

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

2024

Executive Summary

2024

StateOfReport

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Introduction

This executive summary accompanies the '[The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2024](#)' report. The following pages provide key findings from each chapter with a link to the full chapter at the bottom of each page. Please follow these links for more information about each of the key findings, along with other extended analysis.

Skills for Care is the leading source of adult social care workforce intelligence

Our expertise comes from the workforce intelligence that we collect in the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) and from our experience of analysing and interpreting social care data. We also work with our network of locality managers based throughout England, who talk with, and learn from, adult social care employers. This workforce intelligence expertise is at the centre of everything we do at Skills for Care. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

About the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set

The ASC-WDS is an online data collection service that covers 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. 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 18 years.

The independent sector information in this report was collected between April 2023 and March 2024, and local authority information dates from September 2023. As at March 2024 over half of the CQC-regulated workforce were recorded in the ASC-WDS (53%). This coverage varied by care sector, services, job role and geographical area. Additional information about direct payment recipients employing personal assistants was collected in Spring 2024. The methodology used to estimate the size and characteristics of the whole workforce can be found on our [Methodology webpage](#).

Terminology used in this report

Adult social care, and the terminology used to describe it, continues to change. We have created a [glossary of terms](#) to maintain consistency and comparability with previous reports.

A note on international recruitment

Over the past two years international recruitment has contributed to the growth in the number of filled posts in adult social care, with turnover and vacancy rates decreasing. Our analysis shows that people recruited internationally have different demographics and employment characteristics to the rest of the workforce. For example, they are more likely to be male, they are typically younger and are less likely to be on a zero-hours contract. As such, many of the trends presented here are influenced by the level of international recruitment seen over the period.

1. Size and structure

Understanding the size and structure of adult social care, in terms of employers and filled posts, is fundamental to understanding the sector. It allows us to evaluate the impact of current policies and external influences, and guides workforce planning for the future.

18,500

organisations in
adult social care

40,000

establishments in
adult social care

1.84m

total posts (filled
and vacant posts)

1.59m

people working in
adult social care

Size of the adult social care workforce

- An estimated 18,500 organisations were involved in providing or organising adult social care in England. Those organisations delivered services in an estimated 40,000 establishments.
- There were 28,900 CQC-regulated establishments, an increase of 1,100 from 2022/23.
- The total number of posts (filled and vacant posts) in adult social care in England in 2023/24 stood at 1.84 million. This was an increase of 2.6% (47,000 posts) from 2022/23.
- As at 2023/24, there were 1.705 million filled posts in adult social care. This was the highest number of filled posts since Skills for Care records began and an increase of around 4% (70,000 filled posts) from 2022/23.
- There were 131,000 vacant posts, a decrease of 22,000 (14.6%) from the previous year.
- The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) filled posts was estimated at 1.27 million.
- The number of people working in adult social care was estimated at 1.59 million.
- The total wage bill for adult social care in England was £27.9 billion, an increase of 13.5% from 2022/23. The sector was estimated to contribute £68.1 billion gross value added (GVA) to the economy in England (up 13.2% from 2022/23).

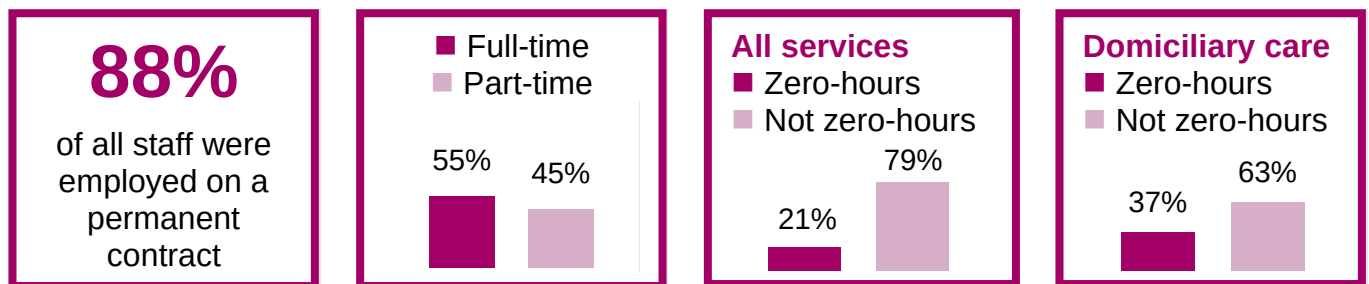
Structure of the adult social care workforce

- In terms of employer type, 79.1% of the workforce were employed in the independent sector (1.350 million filled posts), 6.9% were employed by local authorities (117,400 filled posts) and 7.2% of the workforce (123,000 filled posts) were personal assistants, directly employed by individuals in receipt direct payments from their local authority. Adult social care related posts in the NHS made up 6.8% (117,000 filled posts) of the workforce.
- In terms of service types, domiciliary care services accounted for the largest proportion of filled posts in 2023/24 (43% or 740,000 filled posts), followed by residential services (41% or 700,000 filled posts).
- Care worker was the most common job role in the adult social care sector workforce in 2023/24. There were 905,000 care worker filled posts, 53% of the overall workforce.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

2. Employment overview

Understanding employment information is useful because it provides insight into the employment practices used in the adult social care sector. These factors play a part in the sector's ability to recruit and retain staff.



Employment status

- The majority (88%) of the adult social care workforce in 2023/24 were employed on permanent contracts (1.4 million filled posts).
- Employment status varied by job role, with registered managers and senior care workers more likely to be employed on permanent contracts (98% and 95% respectively).
- 'Indirectly employed' staff include those on bank, pool, agency and/or other contract types. Employers showed a higher reliance on indirectly employed registered nurses (15%), as well as support and outreach workers (13%), care workers and social workers (both 12%), compared to other job roles.

Full-time / part-time status

- In 2023/24, 55% of the workforce worked full-time hours (875,000 filled posts) and 45% worked part-time (710,000 filled posts).
- 94% of registered managers worked full-time (24,500 filled posts), as did a large proportion of senior managers (88% or 12,000 filled posts).
- Personal assistants had the largest proportion of part-time staff (85% or 104,000 filled posts).

Zero-hours contracts

- Around a fifth of the overall workforce (21%) in 2023/24 were employed on a zero-hours contract (340,000 filled posts).
- The percentage of the independent and local authority sector workers employed on a zero-hours contract has decreased slightly on a year-to-year basis from its peak of 25% in 2020/2021, to 22% in 2023/24.
- Just over a third (37%) of the domiciliary care workforce were employed on a zero-hours contract (226,000 filled posts). This proportion was higher for care workers in domiciliary care (43% or 203,000 filled posts).

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

3. Recruitment and retention

The high-quality workforce intelligence that we collect and analyse is key to understanding recruitment and retention issues. It helps to keep recruitment and retention at the forefront of social care debates, providing statistical, rather than just anecdotal, evidence. It's also been used to develop [resources to support recruitment](#) within the sector.

24.2%

turnover rate
in the last
12 months

57%

of recruitment was
from within adult
social care

9.4

average years of
experience in the
sector

8.3%

vacancy rate
(131,000
vacant posts)

Starter and turnover rates in the past 12 months

- The starter rate in the last 12 months was 30.2%, which equates to approximately 400,000 directly employed staff starting roles during 2023/24.
- The turnover rate of directly employed staff working in the adult social care sector was 24.2%, equivalent to approximately 350,000 leavers over the year.
- The turnover rate in the independent and local authority sectors was 24.8%. This is its lowest point since 2014/15 and is a decrease from 29.1% in 2022/23.
- Many of those that leave their roles remain within the sector, as 57% of recruitment across all job roles was from within adult social care.
- Turnover rates for care workers (29.9%) and registered managers (19.4%) in 2023/24 were at their lowest points since 2017/18.

Vacancy rates and average sickness

- The vacancy rate decreased from a peak of 10.6% in 2021/22 to 8.3% in 2023/24, a decrease of around 33,000 vacant posts over the period.
- Vacancy rates remained higher than pre-pandemic levels, but international recruitment has contributed to the reduction in vacant posts since 2021/22.
- The vacancy rate in the adult social care sector remains higher than the vacancy rate in the wider UK economy (2.8%) and specifically in the NHS in England (6.9%). Please see the main report for analysis of the comparability of these figures.
- The average number of sickness days lost was 5.0 per employee; this equates to approximately 7.2 million days lost due to sickness in 2023/24.

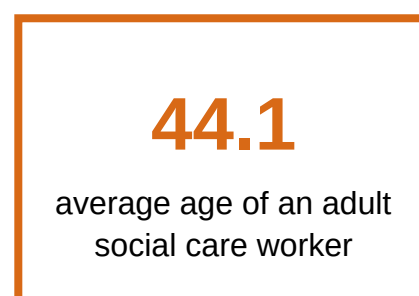
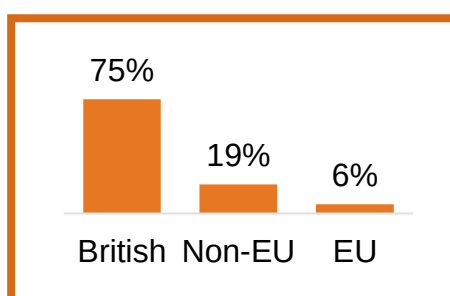
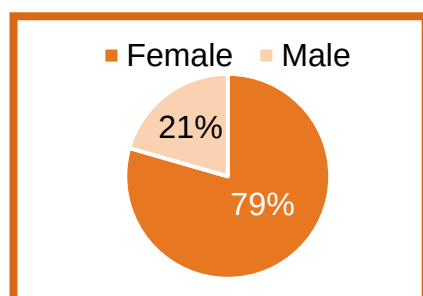
Experience of the adult social care workforce

- On average, workers had 4.9 years of experience in their current role.
- Workers across all job roles had on average 9.4 years of experience in the sector.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

4. Demographics

Supporting culture and diversity is a key focus for Skills for Care, as one of our [strategic priority areas](#) in support of the adult social care workforce. Our objective is to create equity among all those working in social care, so that people feel valued for the work they do and are motivated to stay in the sector, whilst having the choice to develop and progress in their careers.



Gender

- Between 2012/13 and 2021/22 male workers consistently accounted for 18% of the adult social care workforce. In 2022/23 this increased to 19% and in 2023/24 it increased to 21%.
- Senior managers had the largest proportion of male workers in 2023/24 (32%). Care worker was the most common role in adult social care and one in five were male (20%).

Nationality

- In the independent and local authority sectors, the proportion of British workers decreased from 83% in 2021/22 to 73% in 2023/24. Over the same period the proportion of workers with a non-EU nationality has increased from 10% to 20%. The proportion of workers with an EU nationality also decreased, from 7% to 6%.

Age

- Just over a quarter (27%) of adult social care workers were aged 55 and over, compared to 31% of the economically active population.
- The average age of the adult social care workforce in the local authority and independent sectors has decreased by 0.7 years, from 44.4 in 2022/23 to 43.7 in 2023/24.

Ethnicity

- People with a white ethnic background made up 68% of the adult social care workforce, compared to 83% of the population of England. People with an Asian/ Asian British ethnicity made up 11% of the workforce (9% of the population). People with a Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British ethnicity made up 18% of the workforce (4% of the population).
- In March 2024 Skills for Care published the [SC-WRES 2023 report](#) which highlighted the difference in experience of workers from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background in adult social care.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

5. Pay

Pay information was collected from local authorities as at September 2023, and from independent sector employers from April 2023 to March 2024. Pay information relating to personal assistants was collected in February 2024. As such, all figures refer to the 2023/24 National Living Wage period (£10.42). All annual pay information is presented as full-time equivalent (FTE), based on 37 contracted hours per week being classed as one FTE filled post.

£39,500

registered nurse
mean FTE pay
(independent)

£41,500

social worker
mean FTE pay
(local authority)

£11.87

personal assistant
mean hourly pay

£11.23

care worker
mean hourly pay
(independent)

Care worker hourly rates

- The median hourly rate for care workers in March 2024 was £11.00, which was 58p higher than the national living wage. The median hourly rate for care workers nominally increased by 89p (8.8%) between March 2023 and March 2024 however, taking inflation into account, it has increased in real terms by 57p (5.4%).
- Care workers had lower hourly rates (median - £11.00) compared to NHS healthcare assistants (HCAs) who were new in role (£11.67) and HCAs with 2 years of experience (£12.45).
- Care workers with five or more years' experience are, on average, earning around 10p more per hour than care workers with less than one years' experience. This has dropped from 33p per hour in March 2016.

Care workers moving between roles and employers

- Care workers who remained in this role in 2023/24 had a slight decrease in pay relative to the National Living Wage. Care workers that changed roles, within the sector, saw an increase in pay. This indicates that pay progression usually requires promotion into a different role.

Real living wage

- 64% of care workers outside of London were earning the same or more than the real living wage (£10.90). However, only 37% of care workers in London were earning the same or more than the real living wage for London (£11.95).

Impact of the National Living Wage

- Care workers in the bottom 10% of the pay distribution saw a greater benefit from the introduction of the National Living Wage (an increase of 56% since March 2016), whereas the pay for the top 10% of earners increased by 42%.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

6. Qualifications and training

We believe that it's important that staff are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to provide high quality care and support. Investing in learning and development also supports staff retention.

61%

of direct care staff have engaged with the Care Certificate Standards

46%

of staff held a relevant social care qualification

39%

of direct care staff were qualified at Level 2 or Level 3

Care Certificate Standards

- 54% of all staff had achieved, or were working towards, the Care Certificate Standards.
- Almost two thirds (61%) of direct care staff have engaged with the Care Certificate Standards.

Qualifications and skills

- 46% of the adult social care workforce (excluding regulated professions) held a relevant social care qualification in 2023/24. This is a decrease from 48% in 2022/23.
- 51% of the workforce in direct care roles did not hold a relevant social care qualification in 2023/24. However, of those 67% had engaged with the Care Certificate Standards, 44% had five years or more experience in the sector, and 73% had completed training.
- Staff in direct care roles were more likely to be qualified at Level 2 or Level 3 (39%), while those in managers roles were more likely to be qualified at Level 5 or above (33%).
- The latest data shows there were around 24,600 adult social care apprenticeship starts in 2022/23, 14% less than in 2021/22. 81% of adult social care achievements in 2022/23 were from the Adult Care Worker and Lead Adult Care Worker apprenticeship standards.

Career pathways

- For care worker roles the most common career pathway was to progress to senior care worker, or supervisory roles. Senior care workers or supervisors were most likely to move into first-line manager or registered manager roles. As seen in the pay section of the report, there was little pay progression within the care worker role.
- Staff in regulated professions progressed up the pay scale within their individual roles and were also observed to move into managers posts. Registered nurses generally progressed to registered manager roles, whilst social workers and occupational therapists moved into management roles within their local authority.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

7. Workforce projections

We've produced demand-based projections for the size of the adult social care workforce between 2023/24 and 2040. These workforce projections combine adult social care workforce estimates and population projection information.¹

38%

increase in the population
aged 65 and over between
2020 and 2040

■ Total posts 2023/24
■ Extra posts by 2040

1.84m

0.54m

One adult social care
post for every six people
aged 65 and over



Population growth

- The population aged 65 and above in England is projected to grow 38%, from 10.5 million to 14.5 million between 2020 and 2040.
- London is the region expected to have the largest growth in population aged 65 and above, with an increase of 56% between 2020 (1.1 million people) and 2040 (1.7 million people).
- The 90 and over age group is expected to see the greatest amount of growth, with a 91% increase between 2020 and 2040 (from 525,000 to 1 million people).

Adult social care workforce

- If the workforce grows proportionally to the growth of the population aged 65 and above, between 2023/24 and 2040 the adult social care workforce would need to increase by 540,000 posts (29% growth).
- Our model estimates that there is currently one adult social care post for every six people aged 65 and over.

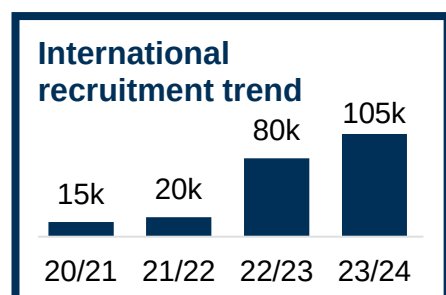
These projections can be used to forecast the number of adult social care posts that may be needed to meet demand in the future. Projections are based on the number of total posts required; this will include future filled posts as well as vacant posts. It should be noted that these projections only account 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.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

¹ Population information: www.nomisweb.co.uk

8. International recruitment

International recruitment has played an increasingly important role in the adult social care sector. The number of staff coming from overseas has contributed to the increase in filled posts across the sector in 2023/24, and the decrease in vacancy rates. To follow trends in international recruitment in the ASC-WDS, visit our [quarterly tracker](#).



29%

of people recruited internationally were male

34.1

average age of a person recruited internationally

People recruited internationally

- Between March 2022 and March 2024 an estimated 185,000 people have started direct care providing roles in the independent sector, having arrived in the UK during that period (80,000 in 2022/23 and 105,000 in 2023/24).
- The number of posts filled by people with a British nationality has decreased by around 70,000 since 2021/22. The number of posts filled by people with a non-EU nationality has increased over the same period by around 160,000.
- 29% of care workers recruited internationally were male. This was higher than the proportion of male care workers with a British nationality (15%).
- The top three nationalities for people recruited internationally were Nigerian (28%), Zimbabwean (22%) and Indian (17%).

Employers recruiting internationally

- The vacancy rate for employers with people recruited internationally decreased by 4.3 percentage points between March 2022 and March 2024, from 12.8% to 8.5%.
- The turnover rate for employers with people recruited internationally decreased by 8.1 percentage points between March 2022 and March 2024, from 41.5% to 33.4%.

Skills for Care has a number of resources related to [international recruitment](#) such as our [tool kit](#) which supports employers in deciding whether to recruit from overseas and how to do so ethically and responsibly.

Changes to [immigration rules](#) in March 2024 have since resulted in less international recruitment. Between April and June 2024, there were an estimated 8,000 international recruits joining the adult social care workforce in direct care roles in the independent sector. This is a substantial decrease from 2023/24 where there was an average of 26,000 per quarter.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

9. Factors affecting staff turnover and CQC ratings

This section focuses on how workforce characteristics relate to workers' propensity to leave their roles. The analysis shows the association between each variable and the turnover rate, this is not necessarily the cause/the reason for workers leaving. All analysis included here is of the independent sector workforce only.

44.6%

turnover rate of care workers aged under 25

20.4%

turnover rate of care workers with multiple positive employment factors in place

36.0%

turnover rate of care workers on a zero-hours contract

Factors affecting turnover for care workers

- The sector has difficulty retaining younger staff. The turnover rate among care workers aged under 25 years was 44.6%. This decreased to 38.6% for those aged 25 to 29 years, while the lowest turnover rate for care workers aged 50 to 59 (25.0%).
- Care workers are more likely to leave soon after starting their role. The turnover rate for those with less than one year of experience in their role was 39.0%, compared to 19.7% turnover rate for those with 20 years or more experience.
- Care workers are more likely to leave if they are on a zero-hours contract (36.0% turnover rate), compared to those with 35 or more contracted hours (29.7%).
- Care workers recruited internationally were less likely to leave (30.0% turnover rate), compared to domestically recruited workers (41.1%).
- Five positive employment factors have been identified: being paid above the national living wage, guaranteed hours, full-time hours, training, and qualifications. Care workers were more likely to stay in their role if all these factors were in place, with a turnover rate of 20.4%. Care workers without any of these factors in place had higher turnover (42.2%).

Factors affecting turnover for CQC scores

- Care homes with more staff in post per bed received better CQC scores on average than those with lower staffing ratios.
- Turnover rates were highest in establishments with the lowest CQC scores.
- Higher care worker pay was associated with better CQC scores. Care workers at the lowest scoring establishments had a median hourly rate of £10.92 compared to £11.18 at establishments with the highest scores.

For a detailed analysis of all the key findings listed here, please [read the chapter](#) in full.

Further resources

We provide valuable 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. This Executive Summary is a compendium of key findings from each chapter of '[The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2024](#)'. To learn more about these findings and for further, detailed analysis in these topic areas please read the full report.

We also produce and analyse workforce estimates looking at [regional](#) and [local area](#) information. This allows for greater scrutiny of the sector and its workforce and helps support local decision making in these geographical areas. There are three pages of regional area information and six pages of local area information on our website; these are split by either local authority area or NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) geography area.

- Individual areas: we have one report looking at the workforce in each region, local authority area or ICB area, one at a time.
- Our comparison reports compare key variables across regions, local areas or ICB areas.
- Each region and local area has a written summary report, summarising the workforce statistics.
- Our 'My ICB area (MH and LD&A)' report shows the latest information from the ASC-WDS for the mental health and learning disability and/or autism workforces, split into ICB areas.

We also publish [tracking information](#) about the adult social care workforce in key areas on a monthly and quarterly basis. These trackers do not use weighted estimates (as shown in our other annual reports) but do give a good indication of moving trends through the year. Trackers are available for

- Recruitment and retention (monthly)
- ICB area recruitment and retention (quarterly)
- Filled posts (monthly)
- International recruitment (quarterly)

To access all these reports and accompanying data visualisations, please refer to the relevant pages on our [Workforce Intelligence website](#).

A workforce strategy for adult social care in England

Skills for Care has led the development of 'A 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. For more information and to read the strategy in full, visit:

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Workforce-Strategy/Home>



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