



Mental health and social care

27 Apr 2021

Social care workers are more likely to report poor mental health than other workers – and the gap is widening

GMB surveyed our social care members to investigate the mental health impacts of work during the coronavirus pandemic. The results have been [covered by the BBC](#) and more information can be [found in our press release](#).

GMB surveyed 1,243 members between December and January. This short post examines some of the issues raised by the findings in more depth.

Social care workers are more likely to report poor mental health than other workers – and the gap is widening

Our members reported happiness scores declined by **12 per cent** between the second and third waves, while reported anxiety levels rose by **6 per cent**.

Worryingly, the mental health and wellbeing gap grew between the two waves. All employees reported more positive scores, while care workers' scores declined.

In September to October 2020, care workers' reported anxiety levels that were **35 per cent** higher than all employees. By December 2020 to January 2021, the gap had grown to **44 per cent**.

Table is scrollable sideways depending on your screen size

	Survey 1 September - October 2020		Survey 2 December 2020 - January 2021		Difference between care workers and all employees (%)		Change in care workers' scores (%)
	Care respondents	ONS - all employees	Care respondents	ONS - all employees	Survey 1	Survey 2	
	Life satisfaction	5.1	6.8	4.5	6.6	-25.7	
Worth	5.9	7.4	5.6	7.3	-19.5	-22.9	-4.8
Happiness	5.1	6.9	4.5	6.6	-26.3	-32.7	-12.0
Anxiety	5.7	4.2	6.0	4.2	35.2	44.3	5.7

Sick pay is a mental health issue

Many care workers do not receive any sick pay cover, and most care workers are only contractually entitled to the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) rate of £96.35 a week.

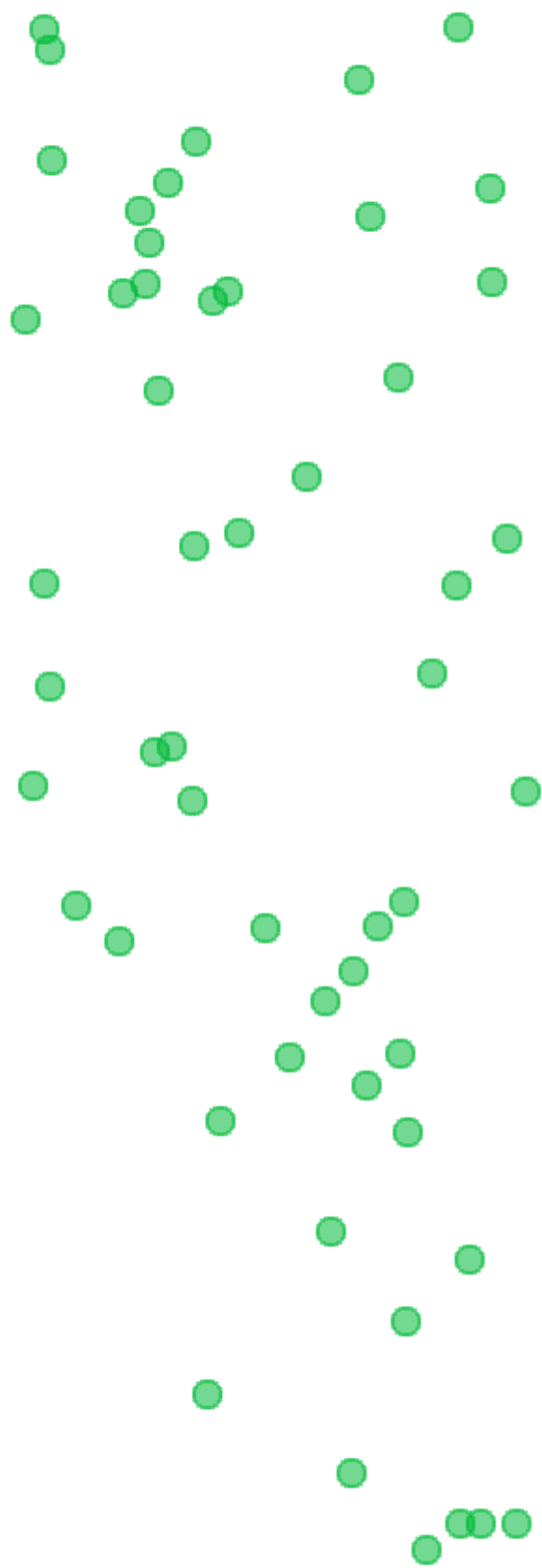
External research has demonstrated that there is a link between inadequate sick pay and higher rates of infections in care homes for residents and staff.

Our research found that care workers on SSP reported scores for feeling that what they do in life is worthwhile that were **10 per cent** lower than workers on company sick pay, and happiness scores that were **11 per cent** lower, on average.

Anxiety scores were **3 per cent** higher on average for workers on SSP. However, care workers on SSP were more likely to report very high anxiety rates, as the graph below shows.



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id you feel yesterday?



Some groups of care workers are more likely to report poor mental health

On average, all groups of care workers were more likely to report poor mental health than all workers. However, some groups of care workers were more likely to report poor mental health and wellbeing than others.

Women workers, disabled workers, those who worked in residential care, and workers employed on Statutory Sick Pay were all more likely to report a lower sense of happiness, self-worth, or life satisfaction, and they were more likely to report higher anxiety levels.

Work in care? Not a GMB member?



Note on methodology

We asked our members four standardised ONS questions to measure care workers' self-reported sense of life satisfaction, self-worth, happiness, and anxiety levels. These questions are an accepted measure of people's wellbeing.

The same questions were asked in an earlier GMB survey, which was completed by 828 care workers. The results allowed us to compare changes in social care workers' reported mental health and wellbeing between the second and third waves in infections. It also allowed us to compare our members' responses to all employees, as estimated by the ONS