

A collage of black and white photographs showing various social care workers in different settings, including a man laughing, a woman with glasses smiling, and a group of people in a meeting.

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

Executive Summary

2025

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Introduction

This executive summary accompanies the '[The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England, 2025](#)' 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 we collect and 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.

In 2023 Skills for Care was added to the [Official Statistics Order](#) and became an official statistics producer. This means that all official statistics produced by Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team will include oversight from the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) (OSR), ensuring that we follow the Code of Practice for Statistics. Our Workforce Intelligence Analysts are committed to the three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value.

About the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS)

The ASC-WDS is an online data collection service that covers the adult social care workforce in England. The data collected 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 independent sector information in this summary was collected between April 2024 and March 2025, and local authority information dates from September 2024. As at March 2025, over half of the CQC-regulated workforce were recorded in the ASC-WDS (54.5%). This coverage varied by care sector, services, job role and geographical area. Information about direct payment recipients employing personal assistants was collected in Spring 2025. 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

Since 2022/23, international recruitment has contributed to the growth in the number of filled posts in adult social care, with overall turnover and vacancy rates decreasing. Many of the trends presented in this summary are influenced by the level of international recruitment between 2022/23 and 2024/25. To view the levels of international recruitment over time in the independent sector, see our [international recruitment tracker](#).

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.

19,000

organisations in
adult social care

42,000

establishments in
adult social care

1.71m

total posts (filled
and vacant posts)

1.60m

filled posts in
adult social care

Size of the adult social care workforce

- An estimated 19,000 organisations were involved in providing or organising adult social care in England. Those organisations delivered services in an estimated 42,000 establishments.
- There were 30,000 CQC-regulated establishments, an increase of 1,100 from 2023/24.
- The total number of posts (filled and vacant posts) in adult social care in England in 2024/25 stood at 1.71 million, an increase of 2.2% (36,000 posts) from 2023/24.
- As at 2024/25, there were 1.60 million filled posts in adult social care in England, an increase of around 3.4% (52,000 filled posts) from 2023/24.
- There were 111,000 vacant posts, a decrease of 16,000 (12.4%) from 2023/24.
- The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) filled posts was estimated at 1.24 million.
- The number of people working in adult social care was estimated at 1.50 million.

Economic contribution

- The total wage bill for adult social care in England was £31.8 billion, an increase of 12.6% from 2023/24.
- The sector was estimated to contribute £77.8 billion gross value added (GVA) to the economy in England (up 12.2% from 2023/24).

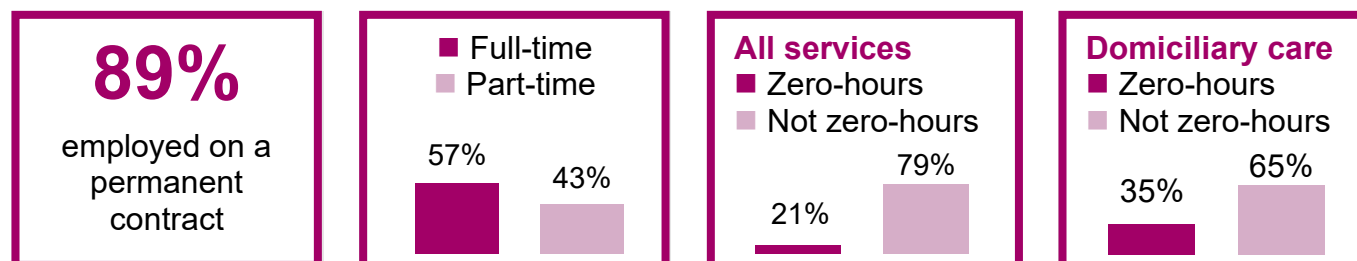
Structure of the adult social care workforce

- In terms of employer type, 84.3% of the adult social care workforce were employed in the independent sector (1.345 million filled posts), 7.5% were employed by local authorities (119,900 filled posts) and 8.2% (131,000 filled posts) were personal assistants, directly employed by individuals in receipt of a direct payment from their local authority.
- In terms of service types, domiciliary care services accounted for the largest proportion of filled posts in 2024/25 (46% or 740,000 filled posts), followed by residential services (44% or 705,000 filled posts).
- The job role group, 'care worker and support worker' was the most common job role in the adult social care sector workforce in 2024/25. There were 925,000 care worker and support worker filled posts, 57.8% 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, which play a part in the sector's ability to recruit and retain staff.



Employment status

- Nearly nine out of ten (89%) of the adult social care workforce in 2024/25 were employed on permanent contracts (1.4 million filled posts).
- 9% of the adult social care workforce were 'indirectly employed' staff, meaning those workers on bank, pool, agency and/or other contract types. This included 16% of registered nurses.

Full-time / part-time status

- 57% of the workforce worked full-time hours (905,000 filled posts) and 43% worked part-time (695,000 filled posts). This differs from the wider [economically active population of England](#), where 75% of the workforce work full-time and 25% part-time.
- Managers were most likely to work full-time, while personal assistants had the largest proportion of part-time staff (86% or 115,000 filled posts).

Zero-hours contracts

- 21% were employed on a zero-hours contract (330,000 filled posts). This was highest among workers in domiciliary care services where 35% were employed on a zero-hours contract (211,000 filled posts). This was even higher for care workers in domiciliary care services, where 42% were employed on zero-hours contracts.
- In 2024/25, the proportion of workers in local authority and independent sectors employed on a zero-hours contract was 21%, down from 23% in 2020/21.

Care worker employment conditions, as at March 2025

- Over two fifths (43%) of responding employers (6,800) reported that they contribute more than the minimum 3% to the workplace pensions of their care workers.
- Nearly two fifths (38%) of employers that responded (7,800) reported that they pay care workers more than [Statutory Sick Pay](#) if they cannot work because of illness.
- The median number of annual leave days given to care workers was 28. Around 44% of local authority establishments gave full-time care workers 29 days or more of annual leave, compared to 13% in the independent sector.

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.

23.1%

turnover rate
in the last
12 months

53%

of recruitment was
from within adult
social care

9.2

average years of
experience in the
sector

7.0%

vacancy rate
(111,000
vacant posts)

Staff turnover rates in the past 12 months

- We estimate that the turnover rate of directly employed staff working in the adult social care sector was 23.1%, equivalent to approximately 335,000 leavers over the year.
- The turnover rate for care workers and support workers (28.5%) and registered managers (17.0%) are at their lowest point over the reporting period.

Source of recruitment

- Many of those workers that leave their roles remain within the sector; 53% of recruitment in 2024/25 was from within adult social care.

Vacancy rates

- The vacancy rate across all sectors of the adult social care workforce has consistently decreased from a peak of 10.5% in 2021/22, to 7.0% in 2024/25. This is a decrease of around 41,000 vacant posts over the previous three years.
- Domiciliary care services had the highest vacancy rate (9.7%) in 2024/25, whilst residential care had the lowest (4.4%).

Average sickness

- The average number of sickness days lost was 4.5 per employee; equivalent to approximately 6.6 million days lost due to sickness in 2024/25.
- Social workers (9.8) and occupational therapists (7.9) had the highest number of average sickness days.

Experience of the adult social care workforce

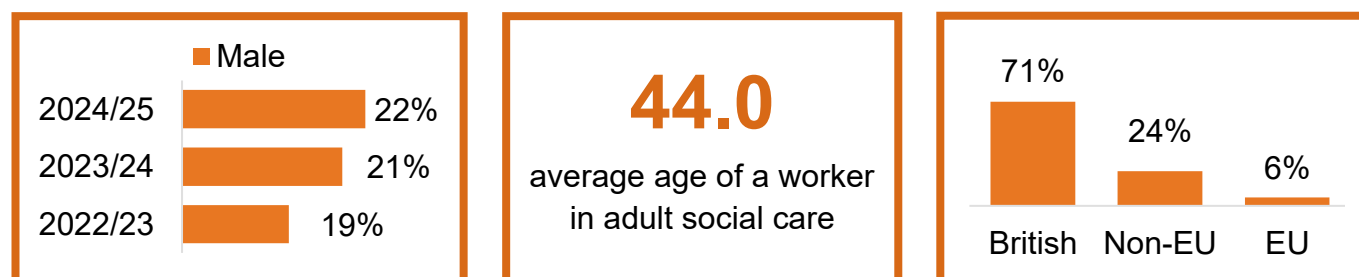
- On average, workers had 4.7 years of experience in their current role.
- Workers across all job roles had on average 9.2 years of experience in the sector.

We track starter, turnover and vacancy rates in the independent sector on a monthly basis throughout the year. To see this and our other workforce trackers, [visit our website](#).

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

4. Demographics

Skills for Care supports culture and diversity in adult social care; our objective is to create equity among all those working in social care, so that people feel valued for the work they do.



To note: trends shown in this section have been impacted by internationally recruited workers joining the workforce since 2022/23.

Gender

- In 2024/25 the proportion of workers identifying as male stood at 22% of the adult social care workforce, the third annual increase. Between 2012/13 and 2021/22, male workers consistently accounted for 18% of the workforce. Senior managers had the largest proportion of male workers in 2024/25 (33%). Care worker was the most common role in adult social care in 2024/25, and one in five were male (21%).

Nationality

- In the independent and local authority sectors, the proportion of workers with a non-EU nationality increased from 10% to 25% between 2021/22 and 2024/25. Over the same period the proportion of workers with a British nationality decreased from 83% to 69%, and the proportion of workers with an EU nationality decreased from 7% to 6%.

Age

- Just over a quarter (27%) of adult social care workers were aged 55 and over, compared to 22% of the [economically active population](#). However, in the local authority and independent sectors the average age of a worker decreased by 0.1 years, to 43.6 in 2024/25.

Ethnicity

- Workers of a White ethnicity made up 64% of the adult social care workforce in England, compared to 80% of the economically active population. In the local authority and independent sectors, London was the most ethnically diverse regional workforce; 50% of staff were of a Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnicity and 22% were of an Asian or Asian British ethnicity.
- In May 2025 Skills for Care published the [SC-WRES 2024 report](#) which highlighted the difference in experience of workers of a Black, Asian and minority ethnicity in adult social care, compared to workers of a White ethnicity.

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 2024, from independent sector employers from April 2024 to March 2025, and information relating to personal assistants was collected in February 2025. The [National Living Wage](#) (NLW) at the time of all data collections was £11.44. 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.

£41,300

registered nurse
mean FTE pay
(independent)

£43,000

social worker
mean FTE pay
(local authority)

£12.89

personal assistant
mean hourly pay

£12.18

care worker
mean hourly pay
(independent)

Care worker hourly rates

- The median hourly rate for care workers in March 2025 was £12.00, 56p higher than the NLW.
- The median hourly rate for care workers nominally increased by £1.00 (9.1%) since March 2024; however, taking inflation into account it increased in real terms by 71p (6.3%).
- Care workers had lower hourly rates (median - £12.00) compared to Band 3 NHS Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) who were new in role (£12.31) and were similar to those in Band 2 who were new in role (£12.08).
- Care workers with five or more years' experience were, on average, earning around 7p 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 their role, whether at their current employer or who moved to another employer, in 2024/25 had a slight reduction in pay relative to the NLW. However, care workers who changed roles within the sector saw a relative increase in pay. This indicates that pay progression usually requires promotion into a different role.

The Real Living Wage

- 58% of care workers outside of London were earning the same or more than the [Real Living Wage](#) (RLW) (£12.00). However, only 33% of care workers in London were earning the same or more than the RLW for London (£13.15).

Impact of the National Living Wage since March 2016

- Pay at the bottom 10% of the care worker pay distribution increased by 71% since March 2016, following the introduction of the NLW, compared with a 55% increase at the top 10%.

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.

63%

of direct care staff have engaged with the Care Certificate standards

45%

of workers held a relevant social care qualification (excluding regulated professions)

36%

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

Care Certificate standards

- Over half (56%) of posts in the adult social care workforce were filled by people who had achieved or were working towards achievement of the Care Certificate standards.

Qualifications and skills

- 45% of the adult social care workforce (excluding regulated professions) held a relevant social care qualification. 55% had no relevant social care qualifications recorded.
- Approximately half of the direct care workforce 54% did not hold a relevant social care qualification in 2024/25. However, of those, 69% had engaged with the Care Certificate standards, 52% had five years or more experience in the adult social care sector, and 81% had completed non-statutory training.
- Direct care-providing staff were more likely to be qualified at Level 2 or Level 3 (36%), while those in managers roles were more likely to be qualified at Level 5 or above (33%).
- The latest data shows there were 23,420 adult social care apprenticeship starts in 2023/24, 5% less than in 2022/23.

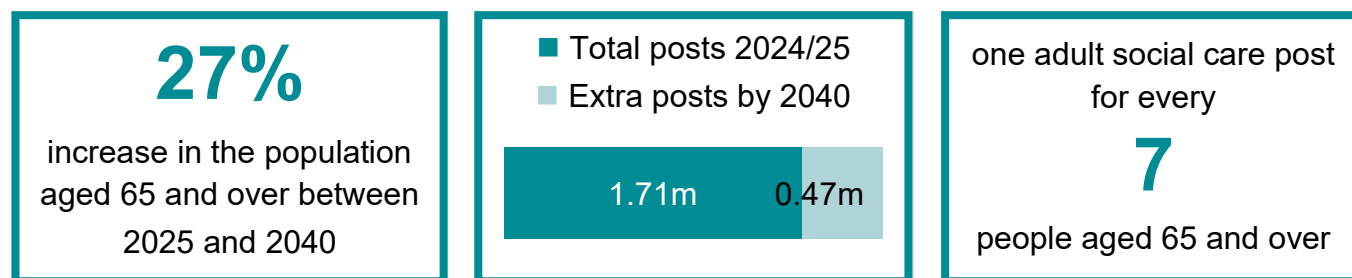
Career progression

- For care worker roles the most common observed career pathway in the ASC-WDS 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.
- In January 2024, [The Care Workforce Pathway](#) was launched in partnership between Skills for Care and the Department of Health and Social Care, to provide a clear career structure for social care staff. Employers can use the pathway to set out how staff can gain skills, learn and develop, and progress in their careers.

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 2024/25 and 2040. These workforce projections combine adult social care workforce estimates and [population projection information](#).



Population growth

- The population aged 65 and above in England is projected to grow 27%, from 11.5 million in 2025, to 14.5 million in 2040.
- London is the region expected to have the largest growth in population aged 65 and above, with an increase of 39% between 2025 (1.2 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 74% increase between 2025 and 2040 (from 575,000 to 1 million people).

Adult social care workforce

- If the workforce grows proportionally to the growth of the population aged 65 and above, between 2024/25 and 2040 the adult social care workforce would need to increase by 470,000 posts, or 27%.
- Our model estimates that there is currently one adult social care post for every seven people aged 65 and over.

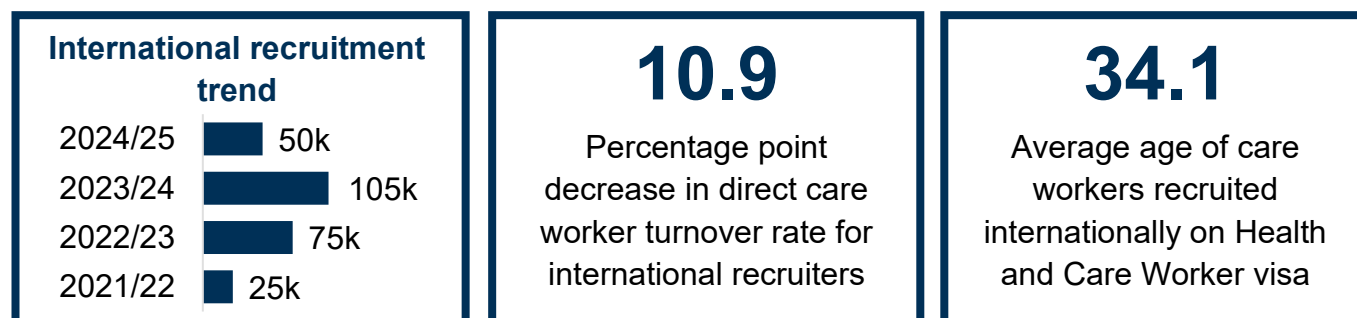
These projections can be used to forecast the number of adult social care posts that may be needed to meet demand in the future. Projections are based on the number of total posts required; this will include future filled posts as well as vacant posts. They should be treated as 'base case' as they only 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. Demand due to replacing leavers will be in addition to the figures shown here.

In addition to our projections shown in this section, the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre (CPEC) at the London School of Economics have also published projections of demand for social care for older people aged 65 and over, as well as younger adults aged 18 to 64. You can read their paper from February 2025 [here](#).

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

8. International recruitment

International recruitment has played an increasingly important role in the adult social care sector in recent years. The number of staff coming from overseas has contributed to the increase in filled posts and decrease in vacancy rates across the sector in 2024/25.



International recruitment estimates

- Between March 2024 and March 2025, an estimated 50,000 people started in direct care providing roles in the independent sector, having arrived in the UK during that period. This was a decrease of 55,000 from 2023/24, when the estimated number was 105,000.

Turnover rates, vacancy rates and demographics

- The vacancy rate for employers with people recruited internationally decreased by 3.2 percentage points between March 2022 and March 2025, from 9.1% to 5.9%.
- The turnover rate for employers with people recruited internationally decreased by 10.9 percentage points between March 2022 and March 2025, from 37.3% to 26.4%.
- The proportion of care workers recruited domestically who were male was 13%, lower than the proportion of all care workers (22%). The proportion was higher among care workers recruited internationally on the Health and Care Worker visa (29%) and for those recruited internationally via other routes (34%).
- Domestic recruitment remains a challenge for the sector. The number of posts filled by staff with a British nationality decreased by around 30,000 in 2024/25, or 85,000 since 2020/21.

International recruitment quarterly tracker information

We [track international recruitment](#) trends in the ASC-WDS on a quarterly basis in the ASC-WDS. In the quarter April to June 2025, an estimated 7,500 international recruits joined the workforce in direct care roles in the independent sector in England. This is a decrease on the previous year, when there was an average of 12,000 per quarter. In July 2025, care workers and senior care workers were removed from the Health and Care Worker visa route as part of [further immigration rule changes](#), meaning it is likely that international recruitment for these roles will continue to fall in the future.

Skills for Care has resources related to [international recruitment](#) such as our [toolkit](#), which supports employers who recruit internationally to do so ethically and responsibly.

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 a worker's propensity to leave their role. The analysis shows the association between each variable and the turnover rate, this is not necessarily the cause or reason for workers leaving. All analysis included here is of the independent sector workforce only, between March 2024 and March 2025.

38.0%

turnover rate of care workers aged under 25

14.4%

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

30.6%

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 38.0%. This decreased to 29.8% for those aged 25 to 29 years, while the lowest turnover rate was for care workers aged 50 to 59 (20.3%).
- Care workers are more likely to leave soon after starting their role. Those with less than one year of experience in their role had a turnover rate of 34.0%, compared to 15.3% for those with 20 years or more experience.
- Care workers are more likely to leave if they are on a zero-hours contract (30.6% turnover rate), compared to those with 35 or more contracted hours (22.9%).
- Care workers recruited internationally were less likely to leave (25.9% turnover rate), compared to domestically recruited workers (38.9%).
- Five positive employment factors have been identified: being paid up to 30% below the local authority average hourly rate, guaranteed hours, full-time hours, training, and qualifications. Care workers with these five factors in place were more likely to remain in post (14.4% turnover), compared to workers with no positive employment factors in place (42.2%).

Factors affecting turnover for CQC scores

- Turnover rates were highest in establishments with lower CQC scores.
- Care homes with more staff in post per bed received better CQC scores on average than those with lower staffing ratios.
- Higher care worker pay was associated with better CQC scores. Care workers at the lowest scoring establishments had a median hourly rate of £12.04 compared to £12.33 at establishments with the highest scores.
- Establishments with a registered manager with more experience in their role were more likely to receive higher CQC 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, 2025](#)' report. 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, local authority and ICB 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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