A black and white photograph of a care home interior. A young female care worker in a dark uniform is leaning over a table, showing a small object to two elderly women seated at the table. In the background, there are balloons shaped like a rainbow and clouds, and a framed picture of a street scene with house numbers 'B 5213 FLIXTON' and 'B 5214'.

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

Workforce supply and demands trends  
2024/25

## Foreword from our CEO

The data in this report comes from Skills for Care's Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS), which has data on more than 700,000 people in over 20,000 locations. It's a valuable and flexible system that allows us to gather data on new areas of interest to support policymaking as and when it's needed.

Despite the use of ASC-WDS being completely voluntary by care providers, they share their data with us because it's a mutually beneficial relationship. ASC-WDS gives them something back in the form of benefits like the ability to analyse their own data, a place to store training and qualifications records - and access to funding for learning and development.

As always, we're hugely grateful to everyone who contributes their data and helps to make ASC-WDS the richest source of adult social care workforce data in England.

It's undoubtedly good to see that in 2024/25, the sector continued to grow and the vacancy rate fell back to pre-Covid levels despite a significant drop in the number of people recruited from overseas. We can't afford to get complacent, though, as some of this will be down to the fall in vacancies in the wider economy, which always benefits our sector. We need to protect ourselves from the wild swings in vacancy rates driven by the economic context. And we can't ignore the fact that the vacancy rate for adult social care is still three times that of the wider economy.

We still need 470,000 more posts by 2040, so we need to stay focused on the workforce – and especially how we attract and keep more people domestically, as the number of people with a British nationality in the workforce continues to fall. Building resilience means investing in stable recruitment and retention and making roles more attractive to the domestic workforce over the long term. That includes improving development opportunities, improving the quality of roles, and fostering positive cultures within organisations.

The sector is strongly committed to action. It's a year since we published the Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England, which the sector came together to develop under Skills for Care's leadership. We've made a lot of progress implementing it over the past year and more than half of the Strategy's recommendations and commitments are already in progress or even complete.

There's a lot more to do, though, and everyone - from government to care providers, from regulators to frontline staff - has a role to play in building the workforce we need to deliver the best possible care and support for the people who draw on it.

**Professor Oonagh Smyth**  
Chief Executive, Skills for Care



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# Contents

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Foreword from our CEO .....	2
Workforce supply and demand .....	4
Introduction .....	5
1. Total posts, filled posts and vacant posts .....	6
1.1 Note on interpreting vacant posts .....	7
2. Filled posts.....	8
3. Vacant posts .....	9
4. Vacancies in adult social care vs the wider economy .....	10
5. Turnover and starter rates .....	12
6. International recruitment .....	13
7. Workforce projections .....	16
Summary.....	17
Further resources.....	18

## Important note on methodological changes in 2024/25

The methodology for this year's report has changed from previous years. Adult social care related roles employed by the NHS are no longer included in the headline statistics for the size of the adult social care workforce.

This change has been applied retrospectively to previous years, so the trends in this report are consistent. Comparing figures from this report to previous reports will not produce a valid trend.

Also, our estimates for the number of filled posts in the independent sector now come from our automated data pipeline. This has resulted in substantial improvements to our estimates over time and some figures have changed as a result from previous versions of this report.

See the [accompanying document on methodology changes](#) for rationale and further details about this, and other, methodology improvements.

# Workforce supply and demand

This report provides information about the size and composition of the adult social care workforce, including information relating to workforce supply and demand such as recruitment and retention statistics, international recruitment and statistics on the wider economy.

Workforce supply and demand is a key issue for the adult social care sector. In recent years workforce supply has experienced significant fluctuations due to policy changes and external factors. The information in this short report provides the latest figures and context surrounding this topic.

This report looks at changes in the workforce since 2019/20, and before where relevant, using Skills for Care's workforce estimates going back to 2015/16. It should be noted that due to the improvements to our methodology, all trends within this report are comparable but they cannot be directly compared to those in previous versions of this report.

An accompanying visualisation is available on [our website](#), providing further insights, trends and breakdowns.

## Key Findings

- The total number of adult social care posts was 1.71m in 2024/25 (an increase of 2.2% from 2023/24).
- Between 2023/24 and 2024/25 the number of posts that were filled (filled posts) increased by 3.4% to 1.60m (an increase of 52,000 filled posts).
- The number of vacant posts decreased by 16,000 vacant posts (-12.4%) to 111,000 over the same period.
- In 2024/25 the vacancy rate was 7.0%. This was a return to similar levels seen prior to 2021/22. In 2021/22 the rate had peaked at 10.5%.
- An estimated 50,000 people arrived in the UK in 2024/25 and started direct care providing roles in the independent sector. This was a decrease of 55,000 from 2023/24, when the estimated number was 105,000. In 2024/25, the number of people employed from outside the UK on the Health and Care Worker visa was an estimated 10,000. Other routes for people joining the sector from outside the UK include dependent, family and student visas.
- The number of posts filled by people with a British nationality decreased by 30,000 in 2024/25 (a decrease of 3%). The decrease in posts filled by people with a British nationality since 2020/2021 was 85,000 (7%).

# Introduction

The majority of the data in this report comes from the workforce intelligence that we collect in the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS). As at May 2025 there were around 21,100 care providers using the ASC-WDS service, completing details from over 728,000 staff in the sector.

The ASC-WDS is an online service that collects data about the adult social care workforce in England. Prior to 2019 it was known as the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) service, which had been collecting information about social care providers and their staff since 2006. For more information, visit the [ASC-WDS](#) pages of our website.

The data collected in the ASC-WDS is 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 19 years.

The ASC-WDS collects information about adult social care sector employers, including the types of care services provided, as well as a detailed picture of the workforce. This includes retention, demographics, pay rates and qualifications, both by job role and employment status.

We use the data collected by the ASC-WDS to create workforce models that, in turn, allow for weighted estimates of the whole adult social care workforce to be produced. We annually estimate the size, structure and characteristics of the adult social care workforce in England and at a local level. Details of these estimates, as well as information on updates to our methodologies as of 2024/25, can be found on our [Workforce Intelligence website](#).

In 2023 Skills for Care became an official statistics producer, having been added to the [Official Statistics Order 2023](#). This means that all official statistics produced by Skills for Care will include oversight from the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) (OSR), ensuring it follows the Code of Practice for Statistics. The Skills for Care Workforce Intelligence team are committed to the three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value, see our website for our full [statement](#).

Throughout this report, charts and tables will display rounded whole numbers and percentages. Therefore, it should be noted that charts and tables may not always total to 100%.



# 1. Total posts, filled posts and vacant posts

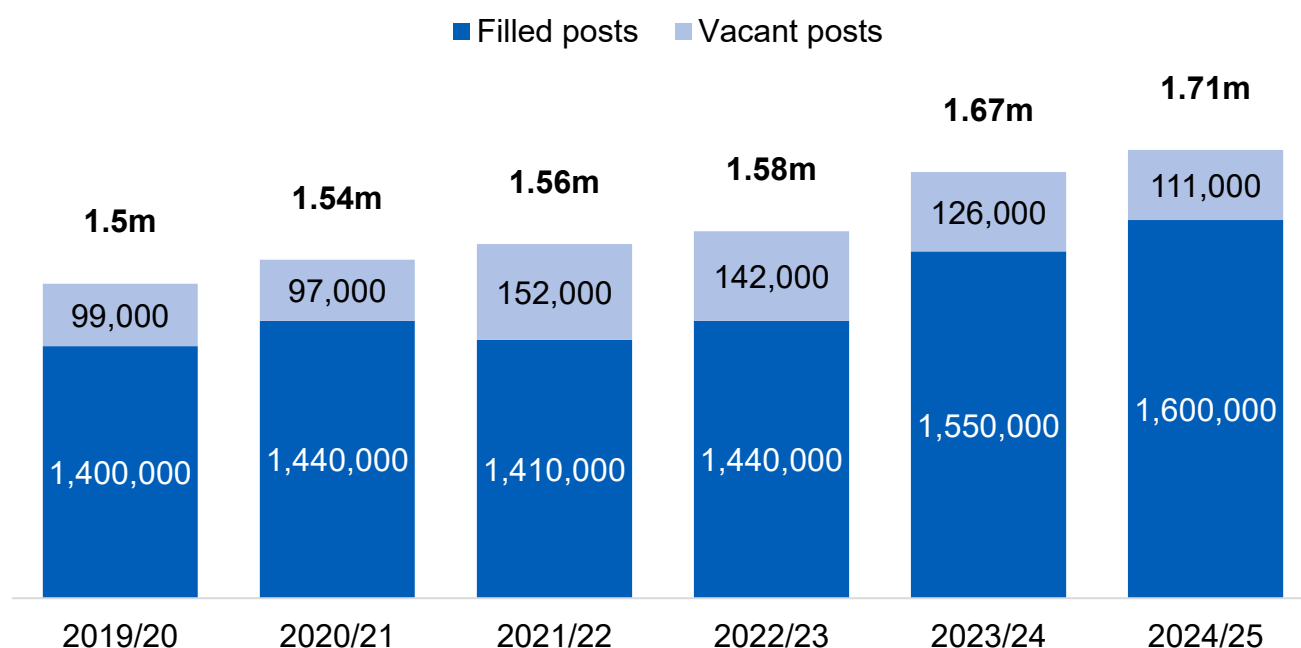
The total number of posts in the adult social care sector in 2024/25 was 1.71 million, as shown in Chart 1. Of these posts, 1.60m were currently filled by a person (filled posts), an increase of 52,000 from 2023/24. There were also 111,000 posts that employers were actively seeking to recruit somebody to (vacant posts).

In 2024/25, the number of filled posts (1.60m) and total posts (1.71m) were at their highest levels over the reported period.

In addition to the 1.60m filled posts in the adult social care sector, there were also 119,000 adult social care related filled posts in the NHS in 2024/25.

**Chart 1. Estimated number of adult social care posts (total posts, filled posts and vacant posts) in England, 2019/20 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



Some vacant posts may be covered by bank or agency staff. In 2024/25 there were around 118,000 bank or agency staff working on any given day in the independent and local authority sectors (this equates to 8.0% of filled posts in 2024/25).

## 1.1 Note on interpreting vacant posts

The number of vacant posts includes posts that are vacant in the short term due to recent or anticipated staff turnover, as well as posts created by employers who want to expand and grow their businesses. It also includes more persistent vacancies where the offer to potential staff is not sufficiently competitive in the local labour market.

As such, not every vacant post represents an issue in terms of workforce supply. However, analysis of workforce trends over time shows that, alongside filled posts, the number of vacant posts and the vacancy rate are useful measures for understanding workforce supply and demand trends. As can be seen in Chart 1 (above), when the number of filled posts increases faster than underlying demand for care (our 'base case' estimate of this rate is 2% per year, see Section 7), then the number of vacant posts and the vacancy rate tend to decrease.

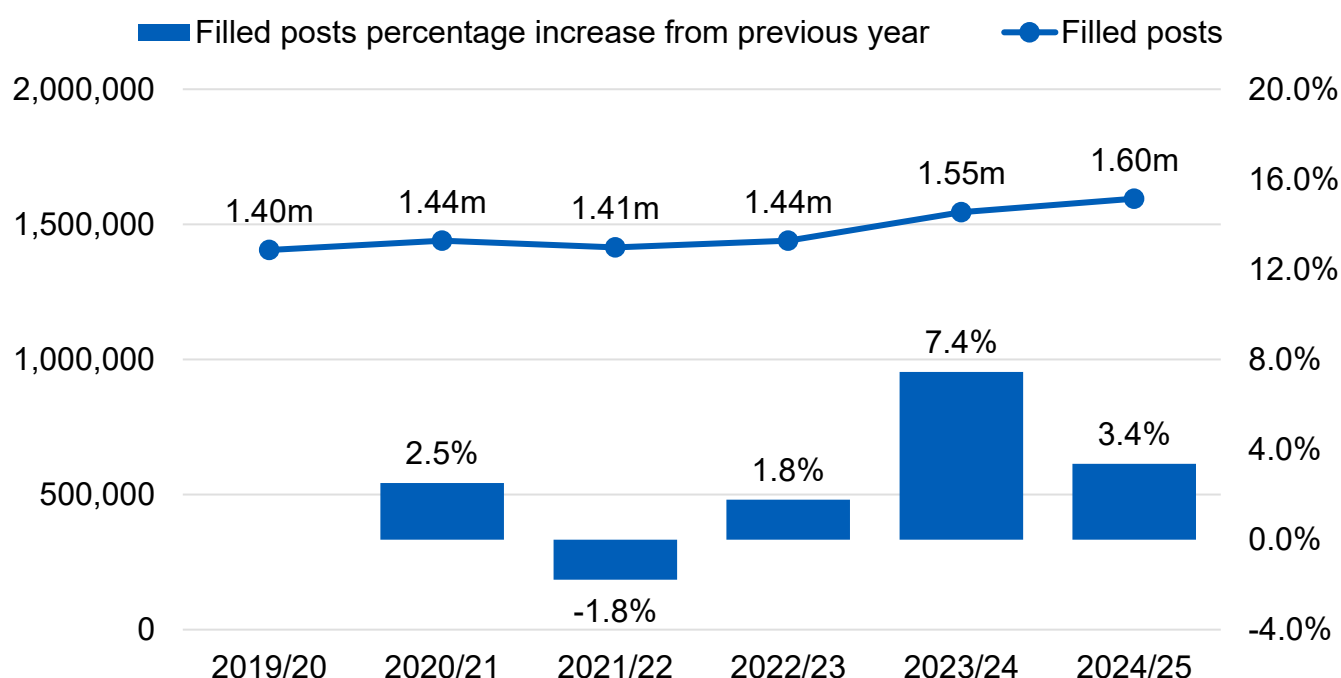
## 2. Filled posts

In 2024/25, the number of filled posts increased by 3.4% (52,000 posts). This was the second largest increase seen since Skills for Care's records began in 2012/13.

In 2021/22, the number of filled posts had decreased for the first time on record (by 26,000 posts). However, with the increases seen in the subsequent three years, the number of filled posts (1.60m) in 2024/25 was at its highest level over the reported period.

**Chart 2. Estimated number of adult social care filled posts in England and the year-on-year percentage change, 2019/20 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



In independent sector care homes, the number of filled posts at care homes with nursing increased by 3.0% in 2024/25 (8,400 posts) and by 3.3% in care homes without nursing (9,900 posts). In independent sector non-residential care services, the number of filled posts increased by 5.1% (28,000 posts). The number of CQC-regulated non-residential locations increased by around 1,000 in 2024/25 (7.5%). The increase in the number of locations accounted for around a third of the increase in filled posts in this part of the sector, with the remaining two-thirds being associated with existing locations increasing in size.

Overall, the number of filled posts in the independent sector increased by 3.7% (47,500 filled posts). There was also an increase in the number of filled posts in local authorities (2,500 filled posts or 2.1%) and an increase in personal assistant filled posts (2,000 filled posts or 1.5%).



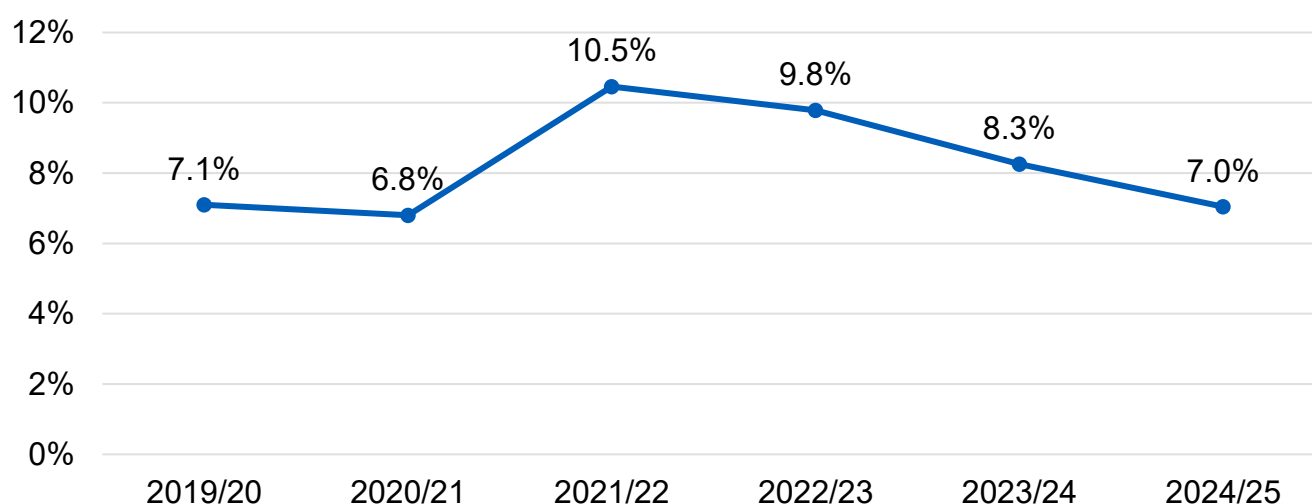
# 3. Vacant posts

The increase in the number of posts being filled in 2024/25 has contributed to a corresponding decrease in the number of vacant posts. In 2024/25, the vacancy rate decreased to 7.0% (111,000 vacant posts), a decrease from 8.3% (126,000 vacant posts) in 2023/24. In 2021/22 the vacancy rate was 10.5% (152,000 vacant posts), the highest rate since records began in 2012/13.

The vacancy rate in 2024/25 (7.0%) has returned to similar levels seen prior to the pandemic in 2019/20 (7.1%). The higher than average levels of international recruitment over the previous three years have contributed to this decrease (see Section 6) as has a reduction in the availability of jobs in other employment sectors (see Section 4).

**Chart 3. Vacancy rate in adult social care, 2019/20 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



In the independent sector, similar decreases in the vacancy rate were seen across different service types in 2024/25. Vacancy rates decreased by 0.9 percentage points in care homes without nursing, by 0.3 percentage points in care homes with nursing, and 1.8 percentage points in domiciliary care.

**Table 1. Independent sector vacancy rate by main service type, 2020/21 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates

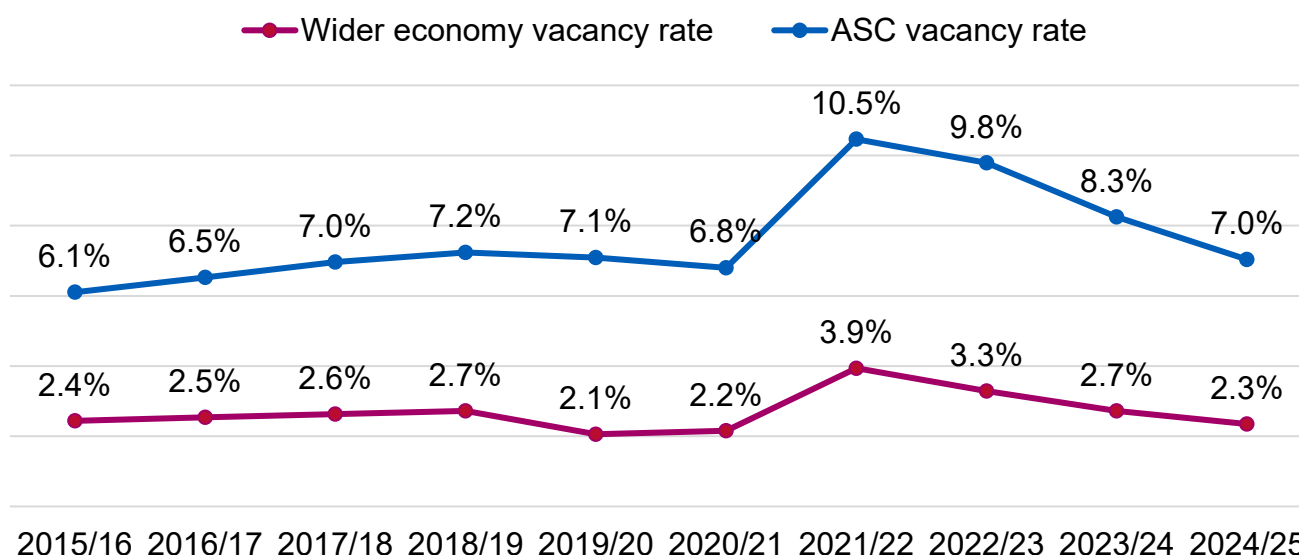
Main service	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Care only home	7.7%	6.2%	5.0%	4.1%
Care home with nursing	8.7%	7.3%	5.0%	4.7%
Domiciliary Care	13.1%	12.8%	11.9%	10.1%

## 4. Vacancies in adult social care vs the wider economy

The chart below shows how the adult social care vacancy rate is correlated with the number of jobs available in the wider economy. There are other factors influencing these figures (international recruitment for example), but it demonstrates that in general, when there are more jobs available in other sectors, fewer adult social care posts get filled.

**Chart 4. Adult social care vacancy rate trend in comparison to the wider economy vacancy rate, 2015/16 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates and ONS: Vacancies and jobs in the UK



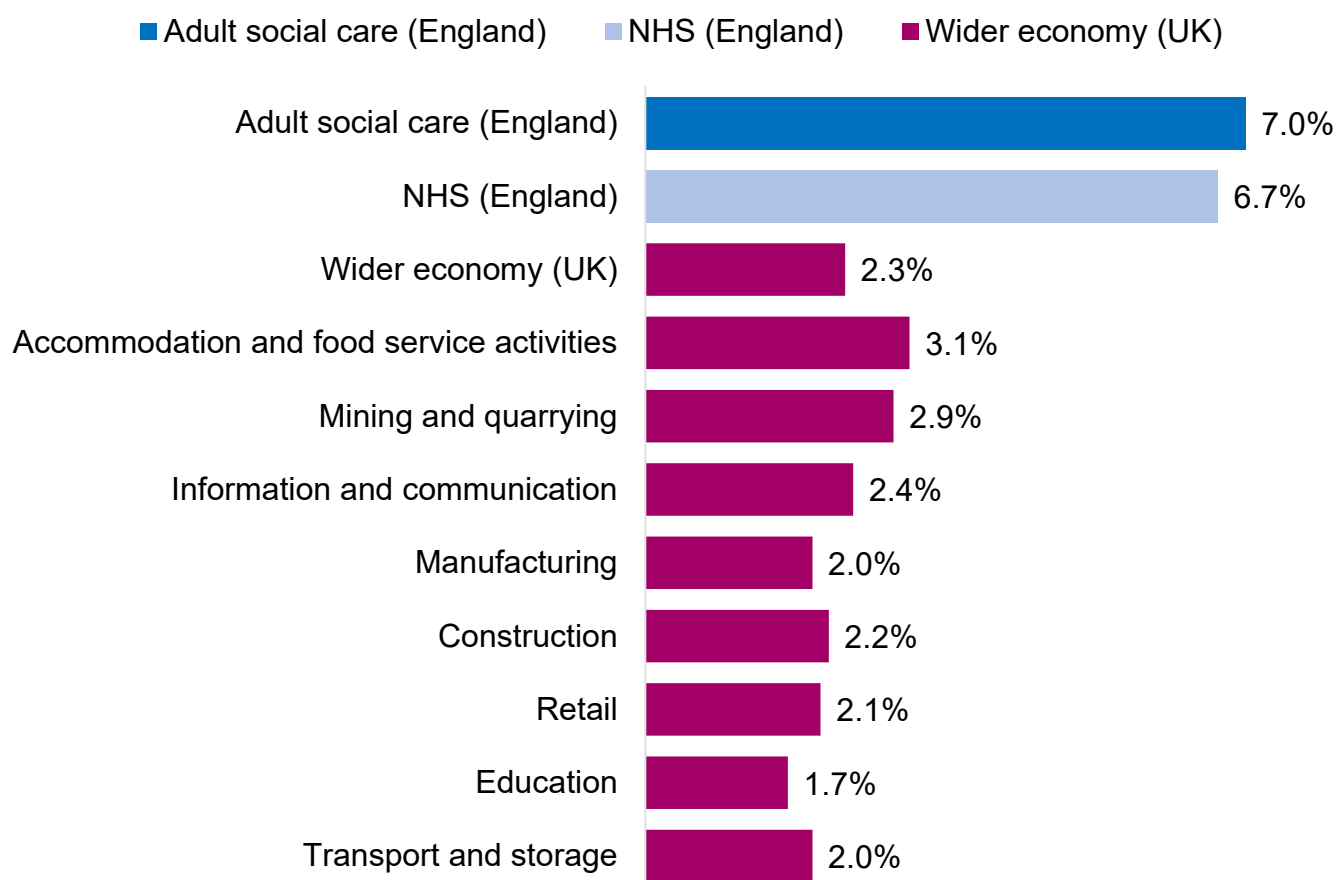
Since 2022, the UK vacancy rate has decreased from 3.9% to 2.3%. At the same time, the adult social care vacancy rate has decreased from 10.5% to 7.0%. Although there are other factors at play, the falling UK vacancy rate is likely a contributing factor to the decrease in the adult social care vacancy rate. The adult social care vacancy rate remains around 3 times higher than the wider economy average.

High vacancy rates are not unique to adult social care. Chart 5 below shows that the adult social care sector is under significant pressure, however, with a vacancy rate similar to the NHS<sup>1</sup> and a vacancy rate much higher than the economy as a whole and many other sectors.

<sup>1</sup> NHS vacancy rates: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-vacancies-survey>

**Chart 5. Adult social care vacancy rate in comparison to the NHS and the wider economy 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates, NHS England and ONS: Vacancies and jobs in the UK



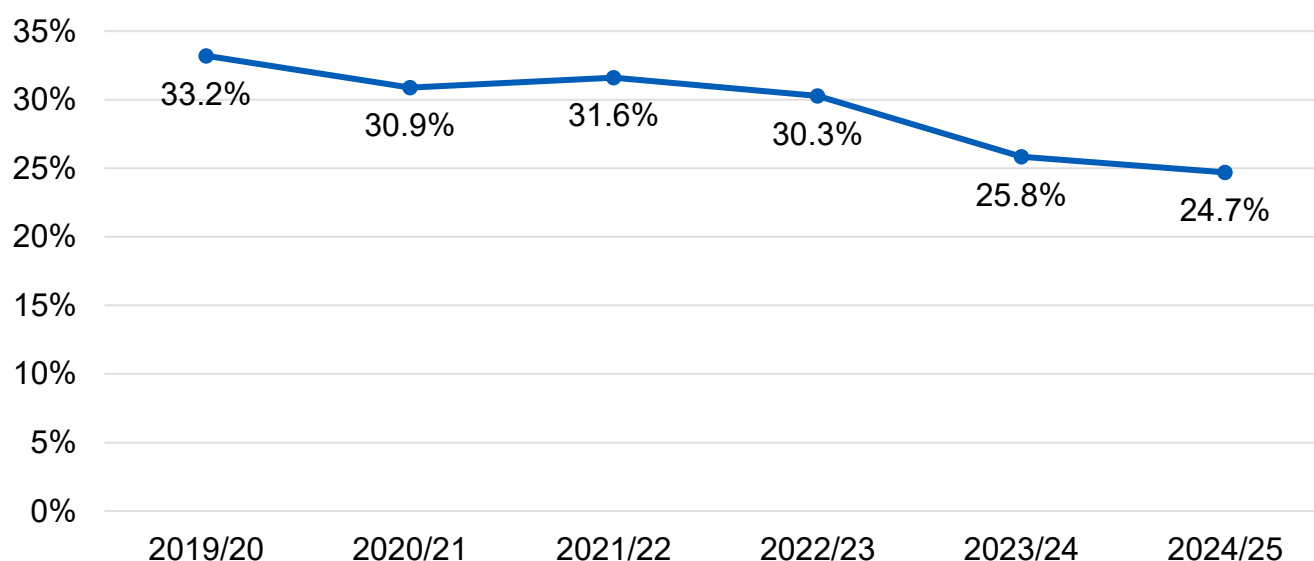
## 5. Turnover and starter rates

The turnover rate in the independent sector decreased from 25.8% in 2023/24, to 24.7% in 2024/25. Evidence from ASC-WDS data suggests that international recruitment may have played a part in this decrease, with the turnover rate for international recruits being around 11 percentage points lower than the turnover rate for people recruited from within the UK<sup>2</sup>. The turnover rate in 2024/25 (24.7%) was 6.9 percentage points lower than in 2021/22 before the increase in international recruitment.

The starters rate in the independent sector decreased from 31.4% to 28.2% in 2024/25. The starters rate decrease is partly a result of the lower turnover rate. Fewer people leaving roles contributes to fewer people needing to start new roles to replace them. Also, a reduction in the number of international recruits entering the sector will have contributed to this decrease.

**Chart 6. Turnover rate in the adult social care independent sector, 2019/20 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



<sup>2</sup> [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2024](#)

## 6. International recruitment

Changes to immigration rules came into effect in the UK on 1 January 2021. These rules effectively meant that people could not come to the UK to take up care worker roles. People could still arrive to take up some regulated professions roles and from April 2021 workers could also come to the UK to take up senior care worker roles, after this role was added to the Shortage Occupation List and Health and Care Worker visa route.

In February 2022, care workers were added to the Shortage Occupation List and the Health and Care worker visa route. This meant that providing workers met the salary threshold of £20,480 and had a licenced sponsor, they could come to the UK to take up care worker roles. The number of international recruits entering the sector increase substantially following this change.

In March/April 2024, restrictions were added only allowing CQC-regulated employers to sponsor care workers and seniors and care workers, the salary threshold was increased for newly sponsored Health and Care Worker visa holders and dependants were no longer able to accompany or join care workers or senior care workers.

Following these changes in 2024, the estimated number of people starting direct care providing roles in the independent sector having arrived in the UK during 2024/25 was 50,000. This was a large decrease from the 105,000 in 2023/24 and 75,000 in 2022/23.

Of the 50,000 people recruited internationally in 2024/25, an estimated 10,000 were recruited from outside the UK on the Health and Care Worker visa. This leaves an estimated 40,000 people arriving in the UK and starting direct care providing jobs in the independent sector via other routes. The ASC-WDS does not collect data on these routes, but available routes include people on a student visa (people on these visas are limited to 20 hours work per week) and dependents and family members of people arriving in UK on other visa types.

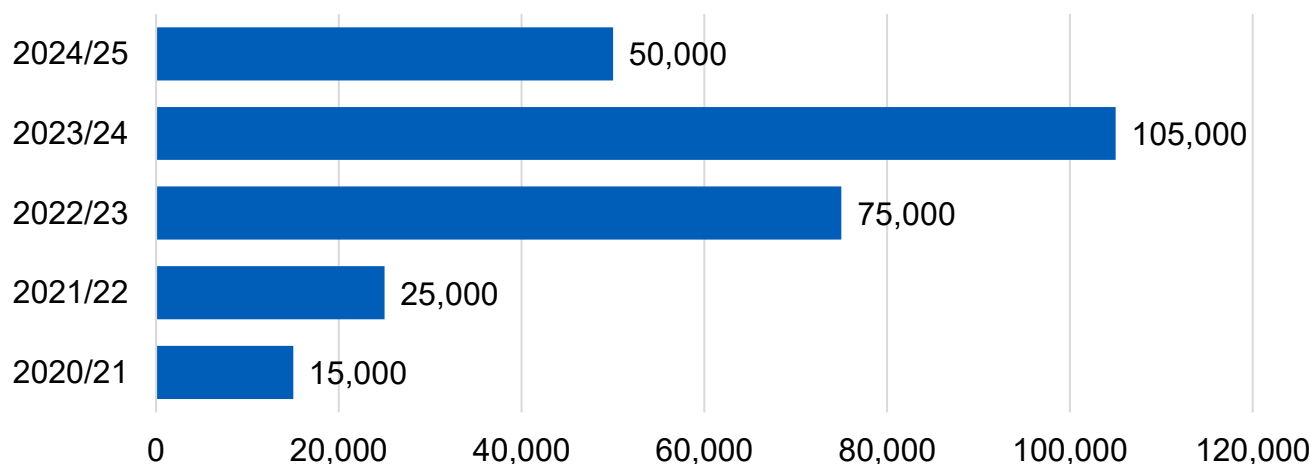
These estimates follow the same pattern as figures published by the Home Office which show 7,891 Health and Care Worker visas granted to people from outside the UK in the occupation group 'caring personal services' in 2024/25, a decrease from 84,715 in 2023/24<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)

**Chart 7. Estimated number of people starting direct care providing roles in the adult social care independent sector, having arrived in the UK during each year, 2020/21 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



Where information was recorded in the ASC-WDS, over 95% of people arriving from outside of the UK to take up direct care providing adult social care posts since 2024/25 were from non-EU countries. The most frequent countries of birth were India, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.

Table 2 below shows that the number of posts filled by people with a British nationality has decreased by around 30,000 in 2024/25 (and by 85,000 since 2021/22). The number of posts filled by people with a non-EU nationality increased by 80,000 in 2024/25 (and by 255,000 since 2021/22).

These trends demonstrate how international recruitment has played an important part in the increase in filled posts since 2021/22 and how there are still challenges with domestic recruitment with the number of British people in the workforce falling since 2021/22.

**Table 2: Number of filled posts by nationality, 2019/20 to 2024/25**

Source: Skills for Care estimates

Nationality	Filled posts					
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
British	1,185,000	1,215,000	1,190,000	1,160,000	1,160,000	1,130,000
EU	100,000	100,000	95,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Non-EU	115,000	120,000	130,000	190,000	295,000	375,000
Nationality	Percentage of filled posts					
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
British	84.6%	84.5%	84.1%	80.6%	75.0%	70.8%
EU	7.1%	7.1%	6.7%	6.2%	5.9%	5.6%
Non-EU	8.3%	8.4%	9.2%	13.2%	19.1%	23.6%



The increase in the number of non-British workers in 2024/25 (80,000) is partly driven by people arriving from outside of the UK to start roles, see Chart 7. However, it also includes non-British people who were already in the UK, prior to 2024/25, but started roles in the adult social care sector in 2024/25.

In July 2025, care workers and senior care workers are due to be removed from the Health and Care Worker visa route for new overseas recruits. Transitional arrangements will be in place until July 2028, where in-country applications (including from other visa routes) will continue to be permitted for care workers and senior care workers, provided individuals are already working in these roles in the adult social care sector<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 997, 1 July 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

# 7. Workforce projections

This section shows demand-based projections for the size of the adult social care workforce between 2024/25 and 2040. These projections should be treated as 'base case' projections as they only account for demographic and population changes over the period. They do not account for any political, economic, technological or sociological factors which may impact on the future size of the workforce. Please note that demand due to replacing leavers will be in addition to the figures shown below.

The approach to calculating workforce projections involves combining adult social care workforce estimates and population projection information from [NOMIS](#). This can be used to forecast the number of adult social care posts that may be needed to meet demand in the future.

Table 3 and Chart 8 show the results of the model. The model projects that if the adult social care workforce grows proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population, then 470,000 new posts would be required by 2040. Overall, by 2040 a total of 2.17 million adult social care posts would be needed, an increase of 27% from 2024/25. This estimate includes filled posts and vacant posts and does not account for if there is enough supply of workers to fill the posts.

**Table 3. Adult social care posts projections based on the number of people in the population aged 65 and over, 2024/25 to 2040**

Source: Skills for Care estimates

Total posts 2024/25	2030	2035	2040	% increase in posts by 2040
1,710,000	1,910,000	2,070,000	2,170,000	27%

For more detail on the methodology for calculating these workforce projections and an evaluation of its performance historically, see '[The state of the adult social care sector and workforce](#)' report.

The Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC) have also published a [report](#) which includes projections covering adult social care demand and expenditure. For further details please visit their [website](#).

# Summary

The number of filled posts continued to increase in 2024/25 (by 3.4% or 52,000 filled posts) following increases in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This increase contributed to a decrease in the number of staff vacancies from their peak of 10.5% in 2021/22 to 7.0% in 2024/25. However, the vacancy rate remains higher than most other employment sectors.

International recruitment has played an important part in this recovery by providing an additional recruitment option for employers. 230,000 people joined the adult social care workforce from outside the UK to take up direct care providing roles in the independent sector since 2022/23.

Domestic recruitment remains challenging for the sector. The number of posts filled by people with a British nationality decreased by around 30,000 in 2024/25, and by 85,000 over the previous three years.

The new immigration rules coming into place in July 2025, removing care workers and senior care workers from the Health and Care Worker visa route for new overseas recruits, will make it more challenging for the sector to continue to grow in line with demand.

Our workforce projections show an extra 470,000 people will need to be employed in the sector by 2040 if the workforce is to grow proportionally to the number of people aged 65 and over. A substantial increase in recruitment and retention of staff with a British nationality would likely be required to achieve this level of growth.

Skills for Care will continue to monitor filled posts and vacancy rate trends in the sector via our [monthly tracking](#).

# Further resources

We provide outstanding workforce intelligence which the Government, strategic bodies, employers, and individuals rely upon to help them make decisions that will improve outcomes for the people who use care services. To access our reports and visualisations, please refer to the relevant pages on our [Workforce Intelligence website](#).

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

This report provides in-depth analysis of the workforce in the adult social care sector in England. This includes further detail on the size and structure of the workforce, as well as information on workforce characteristics, trends and future projections.

To access this information, visit <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof>  
Latest version, October 2024. Updated information is due in October 2025.

## **A workforce strategy for adult social care in England**

Skills for Care has led the development of the 'Workforce strategy for adult social care in England', working in collaboration with a wide range of organisations and people with a stake in the future of the adult social care sector. It combines data from our workforce intelligence reports along with in-depth insights and experience of the sector to address the issues facing the workforce.

The strategy identifies the workforce needed over the next 15 years and sets out a plan for ensuring the sector has enough of the right people with the right skills. It will help employers and commissioners with workforce planning, support the reform agenda and complement the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

For more information and to read the strategy in full, visit: [www.ascworkforcestrategy.co.uk](http://www.ascworkforcestrategy.co.uk)

## **Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set**

The Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is a free online data collection service that covers the adult social care workforce in England. The service helps care providers run their business and manage their staff training needs. It can also provide access to funding for staff training.

The data collected is vital to the Government, the Department of Health and Social Care, local authorities and the Care Quality Commission as it allows them to plan, fund and monitor the sector.

[Learn more about the ASC-WDS account benefits.](#)



## **Skills for Care**

West Gate  
6 Grace Street  
Leeds  
LS1 2RP

T: **0113 245 1716**

E: [info@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:info@skillsforcare.org.uk)

[skillsforcare.org.uk](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)



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