



Department
of Health &
Social Care



The Approved Mental Health Professional Workforce in the social care sector

July 2023

Foreword

Jason Brandon, Mental Health Social Work Lead, Office of the Chief Social Worker, Department of Health and Social Care

Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) are amongst the most experienced and well-trained members of staff within the health and social care workforce. All are required to be registered professionals and to undertake these duties on behalf of the local authority. Their vital role will routinely involve situations which present crisis, uncertainty, distress and often, trauma. AMHPs will mostly be required to intervene in the circumstances of people who find themselves at their lowest ebb and not in control of many important life-changing decisions and choices. The AMHP role is one which can therefore be described as enormously challenging yet rewarding in equal measure. The level of energy, resilience and determination required to be an AMHP is not to be underestimated and certainly also, the sense of professional pride which our AMHP colleagues take in their work is a measure of their commitment.

AMHPs hold a key set of responsibilities to ensure that people's human rights are upheld and that the overarching principles of the Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA) are adhered to, as laid out within the MHA Code of Practice. They ensure that the most appropriate legal framework is selected in line with current case law interpretation, whilst the guiding principle of ensuring least restrictive decision making remains at the forefront of this process. Whilst operating in the front line of delivering mental health services, AMHPs are instrumental when tackling inequalities, and particularly racial and ethnic discrimination.

Whilst the AMHP has a responsibility to organise and undertake an assessment under the MHA 1983, it is essential that we recognise that the AMHP is also integral when seeking to prevent the necessity for compulsory admission to hospital under the Mental Health Act (MHA). It is for these reasons, that the AMHP role is incredibly important and that we continue to ensure that we increase their number as per the objective of the [National workforce plan for approved mental health professionals \(AMHPs\)](#)

I welcome the findings of this annual AMHP Survey '22/23 and would like to thank Skills for Care with their co-ordination and continued support to the AMHP workforce. I would also like to recognise the tremendous contribution from our AMHP leads' community to engage with this project to provide critical workforce information.

We will continue to support Local Authorities and the wider Integrated Care Partnerships to address the reported shortage of AMHPs in the workforce, through use of the improved intelligence provided within this report on staff turnover, models of service, demographics and other key metrics.

Introduction

Skills for Care, as the leading source of adult social care workforce intelligence, helps to create a skilled, valued and better-led adult social care workforce. We provide the practical tools and support to help adult social care organisations in England recruit, retain, develop and lead their workforce. We work with employers and related services to ensure dignity and respect are at the heart of service delivery.

This report presents data collected via a dedicated Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) leads survey, as at May 2023. Skills for Care conducts this survey on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care and the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network. This report also includes data on social workers from local authorities collected via the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) as at September 2022.

We have carried out this survey since 2017, and it has provided important information for the Department of Health and Social Care and the AMHP Leads Network to better understand this key role. The survey provides data on the overall number of AMHPs and intelligence about their role and working patterns. The findings from this survey have been used along with data collected by the ASC-WDS on the characteristics of individual social workers.

An AMHP is a registered professional (social worker, nurse, occupational therapist or psychologist) who has undertaken additional training, approved by the Secretary of State and regulated by Social Work England (formerly by The Health and Care Professions Council - HCPC), to carry out specific duties under the Mental Health Act 1983. In addition, the AMHP will have been approved by a local social services authority to act on its behalf in carrying out these duties.

AMHPs are (amongst other duties) responsible for setting up and co-ordinating assessments under the Mental Health Act and, if necessary, making applications to detain (“section”) people in hospital for assessment and treatment of their mental health needs.

This year the survey was completed by 85% of local authorities in England (126 out of 148). The results of this survey, and data from the ASC-WDS, enables Skills for Care, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network and other stakeholders to have clear, robust workforce intelligence and to better understand this key role. This information is vital to help improve the planning and quality of social care services, which will improve outcomes for people who use these services, both now and in the future.

Key findings

The latest survey of AMHPs in the social care workforce received responses from 126 local authorities in England. The findings from this survey, and those from previous years, are presented in this report as well as data from the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) covering social workers who are AMHP qualified employed by local authority adult social care services departments within local authorities.

Over the previous five years, the estimated number of AMHPs has remained stable at around 3,800.

The survey found that to fully staff their service to provide a 24-hour response then an increase of 30% in the number of full-time equivalent AMHPs is required. Despite this requirement, the vacancy rate was 11.2%, and therefore the number of posts being advertised is less than the overall requirement for a 24-hour AMHP service.

AMHP leads anticipate an additional 44.9% AMHPs starting over the coming 5 years, of which the majority will be newly qualified/first time in the role, and 25.7% will leave the role over this same period.

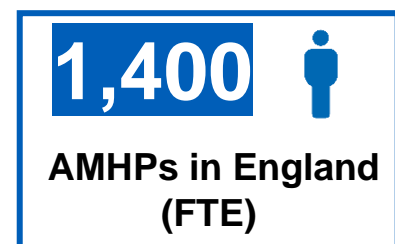
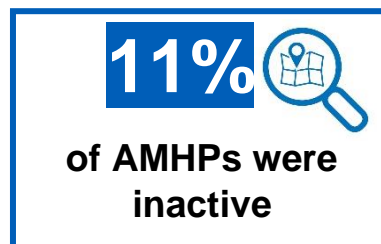
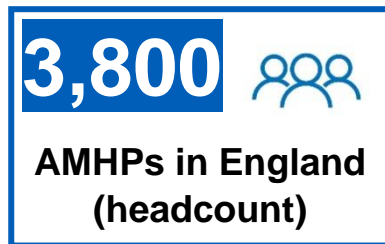
Data from the ASC-WDS showed that around a third of the AMHP workforce (29%) were aged 55 and above, and could retire over the coming 10 years. The survey found that 2.5% of AMHPs had retired in the previous 12 months, therefore succession planning is key to ensuring a stable workforce. The survey also found that 8.2% of the AMHP workforce were newly qualified/first time in the role in the previous 12 months.

Over one third of respondents stated that their local authority ran a single AMHP duty system covering 24-hours 7 days of the week indicating a range of different delivery models.

Findings from the AMHP Survey

Overview of findings from the AMHP survey, 2023

- The survey found that 94% of AMHPs were Social Workers.
- The majority of AMHPs were employed in the local authority sector (77%), 16% were employed in the NHS and 6% agency and freelance.
- Around two thirds (60%) of AMHPs combine their role with another role while around one in four AMHPs solely perform the role of an AMHP (26%). The remaining 15% were not primarily working as an AMHP or regularly as an AMHP.
- The survey showed that 16% of AMHPs only work out-of-hours, for example in emergency duty teams.



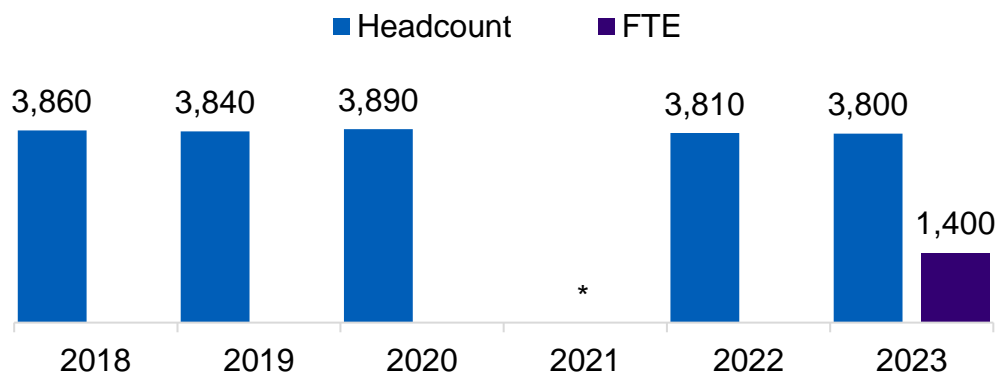
1.1 Introduction

The survey collected data from 126 out of 148 local authorities in 2023, an 85% return rate. For this survey, Westmorland and Furness was included with Cumberland, Rutland was included with Leicestershire, the Isles of Scilly were included with Cornwall, City of London was included with Hackney and West Northamptonshire was included with North Northamptonshire as these local authorities operate a shared service without any of their own AMHPs.

The raw data from the 126 local authorities showed an overall headcount of 3,286 AMHPs **approved** by local authorities. Skills for Care's modelled estimate for the overall headcount of approved AMHPs in England was 3,800. Chart 1 below compares the estimated overall headcount of AMHPs between 2018 and 2023, as well as the estimated number of full-time equivalent (FTE) AMHPs in 2023.

Chart 1. Estimated number of AMHPs and percentage change by year

Source. AMHPs survey May 2023



To estimate the number of AMHPs from local authorities that did not respond to the survey, or were received incorrectly in previous years, we have modelled the relationship between social worker filled posts (using data from the ASC-WDS) and the number of AMHPs (using the survey). These estimates were checked against the average number of AMHPs between years if a local authority had responded previously.

The map below shows the number of AMHPs per 10,000 people aged 15 and above in each local authority area. The South East region had the lowest number of AMHPs per person at around 0.56 whereas the North West had the highest at 1.06, as shown in Chart 2. Please note there are multiple factors which influence the demand for AMHPs, and this is not a suggestion of an optimal number, but this presents the variation across England.

Map 1. Number of AMHPs per 10,000 people aged 15 and above by local authority

Source. AMHPs survey May 2023

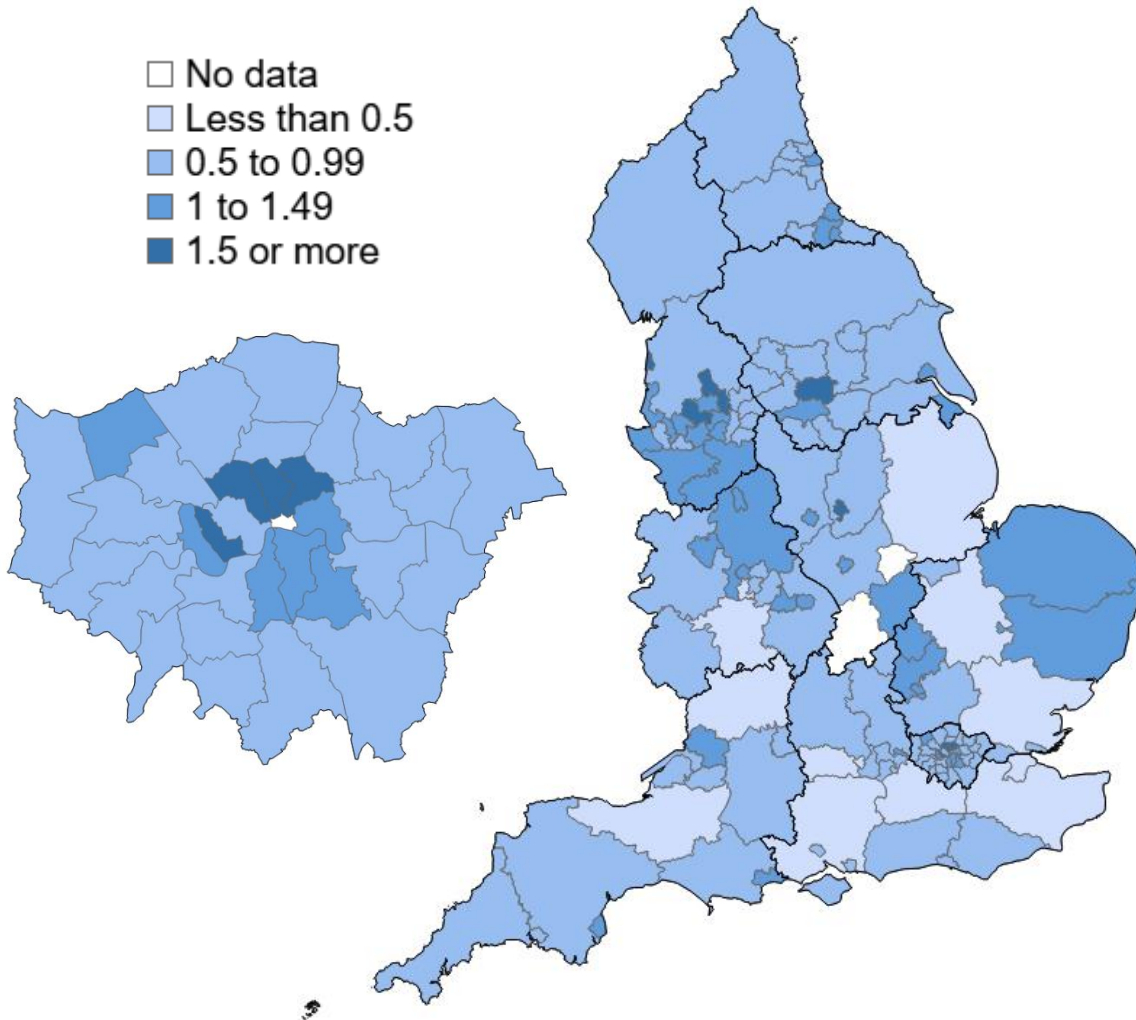
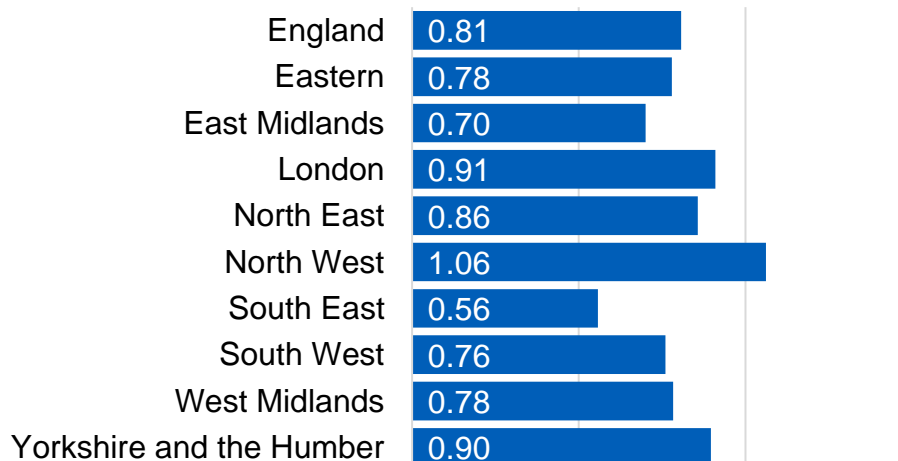


Chart 2. Number of AMHPs per 10,000 people aged 15 and above in each region

Source. AMHPs survey May 2023

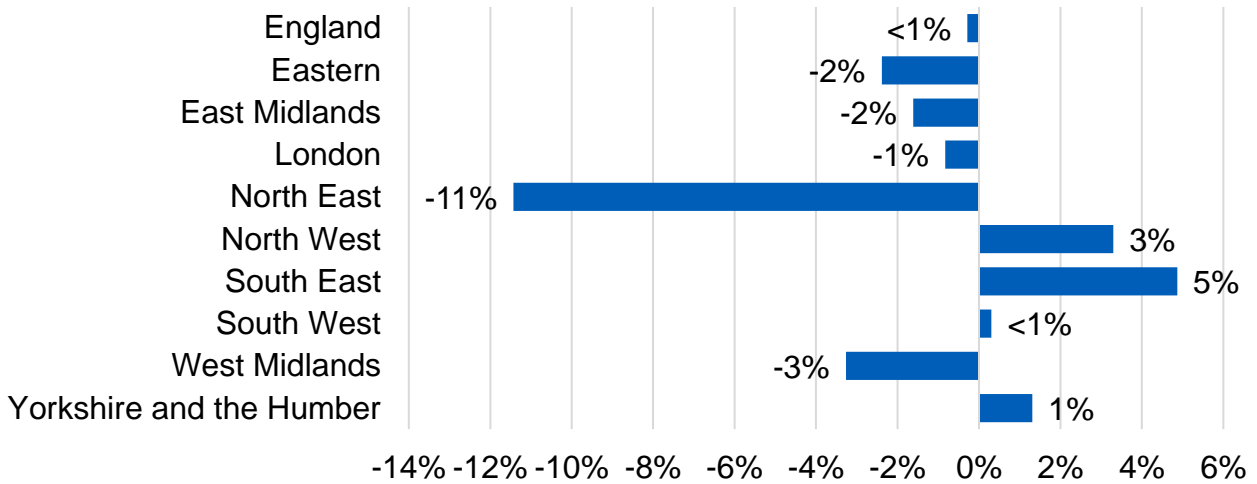


1.2 AMHP headcount comparison 2022 to 2023

The chart below shows the change in the estimated number of AMHPs between 2022 and 2023. The overall number of AMHPs was almost the same in each year. The North East showed the largest decrease at 11% (around 25 fewer AMHPs), whereas the South East showed the largest increase at 5% (around 20 more AMHPs).

Chart 3. Change in the estimated number of AMHPs between 2022 and 2023

Source. AMHP survey May 2023

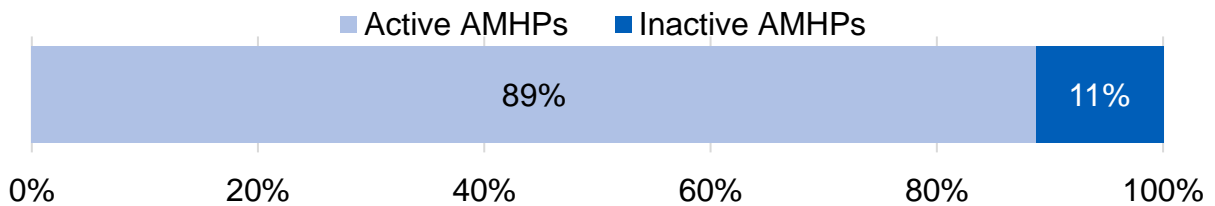


1.3 Findings from the AMHPs Survey

The survey found that 11% of AMHPs were inactive, which equates to around 430 of the estimated 3,800 AMHPs in the workforce. Inactive AMHPs were those who are approved by a local authority and employed in local services, but were not practicing as an AMHP. This could include people working entirely as a manager or on maternity leave.

Chart 4. Proportion of AMHPs who were inactive

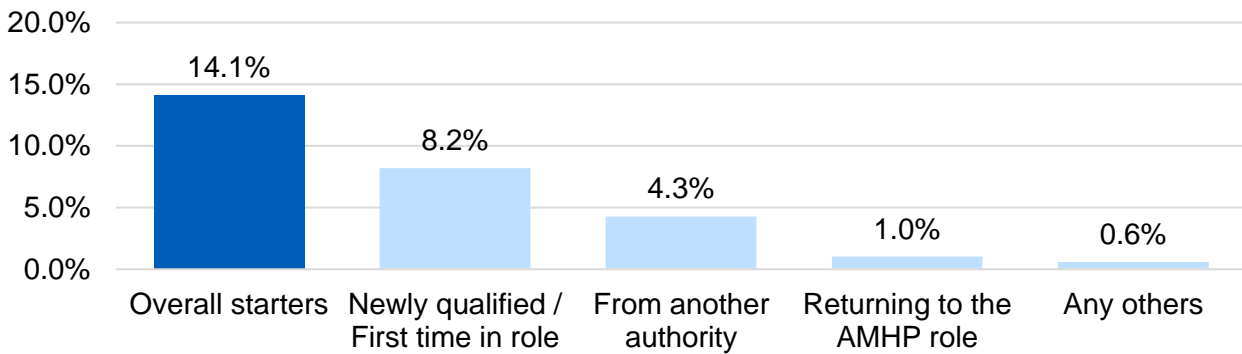
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey found that 14.1% of AMHPs had started active service in the previous 12 months, which equates to around 540 of the estimated 3,800 AMHPs in the workforce. The majority of these starters were those who were newly qualified and this was their first time in the AMHP role (8.2% of starters), followed by those transferring between authorities (4.3% of starters).

Chart 5. Proportion of AMHPs who started in the previous 12 months by category

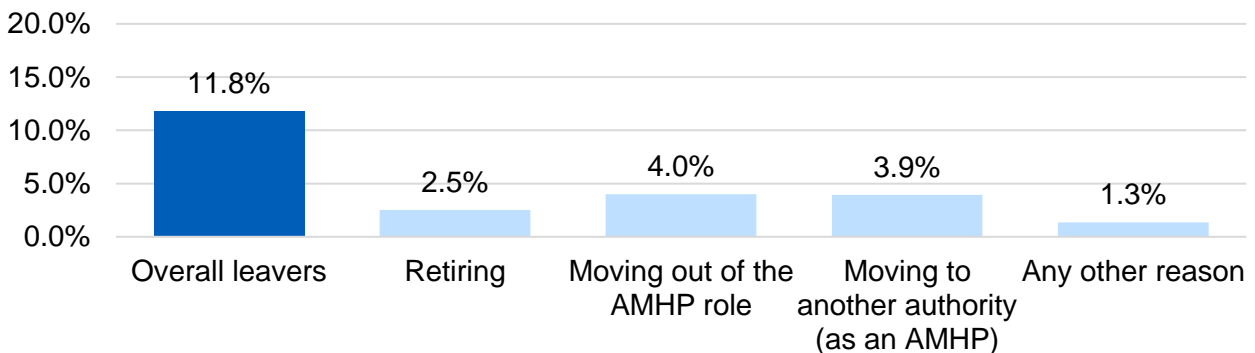
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey found that 11.8% of AMHPs had left the role in the previous 12 months, which equates to around 450 of the estimated 3,800 AMHPs in the workforce. Many of these leavers had moved out of the AMHP role (4.0%), but many also moved within the role to another authority (3.9%). Around 2.5% of AMHPs left due to retiring, which equates to around 100 of the estimated 3,800 AMHPs in the workforce.

Chart 6. Proportion of AMHPs who left in the previous 12 months by category

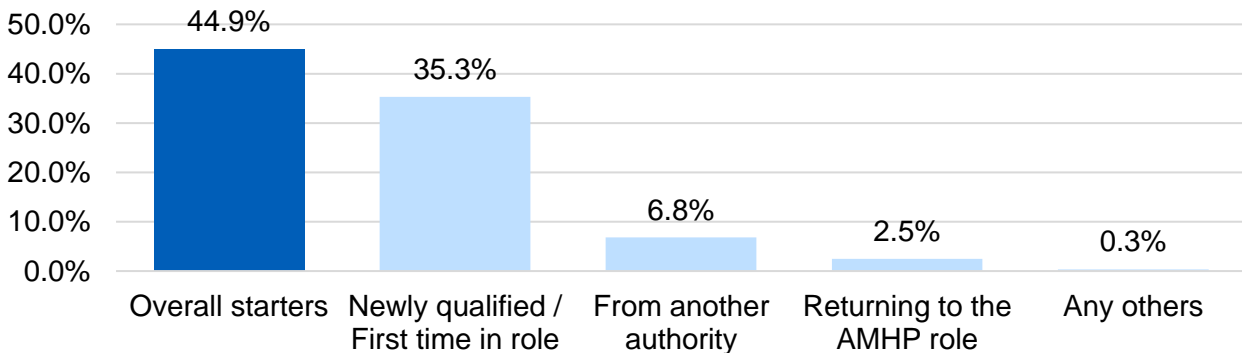
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey asked AMHP leads to anticipate how many AMHPs will start in their authority over the coming 5 years. The survey found an expected 44.9% additional AMHPs would join the workforce over the coming 5 years, and the majority of these starters would come from people who were newly qualified (an additional 35.3%).

Chart 7. Anticipated AMHP starters in the coming 5 years by category

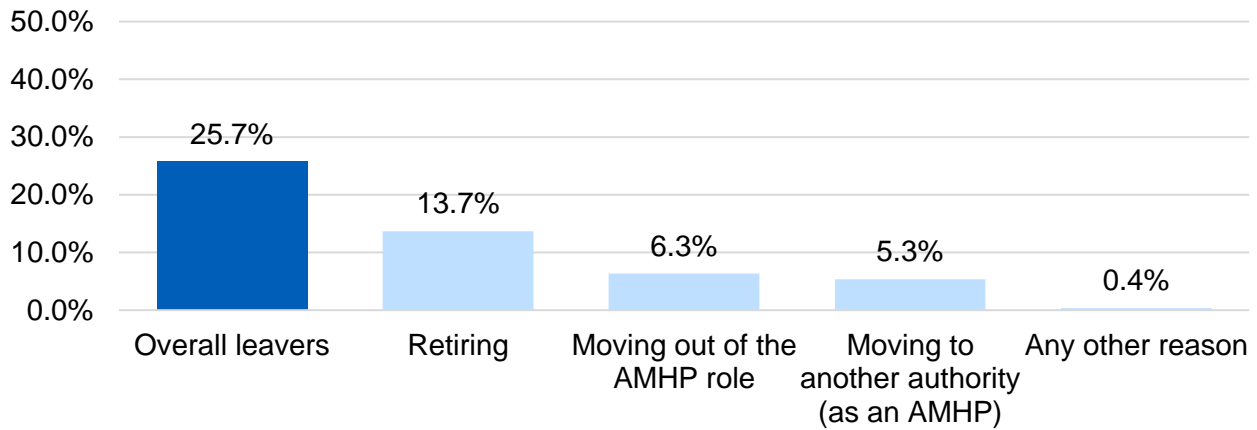
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey also asked AMHP leads to anticipate how many AMHPs will leave their authority over the coming 5 years. The survey found an expected 25.7% AMHPs would leave the workforce over the coming 5 years, and the majority of these leavers would be people retiring (13.7% of AMHPs).

Chart 8. Anticipated AMHP leavers in the coming 5 years by category

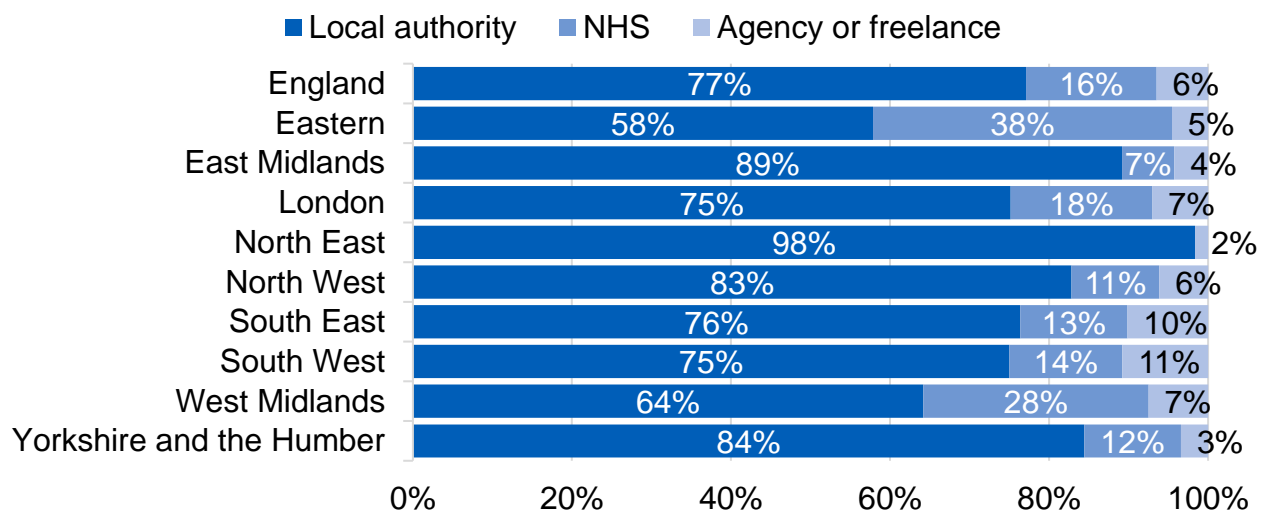
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey showed that the majority of AMHPs were employed by the local authority (77%), compared to 16% who were employed by the NHS and 6% who were agency or freelance workers. This pattern was reflected in each region, however there was some variance, for example the Eastern region had much higher proportion employed by the NHS (38%) where the North East had 0% employed by the NHS.

Chart 9. Proportion of AMHPs by employer

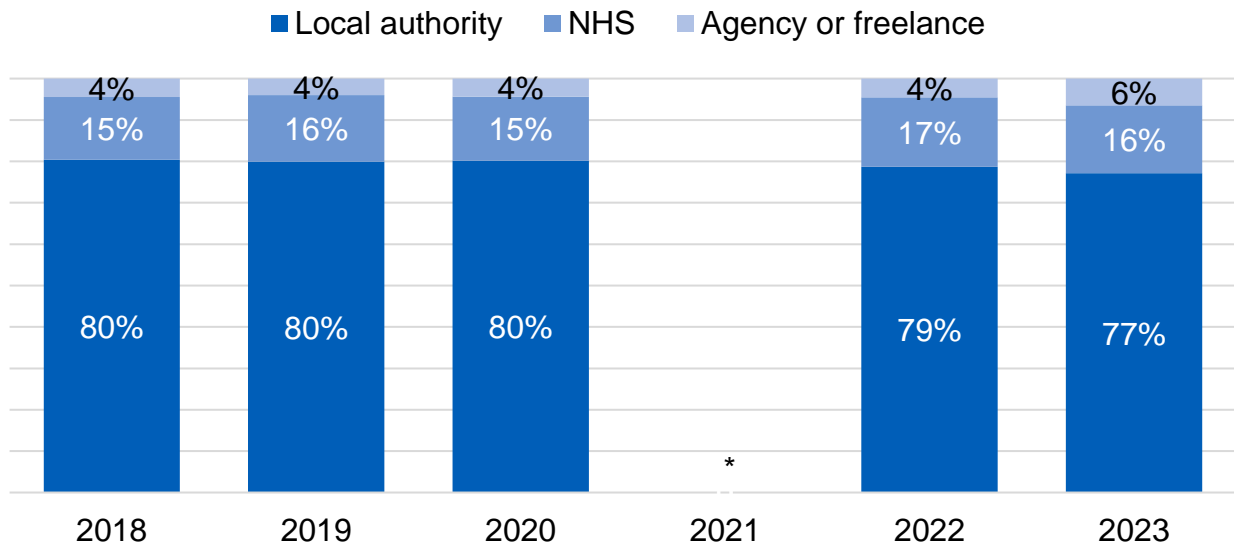
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The chart below shows the proportion of agency AMHPs increased from 4% in 2022 to 6% in 2023. The increased use of agency staff could indicate difficulty recruiting into full-time positions and have financial implications for local authorities.

Chart 10. Proportion of AMHPs by employer between 2018 and 2023

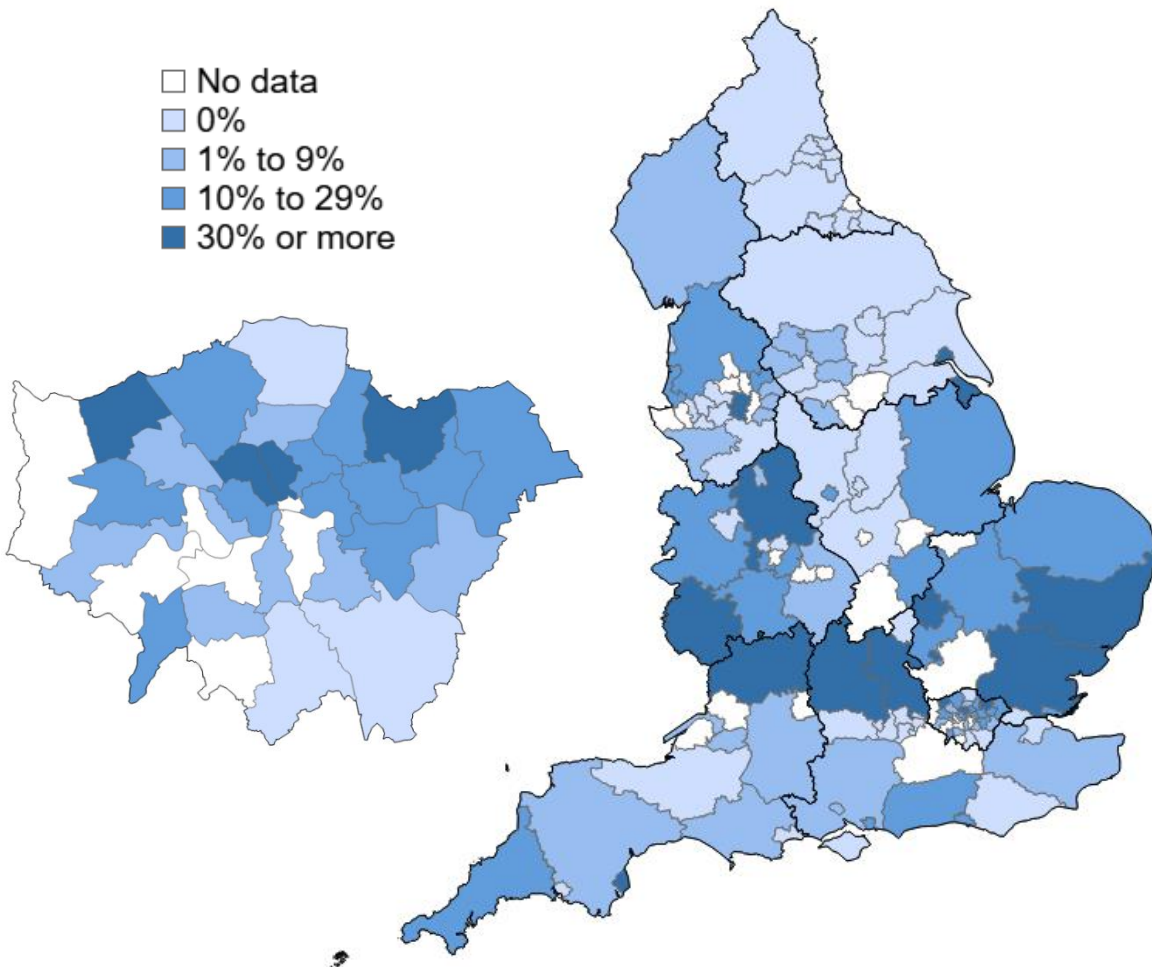
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The map below shows the percentage of AMHPs employed by the NHS in each local authority area. Many areas reported none of their AMHPs were employed by the NHS, such as all areas within the North East. But the map also shows a high concentration from Herefordshire in the west to Suffolk in the east.

Map 2. Percentage of AMHPs employed by the NHS

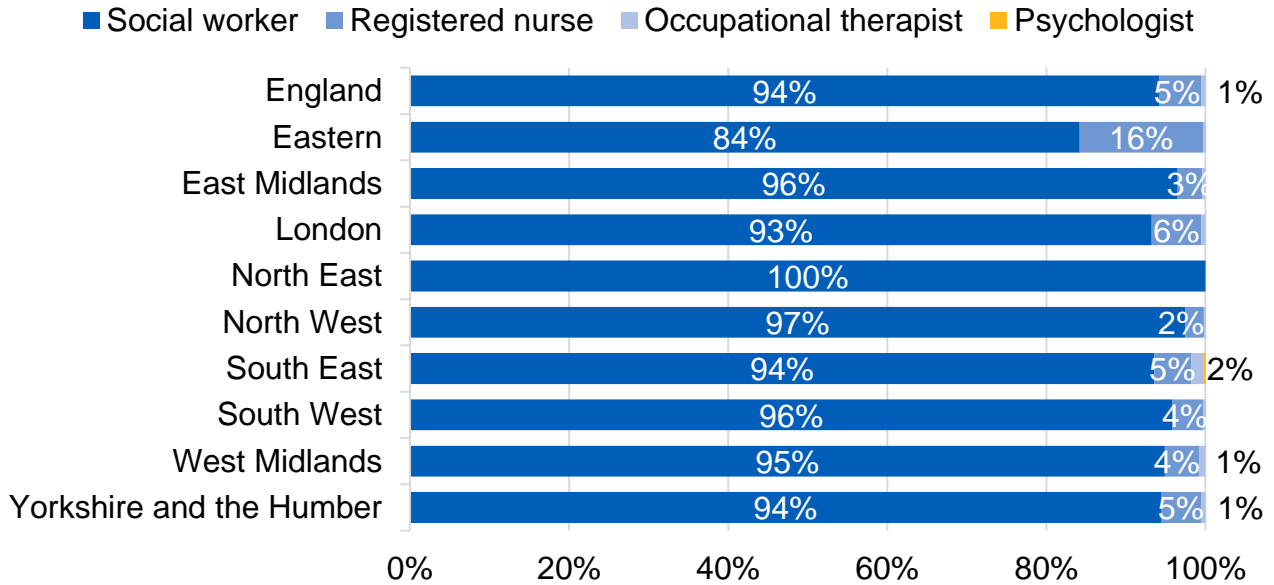
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey found that 94% of AMHPs were social workers, with 5% registered nurses along with less than 1% occupational therapists and very few psychologists. In half of local authority areas that were surveyed, all AMHPs were social workers, which means no AMHPs from these local authorities were from nursing, occupational therapy or psychology professions. The Eastern region had the highest proportion of AMHPs whose primary role was as a registered nurse (16%).

Chart 11. Proportion of AMHPs by profession

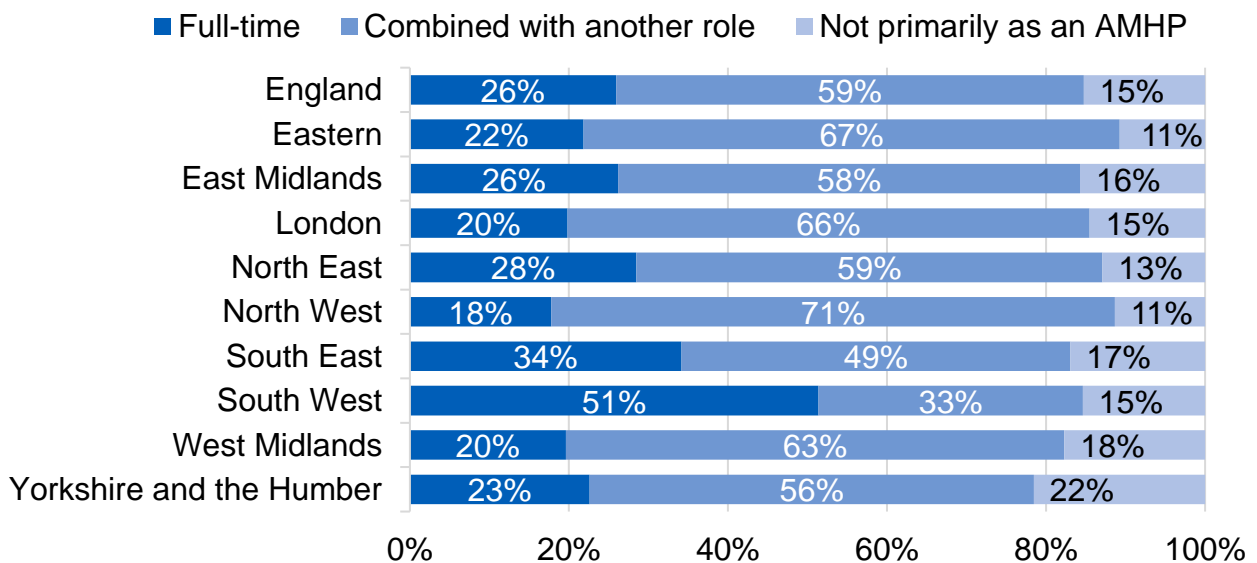
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



Around two thirds (59%) of AMHPs combine their role with another role, while around one in four AMHPs solely perform the role of an AMHP (26%). Around 15% were not primarily working as an AMHP. Therefore, of the estimated 3,800 AMHPs overall, around 580 were not regularly performing the role (e.g. seasonal, senior management working occasional duty shifts).

Chart 12. Proportion of AMHPs by status of role

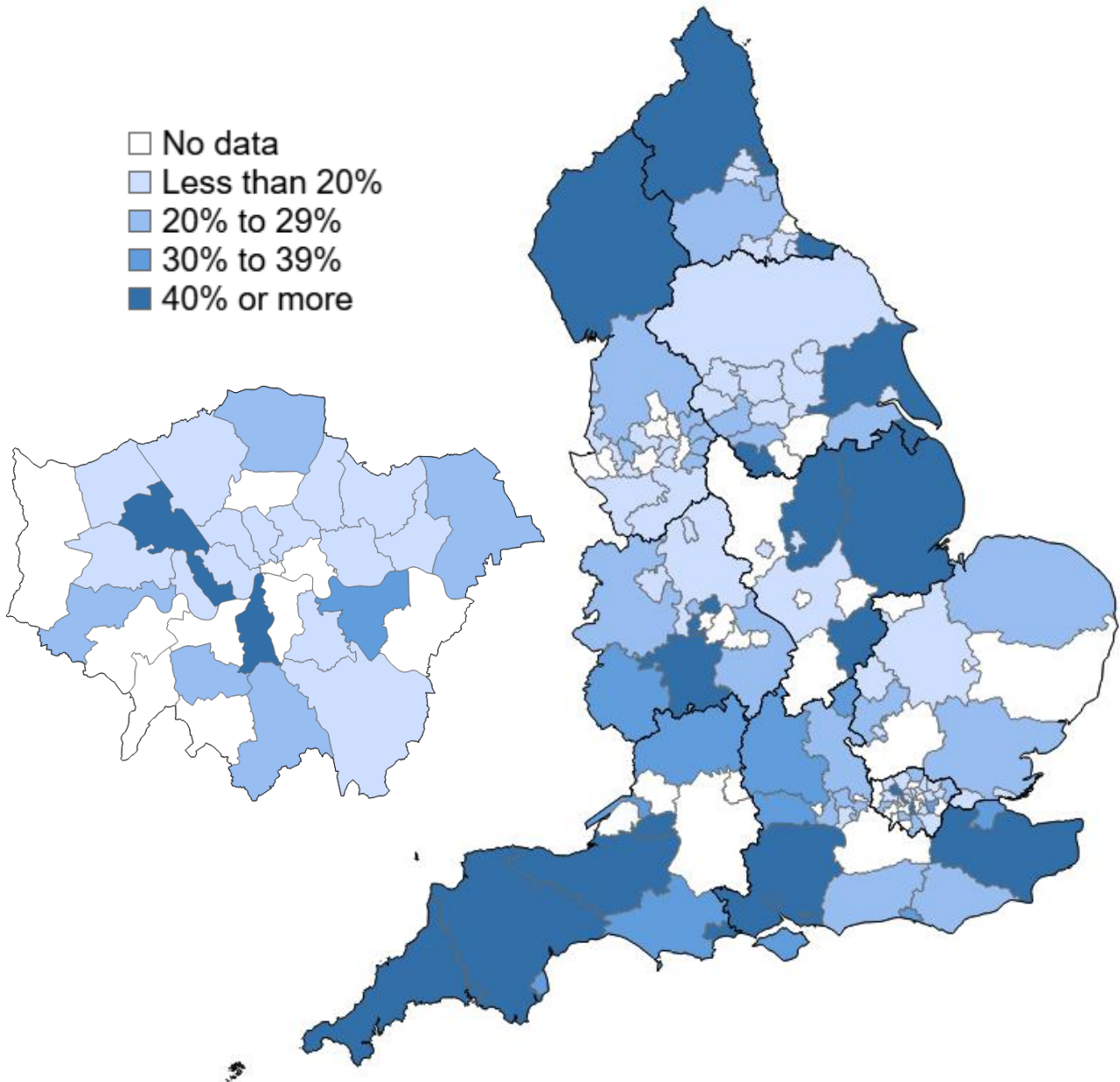
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The map below shows the percentage of AMHPs which were “full-time”, meaning they acted as the AMHP as their primary function even if not working full-time hours, by local authority area. Areas in the south of England show a higher concentration of “full-time” AMHPs, whereas they are more dispersed throughout the rest of the country.

Map 3. Percentage of AMHPs which were “full-time”

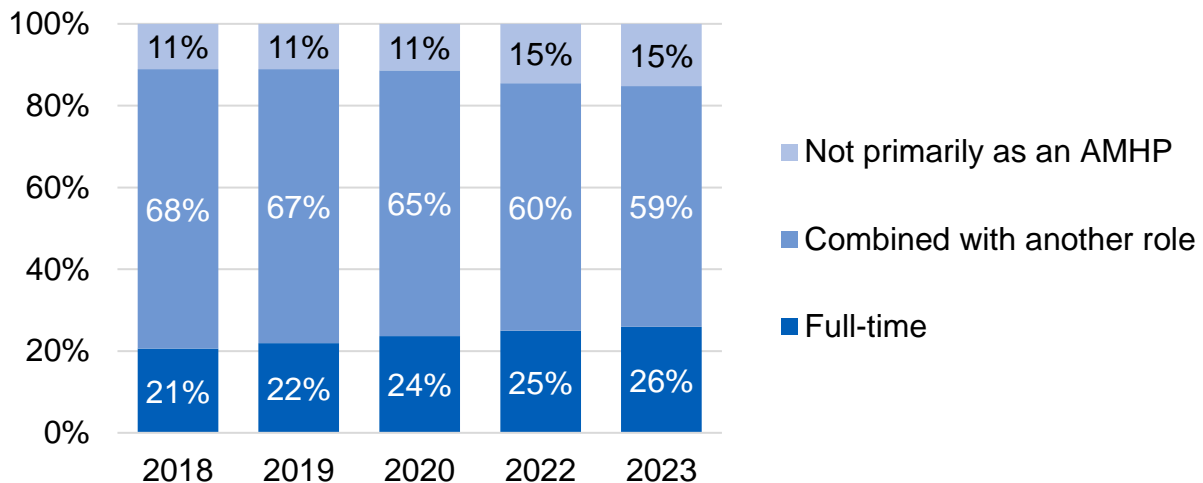
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



Since 2018, the proportion of AMHPs who were “full-time” has consistently increased whereas those combining the AMHP role has decreased. The latest survey in 2023 also showed a sustained increase in the proportion of AMHPs who were not regularly performing the role.

Chart 13. Comparing status of role over time

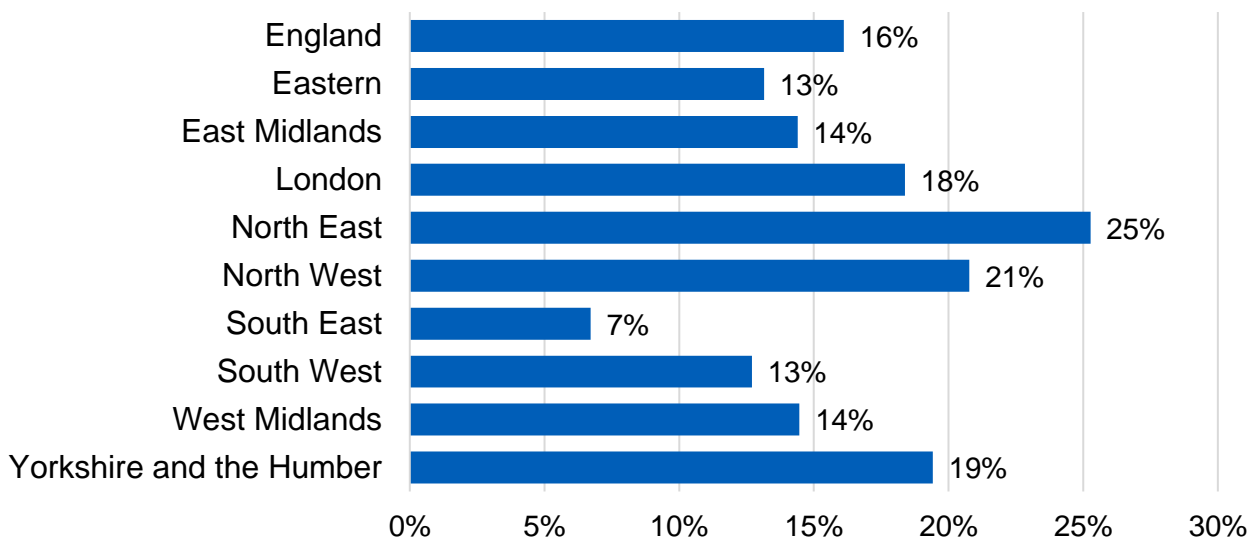
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey showed that 16% of AMHPs only work out-of-hours, for example in emergency duty teams. This proportion varied from 7% in the South East to 25% in the North East.

Chart 14. Proportion of AMHPs that only worked out-of-hours

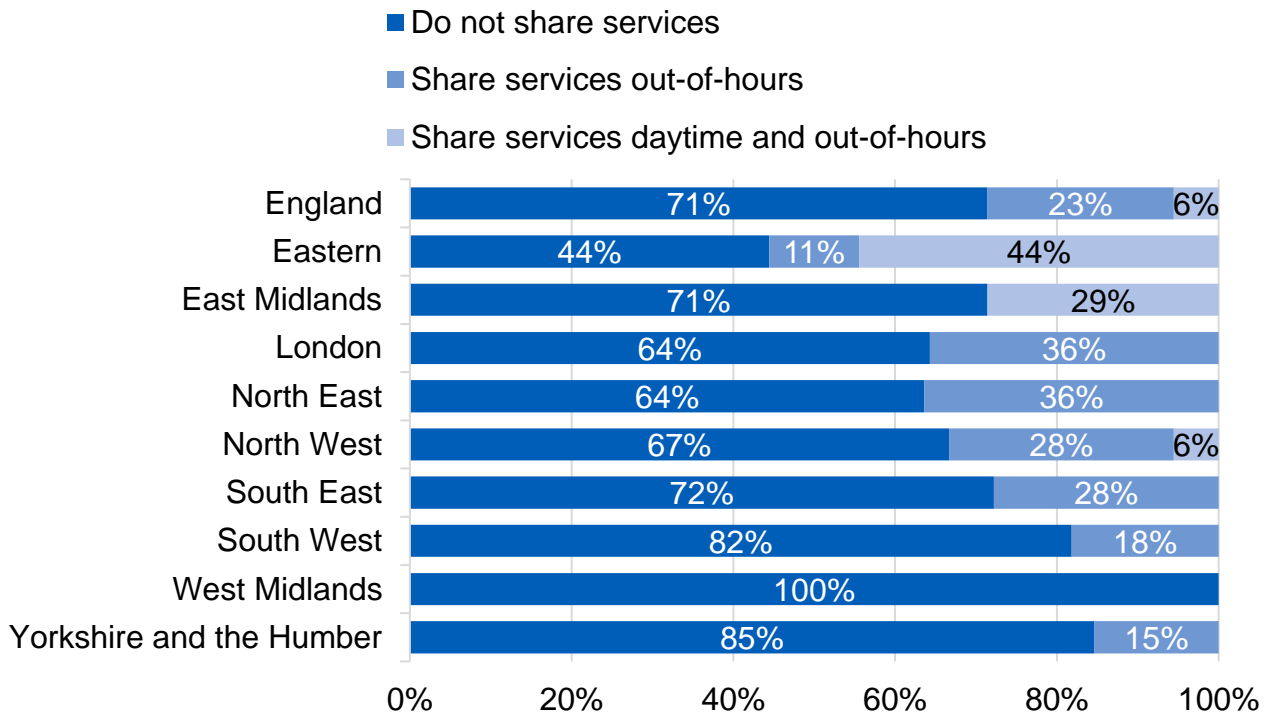
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey also asked local authorities whether they shared their daytime and/or out-of-hours AMHP service with any other authority. Of the 126 local authorities that responded 71% of authorities did not share services, 23% shared out-of-hours services, 6% of authorities shared both daytime and out-of-hours services and 0% shared services during office hours only. None of the authorities in the West Midlands shared their AMHP services.

Chart 15. Proportion of local authorities that share AMHP services

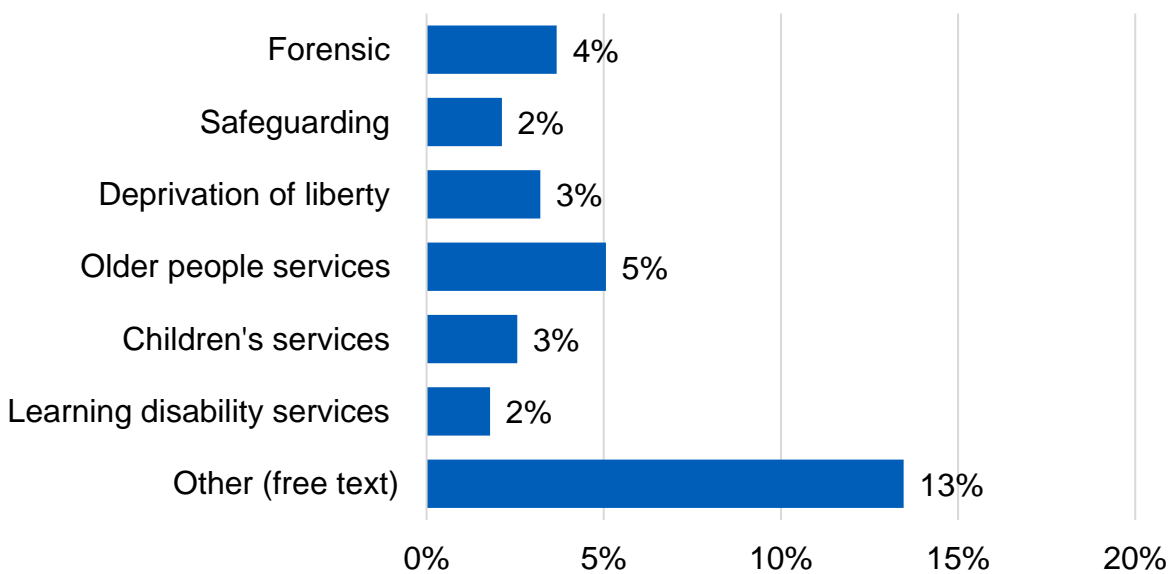
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey asked for the headcount of AMHPs that worked in specific services such as forensics, safeguarding, deprivation of liberty and others shown in the chart below. The responses showed that many did not fit into these services and instead provided a free text response. These responses included “Preparing for adulthood/transitions” and “Homelessness”.

Chart 16. Proportion of AMHPs by service type

Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey asked respondents for number of full-time equivalent AMHPs, in addition to the headcount. To help respondents calculate this, we provided a tool which would give their overall FTE figure based on the total hours worked per AMHP over their rota period. Full-time was classified as working 40 hours per week.

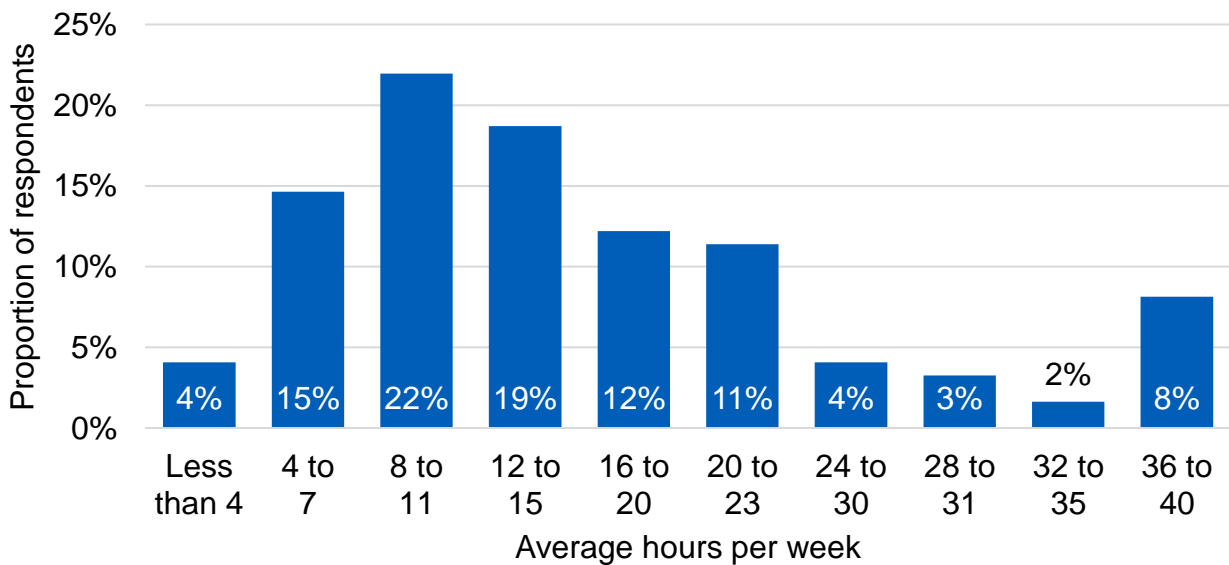
Skills for Care have noted that it was difficult for respondents to answer this question as we are aware of the variety of working patterns that AMHPs undertake.

The estimated AMHP headcount was 3,800. The survey found an FTE ratio of 0.37, which equates to around 1,400 full-time equivalent AMHPs. Therefore, on average, AMHPs worked 15 out of 40 hours per week in their statutory role. However, there was a wide range of responses across areas. Around 14% had an FTE ratio of 0.7 or more, therefore their AMHPs worked 28 or more hours per week in their statutory role. Around 41% of respondents had an FTE ratio less than 0.3, therefore their AMHPs worked less than 12 hours per week in their statutory role.

The chart below includes 123 local authority areas (respondents).

Chart 17. Proportion of respondents by AMHPs average hours per week in their statutory role

Source. AMHP survey May 2023

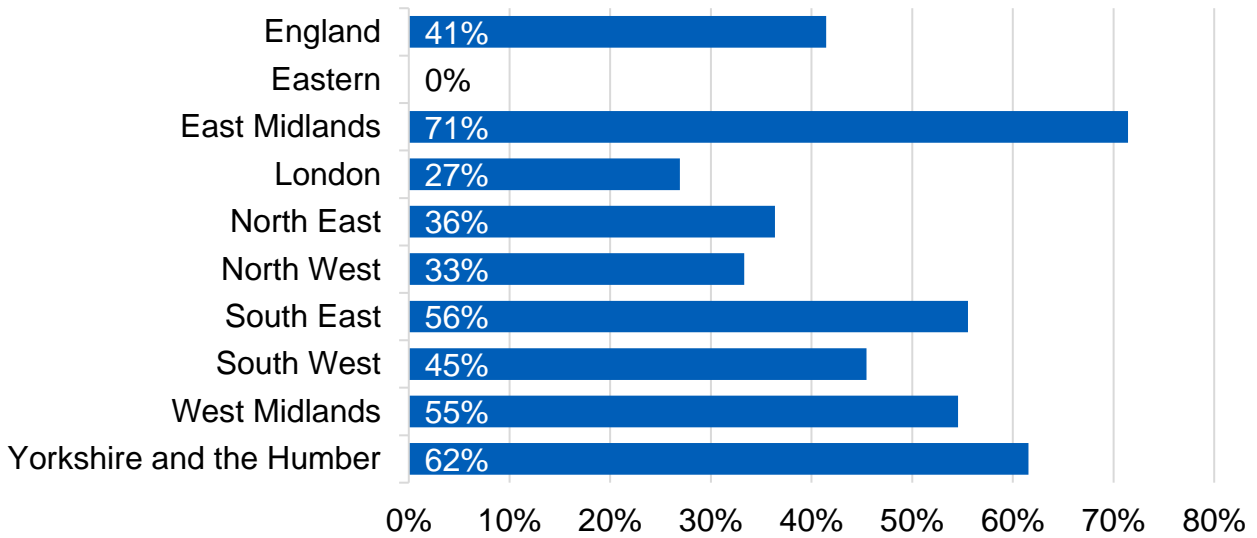


The survey asked respondents for the number of FTE AMHPs needed to fully staff their service to provide a 24-hour response. From the 107 respondents to this question, they required an increase in staff of 30% to meet this target.

We also asked for the number of AMHP vacancies in their AMHP rota. From 115 respondents to this question, they had a vacancy rate of 11.2%. Therefore, the number posts being advertised is less than the overall requirement for a 24-hour AMHP service.

The survey asked respondents if their local authority ran a single AMHP duty system covering 24-hours 7 days of the week. Over a third of respondents said yes (40%) but this proportion varied regionally with the East Midlands having the highest proportion of 24/7 services (71%) and Eastern having the lowest (0%).

Chart 18. Proportion of local authorities in each region with a 24/7 AMHP services
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



Findings from the ASC-WDS

Overview of social workers and qualified AMHPs from ASC-WDS data

- The information below covers social workers employed by local authorities in England only.
- Skills for Care estimate that, of those qualified as an AMHP, 29% were aged 55 and over compared to 24% of social workers.
- Around a quarter of AMHPs (23%) were of Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Over half (53%) of those qualified as an AMHP had ten or more years experience in the social care sector.

£41,300

**Average FTE salary
of AMHPs**

29%

**AMHPs aged 55 and
above**

53%

**AMHPs have 10
years or more
experience in sector**

2.1 Introduction

The Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is the new name for the updated National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) service. The NMDS-SC had been collecting information about social care providers and their staff since 2006. The data collected has been vital to the Government, the Department of Health and Social Care, local authorities and the Care Quality Commission as it has allowed them to plan, fund and monitor the sector for the past 16 years. For more information about the ASC-WDS please see www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforceintelligence

The ASC-WDS continues to collect information on the size and structure of the whole adult social care sector, including the types of care services provided, as well as a detailed picture of the workforce, including retention, demographics, pay rates, and qualifications, both by job role, and employment status.

This chapter focuses on social workers and AMHPs who are employed by local authority services in England, as collected in the ASC-WDS. Social workers are shown alongside AMHPs because the survey, detailed in the previous chapter, showed that 94% of AMHPs were social workers.

Within the ASC-WDS, we were able to identify 1,901 social workers that were employed within local authorities and defined as an AMHP or held an AMHP qualification. We have used these records to identify some of the key characteristics of AMHPs.

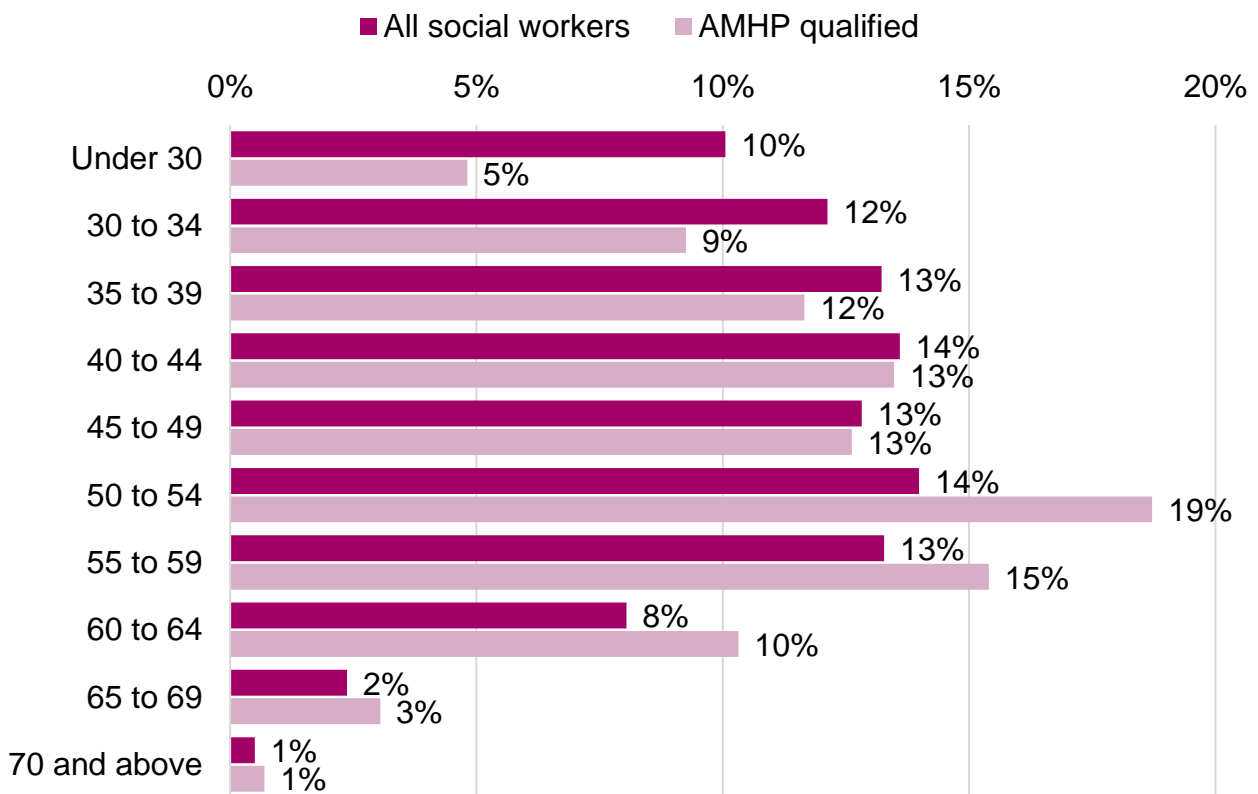
2.2 AMHP Demographics

2.2.1 Age

The ASC-WDS showed that around 24% of social workers were aged 55 and above, and this proportion is higher for those qualified as an AMHP (29%). From a workforce planning perspective this group may retire within the next ten years. The ASC-WDS also showed there were notably fewer qualified AMHPs under 30 compared to social workers.

Chart 19. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by age group

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022

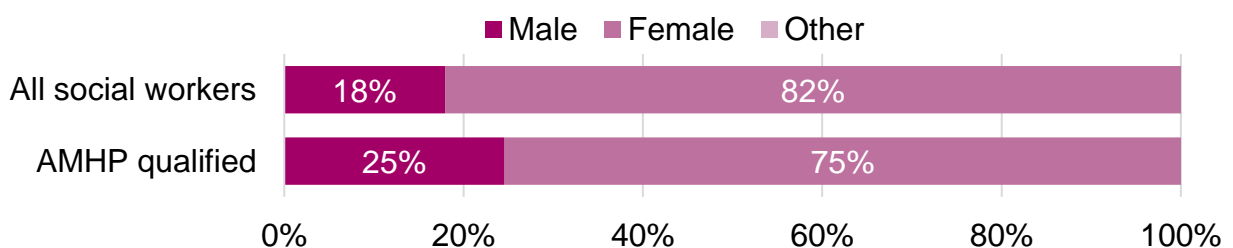


2.2.2 Gender

Across England, the AMHP role had a higher proportion of people identifying as male (25%) compared to social workers overall (18%). This difference was greatest in the Eastern (17% male social workers / 29% male AMHPs) and Yorkshire and Humber regions (15% male social workers / 27% male AMHPs), and lowest in the East Midlands (14% male social workers / 15% male AMHPs).

Chart 20. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by gender

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



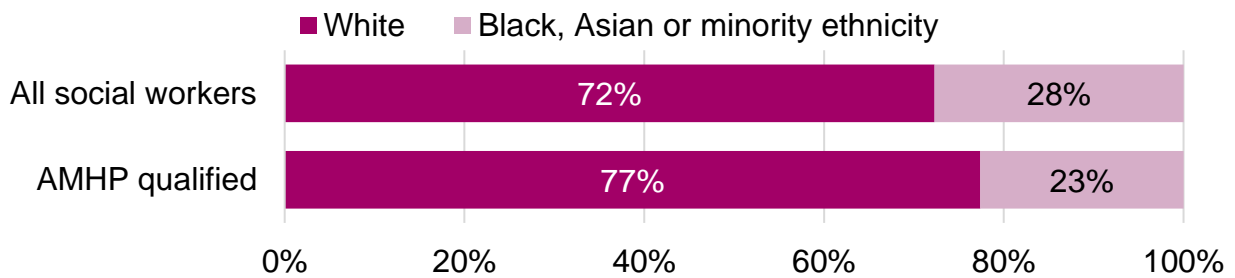
2.2.3 Ethnicity

The ASC-WDS showed that 72% of social workers identified as being of white ethnicity and 28% identified as of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity. Social workers qualified to perform as an AMHP were less ethnically diverse (23% Black, Asian and minority ethnicity) than social workers overall.

London showed the highest ethnic diversity with 62% of social workers and 52% of AMHPs from Black, Asian and minority ethnicity backgrounds. Whereas in the North East, diversity was lower with 7% of social workers and AMHPs from Black, Asian and minority ethnicity backgrounds. These proportions generally reflect the population of these regions.

Chart 21. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by ethnicity

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022

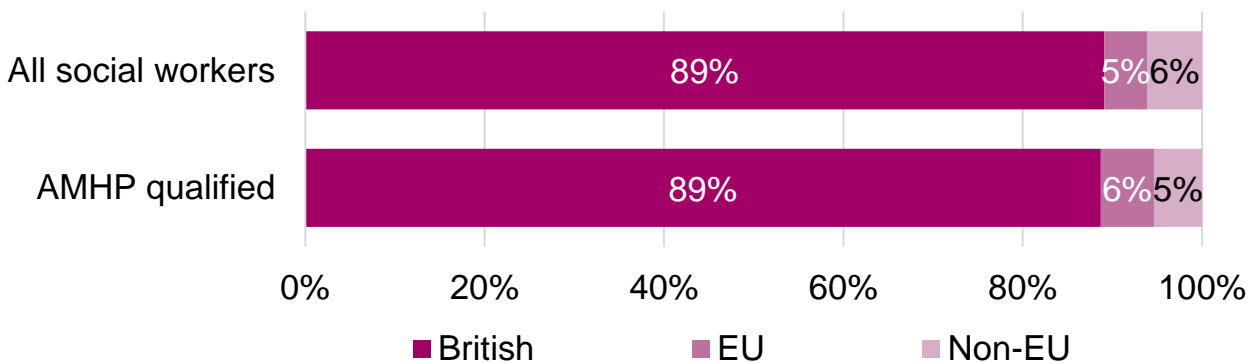


2.2.3 Nationality

The ASC-WDS showed that 89% of overall social workers and those qualified as an AMHP had a British nationality and 11% held a non-British nationality. The chart below shows that 6% of AMHPs held an EU nationality and 5% held a non-EU nationality.

Chart 22. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by nationality

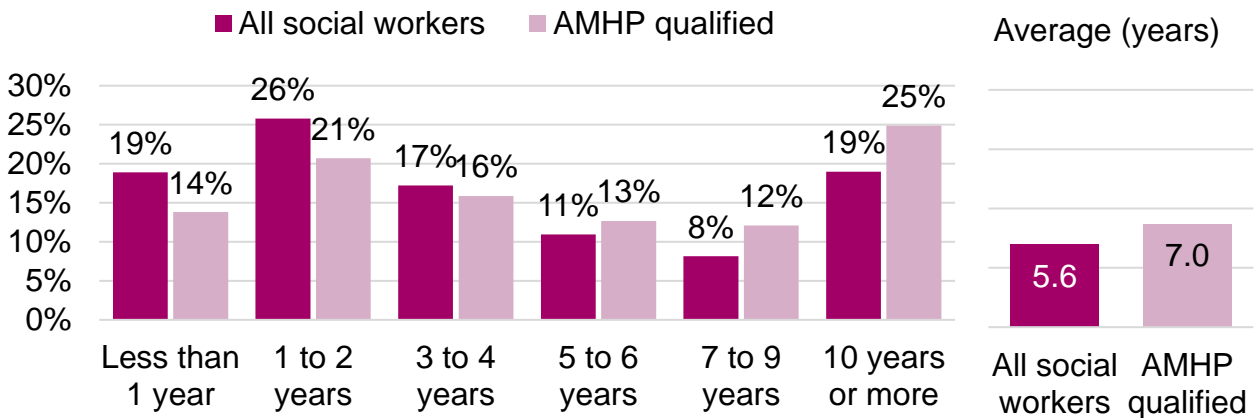
Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



2.3 Experience in current role

ASC-WDS data also allows us to look at how long social workers have been performing their current role. The data shows that those who hold an AMHP qualification had generally been in post for a longer time. The average experience in current role for an AMHP was 7.0 years compared to 5.6 years for all social workers. Of those with an AMHP qualification, 25% had ten years or more experience, compared to 19% of those without the AMHP qualification. The main reason for this trend is that only social workers with at least two years post-qualification experience can embark on AMHP training.

Chart 23. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in role*
 Source. ASC-WDS September 2022

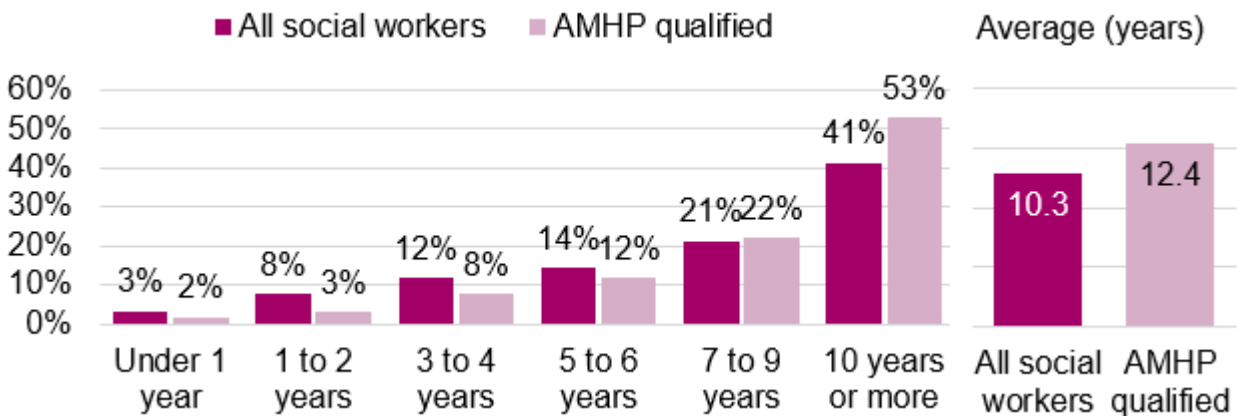


*Those with less than two years in their current role in may have been trained as an AMHP in a previous role.

2.4 Experience in sector

Chart 23 shows that social workers with an AMHP qualification had more experience in the adult social care sector than social workers in general. The average experience in sector for an AMHP is 12.4 years compared to 10.3 years for all social workers. The largest difference was in the 10 or more years' experience group where 53% of AMHPs have this level of experience compared to 41% of social workers. Again, this suggests that social workers can progress to becoming AMHPs later in their career.

Chart 24. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector
 Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



2.5 Pay

The chart below compares the average salary of a social worker to those identified as an AMHP. As AMHPs tend to have a greater amount of experience in the sector (shown above), only those with five years or more experience in adult social care are included in both groups. It is also acknowledged that many local authorities pay a premium for practicing AMHPs as either a fixed payment or an incremental increase, but this is inconsistent across the sector¹.

Across England, the median pay for an AMHP was £41,300, which was 9% higher than the £37,900 for all social workers. As shown in Chart 26 below, this uplift is still substantial for social workers with the most experience in the sector, at 5% for those with 20 years or more experience.

Chart 25. Median FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022.

Note. Only those with five years or more experience in the sector were included.

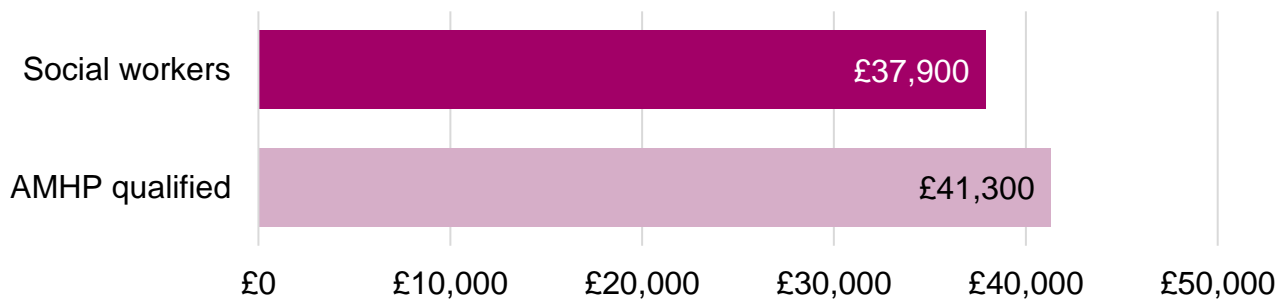
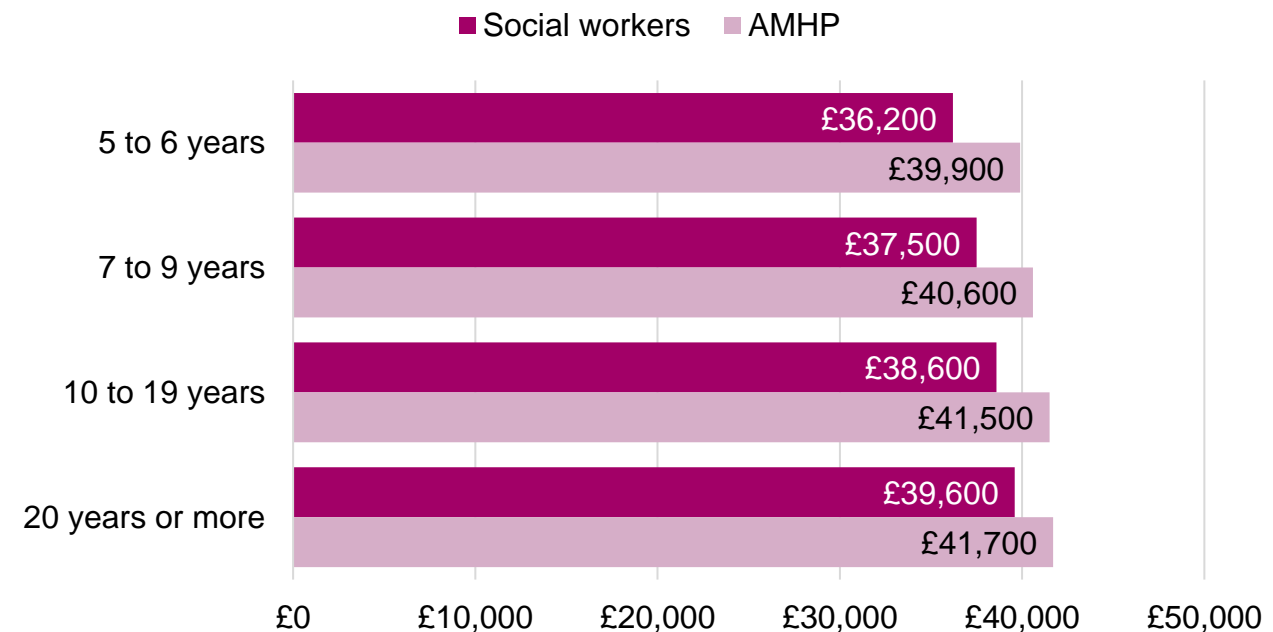


Chart 26. Median FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



¹ Who wants to be an Approved Mental Health Professional? – King’s College London – 2018
https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/101007101/Stevens_et_al_2018_AMHP_Report.pdf

Further resources

Skills for Care provides outstanding workforce intelligence relied upon by the Government, strategic bodies, employers and individuals to help them make decisions that will improve outcomes for the people who use care services. The ASC Workforce Data Set (ASCWDS) is recognised as the leading source of workforce intelligence for adult social care. This chapter provides an overview of some of the reports and resources published by our Workforce Intelligence team.

Workforce intelligence publications

The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England

This report provides estimates of the number of organisations and establishments involved in providing or organising adult social care, as well as the size and structure of the workforce, including people and job estimates, trend data, and future projections. To access this report, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/sizeandstructure.

Latest version, July 2022



The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England

This report uses data from the ASC-WDS to explore characteristics of the adult social care sector, including demographic information, recruitment and retention issues, pay rates and qualification and training information. This report also includes information about workforce trends between 2012/13 and 2019/20, including turnover rates, vacancy rates, zero-hours contracts and pay rates. To access this report please visit

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof.

Latest version, October 2022

Regional reports

These nine regional reports provide an annual overview of adult social care services and the workforce in each region. Each of these nine reports examines regional findings in light of the findings for England as a whole, which are presented in this report. To access these, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/regionalreports.

Latest version, October 2022

Local authority area reports

This collection of summary reports gives an overview of the adult social care sector and workforce in each of the 151 local authority areas in England. They are accompanied by two interactive visualisations which look at individual areas in greater detail. To access these reports, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/lasummaries.

Latest version, October 2022

Keeping informed



For a bespoke analysis of workforce information at a local level or to answer any specific questions you have about the adult social care workforce please contact: analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk. To be kept up to date with Workforce Intelligence news please join our mailing list by registering with us and selecting 'Workforce Intelligence publications'. You can also follow us on Twitter @SfC_Data or visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/contactWI.