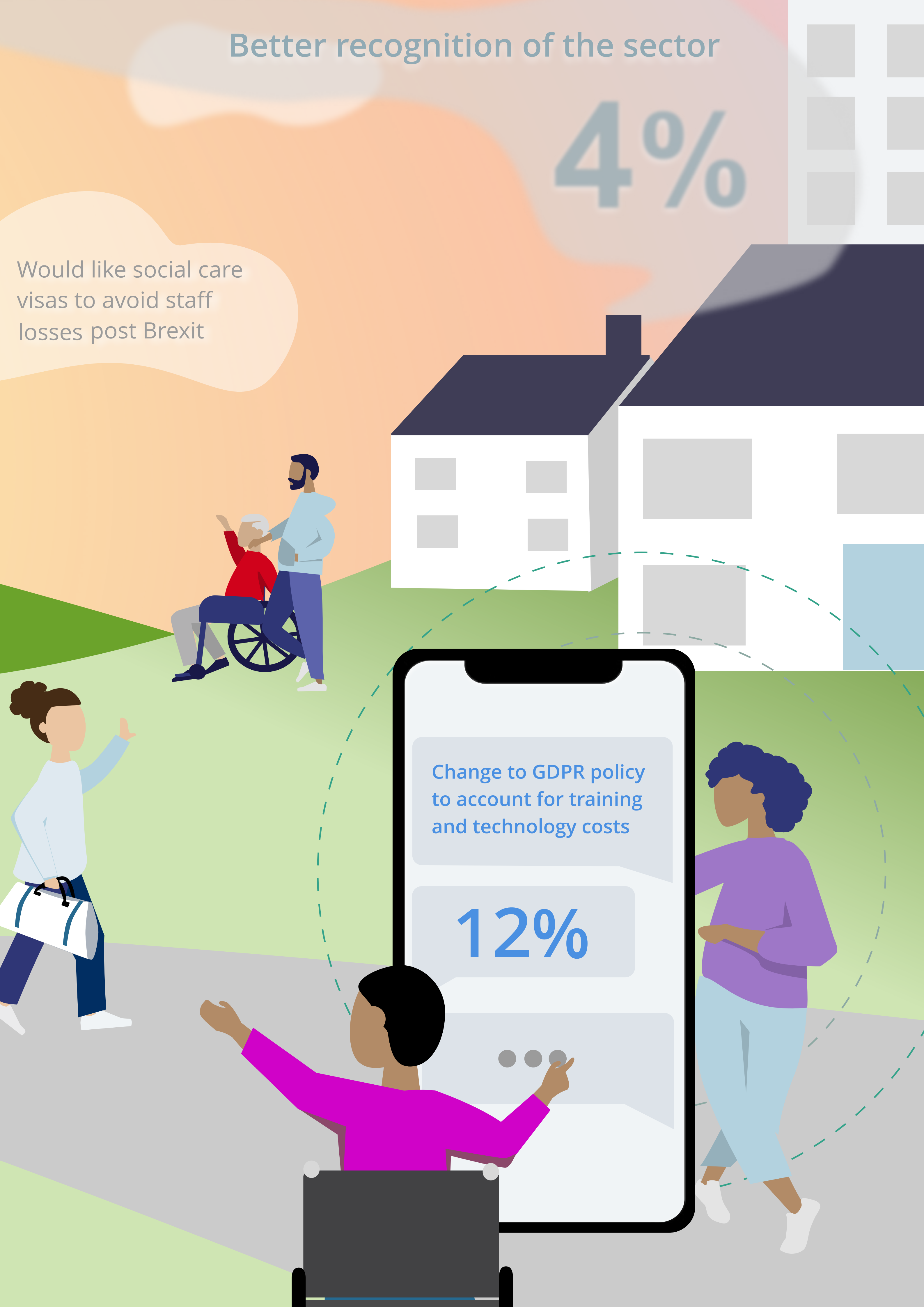
36%

Better Funding for Home Care

3%

5%

Would like to see higher minimum wage for carers


Better recognition of the sector
4%
Would like social care visas to avoid staff losses post Brexit
Change to GDPR policy to account for training and technology costs
12%

Care Delivery and Management

The combined percentage of respondents flagging *admin time* (4.1%) as well as *reporting and managing performance* (1.5%) highlights exactly the sort of challenges where technology can make a considerable difference.

Care delivery time, and budget to support this, is at a premium. Any time saved by simplifying or even automating admin duties is an important gain. Technology can reduce repetitive admin tasks, automate reporting and even be used analytically to improve performance at an individual as well as business level.

Care delivery challenges combined were 7.7% - made up of *delivering high enough care quality*, *missed medications* and *missed appointments*. Again, these are all areas where technological solutions are helping to improve both efficiency and accuracy.

Taking these challenges into consideration, alongside statements in a recent CQC report[9] about risks associated with *hand-written* MAR charts, points to a growing need for digital solutions, such as electronic MARs (or eMARs), in care environments.

> "The key contributing factor for administration errors was poor record keeping. We saw that MARs were either not completed, or not completed accurately. Discontinued medicines and incorrect strengths of medicines were sometimes found on MAR charts. *These types of errors were more likely when MAR charts were hand-written* or included additional hand-written medicines."
>
> - Care Quality Commission: Medicines in health and adult social care, June 2019

Routes Forward

- Care management software can ensure that only carers with the right set of skills are allocated to each appointment, improving the quality of care delivered.
- Use call monitoring to track call status and carer location, enabling dynamic rescheduling and notification of service users or family members when unavoidable delays occur.
- Reduce missed calls through the connection of back-office scheduling to carers via an app, putting their rota in their pocket (with reminders and even directions to their next call).
- Integrate eMARs with care rostering solutions, enabling the setting of reminders for medication delivery and require items to be checked off to proceed - massively reducing the risk of missed medications.

Green Paper Opinions

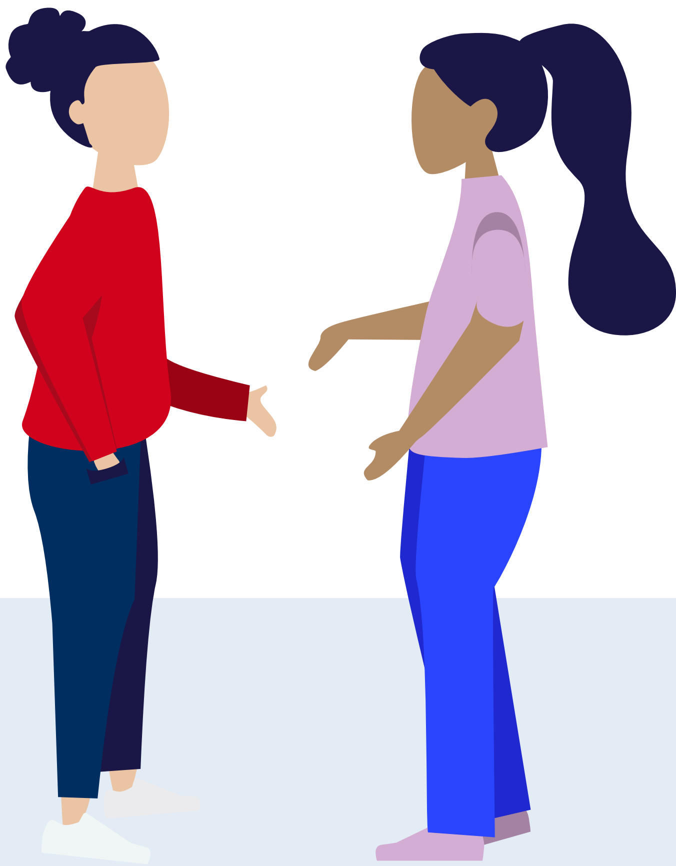
On the topic of the Green Paper, some heartfelt opinions were voiced in the survey – here are a few examples:

"7,240 older people have lost their homes and any savings through the cost of social care. That's 10 older people draining their savings every day. Who does care for that?? No one!"

"It's an important body of work and everything has been put on the back burner with Brexit, I am disgusted with ALL politicians."

"People having to use their life savings to fund care at home. This also does not apply across the UK"

"We are always the last for consideration. We should have more consideration shown."



Missed Appointments and Frustrated Visits

Missed appointments are the worst fear of any home care agency. Traditional methods of call scheduling and monitoring, such as paper-based schedules or even Excel-driven rosters, typically lack the level of safeguards necessary to minimise the risk of missed calls.

Overall, the response to the survey indicated that on average just over 71% had no missed calls or frustrated visits each month.

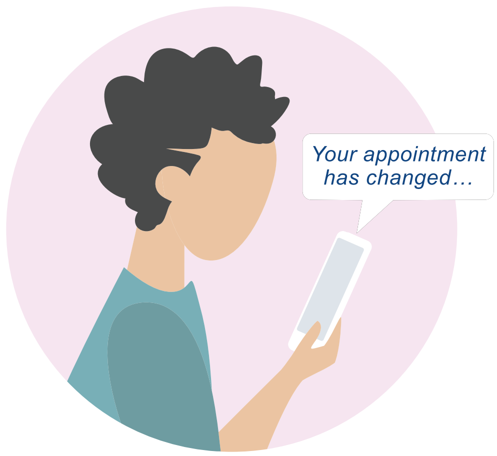
Thankfully, of those agencies who suffered from these, the distribution was skewed to the lower end of the range. However, there are still some agencies who have yet to fully embrace technology to minimise missed calls.

Technology has a dual role to play in addressing missed calls.

Firstly, care management solutions help reduce the number of missed calls, through better scheduling, call reminders and even sending map-based directions to guide carers from one call to the next.

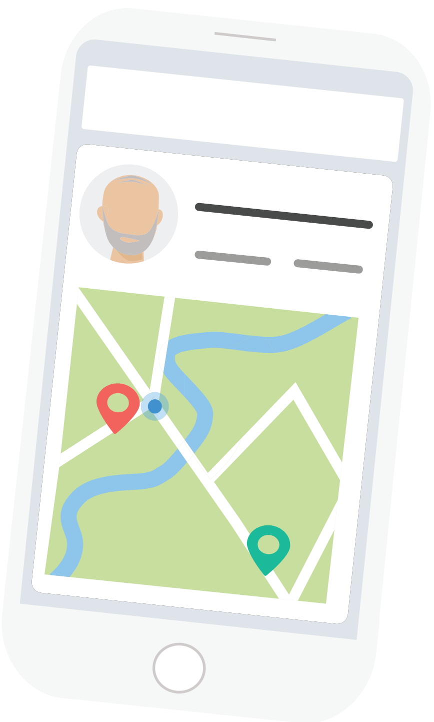
Secondly, an agency can mitigate the impact of a missed call by using GPS/call monitoring solutions to gauge if a carer is running late, and then reach out to alert a family or service user.

Technology in Care



There's no ignoring the sharp increase in the use of technology throughout the home care sector in the last few years. As awareness of the benefits grows, so does uptake. Almost half of respondents to the survey (44.2%) have some form of remote monitoring in place. 22.3% have fall detectors in place.

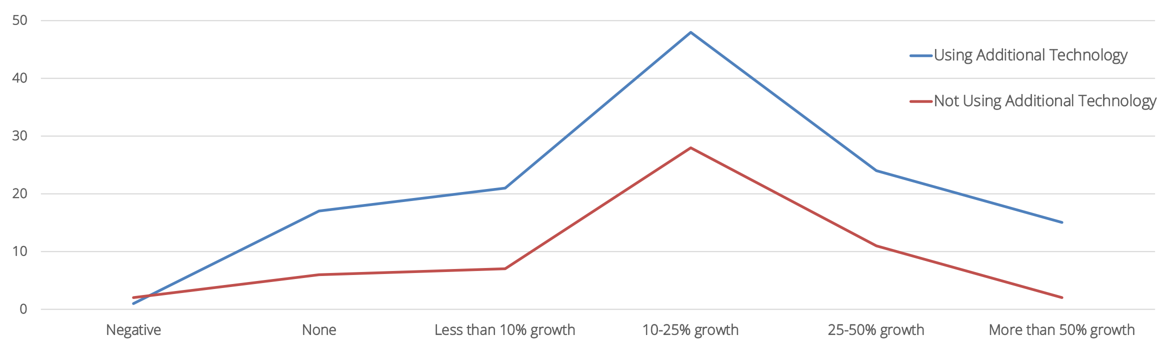
Technology also plays an important role in improving quality of life for service users, as demonstrated by the volume of respondents mentioning the deployment of Amazon Alexa or Google Home (12.7%) or apps for mental stimulation (6.1%) as part of their care delivery.



An interesting observation is that agencies with this focus on technology to support care quality – those using smart speakers, monitoring or apps – all expected their businesses to grow in the coming year. The majority of these agencies expect growth in the region of 10-25%.

In fact, 85.9% of agencies using technology in some capacity expected their business to grow in the coming year, with only 0.8% of agencies using technology in some capacity expecting their business to decline in the next year.

Morevover, projections for growth were far healthier for those using technology - they were *three times more likely* to predict a 50% growth in their business over the coming year



Supporting CQC Inspections

62.9% of the surveyed audience look for technology to support their CQC compliance and inspection process. When asked for specifics on this, the most popular requirement (from 21.1% of respondents) was for audit trails, crucial to support compliance obligations as well as fulfil requirements of the GDPR.

It's important not to underestimate this - strong audit trails provide traceability for decisions, and accountability for everyone within an organisation, encouraging an atmosphere of honesty and openness.

Other ways in which respondents look to technology to support their CQC compliance and inspection process included:

Enable Excel output of information - Having a care management system with everything recorded in one place is all very well, but the CQC requires access to specific information for inspections. If CQC specific reports can't be generated at the touch of a button, exporting raw data in Excel format enables care managers to gather and compile what they need for the inspection process.

Accident reports, complaints and carer assessments - Presenting clearly logged and followed-up accidents and complaints is hugely important to the CQC inspection process. Being able to enter these into a system against individuals concerned and export the details via a report helps to address this aspect of the inspection process. Carer assessments should be stored and made easily exportable, both for the inspection process and to manage each carer's professional development.

Reminders to keep on track with targets - Keeping on top of paperwork isn't easy when you're focussed on delivering quality care. It's here that workload scheduling systems can help, notifying various individuals - from carers to managers - of what needs to be done, at the appropriate time.

Invoicing Technology

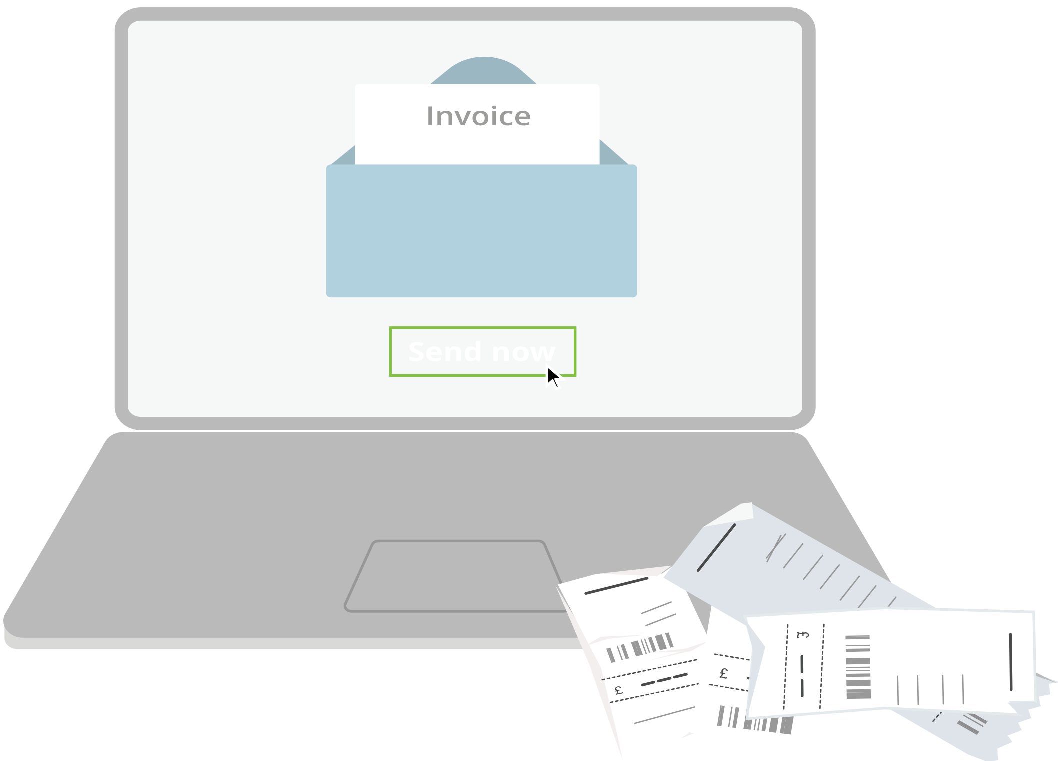
If you're reading this as a manager of a home care agency, you'll most likely be painfully familiar with the time spent producing invoices. Any agency which evolved from paper-based, or even Excel-driven, processes will have lost hours every month to generating and sending invoices.

Worse still, manually generated invoices are more prone to human error – resulting in queries and subsequent delays to payment. Every organisation lives and dies by the strength of its cash flow, so accurate, timely invoicing is essential for a sustainable business.

As a result of these challenges and the value of the invoicing process to the business, many home care agencies have adopted electronic invoicing solutions to reduce costs and enable automation.

From the results of this survey, we can see that the majority of home care agencies who responded have embraced electronic invoicing in some capacity, but many still send a mixture of printed and electronic invoices.

When invoicing requirements are more complex than a single payment request to an individual, electronic invoicing comes into its own. Splitting payments between multiple funders, handling direct payments as well as council funding, even coping with health insurance payments (if our social care develops as some would have it) - these challenges all fall easily into the remit of electronic invoicing.



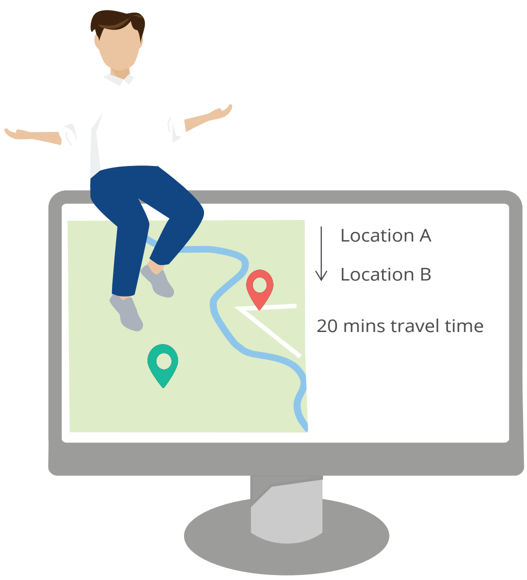
Time Saving through Electronic Invoicing

It's useful to understand the time savings that agencies have experienced through adopting an e-invoicing approach. Even when used alongside traditional print-and-post invoices, the switch to electronic invoicing ensures a greater degree of automation – improving both accuracy and speed.

The average amount of time saved, for all our survey respondents, was 10 hours per month on invoice production. This is more than a full working day, which can be allocated to other areas in need of valuable staff time. For some, the savings were even more dramatic, with several agencies saving 100 hours per month as a result.

Travel Calculations

Few areas of the economy can have as complex and varied travel arrangements as home care, so it seemed only right to give respondents a chance to paint a picture of the challenges they experience in this area. In particular, the survey looked at the time spent calculating travel expenses and payments.



Optimising travel routes and calculating fair rates of pay for travel time and distance covered can take up valuable time. Similarly, when invoices need to reflect accurate travel costs, it pays to have a system that handles this automatically.

Agencies responding to the survey and still manually calculating travel costs lost an average of 9.32 hours per month to this task: again, more than a full working day for a member of staff.

Conclusion

The results of the survey paint a broad and complex picture. It is a picture of a sector that anticipates considerable growth, but worries about how to manage that growth sustainably. It is a picture of a sector that has a real appetite for technological solutions, but which still struggles to source its key resource: people. And it is a picture of a sector that is willing and eager to continue to provide great care, but which has deep concerns about the funding being made available from government.

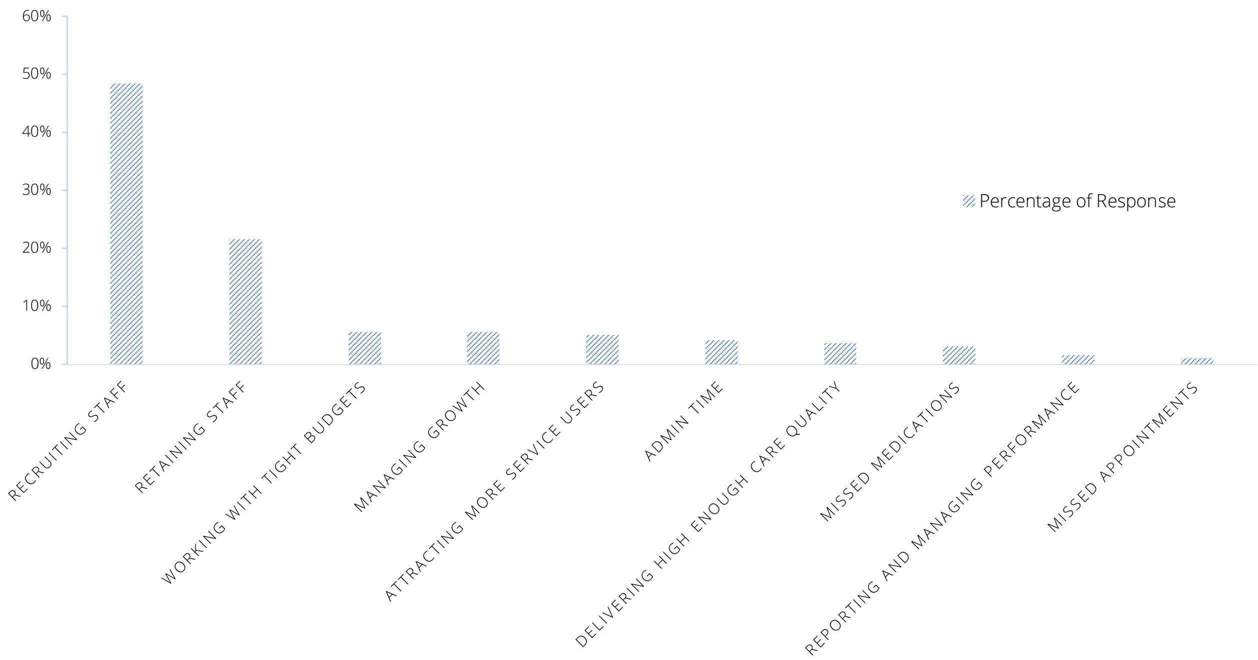
Even when the Social Care Green paper arrives, however, few will await change with bated breath. If increased funding is agreed, it is likely to be deployed in an attempt to broaden access to funded social care, rather than to raise the premiums paid out to struggling private-sector providers.

It is becoming more and more clear that social care providers must be the change they want to see – embracing the opportunities offered by technology to increase efficiency, care quality and the diversity of care options for service users.

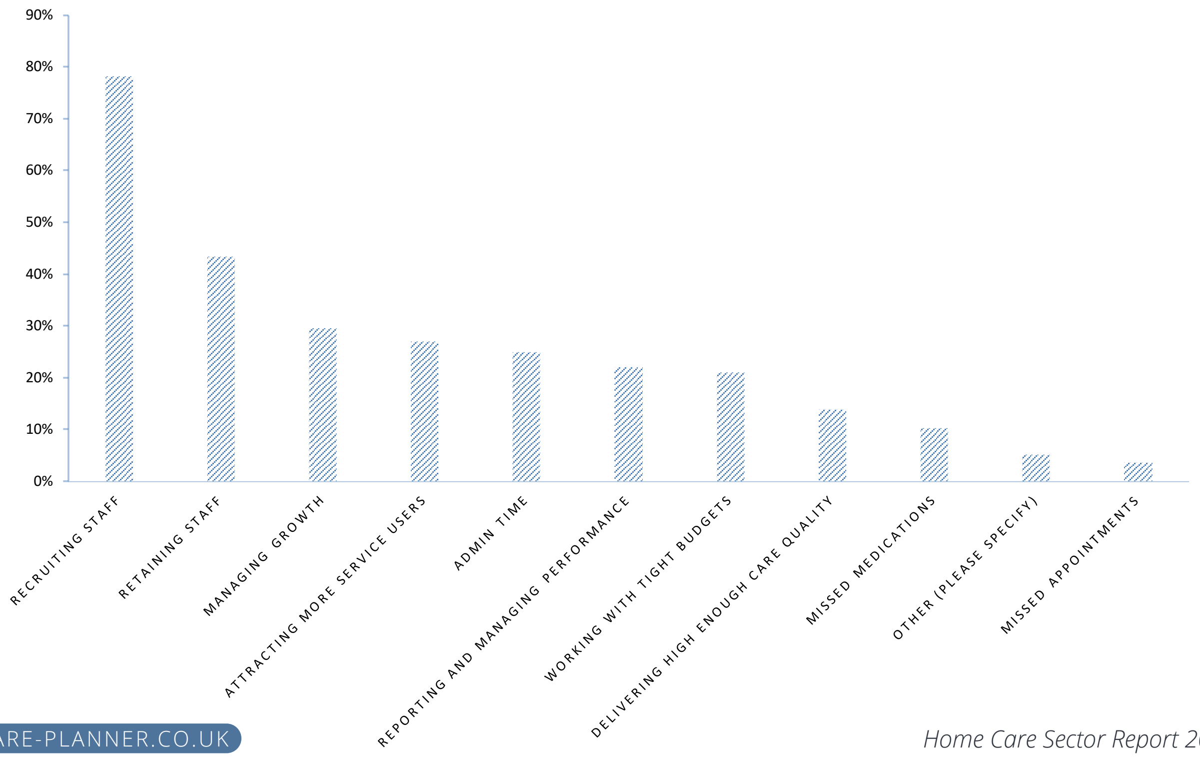
What this report reveals – and what we hope to be able to confirm in subsequent surveys – is that home care agencies who select the right tools with which to tackle the challenges before them can, and will, enjoy a prosperous future. And, most importantly, offer the same to those they support.

Appendices

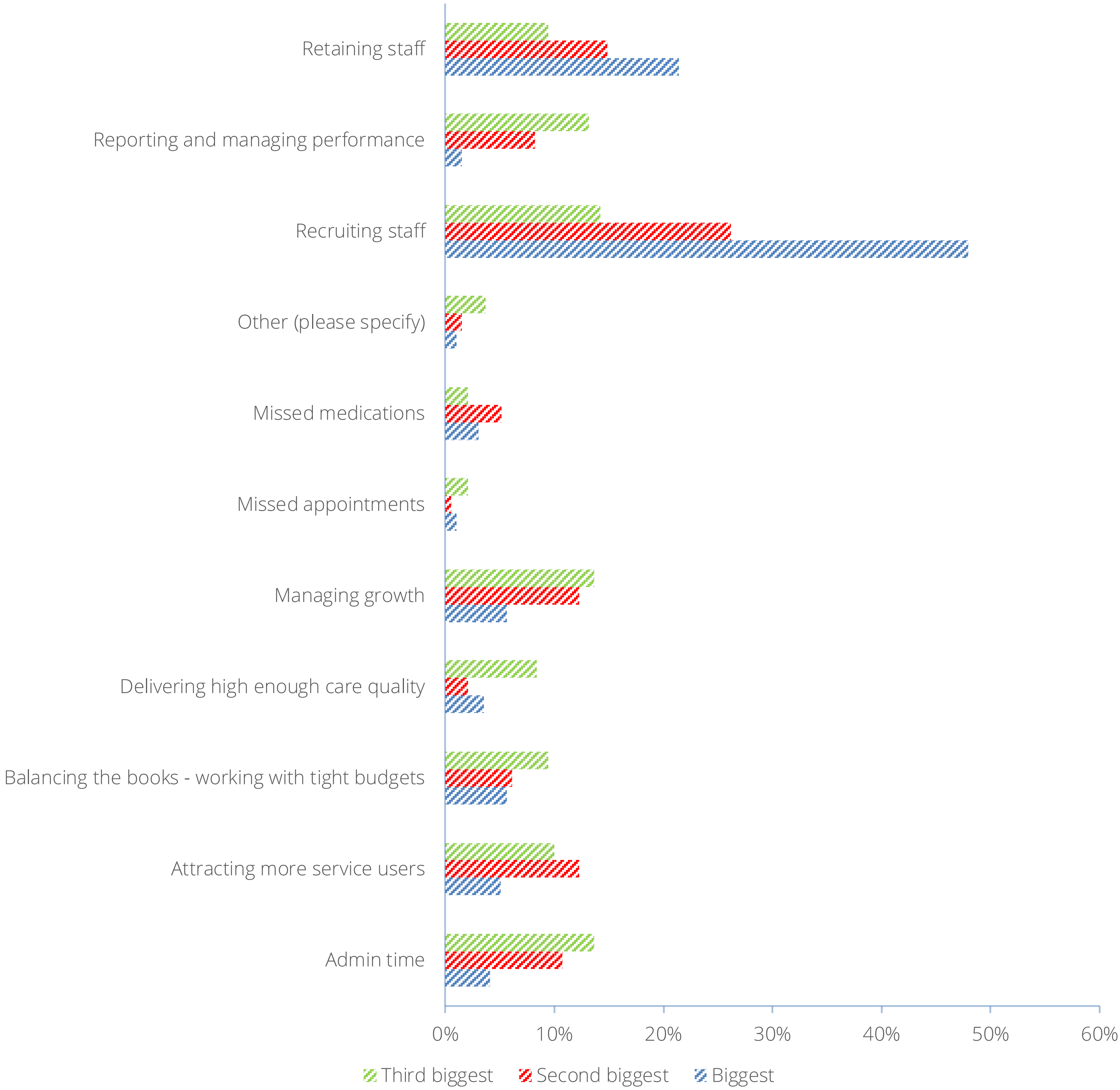
Appendix 1: Number One Business Challenge in 2019



Appendix 2: Appeared in Any of the Top 3 Business Challenges in 2019 (in any order)

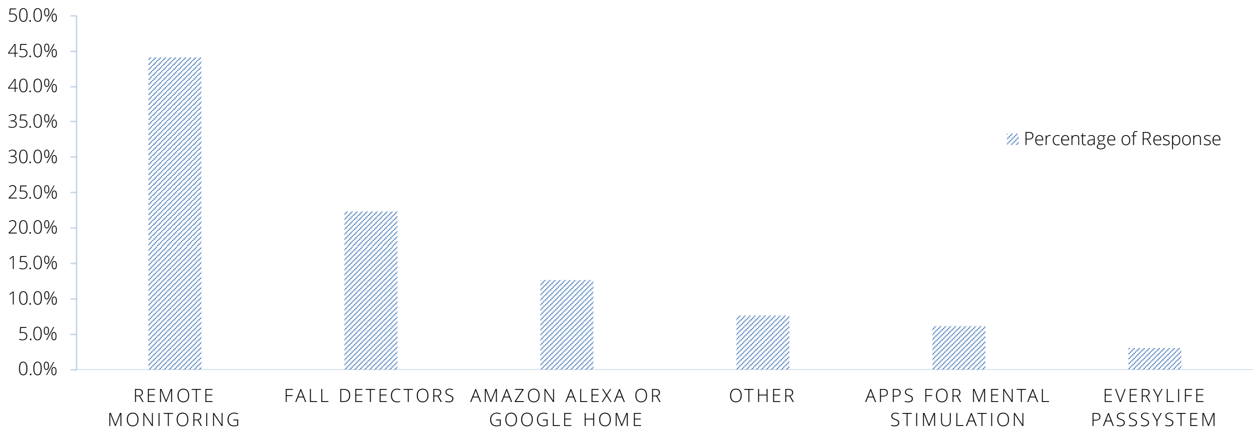


Appendix 3: Biggest, Second Biggest and Third Biggest Business Challenges in 2019

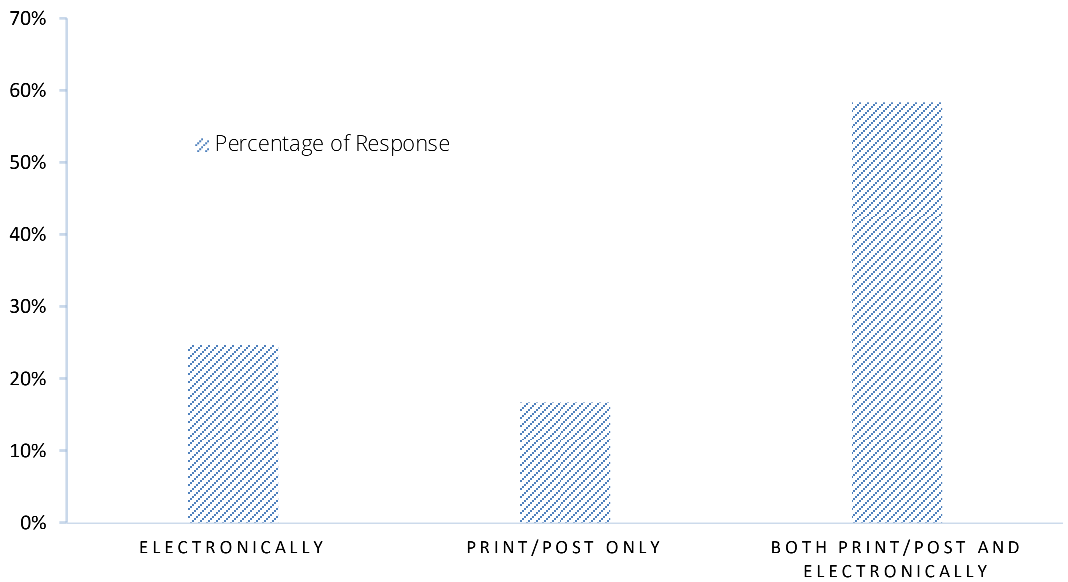


Appendix 4: Top Request of Change to Government Policy

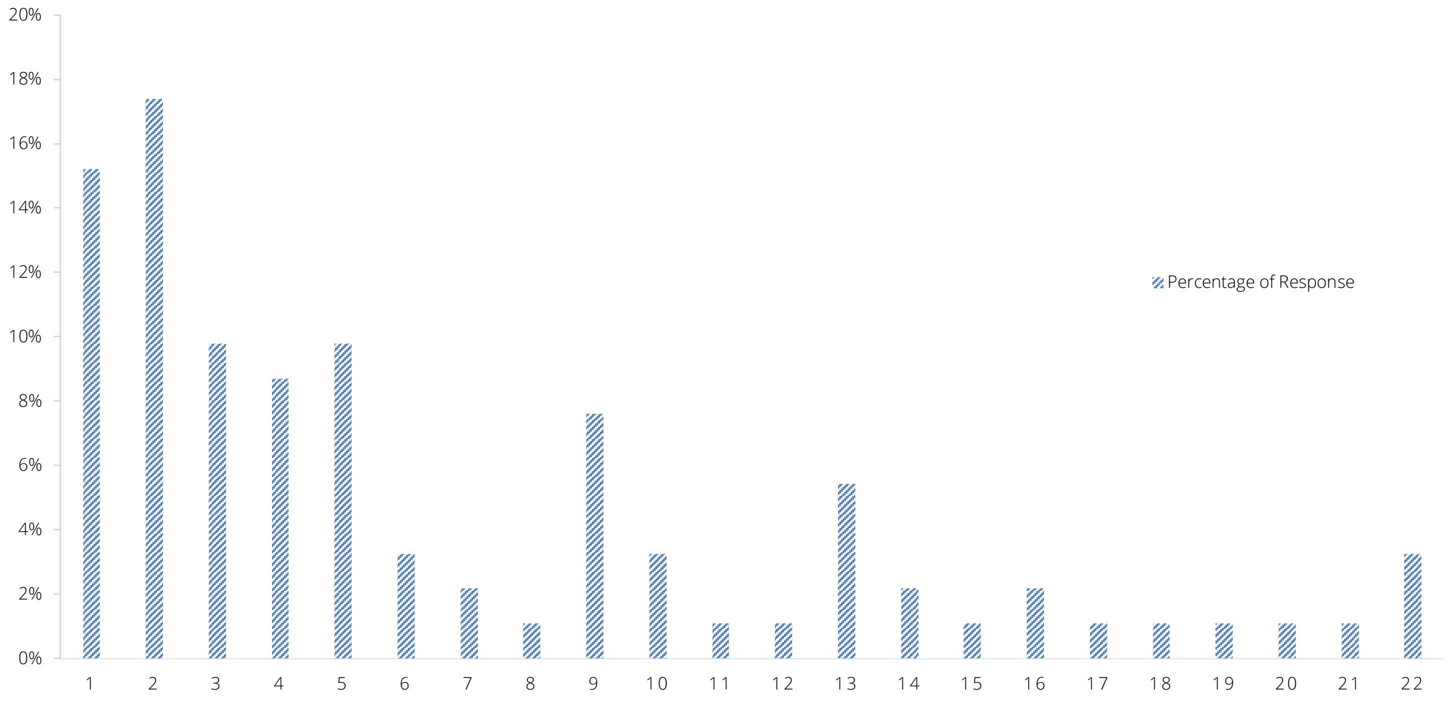
Appendix 5: Additional Technology Use in Home Care



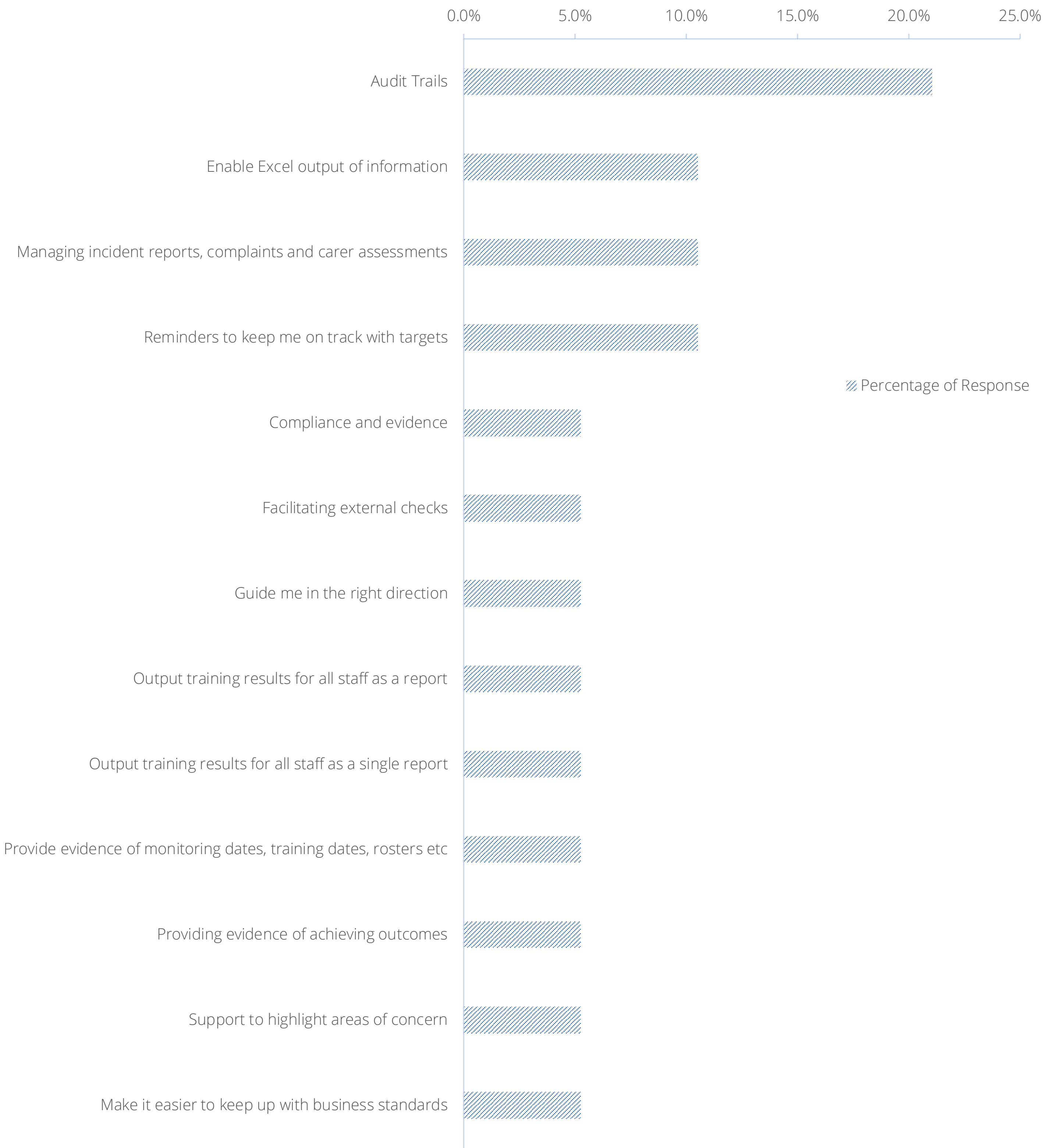
Appendix 6: How Do You Send Your Invoices?

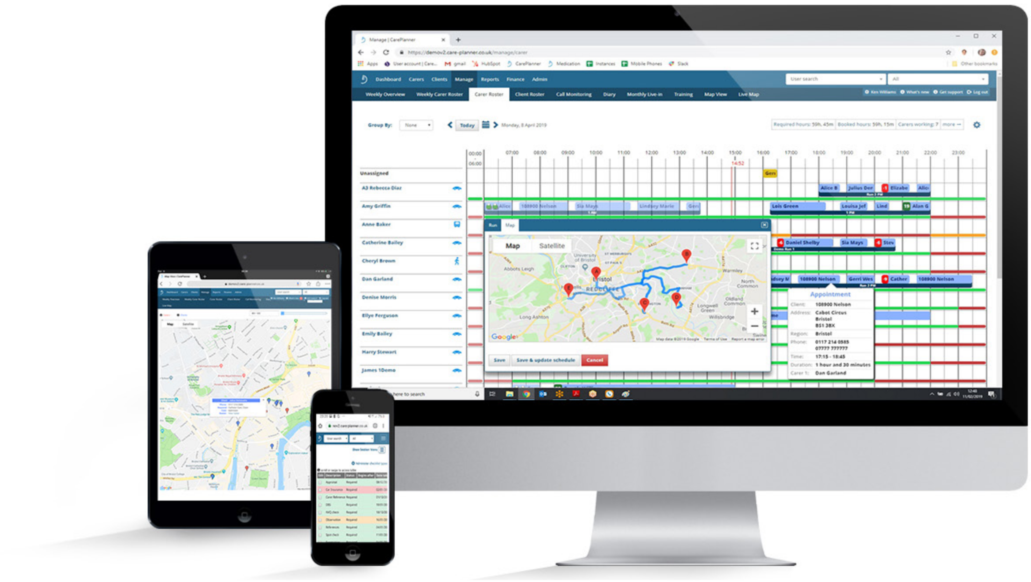


Appendix 7: Hours Saved Each Month by Sending Electronic Invoices



Appendix 8: Technology to Support CQC Compliance





About CarePlanner

Out of the 197 survey respondents, 89% of those using CarePlanner expected their business to grow in the next year, as opposed to 65.4% of those not using CarePlanner. More dramatically, businesses not using CarePlanner were almost three times as likely to anticipate business decline over the next year.

By saving time and money, through more efficient management of care, as well as improving control and quality of care, CarePlanner users are better placed to deal with the challenges of the home care sector and grow their businesses.

CarePlanner optimises the planning and management of social care. It offers one system, from scheduling through to invoicing, which simplifies, automates and alerts to reduce human error. This allows you to focus on delivering outstanding care, whilst CarePlanner takes the strain of scheduling, tracking and reporting.

Working with a broad range of social care agencies, we developed CarePlanner to meet the complex needs of this sector. The system blends clarity with control. You can customise every aspect of how CarePlanner works, to provide every user with their ideal interface – from care workers, to schedulers, to finance and management.

CarePlanner
Taking care of your time

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