

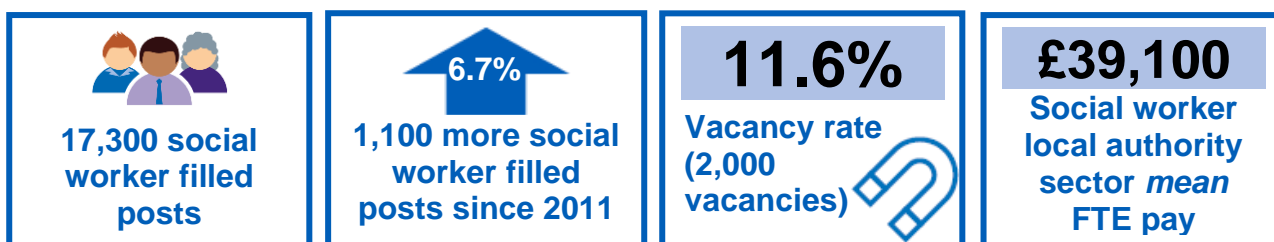
Headline social worker information

Social workers employed by local
authorities in the adult social care sector

February 2023

Summary of key findings

This report provides the key findings from the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) relating to social workers in local authority adult social service departments as at September 2022.



- The number of social workers employed by local authorities in England as at September 2022 was 17,300.
- There was an increase of 1,100 social worker filled posts since 2011 (+6.7%), whereas the total number all filled posts within local authorities decreased by 45,500 filled posts (-28.5%) over the same period. Social worker posts have generally been retained by local authorities during the period when many other posts have been outsourced to the independent sector.
- The social worker turnover rate in adult social services departments was 17.1% in 2022, equivalent to around 2,600 leavers in the previous 12 months.
- There were around 2,000 vacant social worker posts in local authorities as at September 2022, which is a rate of 11.6%.
- Social workers had an average of 12.1 sickness days in 2022. Social workers had the second highest average number of sickness days, compared to other regulated professions employed by local authorities.
- Social workers had an average of 10.4 years of experience working in adult social care and 5.6 years in their current role.
- Social workers were more ethnically diverse than the overall adult social services departments' workforce. Almost a third (29%) of social workers were identified as having a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background, compared to 18% across all job roles.
- The mean full-time equivalent salary for a social worker in local authorities was £39,100 as at September 2022.
- Between 2012 and 2022, the nominal full-time equivalent salary of social workers has increased by 19.8% from £32,600 to £39,100. However, in real terms the salary is -5.5% less than in 2012.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Social worker filled posts	6
3. Recruitment and retention	8
4. Demographics.....	11
5. Pay	13
Further resources	16

1. Introduction

This report provides the estimated number of social workers employed by local authorities in England, and information about recruitment and retention, demographics and pay rates. Information is correct as at September 2022. Data on the children's social work workforce is published by the Department for Education¹.

Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England. We work with employers, Government, and partners to ensure social care has the right people, skills, and support required to deliver the highest quality care and support, now and in the future. Our role is to respond and adapt to the emerging trends and needs within social care, using data and evidence to drive forward widescale change.

The Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is an online data collection service which gathers information about the adult social care workforce in England. This service was formerly known as the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC), which was launched in 2007. We have therefore been collecting data for over 15 years.

The ASC-WDS is the means of collection for the adult workforce data return for local authorities (Adult social services departments). Between 2012 and 2021 all local authorities in England met the criteria of a full ASC-WDS return for people working in adult social services departments. However, in 2022 all local authorities apart from Salford submitted a return.

1.1 Methodology used to estimate characteristics of the adult social care workforce in local authorities

Meeting the criteria for a full ASC-WDS return means that for each workplace the following fields must be completed: type of organisation, service provided, service user groups for whom care is provided, capacity, number of service users, number of staff, vacancies, and number of leavers in the past year.

Also, for every worker a staff record must be completed with the main job role and the employment status. And at least 90% of staff records must have the following information: gender, date of birth, ethnic group, contracted/average hours, sickness, pay and qualifications.

To ensure that the data we provide in our publications is trustworthy, the best quality and adds value to the sector, and as part of our commitment to the Code of Practice for Statistics², we use several methods to quality assure the data. Applicable data is

¹Statistics: children's social work workforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childrens-social-care-workforce>

² <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/about-us/Our-Values.aspx>

validated at the point of entry into the ASC-WDS and data from local authority employers is checked and approved by Skills for Care's workforce intelligence team.

Due to the mandatory criteria for local authorities, we have complete data for the vast majority of data fields from this part of the sector. We do have some small gaps in completion, and we use our workforce estimates methodology to fill these gaps in order to create a full picture of the adult social care local authority sector and workforce. We have confidence in the quality of these estimates; the methodologies used have been peer reviewed by universities and an independent statistician. For a detailed methodology of how these estimates were produced, please visit the Workforce Intelligence website.

1.2 Scope of this report

There were around 17,300 social workers employed by local authority adult social service departments across England as at September 2022, and an additional 2,500 in the independent sector and around 4,000 in the NHS. This report focuses on the 17,300 social workers employed by local authority adult social services departments only.

1.3 Shortage Occupation List

Under the new post-Brexit immigration rules in January 2021, social workers are listed as an occupation on the 'skilled worker route' and are on the Shortage Occupation List. Therefore, workers are still able to immigrate to the UK under the new rules providing they have a job offer and can speak English to the required standard.

2. Social worker filled posts

In 2022 there were 17,300 social worker filled posts and around 113,900 filled posts in local authority adult social service departments. The number of all filled posts decreased by -1.0% from 115,100 in 2020. Between 2012 and 2017 the overall number of filled posts decreased consistently each year, by an average of 6.2%. From 2017 this increased slightly each year to 2021, followed by a slight reduction of -1% in 2022. Overall, since 2011, the overall number of filled posts fell by 45,500 (-28.5%).

Despite these decreases, most social worker roles have been retained within local authorities. As shown in Table 1, the number of social worker filled posts in adult social service departments has increased by around 1,100 (6.7%) between 2011 and 2022.

As a result of the wider fall in filled posts in adult social services departments, the proportion of these filled posts that were social workers has increased from 11% in 2012 to 15% in 2022. Between 2012/13 and March 2022 the independent sector adult social care workforce grew by an estimated 12%, or 135,000 filled posts³. Adult social service department filled posts that have been outsourced to the independent sector have contributed to this increase.

Table 1. Social worker filled posts and all job roles in adult social service departments

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

	Social workers	% change	% of all filled posts	All filled posts	% change
2011	16,200			159,400	
2012	16,600	2.3%	11%	150,600	-5.5%
2013	16,500	-0.4%	12%	140,700	-6.6%
2014	15,700	-5.1%	12%	130,100	-7.5%
2015	16,100	2.9%	13%	120,100	-7.7%
2016	16,100	-0.2%	14%	112,800	-6.1%
2017	16,200	0.9%	15%	109,200	-3.2%
2018	17,000	4.7%	15%	112,100	2.7%
2019	17,400	2.5%	15%	113,300	1.0%
2020	17,500	0.1%	15%	114,100	0.7%
2021	17,300	-1.0%	15%	115,100	0.8%
2022	17,300	0.0%	15%	113,900	-1.0%
Since 2011	1,100	6.7%		-45,500	-28.5%

The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) social worker filled posts was estimated at 15,600. These estimates were created by applying contracted hours and additional

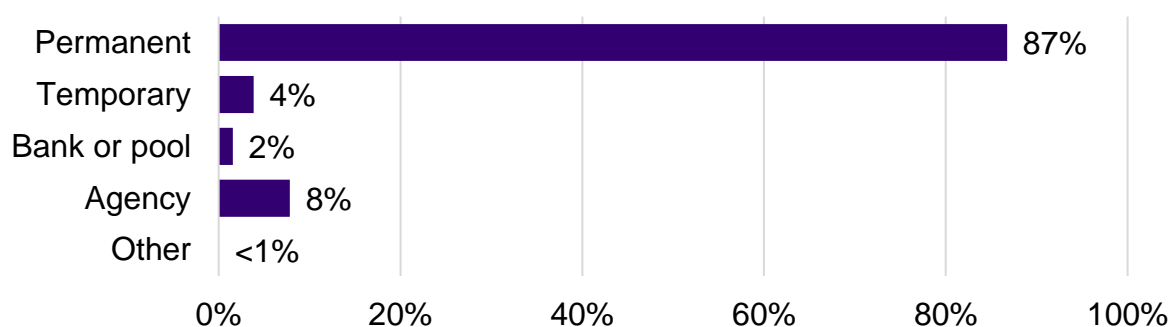
³ The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof

hours data to estimates of the total number of social worker filled posts. 37 hours per week has been classed as 'full-time'. The number of people working as social workers was estimated at 15,400.

The majority of social workers (87%) were permanently employed. Local authorities reported that 8% of the social worker workforce were agency workers, this was approximately 1,400 people. Social workers were the most likely to be agency workers across all the job roles reported in the 'State of the adult social care sector and workforce' report in 2021.⁴

Chart 1. Estimated employment status of social workers in the local authority sector

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

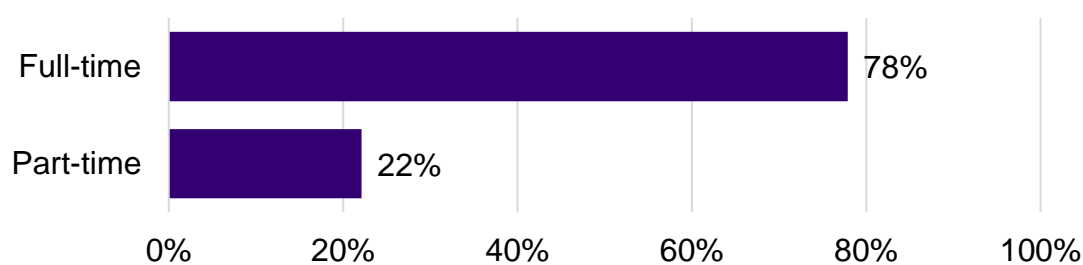


It should be noted that when the ASC-WDS is completed, it reflects a snapshot in time. Therefore, these estimates should be interpreted as an indication of the average number of the above types of worker being utilised at any one time. The total number of workers used throughout the year that aren't directly employed will be higher. For example, an establishment may have used several agency staff throughout the year, but none may be in post on the date that the organisation completed their ASC-WDS data.

Almost four fifths of social workers (78%) were employed on a full-time contact. This breakdown was similar to that of other regulated professionals in the sector.⁶

Chart 2. Estimated fill/part-time status of social workers in the local authority sector

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022



⁴ www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof

3. Recruitment and retention

3.1. Turnover and vacancy rates

The social worker turnover rate in adult social services departments was 17.1% in 2022, equivalent to around 2,600 leavers in the previous 12 months. It should be noted that the turnover rate is generally much lower in the independent sector which stood at 8.3% during the same period.

Turnover rates increased year on year from 2012 to 2016, before falling and then plateauing between 2018 and 2020. Between 2021 and 2022 turnover rates have increased from 15.0% to 17.1%.

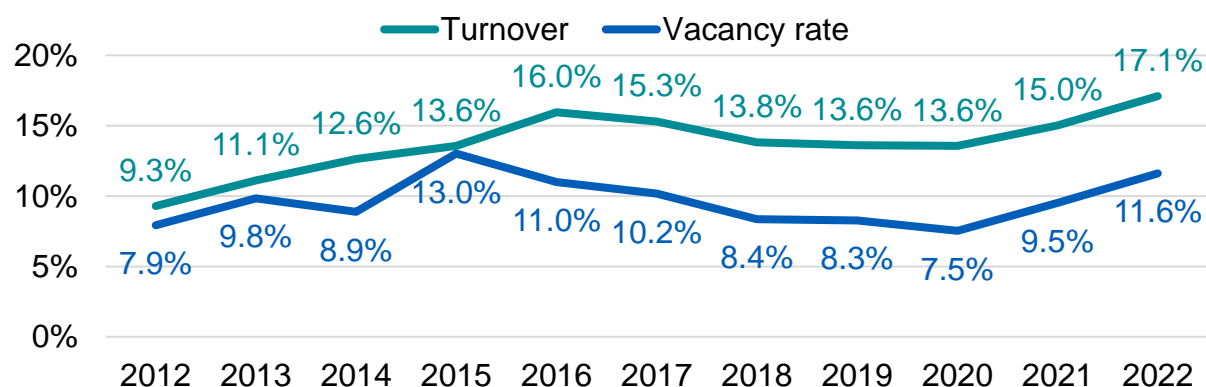
There were around 2,000 vacant social worker posts in local authorities as at September 2022, a rate of 11.6%. Vacancy rates stood at 13.0% in 2015 and had fallen year on year to a low of 7.5% in 2020. In 2021 they increased to 9.5% and have continued to increase since.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we've been monitoring the change in vacancy rates as employers provide updated information. For the most up-to-date information about all job roles, please see our vacancy information monthly tracker.⁵

As explained in section 1.3, under the new post-Brexit immigration rules in January 2021 social workers are listed occupations on the 'skilled worker route' and are on the Shortage Occupation List. Therefore, workers are still able to immigrate to the UK under the new rules providing they have a job offer and can speak English to the required standard.

Chart 3. Social worker turnover and vacancy rate trends in adult social service departments

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022



⁵ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/Monthly-tracking/Monthly-tracking.aspx>

3.2. Sickness

Supporting the health and wellbeing of staff can have a positive impact on their performance, most especially when this is aligned with the culture of the organisation. Workplace culture is defined as the character and personality of an organisation. Having a positive workplace culture has been found to be vital in the delivery of higher quality care and support. We've launched the 'Culture for care' toolkit to guide employers towards developing a positive workplace culture⁶ and a workforce wellbeing resource finder all social care workers and employers.⁷

We understand that the daily stress of care work can contribute to absence through sickness; it's crucial that employers support their staff to become resilient, help them to cope better under pressure, and to protect them from mental and physical ill-health. The 'Greater resilience, better care'⁸ resource has been developed to help managers to approach the wellbeing of their staff positively, and to offer practical ideas on how they're able to improve the working environment for their staff.

Social workers had an average of 12.1 sickness days in 2022, which equates to around 187,00 working days lost. Chart 4 shows that the average sickness days has varied little between 2012 and 2021 but increased sharply in 2022.

Chart 4: Average number of sickness days in the previous 12 months for social workers

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

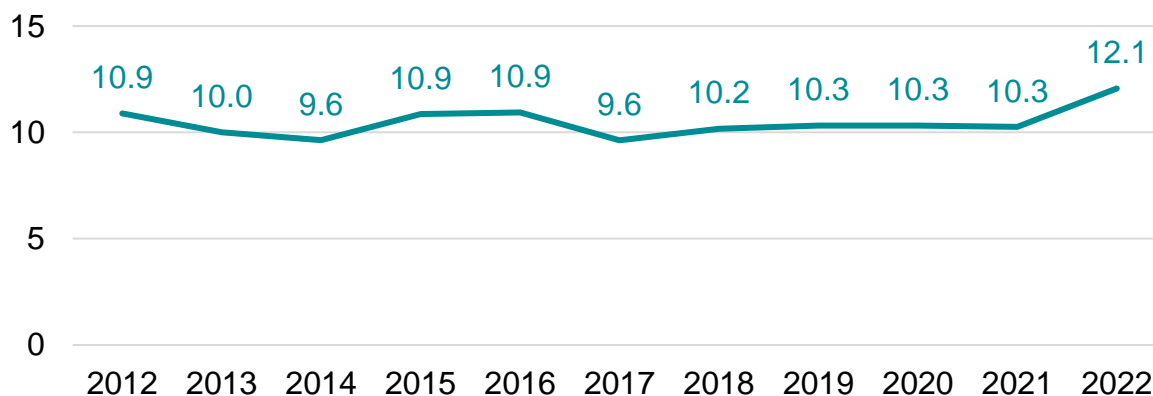
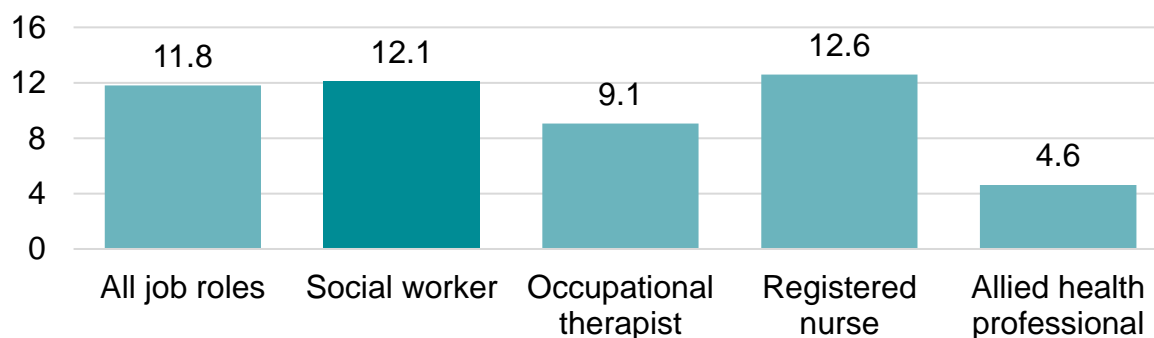


Chart 5 below shows that social workers had the highest average number of sickness days (12.1) compared to other regulated professions employed by local authorities. Sickness is not universally high. Around 40% of social workers didn't have any sickness days in the year leading up to September 2022. In September 2021 the figure was 52%.

⁶ www.skillsforcare.org.uk/culture

⁷ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Managing-people/Wellbeing/Workforce-wellbeing-finder/Wellbeing-resource-finder.aspx>

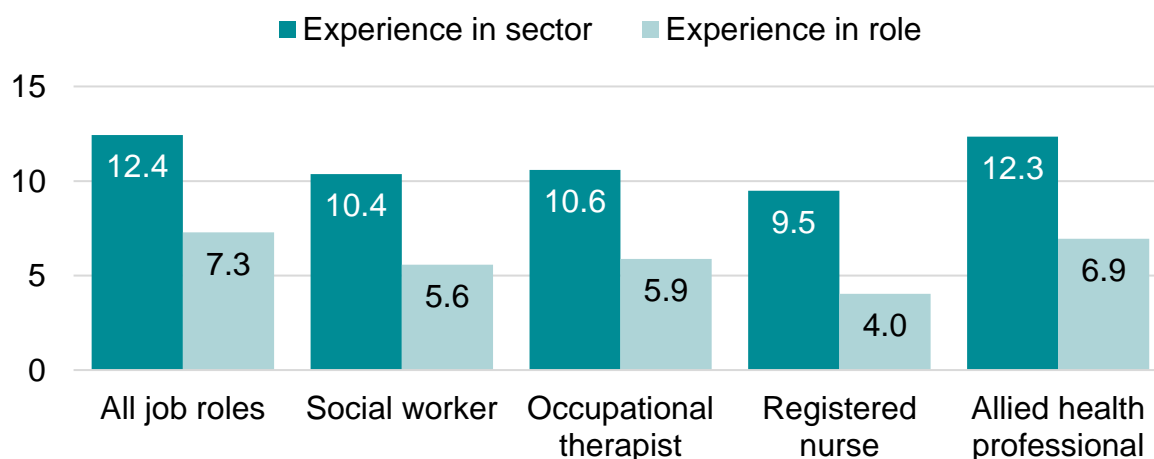
⁸ www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resilience

Chart 5: Average number of sickness days in adult social service departments*Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022*

3.3. Experience

Social workers had an average of 10.4 years of experience working in adult social care. This was higher than registered nurses (9.5 years) but similar to occupational therapists (10.6 years) and lower than allied health professionals (12.3 years).

The average length of time a social worker has been in their current role was 5.6 years, a shorter duration than in the sector, which demonstrates that social workers are moving between posts within the adult social care sector.

Chart 6: Experience in sector and role in adult social services departments, by job role*Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022*

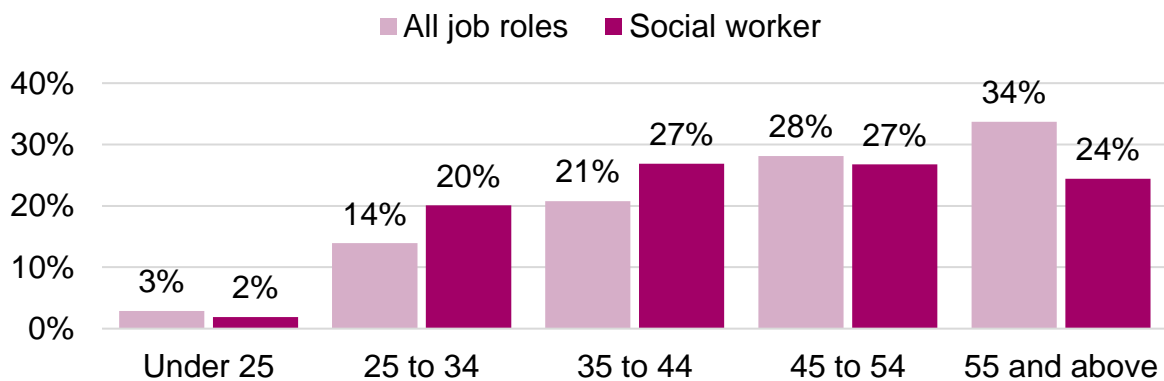
4. Demographics

The gender breakdown of social workers was the same as the rest of the overall adult social services departments' workforce, 82% female and 18% male.

Other demographic information of social workers differed from the overall adult social services departments' workforce. Chart 7 shows that social workers were younger on average with around a fifth (20%) of social workers aged between 25 and 34 years compared to 14% of all people in adult social service department posts. Social workers had an average age of 45 years in 2022, and this has shown very little change since 2012.

Chart 7: Age bands of social workers in adult social service departments

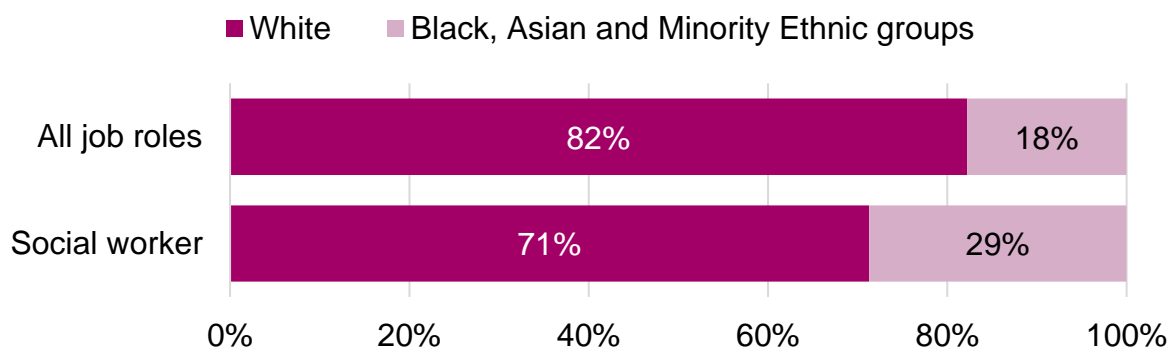
Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022



Social workers were more ethnically diverse than the overall adult social services departments' workforce. Chart 8 shows that 29% of social workers were identified as having a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background, compared to 18% across all job roles.

Chart 8: Ethnicity of social workers in adult social services departments

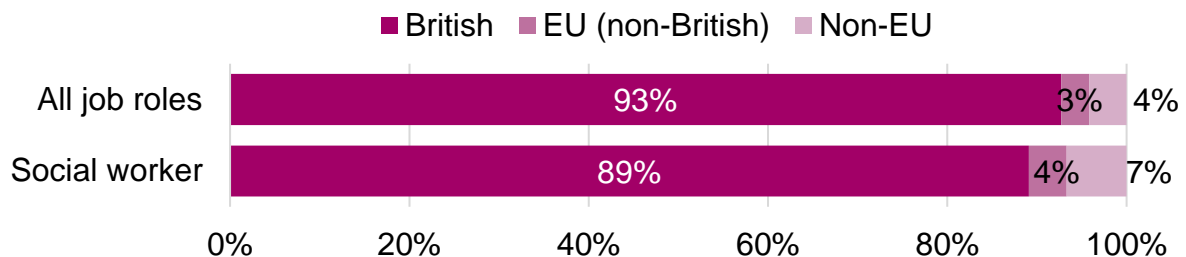
Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022



Around 89% of social workers in local authorities had a British nationality, 4% had an EU nationality (equivalent to around 700 filled posts) and 7% had a non-EU nationality (equivalent to around 1,200 filled posts).

Chart 9: Nationality of social workers in adult social services departments

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

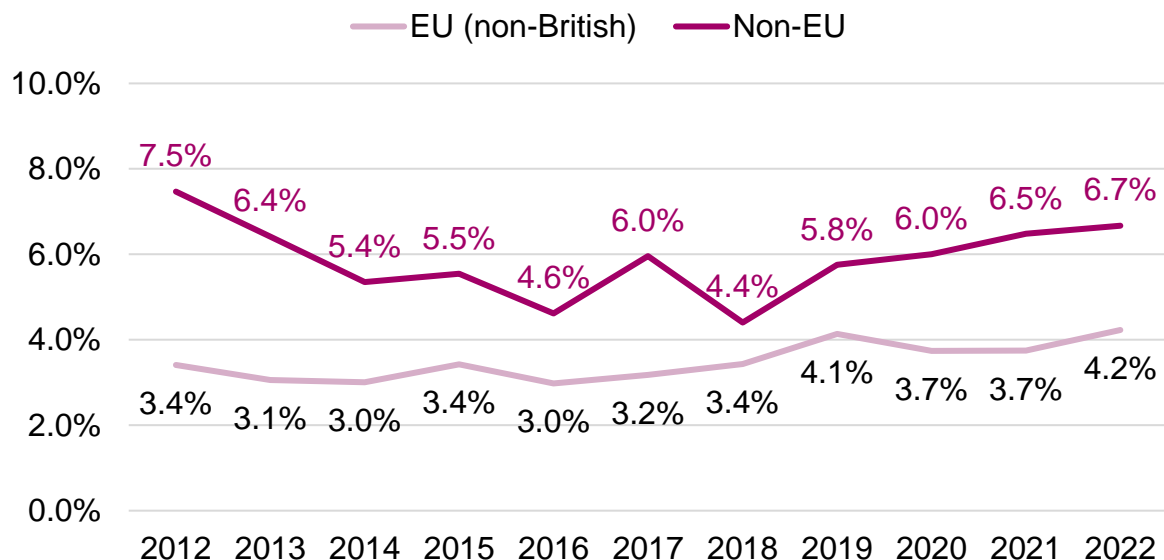


The proportion of social worker filled posts held by people with an EU nationality showed little change between 2012 and 2022. In nominal terms, the number of social workers posts held by people with an EU nationality has increased by around 150 (29%) since 2012. In contrast, the proportion with a non-EU nationality has decreased by around 100 (-7%) over the same period.

Please see section 1.3 for more information about social workers on the Shortage occupation list and rules post-Brexit.

Chart 10: Nationality trend of social workers in adult social services departments

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

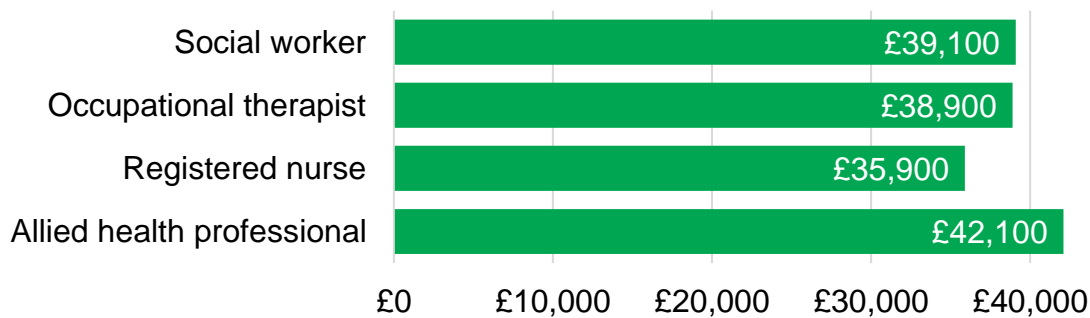


5. Pay

The mean full-time equivalent salary for a social worker in local authorities was £39,100 as at September 2022. This was similar to occupational therapists (£38,900), but lower than allied health professionals at (£42,100) and higher than registered nurses at (£35,900).

Chart 11: Mean full-time equivalent pay of regulated professional roles in adult social services departments

Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022

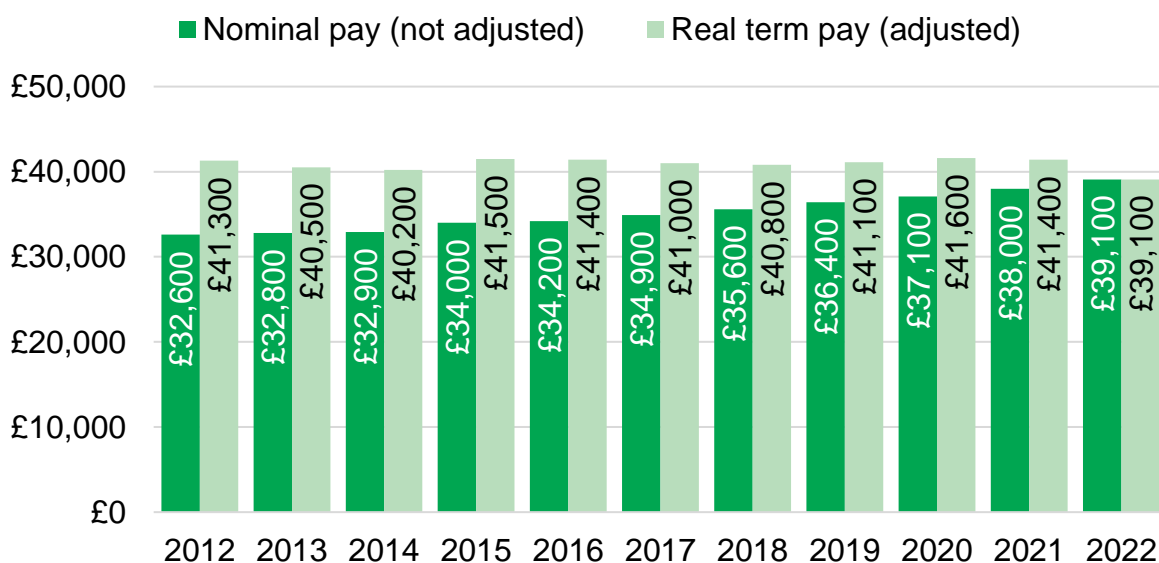


The chart below shows the mean salary trend of social workers in both nominal and real terms. 'Real term' means that the pay rate has been adjusted to take inflation into account and has been calculated using the Consumers Price Index (CPI), the official measure of inflation of consumer prices in the UK, as at September 2022. Therefore, this considers changes in the cost of living over time.

Between 2012 and 2022, the nominal full-time equivalent salary of social workers has increased by 19.8% from £32,600 to £39,100. However, in real terms the salary is less than in 2012.

Chart 12: Average FTE salary of social workers between 2012 and 2022

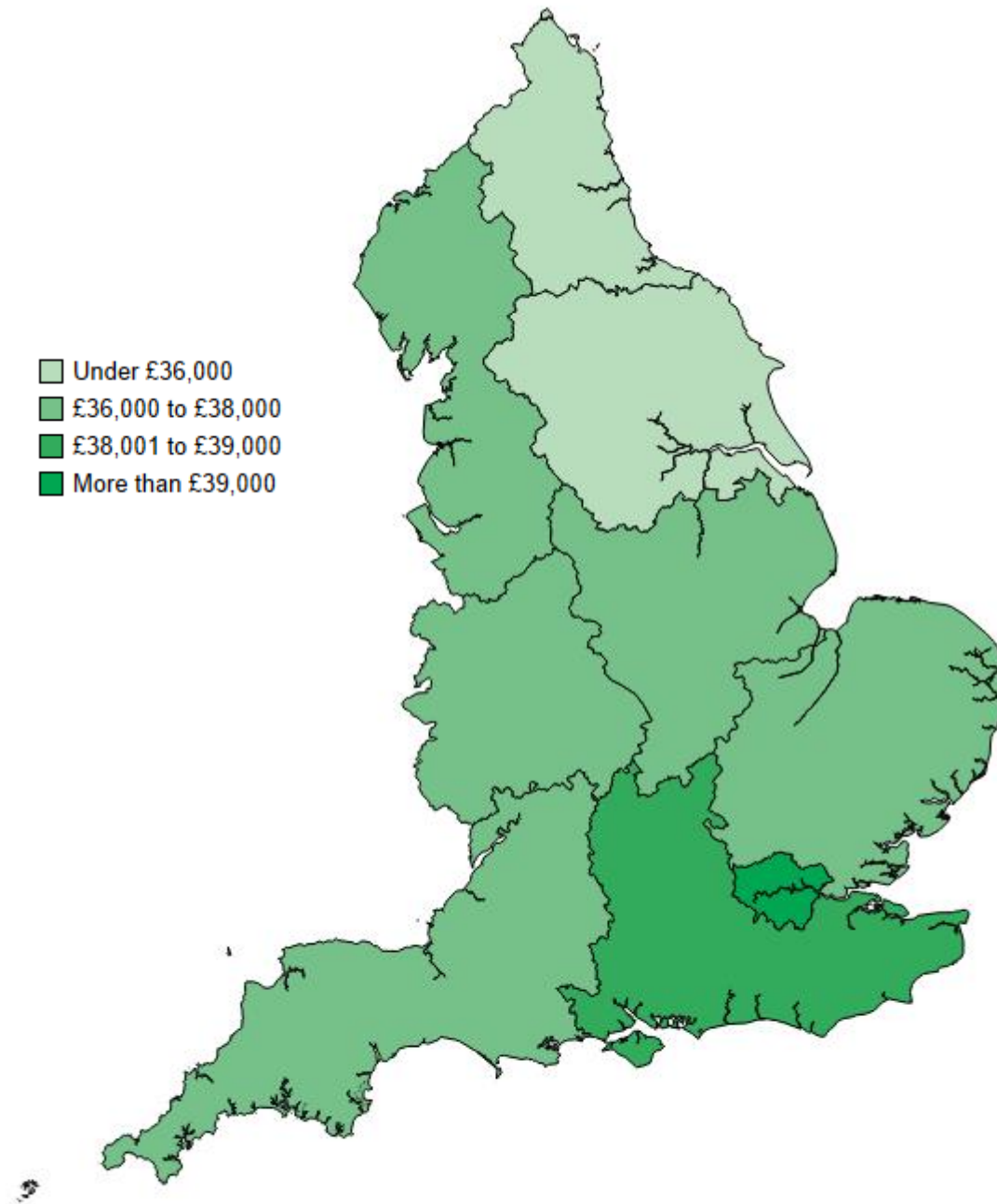
Source: Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022



The map below shows that social workers in London had the highest mean salary at £47,100, which was 20.5% higher than the mean across England. Outside of London, social worker salaries ranged from £40,300 in the South East, to £36,000 in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Map 1. Mean FTE salary of social workers by region

Source, *Skills for Care workforce estimates 2022*



Further resources

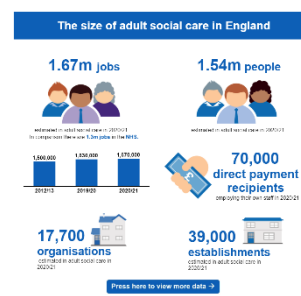
We provide outstanding workforce intelligence which the Government, strategic bodies, employers, and individuals rely upon to help them make decisions that will improve outcomes for the people who use care services. The ASC Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is recognised as the leading source of workforce 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 data visualisation 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 webpage, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/sizeandstructure.

Latest version, July 2022. Updated information is due in July 2023.



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



This report and data visualisation provides comprehensive workforce characteristics about the 1.62 million filled posts working in adult social care in England. It includes information on employment, recruitment and retention, workforce demographics, pay, and qualifications and skills, as well as workforce forecasts. Data science is also used to look at factors affecting turnover rates and CQC ratings. To access this report please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof

Latest version, October 2022. Updated information is due in mid-October 2023.

Regional reports

These nine regional reports and data visualisations provide an annual overview of adult social care services and the workforce in each region. To access these, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/regionalreports.

Latest version, October 2022. Updated information is due in mid-October 2023.



Local area information

There are five pages of local area information:

- 'My local area' page is a detailed interactive visualisation showing local areas in England one at a time, and summary reports for each area.

- Local area comparison page, where you'll find the local authority comparison interactive visualisation which allows you to compare two or more local areas in England.
- 'My ICS area', showing the latest information from ASC-WDS split into Integrated Care System (ICS) areas.
- ICS comparison page, where you'll find the ICS comparison interactive visualisation which allows you to compare two or more ICS areas in England.
- My ICS area (MH and LD&A) which shows the latest information from the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) for the mental health and learning disability and/or autism workforces split by ICS area.

To access these data visualisations and reports, please visit

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/localareainformation

Latest version, October 2022. Updated information is due in October 2023.

Key topic areas

The Workforce Intelligence website includes information on the following popular topic areas. Each topic includes a summary of the workforce information available, and signposts to the latest publications and relevant resources. Many of the topic areas include an interactive visualisation:

- Monthly tracking
- Learning disability and/or autism workforce
- Apprenticeships
- Pay rates
- Personal assistants
- Nurses in social care
- Recruitment and retention
- Registered managers
- Workforce nationality.

To access these topics, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/topics.

Commission our services

Our analysis team provides an external analysis service which can produce a range of in-depth reports, tailored to your specific requirements.

How we can help you

We use our expertise and sector knowledge to turn the ASC-WDS data into meaningful information and insight.

You can commission us to help you:

- Partner with us to draw on our adult social care data and expertise to win bids and tenders
- Provide a detailed analysis of a geographic area, including analysis below local authority level
- Draw on our data science capabilities - discover how key outcomes (such as CQC scores, turnover rates and vacancy rates) can be improved
- Provide trends back to 2012/13 and forecasts for how the workforce could look in the future
- Request a feed of data to enhance or improve a product or service.

Why we're the right people to talk to

We're the experts because:

- the data we collect in the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) offers an unrivalled overview of the adult social care workforce in England
- we've more than 15 years of experience in analysing and interpreting social care data - it's what we do
- our analysts have worked with leading universities and data scientists to create our workforce models.

Our values

Skills for Care is guided by core values. Throughout everything we do, we're inclusive, motivated, passionate, ambitious, collaborative and trustworthy. For more information about the Skills for Care strategy, our vision, mission, values and plan to achieve our mission, please visit strategy.skillsforcare.org.uk.

As a Workforce Intelligence team, we,

- help people to understand what's already available without commissioning our services and what options are available
- aren't selling the data, we're selling our analysis and sector expertise
- carry out bespoke work in particular areas that we can't cover in general outputs
- have a 'good for the sector' aim on all projects we work on
- channel any money we earn straight back into the sector.

The Skills for Care Workforce Intelligence team, in January 2022, were approved to join the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA) list for voluntary



Office for
Statistics Regulation

commitment to the Code of Practice for Statistics. This approval helps us evidence the quality, trustworthiness and value of our analysis. We are only the fifth non-public sector organisation to join the list. For more information please visit our website.⁹

Many of our analysts are certified statisticians, meaning we work to the standard of the 'five safes'. We make it a priority to keep these front-of-mind when conducting research and analysis, or storing and sharing any research or data. We always make sure that our research and outputs are appropriate and trustworthy, and that there's no risk of misuse or confidentially breach. When creating outputs, we always adhere to statistical disclosure controls.

Keeping informed



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 @ASCWDS or visit

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/contactWI.

⁹ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/about-us/Our-Values.aspx>



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