



Research
Report

Leaders of Tomorrow

Research to inform the future of leadership in social care



Contents

Introduction	4
Key report themes	5
Research methodology	5
The path to leadership in care	6
What makes a good care leader	8
From research to action: supporting aspiring leaders of tomorrow	10

Introduction

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Welcome to the Leaders of Tomorrow Report, a comprehensive exploration of leadership in Social Care.

Building on our Leaders of Tomorrow series, this research led report aims to provide deeper insights and actionable recommendations to support and give direction to aspiring care leaders in social care.

Observationally and from research we know that social care is currently facing considerable challenges. And when we looked closer this also extended to challenges in future proofing leadership in social care.

Our research highlighted that today's aspiring care leaders have widely experienced a lack of support around professional growth. Around a third (31%) of aspiring leaders are not aware of formal training opportunities offered by their current employer and a further 40% say a lack of training acts as a barrier to growth in their social care career.

We know the importance and benefits of developing comprehensive and sustainable leaders in social care but sector scrutiny, regulator expectations, and workloads in care are all significantly higher post-pandemic, leaving little time for much else.

Training and development programmes for leaders were identified in our research as key to managing and overcoming challenges in the sector. However, our research uncovered a lack of consistency and support in both mentoring programmes and training and development opportunities for aspiring and current leaders.

Therefore, it is paramount these much-needed programmes and resources are embedded into the culture and ethos of care organisations.

This report has been produced following extensive sector research. This involved conducting surveys of over 250 care leaders and deep-dive discussions with care setting leaders and managers in two dedicated focus group sessions. The research findings from those who contributed offers valuable insights around their professional experiences in the care sector and the current challenges and opportunities in care leadership as they see it.

The Leaders of Tomorrow Report explores the career path to leadership roles in social care. It identifies what support and guidance are typically available to aspiring care leaders and where more training, professional development opportunities, and resources are needed to support the next generation of care leaders.

To support the research findings in this report, we have produced The Essential Guide to Leadership in Care. This new guide serves as an invaluable, practical, and sustainable resource for those seeking to make a positive impact in the care sector and progress their careers in leadership roles. And ultimately to become the best leader they can be.

Key report themes

The path to leadership in care

What makes a good care leader

From research to action:
supporting aspiring leaders of tomorrow

Research methodology



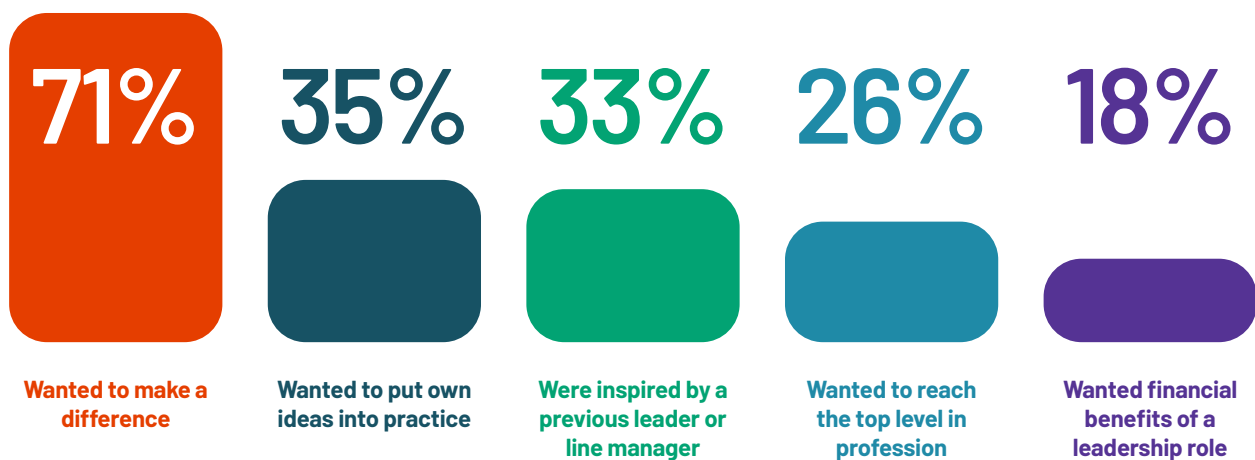
The team behind PASS, the leading care management software platform, employed quantitative and qualitative research to produce the Leaders of Tomorrow Report.

- PASS polled 265 care sector leaders via an online survey between 15th August and 31st August 2023.
- And commissioned an independent research organisation to recruit nine care leaders to participate in 90-minute research focus group discussion sessions on 21st and 22nd August 2023.
- Care leaders were defined as care business owners, care board members, care franchise owners, care group directors, care franchise managers, care group managers and care managers.

The path to leadership in care

Understanding current leaders' motivations

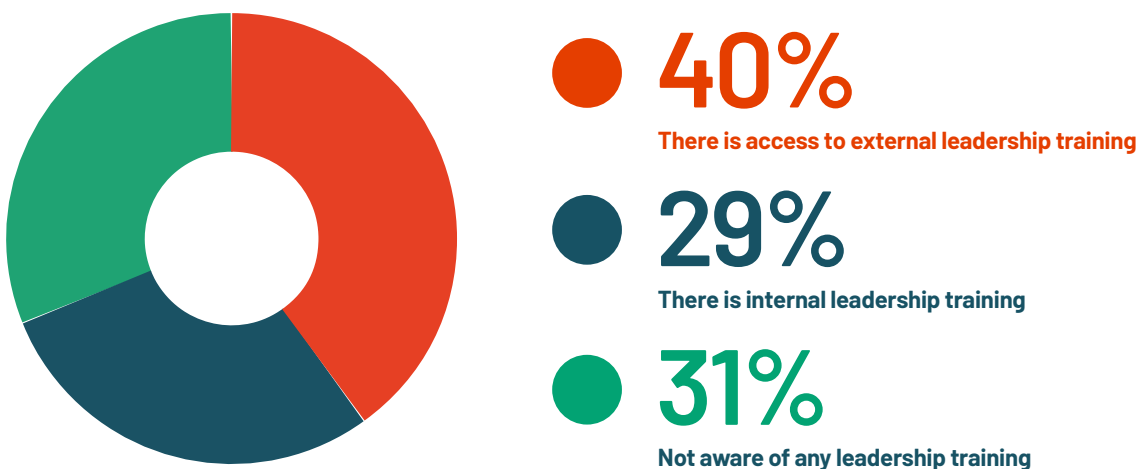
Why did you become a leader in the care sector?



Multiple choice questions answered by 265 research participants

Access to training and development for aspiring leaders

Awareness of formal leadership training programmes or opportunities in care organisations



Developing core skills for the future: data management

Strong data management skills, defined in this research as the ability to effectively manage and use information to identify patterns and trends, are becoming increasingly valued by leaders in the care sector.

Data management skills were rated 9 out of 10 on a scale of importance for care leaders to possess by our research participants. Our focus group of care leaders and managers also agreed unilaterally that data management skills are becoming increasingly important in care, highlighting that aspiring leaders need to demonstrate comprehensive data management skills to progress into, and succeed in future leadership roles.

Digital technology designed for the care sector is evolving at pace and enhanced data management will bring huge benefits to the care sector.

Care leaders recognise that it's critical they and their staff have strong digital literacy and data management skills to be able to deliver the best quality of care for their service users, as well as to meet the Care Quality Commission's regulatory requirements, and for services to continuously learn, improve, innovate, and ensure sustainability.

Key findings

While recruitment and retention have been significant issues in the care sector over the past few years, the care leaders we spoke with reported seeing a promising pipeline of new talent aspiring to become leaders. However, the path to leadership in care isn't always simple to navigate or as accessible as it should be.

Despite care workers aspiring to progress into leadership roles, our focus groups told us about instances of leadership candidates declining promotional opportunities because the rate of pay and benefits didn't remunerate adequately for the additional responsibility, pressure and hours that are required of leaders.

Many aspiring leaders felt well-informed about their career path and leadership opportunities (rated 7 out of 10 for being well-informed) but recognised there are significant hurdles to overcome on this journey which often lacks the support required.

4 in 10 of our research participants said a lack of training and over a third (34%) said a lack of mentorship are barriers to their career growth. Employer policies of supporting time for training and development are often not implemented in reality and studying is completed in personal time. Those who received mentorship from their own leaders during their route into leadership roles said this support was critical to their success.

In our focus group discussions, the majority of established and current care leaders received support from their employers to take their Level Five Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care, but many reported a lack of mentorship during their course or ongoing professional development after completing their course.

What care leaders say

"You need ambition and personal drive to become a leader and do a good job. I had a clear five-year goal for my management career."

"Mentorship and signposting you to opportunities is crucial."

What makes a good care leader

Leaders in any industry require a core set of skills and attributes to be successful, but leadership in care demands an even more distinct set of characteristics to lead organisations in a sector that is experiencing ongoing challenges and demands on its already stretched workforce.

The people we spoke with in the care sector placed greatest emphasis on good communication with staff, service users, and carers for successful leadership in social care.

Actively listening to feedback and engaging in meaningful dialogue fosters a culture of trust, a theme that came up frequently in our focus group conversations with care leaders, all from a wide range of backgrounds and care settings.

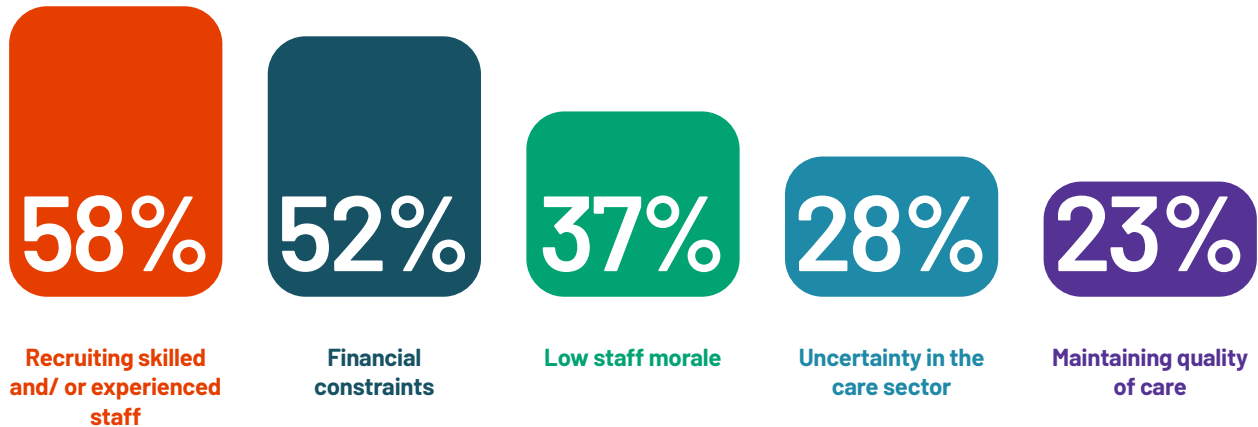
Most important leadership characteristics



Average ranking out of 5 (with 1 ranked as least important and 5 ranked as most important)

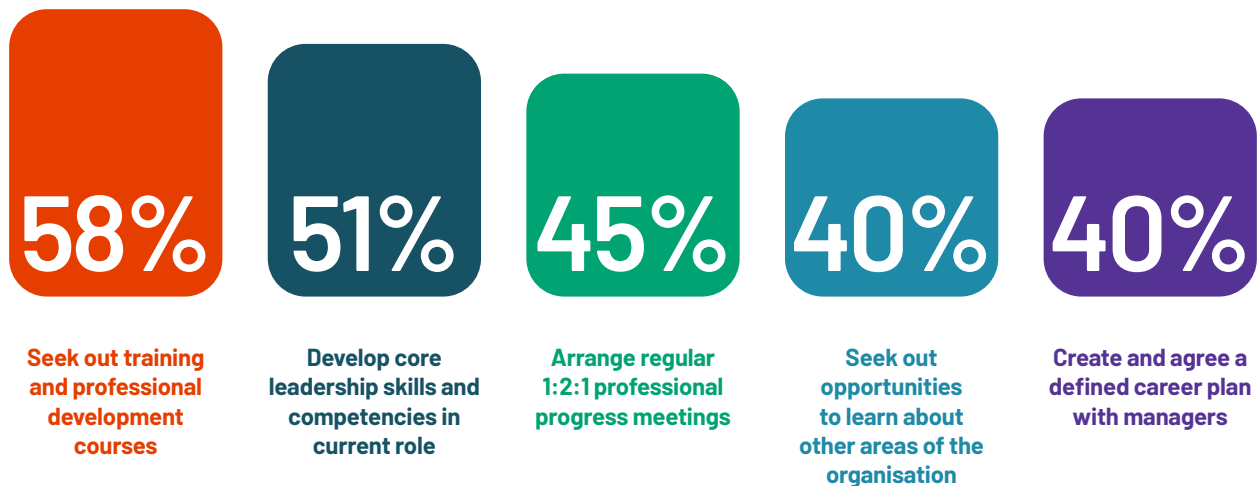
Overcoming challenges In leadership

The top five challenges faced by care leaders today



Multiple choice questions answered by 265 research participants

How care leaders believe they can overcome these challenges



Multiple choice questions answered by 265 research participants

Key findings

Our research identified that the top-rated characteristics underpinning good leaders are communication, people skills, compassion, and empathy.

These attributes are really important for current and aspiring leaders in social care, both enabling and empowering those in charge to manage and overcome considerable challenges faced by the sector. However, a conscious investment into people development is needed to achieve these outcomes.

Over half of our research participants (58%) responded that seeking out professional training and development courses together with on-the-job development of core leadership skills, are crucial in effectively navigating workplace challenges.

Experiences varied greatly among research participants in terms of accessibility to and availability of such programmes and resources aimed at professional growth. Many had been forced to seek out their own leadership development opportunities inclusive of attending industry events, talks and webinars.

From research to action: supporting aspiring leaders of tomorrow

Our research findings have highlighted with clarity the importance of professional training, development, and mentorship programmes in supporting growth among aspiring and current leaders in social care.

Our research participants agreed that these need to be embedded within care organisations as part of the culture and ethos, and in order to deliver a future pipeline of good social care leaders.

Established leaders have the experience and knowledge to support those aspiring to future leadership roles and have shared their career success stories, attributing much of this to their seniors who enabled their career growth. And this cycle of support and progression is essential.

Furthermore, based on our comprehensive research findings, we've created a brand-new resource for aspiring leaders in social care.

The Essential Guide to Leadership in Care

This guide delivers invaluable insights, actionable recommendations, and practical resources that can be used today, tomorrow and into the future. This is a companion for life to those aspiring leaders of tomorrow within social care and we wish everyone the very best in their career journeys.

What care leaders say

"We need to think outside the box and be creative with the resources we have available."

"Challenges that were solved yesterday will need different solutions today."

"Creating a network around you of people you can trust is key."

**Register now for your free copy of
The Essential Guide to Leadership
Launching November 2023**





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