

A black and white photograph of a young man and an elderly woman walking together in a hallway. The man is on the left, wearing a plaid shirt and a lanyard, with his arm around the woman's shoulder. The woman is on the right, wearing a cable-knit cardigan and dark trousers, smiling broadly. The hallway has white walls and recessed ceiling lights.

A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes

2024/25

A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, 2024/25

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 wide scale change.

The information within this summary has been produced by Skills for Care using the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS). We use the data collected by the ASC-WDS to create workforce models that, in turn, allow for estimates of the whole adult social care workforce and its characteristics to be produced. Data will not appear or will be denoted by an asterisk (*) when a figure has been suppressed. Data may be suppressed due to low coverage or data quality.

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%.

The independent sector information in this report was collected between April 2024 and March 2025, and local authority information dates from September 2024.

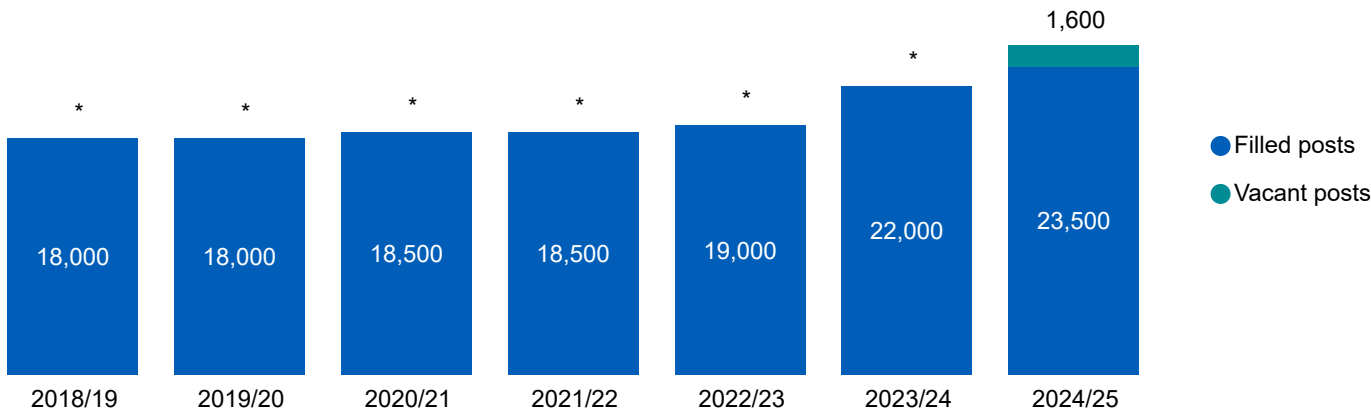
Size and Structure

In 2024/25, the adult social care sector in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes had **665** CQC locations and an estimated **27,000** total posts, an increase of 5.7 % since 2023/24. Of these posts, **26,000** were currently filled by a person, called 'filled posts', an increase of 7.2 % since 2023/24, and **1,600** vacant posts (vacancies) that employers were actively seeking to recruit somebody into (a change of -9.0 % since 2023/24).

In the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes area, there were an estimated **26,000** filled posts. There were **2,700** filled posts in local authorities, **21,000** in the independent sector and **1,900** filled posts working for direct payment recipients.

From this point, the figures in this report refer to the **23,500** filled posts in local authorities and the independent sector in the area. Filled posts for those working for direct payment recipients are not included.

Number of posts from 2018/19 to 2024/25 (local authority and independent sectors only)

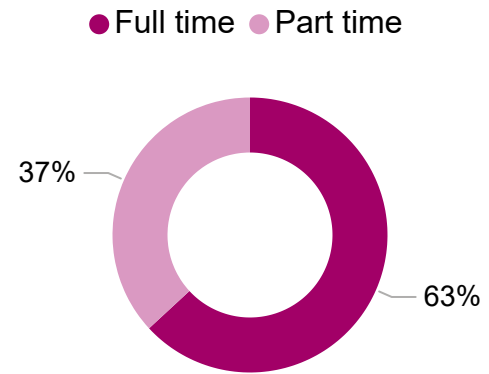


Employment overview

The majority (**88%**) of the workforce in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes were employed on permanent contracts. Over half of the workforce (**63 %**) usually worked full-time hours and **37 %** were part-time.

Around **25 %** (or **5,900** filled posts) of the workforce were recorded as being employed on a zero-hours contract. In Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes the full-time equivalent (FTE) ratio was **0.81**, which was higher than the England average of **0.80**.

Working time status

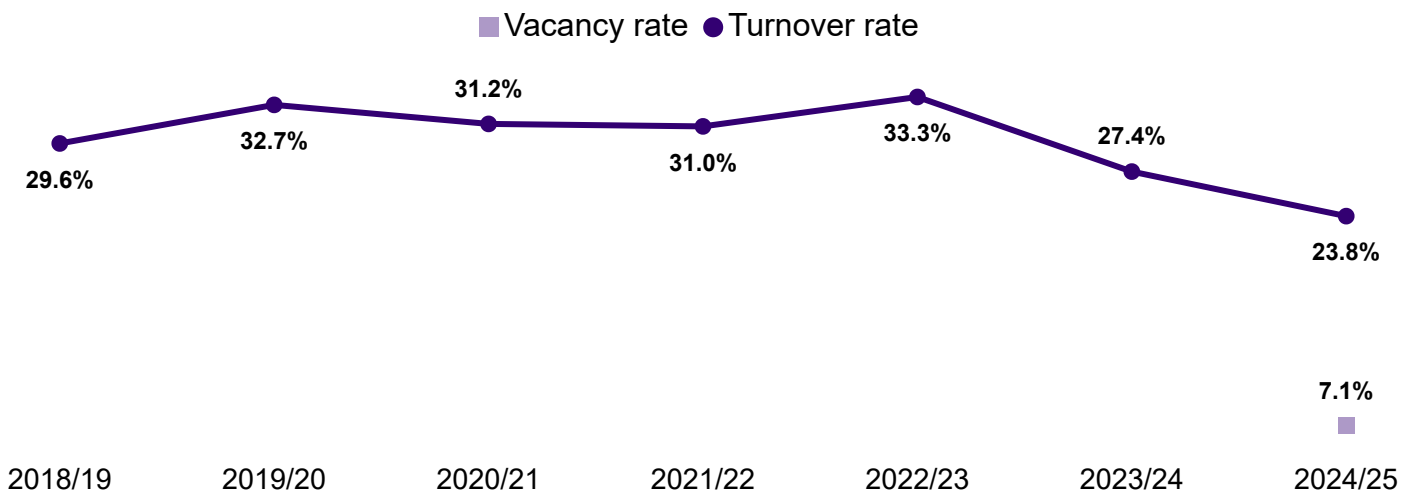


Recruitment and retention

The staff turnover rate in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes was **23.8 %**. Not all turnover resulted in workers leaving the sector, since **51 %** of starters were recruited from within the adult social care sector. Therefore although employers need to recruit to these posts, the sector retains their skills and experiences.

In Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, the vacancy rate was **7.1 %**, equivalent to **1,600** vacant posts.

Turnover and vacancy rate trends



The starters rate in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes between 2023/24 and 2024/25 changed by **-7.5%** from **34.2 %** to **26.7 %**.

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes had an estimated sickness rate of **4.1** days per employee. This was **0.7** days lower than the England rate of **4.8** sickness days.

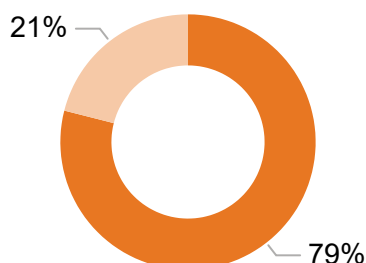
Adult social care has an experienced 'core' of workers. Workers in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes had an average of **8.7** years of experience in the sector and **70 %** of the workforce had been working in the sector for at least 3 years.

For more information about changes in the workforce since March 2025 please see our [trackers](#) on the Workforce Intelligence website.

Demographics

79 % of workers in the adult social care identified as female in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, compared to **51%** of the economically active population in England (Census, 2021). Female workers were less likely to be managers, especially senior management roles (**70 %**), compared to direct care providing roles (**78 %**).

Gender



- Female
- Male

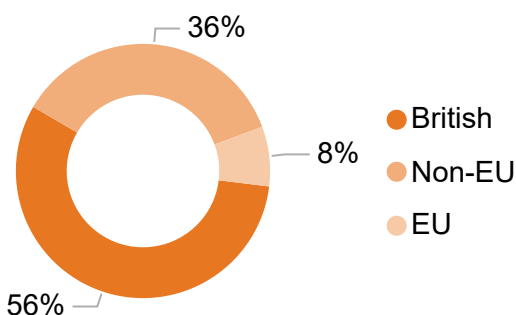
For further information about this topic, including further detail of why 'other' gender is collected but not yet included in analysis, click to read the [Workforce Demographics](#) chapter from 'The State of adult social care sector and workforce in England' report in full.



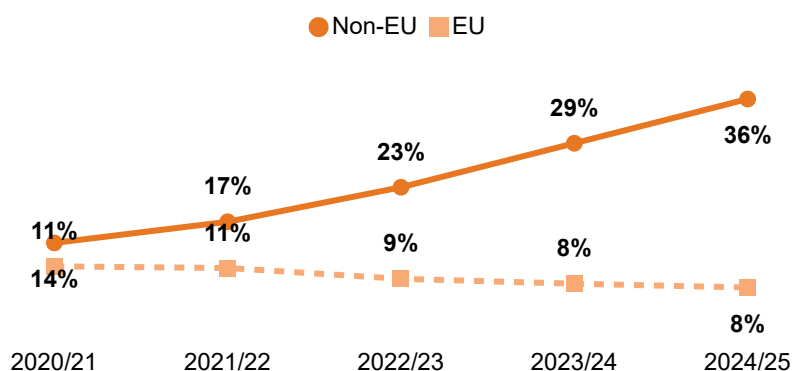
The average age of the adult social care workforce in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes was **43.9**. Around **24 %** of adult social care workers were aged 55 and over, compared to 21% of the economically active population (Census, 2021). From a workforce planning perspective, these workers may retire within the next ten years.

In Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, around **56 %** of the adult social care workforce had a British nationality, **36 %** had a non-EU nationality, and **8 %** had an EU nationality.

Nationality (current year)



Nationality trend



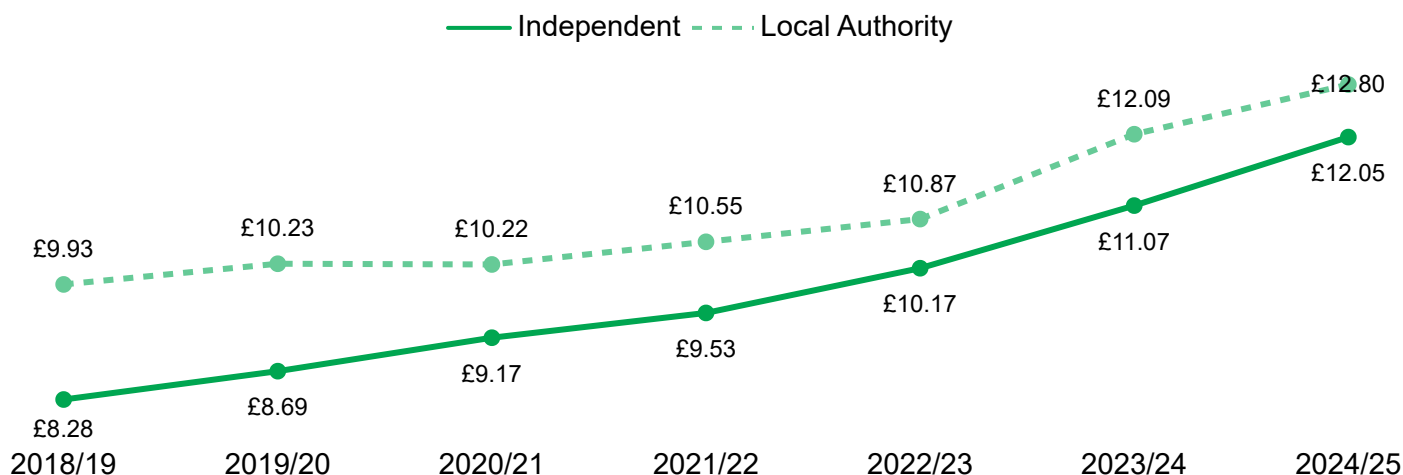
A total of **44 %** of the adult social care workforce in the region were people of a White ethnicity. People of an Asian or Asian British ethnicity made up **15 %** of the workforce. People of a Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnicity made up **38 %** of the workforce.

Registered nurses remained one of the most ethnically diverse job roles, where **64 %** of workers were of Black, Asian or minority ethnicities. Senior managers and occupational therapists were among the least ethnically diverse job roles (both reported **26 %** and **33 %** respectively of people were of Black, Asian or minority ethnicities).

Pay

The National Living Wage (NLW) of **£11.44** per hour at the time the data was collected. In April 2025, after the data in this report was analysed, the National Living Wage had increased to **£12.21**.

Care worker and support worker average pay by sector



Care worker and support worker average pay by sector



Pay varies by sector as shown in the chart. Local authority pay is generally higher than independent sector pay. Average care worker and support worker pay in the independent sector was **£12.05**, which was **-£0.11** lower than the average for England.

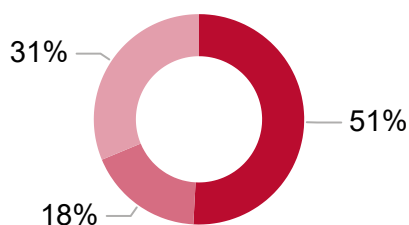
Qualifications and training

Skills for Care believe that everyone working in adult social care should have access to learning and development so they can carry out their roles effectively and provide high-quality care and support.

In Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, around **69 %** of direct care-providing staff had engaged (achieved, partially completed, or were working towards) with the Care Certificate standards.

Direct care workers' Care Certificate standards status

● Complete ● In progress/partially complete ● Not started

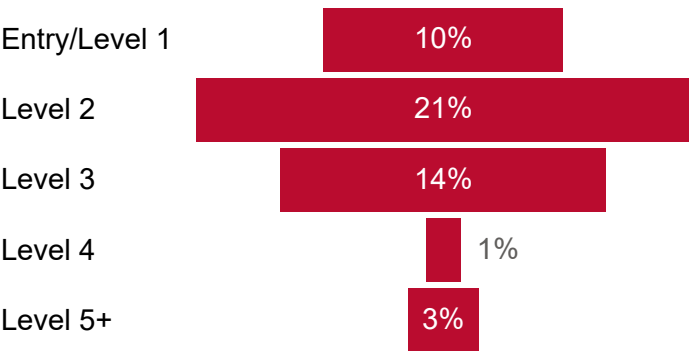
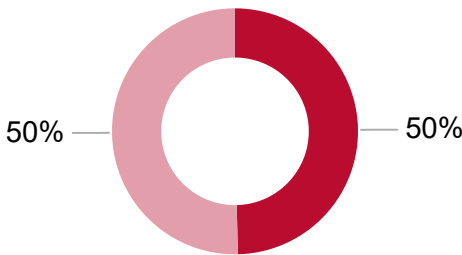


For further information about the Care Certificate standards, please visit [our website](#).

Around **50 %** of direct care-providing staff held a relevant adult social care qualification in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. This was higher than the England average of **46 %**.

Direct care workers' highest social care (SC) qualification held

● Has relevant SC qual ● No relevant SC qual



Workforce projections

If the adult social care workforce grows proportionally to the number of people aged 65 and over in the population, the number of total posts needs to **increase by 28 %** (7,600 additional posts). This would take the total number of posts in 2040 to around **35,000**.

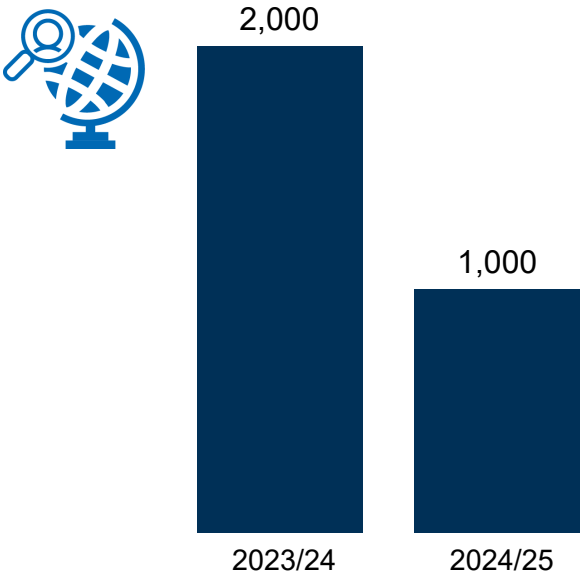
Current and projected required total posts



International recruitment

The chart shows data for direct care providing roles in the **independent sector** in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. International recruitment increased since 2022/23, mostly due to care workers being added to the Shortage Occupation List in February 2022. In April 2024, this was replaced by the Immigration Salary List, with the same adult social care sector job roles eligible occupations on the skilled worker route.

Number of people recruited internationally



International recruitment increased in 2023/24, however this fell significantly in 2024/25.

Across England in the first quarter of 2025/26, **7,500** workers were recruited internationally compared with **12,000** workers recruited internationally per quarter in 2024/25.

In July 2025, care workers and senior care workers were removed from the Health and Care Worker visa route for new overseas recruits. However, international recruitment via routes other than this visa will still be possible.

For more information about quarterly international recruitment trends, please see our [international recruitment tracker](#) on the Workforce Intelligence website.

Factors affecting turnover

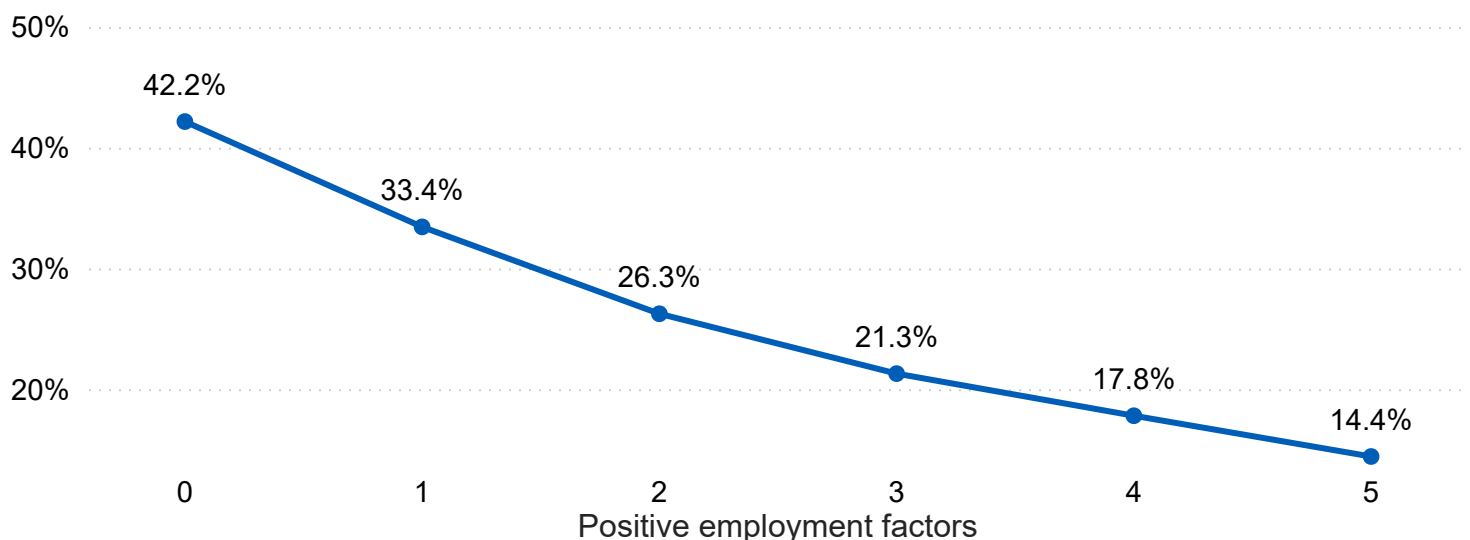
Using ASC-WDS information, we assessed which variables influenced adult social care workers' propensity to leave their posts. From this, key variables were identified that could be compared to turnover rates. The information below shows the relationship between these key variables and turnover between March 2024 and March 2025.

Care workers in a role with several positive employment factors were more likely to remain in post than care workers in a post that did not. Five of the variables which affect turnover were analysed to observe their combined effect.

These variables were:

- Pay up to 30% below the local authority average
- Not being on a zero-hours contract
- Receiving training
- Having a qualification relevant to social care
- Working full-time

Care worker turnover rate by number of positive employment factors in England



For more information please see Chapter 9 of 'The State of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2025' available at: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Stateof

Further Resources

National level data

The state of the adult social care sector and workforce data visualisation and report can be found on our website. This shows you information about the adult social care sector at a national level.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/data-and-publications

Commission our services

Beyond the wealth of information already available publicly on our website you can commission the services of the Workforce Intelligence team to produce bespoke reports and analysis for your organisation or area: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Commission-our-services

For more information please email analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk