

Health and Social Care Committee

Oral evidence: Workforce: retention, recruitment and training in health and social care, HC 115

Tuesday 28 June 2022

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Members present: Jeremy Hunt (Chair); Lucy Allan; Luke Evans and Laura Trott.

Questions 381 - 389

Witness

I: Chevonne Baker, Care Worker, Right at Home UK, at-home care provider.



Examination of witness

Witness: Chevonne Baker.

Q381 **Chair:** Good morning and welcome to the latest evidence session of the Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into the future of general practice. We are going to be focusing today on the complex relationship between general practice and other parts of the health and care system, such as A&E departments, social care and community care, and to hear from NHS Providers, the NHS Confederation and National Voices. We will also be talking to Dr Claire Fuller, who has drawn up the strategy on primary care for NHS England.

Before we do, we are absolutely delighted to have Chevonne Baker, who is going to help us better understand the pressures faced by care workers, as part of our workforce inquiry. I am going to hand over to my colleague, Lucy Allan, to ask Chevonne some questions.

Q382 **Lucy Allan:** Thank you, Chair. Chevonne, thank you so much for coming today. I read your article and I could not help but be moved by your empathy and ability to engage with your clients; you are an absolute role model for others, and I was really touched by what I read. Perhaps you could share some of that experience with the Committee this morning and just tell us a little more about what it has been like working in social care.

Chevonne Baker: I started working in social care just under three years ago, and the job is incredibly varied; each day is different, but you really build a strong relationship with your clients. You help support a number of different needs, including clinical needs such as washing, dressing, medication administration. But then you also look at the social needs as well: the mental wellbeing and how you can help this client prevent isolation and really make sure they are still integrated within the community. It is about making sure all needs of our clients are met, whether that is clinical or companionship, which is equally important.

In order to do this, we make sure our calls are at least an hour. We are not there for 15 minutes, 30 minutes, like other care companies where it can be a bit of a rush job—get in, get out. We make sure we take the time to build relationships with our clients. They trust us. We know how to approach them and how best to respect them and care for them in a person-centred way to make sure all their needs are met.

Q383 **Lucy Allan:** What would you describe as the major challenges in your role?

Chevonne Baker: The hardest challenge at the moment is simply making sure there are enough of us to go around. As time goes on, care packages typically increase because clients tend to need more care as they progress. At the moment we are also seeing an influx of people requesting more care. We are constantly having people calling and asking whether we can you support Mum, Dad, Nan or Granddad. We are having



to turn away care and to say, “Unfortunately, we don’t have the carers to go around,” which is heartbreaking. We know how much we help other people, and to know people are being delayed in getting care, or are going without or not having enough to suit their needs, is just heart-wrenching.

Q384 Lucy Allan: We are looking at how we can retain people within the sector. What would your suggestions be to encourage more people to stay within the job or to help them stay within the sector rather than leave or move on?

Chevonne Baker: I think care has a bit of a bad reputation—it has a bit of a dirty name—which is not helped by the media only showing the negative side. You hear when things go wrong, when stories go haywire, and we are deemed as unskilled workers, which simply is not true. I am trained to be able to walk into a number of different circumstances and situations and to ensure my clients get the best care they deserve.

Administering care in people's homes means we are able to monitor their care and their situations, and we can spot when they are not quite themselves and when things start to go wrong, so we can contact health care professionals early to minimise any of the effects afterwards. We play a vital role in keeping people at home, keeping them safe, keeping the NHS under slightly less pressure and trying to keep hospitals a bit freer.

We do an amazing job, but we are still deemed as unskilled and unworthy of any accolade or acclaim that other health care professionals receive.

Q385 Lucy Allan: You have clearly wanted to stay within the sector. What would you say are the key issues that mean you have job satisfaction?

Chevonne Baker: In order for me to have job satisfaction I have to feel like I am helping someone, which is easily done in this job. I feel rewarded when I know I have helped a client; whether that is a small issue or an ongoing issue, it is really pleasant. I am also incredibly well looked after at my company. Unlike other care providers, Right at Home pays at least the minimum living wage. They now pay 40p a mile for my fuel costs and they pay my travel time. There is a good sense of, “If you take care of us, we will take care of you,” so I am well looked after.

Q386 Lucy Allan: How about training? Is that part of how you have been able to be supported in your role?

Chevonne Baker: Yes. I came to care having never done it before. I did not fully know what to expect when I walked into it, and I was very kindly sat down and had the realities of the job explained to me. I also shadowed and then, when I felt confident and I had done all my training, they let me out on my own. I also have supervisions—several a year—and update training once a year just to make sure I am all up to date and keeping up with best practice.



Q387 **Lucy Allan:** You have talked about a number of really positive things, but if you could make one change to improve working conditions for social care workers, what would that be?

Chevonne Baker: I would change the fact we are deemed unskilled. It is simply not true. We really take a holistic approach to all our clients. We really look at every single need they have, and we try to make sure that clinical needs, mental health needs and companionship needs are all treated the same. Social care workers are trained to walk into any situation and deliver the best standard of care possible, really build a meaningful relationship with clients, and see them progress and well looked after. You cannot say that is unskilled.

Q388 **Lucy Allan:** Absolutely. No, I absolutely agree with you. If you were going to recommend a career in care to somebody else, what would you say?

Chevonne Baker: I would say definitely do it. It is rewarding, but I would be mindful that it is not a job for everyone. There is a tremendous amount of patience and empathy required, and if those are not your particular personality traits, maybe it is not right for you. I would also advise caution when considering which companies you are applying for. Unfortunately, there is such a demand for care that some care companies have to say, "We'll do smaller calls. We'll really try to fit a lot in your day." It can very quickly take a toll on you if you are constantly running around on the go for 15-minute visits, half-hour visits, with no real building of that relationship.

Lucy Allan: That is really useful to know. Thank you so much for coming here today and sharing your experience, which has obviously been very positive, with all these people. Congratulations for everything and thank you for what you do.

Chevonne Baker: Thank you for having me.

Q389 **Chair:** Just a quick final question from me: are most of your clients funded by the local authority or are they privately funded?

Chevonne Baker: I am afraid I do not know the answer for definite. I assume most of them are privately funded, but I know we have a few from local authority funding.

Chair: Thank you so much for joining us and coming up from Basingstoke. It is really appreciated. Best of luck with your continuing great work.