

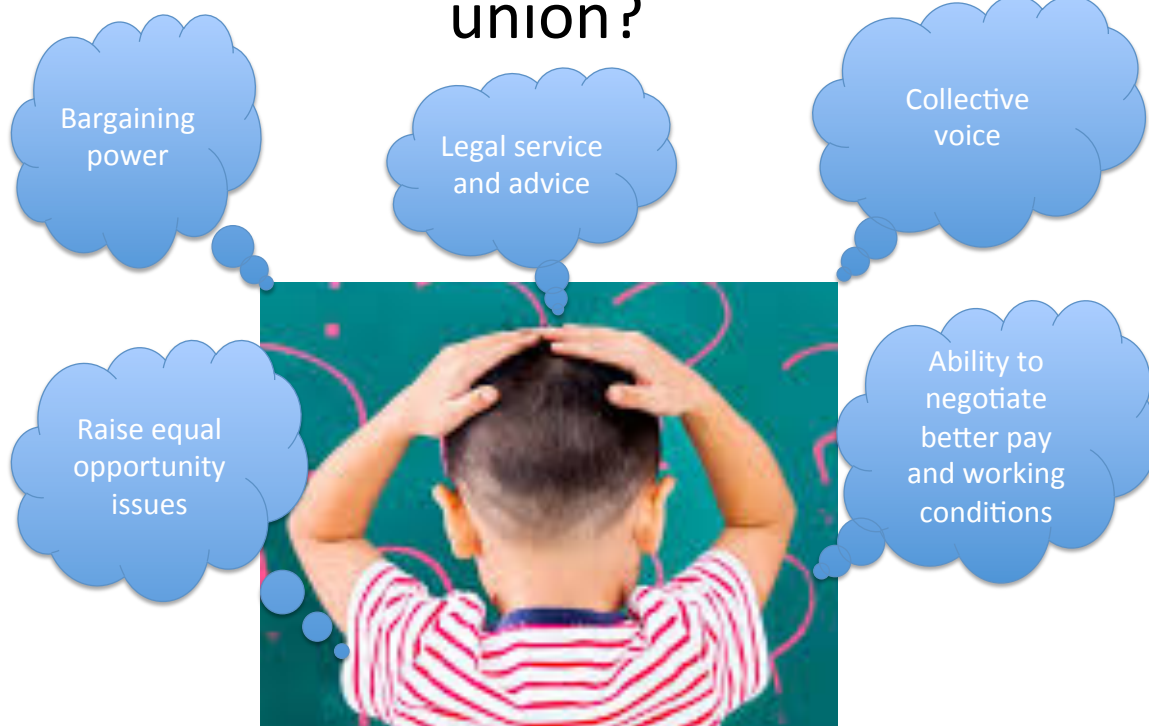
# The Social Care Workforce: The role of trade unions

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## The Care Workforce

- An expanding workforce – one of the fastest growing sectors of employment
- Gender and migration structure
- Low pay – significant wage penalties
  - Issues of minimum and living wage compliance
- Fragmentation and casualisation of work
- Diverse work place environment and settings
- Emotional work

# Why become a member of a trade union?



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I think the relationship between the staff is good. I think also there are two of us who are union reps. We are Unison.

Male, care workers, 61  
LoCS T2

Yes, we had a meeting with the union representative. They were going to change our contracts and basically people within the council who worked nine to five wouldn't really have been affected, but because we were 24/7 things would affect us quite a lot

Female, care assistant, 52  
LoCS T2

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# THE ENGLISH SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE & TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

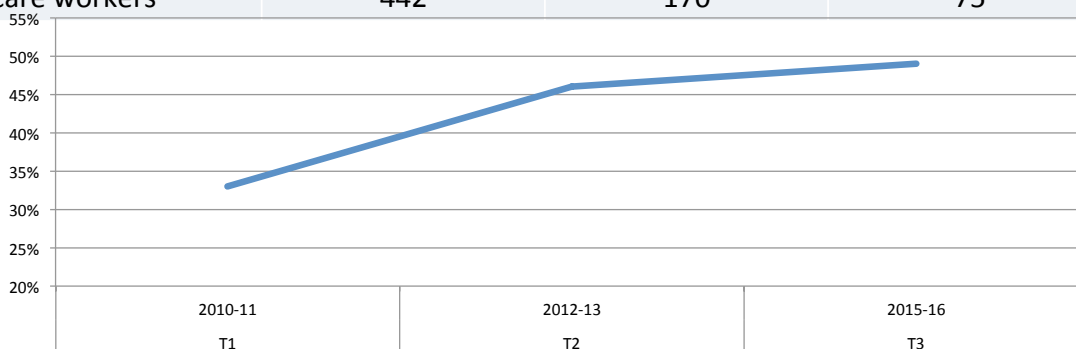
## Factors impacting on unionisation

- An increasingly dispersed nature of work
- Workers' characteristics
  - Predominantly female
  - Multiple responsibilities
  - Nearly a quarter find their finance difficult to manage (Hussein, in press)
  - Levels of unresolved stress
- The individual's identity with the collective

# Social care workers and trade unions

Percentage of care and support workers who belong to a trade union  
The Longitudinal Care Work Study survey from 2010 to 2016

Trade Union membership	T1 2010-11	T2 2012-13	T3 2015-16
Yes	33%	46%	49%
Total number of care workers	442	170	75



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## Characteristics of Unionised Care Workers

- Slightly more men (38% vs. 36%)
- Higher prevalence of unionisation among migrant workers (39% vs. 36%)
- Almost identical percentage of union membership among white and black and minority ethnic groups
- Highest unionisation rate among workers aged 40-60 years old

Not significantly different

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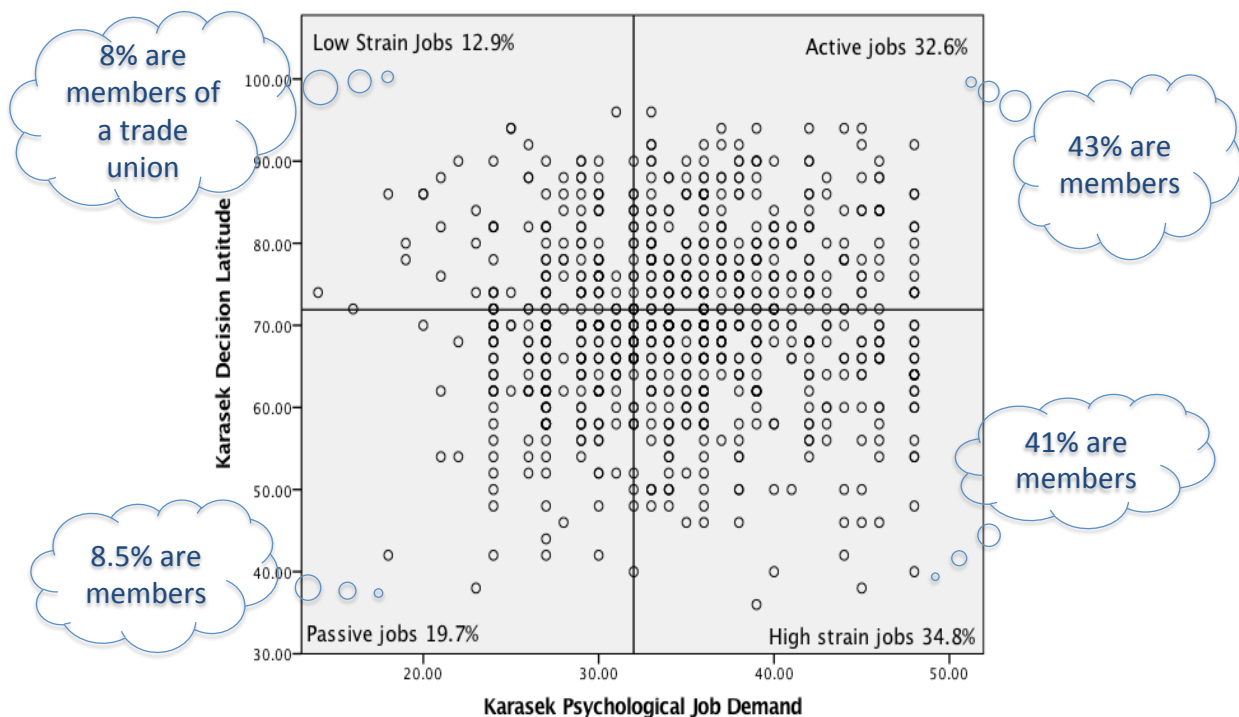
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# Characteristics of Unionised Care Workers- continued

- Members have lower levels of in-work social support (23.9 vs. 24.8)
- Members have higher levels job insecurity (6.2 vs. 5.6)
- More likely to feel well or alright about their personal finance
- More home care workers are members of a trade union than care home workers (36% vs. 29%)

Significantly different

## Unionisation and unresolved stress



Significant variables	Active vs. Low strain				High strain vs. Low strain			
	P-value	Odds Ratio	Confidence Interval		P-value	Odds Ratio	Confidence Interval	
			2.5%	97.5%			2.5%	97.5%
Union- member: Yes vs. no	<0.001 <sup>s</sup>	4.64	2.67	8.06	<0.001 <sup>s</sup>	2.86	1.64	5.01

- Care workers belonging to trade unions:
  - Have higher levels of job demand, job control as well as of job insecurity
  - Are significantly more likely to have high strain or active job experiences
- Might seem counter-intuitive .. But
  - Which care workers are likely to join a trade union?
  - Three conditions seem to be required:
    - ‘grievances, blame attribution and efficacy beliefs’

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## Union recruitment in the care sector

- Some signs of success since 2010 (from 33% to 49%)
- Research identify key factors for success
  - quality, comprehensiveness and intensity of the union campaign
- Macro factors
  - The broader social care labour market structure
  - The role of the state in the care market
  - Social policies

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## The role of UNISON

- Mobilise the workforce for better outcomes
- Raise awareness of employment rights and responsibilities
- Tackling cultural barriers at various levels
  - Care as a labour that was once provided mainly within families rather than in market exchange
- Foresee adequate mechanisms to ensure workers' representations and rights

# UNISON involvement in the social care sector

- A proven track record of raising issues of workers' rights to decent pay and working conditions
- Developed the 'Ethical Care Charter'
- Proactive in bringing care workers voice to the debate
  - Contributing to consultations, reviews and research

## Current developments and possible UNISON input

- Ensure workers' representation in the development of the Green Paper on social care
- Tackle issues of non-compliance with payments of the national minimum wage
- Improve access to workers, particularly in the private sector and among those employed directly by service users
- Work with LAs and the CQC to improve commissioning practice
- Input to debate concerning Brexit and its impact on the workforce



# White Swans and Black Swans

- Increased fragmentation and casualisation of work
- Brexit and implications on the workforce
  - As well as the implications on care provision and quality of care
- Grey and irregular care work
  - Impact of personal budgets
  - Informal arrangements of care provision
- The labour market enforcement strategy and the role of GLAA

## Discussion points

- How to mobilise more of the workforce to join trade unions
- Current debates and developments- the role of UNISON
  - Brexit and impact on care workers
  - The Green Paper on social care
  - Wage penalties and non-compliance
- Private and informal organisation of care



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## Thanks for listening

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*The views expressed here are that of the author alone and does not necessarily represent that of the Department of Health.*

### ***Reference:***

Hussein, S. (in press). Job Demand, Control and Unresolved Stress within the Emotional Work of Long Term Care in England. *International Journal of Care and Caring*