

A black and white photograph of a young man and an elderly woman walking towards the camera in a brightly lit hallway. The man is on the left, wearing a plaid shirt and a lanyard, and the woman is on the right, wearing a cable-knit sweater. Both are smiling.

Methodology changes 2024/25

July 2025

Overview

Skills for Care publish estimates of the size and structure of the workforce each year using data from the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS). When additional information becomes available or methodologies improve, we also make retrospective changes to previously published estimates to ensure our estimates are comparable across years and not a reflection of changes to methodologies.

Changes to our methodology in 2024/25 include:

- Use of our data engineered pipeline for filled posts estimates of independent sector CQC-regulated services
- Retrospective changes to the number of personal assistant filled posts in previous years
- Removal of self-employed shared lives workers from our workforce estimates
- Removal of adult social care related roles in the NHS from our workforce estimates.

In this document are descriptions of these changes and their impact on our workforce estimates. For more information about our methodology and to read our methodology paper in full, visit [our website](#). Please note that our methodology paper will be updated in October 2025 with further details and incorporate the changes referenced in this document.

If you have any questions or feedback in relation to the figures shown here or the changes to our methodology, contact us: analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk

Changes to the filled posts estimates methodology

In 2024/25 we have used our automated data pipeline for the first time to estimate the number of filled posts over time in the CQC-regulated independent sector in '[The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2025](#)' report. Using this data pipeline allows us to publish data about the workforce more frequently (every month in our [filled posts monthly tracker](#)) and closer to the time period it refers to (estimates will be published in our tracker by the 15th of each month and refer to the position as at the end of the previous month).

In addition to speeding up processing times and bring forward publication dates, using an automated data pipeline has allowed us to make improvements to our estimates which are detailed below:

- The automated data pipeline makes use of all the data collected by ASC-WDS over time and can therefore make more accurate and consistent estimates. This includes the ability to make estimates at location level using data submitted at different time points (using forward and backwards imputation and interpolation between two known data points). Previous estimates were mostly based on independent snapshots of our data at the end of March each year.
- The automated pipeline accounts for the date that information was submitted to ASC-WDS in a more detailed way than the previous method and backdates previous estimates based on new information received. This use of dates has reduced the 'lag' between changes happening in the sector and being reflected in our estimates.
- Using the automated pipeline and cloud computing has allowed us to make use of more sophisticated models with more features to improve the accuracy of our estimates.
- We have been able to incorporate CQC's Provider Information Return (PIR) data into our estimates for non-residential locations. This has increased the amount of data available for making estimates for this part of the sector and therefore increased accuracy.

The automated data pipeline has been used to estimate the number of filled posts in independent sector CQC-regulated services for the first time in 2024/25. These are shown in the report with new figures for 2024/25, alongside retrospectively updated filled posts figures for previous years. These filled posts estimates are split by geography, main service type and job role.

It should be noted that in our monthly trackers these new estimates are still published as 'statistics in development' as we continue to work on the methodology.

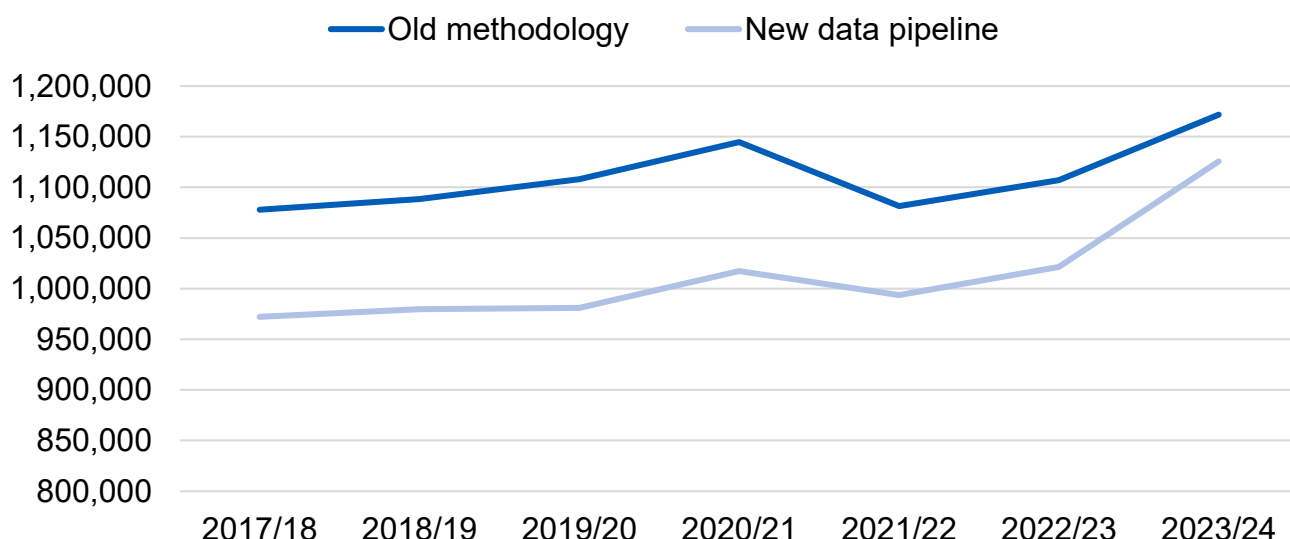
Analysis of changes from previously published data

Chart 1 below shows the difference between our new estimates and those previously published. It shows that, in general, the pattern is similar over time. Differences in the trend are mostly as a result of the new data pipeline responding faster to changes in the sector, for example in 2023/24 the new methodology identified the increase in staff caused by international recruitment sooner than the old methodology.

The new data pipeline generally estimates a lower overall total than previous estimates. The main reason for this is the inclusion of CQC's PIR data for non-residential locations which improved the coverage of new and smaller domiciliary care providers.

The chart shows data at a national level. The data pipeline has also improved accuracy and consistency at a lower geography allowing for more trends and insights to be generated at a local level.

Chart 1: Estimated number of filled posts in the independent CQC regulated sector by estimation type



Skills for Care continues to iterate and develop the automated data pipeline with a view to estimating more of the characteristics of adult social care sector and workforce in this way. The next areas for development are recruitment and retention metrics.

Changes to historical personal assistant filled posts figures

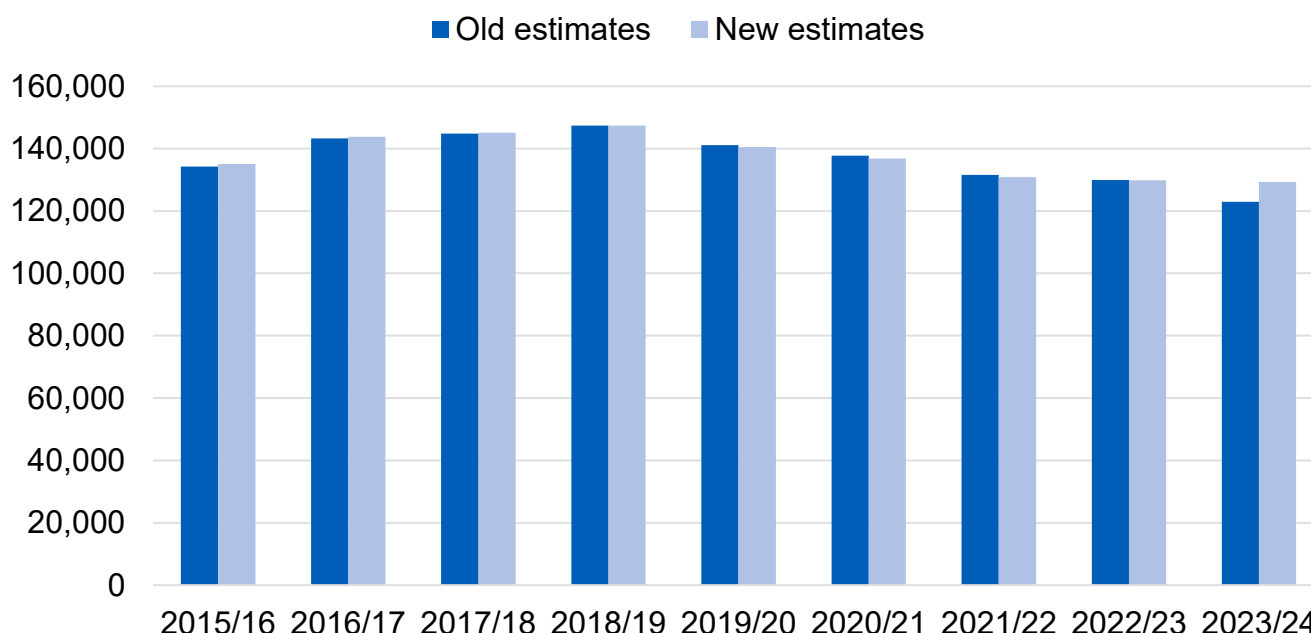
In our 'The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2024' report, we estimated there were 123,000 personal assistant filled posts employed by direct payment recipients. This figure has been replaced by an improved estimate this year (129,000).

This year we have applied an improved quality filtering method, meaning that the current published estimate of personal assistant filled posts in 2023/24 is not comparable to our previous publication. This change has been retrospectively applied to previous years, so the trends in the current report are comparable over time.

A trend of the number of personal assistant filled posts and the percentage change over time can be found in the '[The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England](#)' data visualisation on our Workforce Intelligence website, in the "workforce" pages.

Chart 2 shows the impact of the change in filtering methodology. As above, this has changed the 2023/24 figure by 6,000 but has had a minimal effect to other years.

Chart 2: Estimated number of personal assistants by estimation type



Adult social care related roles in the NHS

The NHS continues to play a role in providing adult social care. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) work across all Integrated Care System areas (ICSs) to provide the vital integrated links between health and social care, bringing health and care organisations together to develop shared plans and joined-up services¹.

However, as of 2024/25, we are no longer including adult social care related roles employed by the NHS in our estimates of the size of the adult social care workforce. The reasons for this change include:

- There is not much detail available about the roles in the NHS that were previously included. As such they were only included in filled posts analysis but could not be included in any of breakdowns (for example, demographics).
- It was possible that not all the roles previously included were actually adult social care related on a daily basis. These workers were identified based on a fairly broad job role grouping.
- Including these roles in estimates for the size of the adult social care workforce and the NHS workforce could lead to accidental double counting.

Filled posts for adult social care workforce related roles in the NHS are now reported separately, as shown in the [‘The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England’](#) data visualisation on our Workforce Intelligence website.

Historically adult social care related filled posts in the NHS typically accounted for less than 7% of the total adult social care workforce each year². The majority of the adult social care workforce are employed by local authorities, independent care providers, charities, voluntary organisations and individuals employing their own staff. From 2024/25 onwards we will be focusing on these filled posts only in our workforce estimates.

A section on the change to our method for creating our workforce estimates is included in [‘The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2025’](#) report where these changes have been made for 2024/25. A similar section will also be included in our next update to [‘The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England’](#) report, due to be published in October 2025.

¹ NHS England – what is integrated care: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/what-is-integrated-care/>

² Skills for Care’s workforce estimates, 2023/24



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