

A black and white photograph of a care worker with blonde hair, wearing a dark uniform, leaning over and talking to an elderly woman with white hair who is sitting in a chair. A small table with a cup and saucer is in the foreground. The background shows a clock on the wall.

# Pay in the adult social care sector in England, as at December 2024

March 2025

## Foreword from our CEO

The 1.59 million people who work in adult social care are vital to our society and our economy. Few careers are more rewarding. It's a profession where everything you do, every day, enables people to live better, more fulfilling lives than they'd be able to without you.

The sector's contribution to the economy is huge - £68.1 billion in 2023/24 and growing every year. However, as this report – and the ones that have come before it – shows, social care roles remain among the lowest-paid in our economy.



Low levels of hourly pay, combined with a lack of pay progression for experienced care workers, make it harder to attract and keep good people. We may need up to 540,000 more good people by 2040 if we're to keep pace with the projected growth in the number of over-65s in the population alone. And that's on top of the need to fill the vacancies we currently have – with a vacancy rate around 3 times that of the wider economy.

Pay isn't a magic bullet that will fix all the challenges our sector faces. But it's a significant influence on the wider quality of social care roles – and we know from our data and insight that it's one of the things that affects staff turnover.

Skills for Care has led the development of a [Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England](#), which we published in July 2024. It's designed to make sure we have enough of the right people with the right skills and values to provide the best possible care and support to the people who draw on it over the next 15 years.

One of the Strategy's recommendations is joined-up, consistent action on pay, terms and conditions over several years. To that end, the Government's plans for a Fair Pay Agreement for care workers, arrived at by a new negotiating body, represents a huge step forward.

The Fair Pay Agreement will also cover things like career progression and training - which are supported by the Care Workforce Pathway that we helped to develop. These factors are vitally important for improving the quality of social care roles.

In a sector with 1.59 million people working for 18,500 different employers – and in a difficult economic climate – the road to a Fair Pay Agreement will come with many challenges along the way. But these are challenges we must – and will – overcome to ensure that adult social care is a rewarding career in every sense.

**Professor Oonagh Smyth**

Chief Executive, Skills for Care

# Key findings, December 2024

**£12.00**

Care worker median  
hourly rate

**23%**

Of care workers were  
on the wage floor

**58%**

Of workers were paid  
below next NLW

## Current levels of pay and trends

- The median hourly rate for a care worker in the independent sector was £12.00 as at December 2024 (56 pence above the NLW). This varies across the regions, with the highest median hourly pay rates recorded in London (£12.19) and the lowest in the West Midlands (£11.75).
- In December 2024, the nominal median care worker pay had increased by 9.1% (£1.00 per hour) since March 2024. The average care worker was better off, in real terms, by 78 pence per hour (7.0%) than they were in March 2024.

## Side effects of the increasing wage floor

- The proportion of care workers being paid on the wage floor (those on or within 10 pence of the NLW) was 23%. This proportion had been decreasing from 34% since March 2020. However, between March 2024 and December 2024, the proportion of workers on the wage floor increased from 18% to 23%.
- Experienced care workers (those with 5 or more years in the sector) are paid just 4 pence more on average than care workers who are new to the sector. Prior to March 2017, this gap was between 26 pence and 37 pence per hour.
- 48% of care workers were paid below the Real Living Wage (£12.00 outside London / £13.50 in London) in December 2024.

## The impact of the new NLW rate from 1 April 2025 (£12.21)

- As at December 2024, over half (58%) of all independent sector workers were paid less than the April 2025 mandatory NLW rate (£12.21). This equates to around 575,000 filled posts being directly affected by the next increase in the NLW.
- 93% of adult social care providers in the independent sector in December 2024 were paying at least some of their workers below the April 2025 mandatory NLW (£12.21) and would be directly affected by its introduction.

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# Introduction

This report uses data from the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) to create workforce models, which allow for estimates of the whole adult social care workforce to be produced. For information about the methodology used to create these workforce estimates, visit [our website](#).

This report analyses data as at December 2024. Occasionally data from other periods has been used for comparison with external data sources – where this happens it is clearly labelled in the report.

On 1 April 2024 the National Living Wage (NLW) increased from £10.42 to £11.44 per hour for workers aged 21 and over. This report measures pay rates in the adult social care sector as at December 2024, examines pay trends, investigates any side effects in the adult social care sector as a result of the higher pay floor, and looks at the potential impact of the 2025 NLW (£12.21). Independent sector care worker hourly rates are the main focus of this report, as well as differentials with other job roles in the adult social care sector.

Analysis of the financial year 2023/24 can be found in Chapter 5 of our annual report [The State of the Adult Social Sector and Workforce in England](#), published in October 2024. Analysis of the financial year 2024/25 will be published in the annual update in October 2025.

Please note, a glossary of terms used in this report can be found in the Glossary section.

## The National Living Wage and the Real Living Wage

The National Living Wage (NLW) was first introduced on 1 April 2016 at £7.20 per hour for workers aged 25 and over. Over time this has increased and in 2021 the age threshold was reduced to 23 years. From 1 April 2024 the age threshold was reduced again to 21 years. The current NLW increased by 9.8% (£1.02) on 1 April 2024 from £10.42 (for workers aged 23 and over) to £11.44 per hour (for workers aged 21 and over). As of 1 April 2025, the NLW rate will be £12.21 per hour for workers aged 21 and over, an increase of 77 pence (6.7%).

The Real Living Wage (RLW) is set by the [Living Wage Foundation](#) charity and is separate to the National Living Wage. The equivalent Real Living Wage rate to the £11.44 NLW rate used throughout this report is £13.15 in London and £12.00 across the rest of the UK.

## Pay periods used in this report

The ASC-WDS data used in this report has been split into time periods to reflect the National Minimum Wage (NMW; used prior to the introduction of the NLW) or NLW in place at the time (see Table 1. Time periods used in this report). October 2012 to March 2016 covers the period when the NMW was in place for workers aged 21 and older and is described by the final month in the period (e.g. October 2012 to September 2013 is recorded as Sep 13 in the data; October 2015 to March 2016 is recorded as Mar 16).

April 2016 to March 2021 covers the NLW for workers aged 25 and older. On 1 April 2021, the NLW became applicable for anyone aged 23 or over, therefore April 2021 onwards covers the NLW for workers aged 23 and older. From April 2024, workers aged 21 were paid the NLW.

We have used the most current data (December 2024) in this report as far as possible. However, when making comparisons to external data, we used March 2024 data to make direct comparisons.

The latest local authority sector data was collected in September 2024. The majority of local authority sector care workers were already paid above the 2025 NLW (£12.21). As a result, this report will focus on the adult social care filled posts in the independent sector only.

**Table 1. Time periods used in this report**

| Time period       | Referred to as | National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage | Real Living Wage – UK / London (announced each autumn) |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 12 to Sep 13  | 2012 NMW       | £6.19                                      | £7.45 / £8.55                                          |
| Oct 13 to Sep 14  | 2013 NMW       | £6.31                                      | £7.65 / £8.80                                          |
| Oct 14 to Sep 15  | 2014 NMW       | £6.50                                      | £7.85 / £9.15                                          |
| Oct 15 to Mar 16  | 2015 NMW       | £6.70                                      | £7.85 / £9.15                                          |
| Apr 16 to Mar 17  | 2016 NLW       | £7.20 (NLW introduced)                     | £8.25 / £9.40                                          |
| Apr 17 to Mar 18  | 2017 NLW       | £7.50                                      | £8.45 / £9.75                                          |
| Apr 18 to Mar 19  | 2018 NLW       | £7.83                                      | £8.75 / £10.20                                         |
| Apr 19 to Mar 20  | 2019 NLW       | £8.21                                      | £9.00 / £10.55                                         |
| Apr 20 to Mar 21  | 2020 NLW       | £8.72                                      | £9.30 / £10.75                                         |
| Apr 21 to Mar 22  | 2021 NLW       | £8.91                                      | £9.50 / £10.85                                         |
| Apr 22 to Mar 23  | 2022 NLW       | £9.50                                      | £9.90 / £11.05                                         |
| Apr 23 to Mar 24  | 2023 NLW       | £10.42                                     | £10.90 / £11.95                                        |
| Apr 24 to Mar 25* | 2024 NLW       | £11.44                                     | £12.00 / £13.15                                        |
| Apr 25 to Mar 26  | 2025 NLW       | £12.21                                     | £12.60 / £13.85                                        |

***\*This report focuses on data in this period.***

## Increase in National Insurance Contributions (NICs)

From 6 April 2025, UK employers' National Insurance Contributions (NICs) will increase from 13.8% to 15%. In addition, the threshold at which businesses start paying National Insurance (NI) on a worker's earnings will be lowered from £9,100 to £5,000. Based on December 2024 estimates, this change will mean employers will pay NI on an additional 24,500 workers. This means that adult social care employers will face increased costs to accommodate the increase in NI for their workers.

To minimise the impact on small businesses the Employment Allowance, which supports eligible employers to reduce their NI liability, will increase from £5,000 to £10,500. This report

will not include analysis of changes to the NICs or Employment Allowance, however we are aware of their potential impact on employers within the adult social care sector.

## Employment Rights Bill

The Employment Rights Bill, first introduced to Parliament in October 2024, aims to enhance the rights of employees, including guaranteed hours for workers on zero-hours contracts and entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay from the first day of absence. This has not yet passed through parliamentary process but we are aware of its potential implications to the adult social care sector.

This report uses data as at December 2024, and will not include analysis of employment factors affected by the Employment Rights Bill. However, we will explore this in more depth in the next 'The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England' report, due to be published in October 2025.

# 1. Current levels of pay and trends

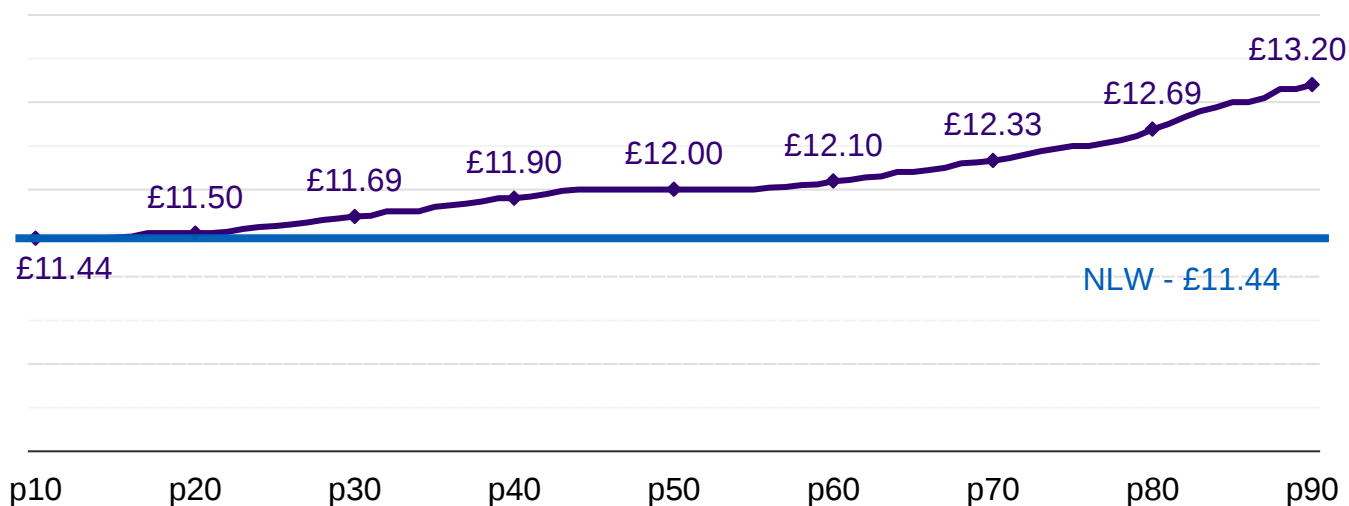
## 1.1 Care worker hourly rate distribution, as at December 2024

Chart 1 shows the hourly rate distribution for all care workers as at December 2024. The median (p50) refers to the hourly rate at which half of care workers earned more than that amount, and half earned less. The 10th percentile (p10) is the value at which 10% of care workers earned less than that value and 90% earned more.

The median hourly rate for a care worker in the independent sector was £12.00 as at December 2024, with nearly a quarter (23%) being paid within 10 pence of the 2024 NLW rate of £11.44. The hourly rate difference between a top 10% earner (£13.20) and a bottom 10% earner (£11.44) was £1.76 per hour.

**Chart 1. Care worker hourly rate distribution, as at December 2024**

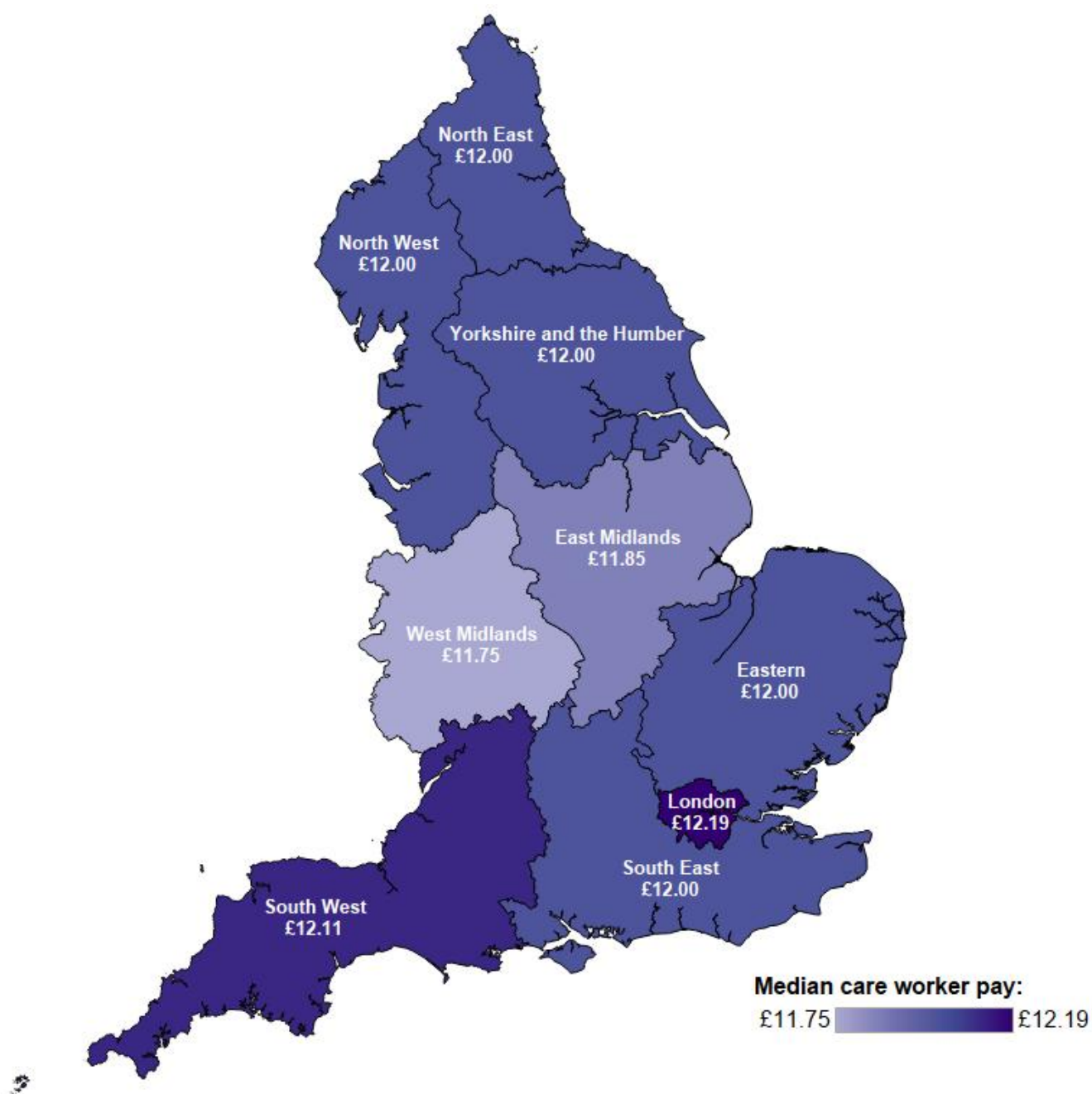
Source: Skills for Care estimates



Map 1 below shows that there was regional variation in median hourly pay rates, with the highest recorded in London (£12.19) and the South West (£12.11). The lowest median hourly rate was recorded in the West Midlands (£11.75).

## Map 1. Median care worker pay by region, December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates



## 1.2 Median care worker hourly rate trends

This section looks at the trend of median care worker hourly pay rates since March 2016 in both 'nominal' and 'real term' pay rates. 'Nominal' pay shows the pay rates as they were at the time. 'Real term' rates are adjusted to take inflation into account (calculated using the Consumers Price Index (CPI)<sup>1</sup>, the official measure of inflation of consumer prices in the UK) and are expressed in December 2024 prices.

<sup>1</sup> ONS: CPI Index <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7bt/mm23>

Chart 2 below shows that median nominal care worker pay increased steadily from £7.28 in March 2016, to £12.00 in December 2024, a 65% increase. The average care worker was better off in real terms by £2.14 per hour (22%) in December 2024, than they were in March 2016.

The nominal median care worker pay increased by 9.1% (£1.00 per hour) between March 2024 and December 2024. The average care worker was better off in real terms by 78 pence per hour (7.0%) than they were in March 2024. The increase in pay was higher than the rate of inflation over the period (2.0%).

**Chart 2. Care worker nominal and real term hourly rate, March 2016 to December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates

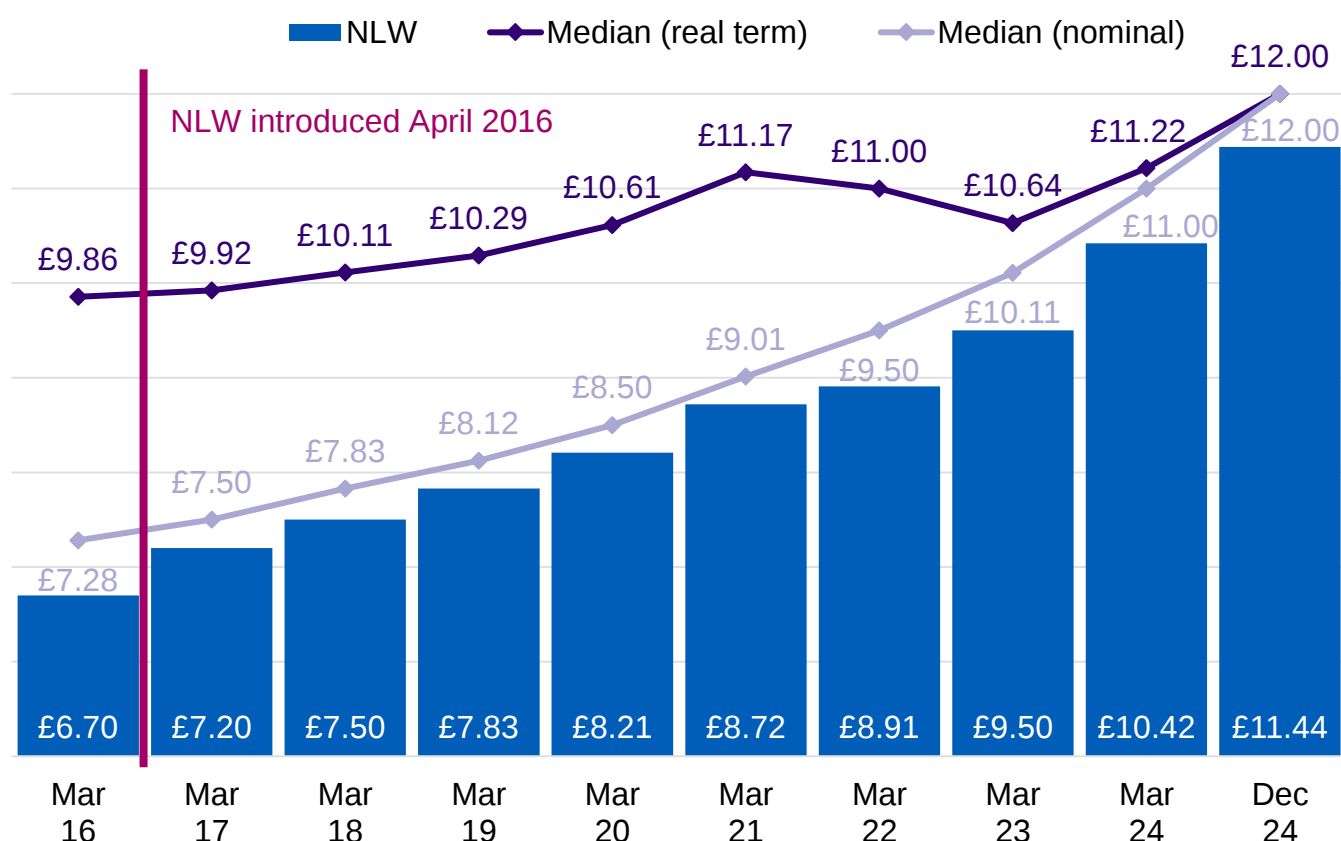


Chart 3 below shows the change in care worker nominal median hourly rate, compared to nominal changes in the National Living Wage (NLW). The nominal care worker hourly rate usually increases by a similar amount to the NLW increase. However, between March 2021 and March 2022 the change in nominal median hourly rate (5.4% increase) was larger than the nominal NLW (2.2%). Vacancy rates were high in this period, reaching a peak of 10.7%. Anecdotal evidence provided to Skills for Care suggested some care providers responded to rising staff vacancies by increasing wages to attract and retain more staff. This appears to not have continued after March 2022 as nominal pay increased at a similar rate to the NLW, as it has done in previous years.

Between March 2024 and December 2024, the NLW increased by 9.8% in nominal terms whilst the nominal median care worker pay increased by 9.1%. This increase is more in line with what

was expected given the increase in the NLW (i.e. care worker pay usually increases at a similar rate).

Some employers have reported to Skills for Care that keeping up with NLW increases has been a challenge, especially alongside other rising costs to their business and the implications of the change to employer National Insurance contributions.

### Chart 3. Change in care worker nominal median hourly rates compared to nominal change in the NLW, March 2016 to December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates

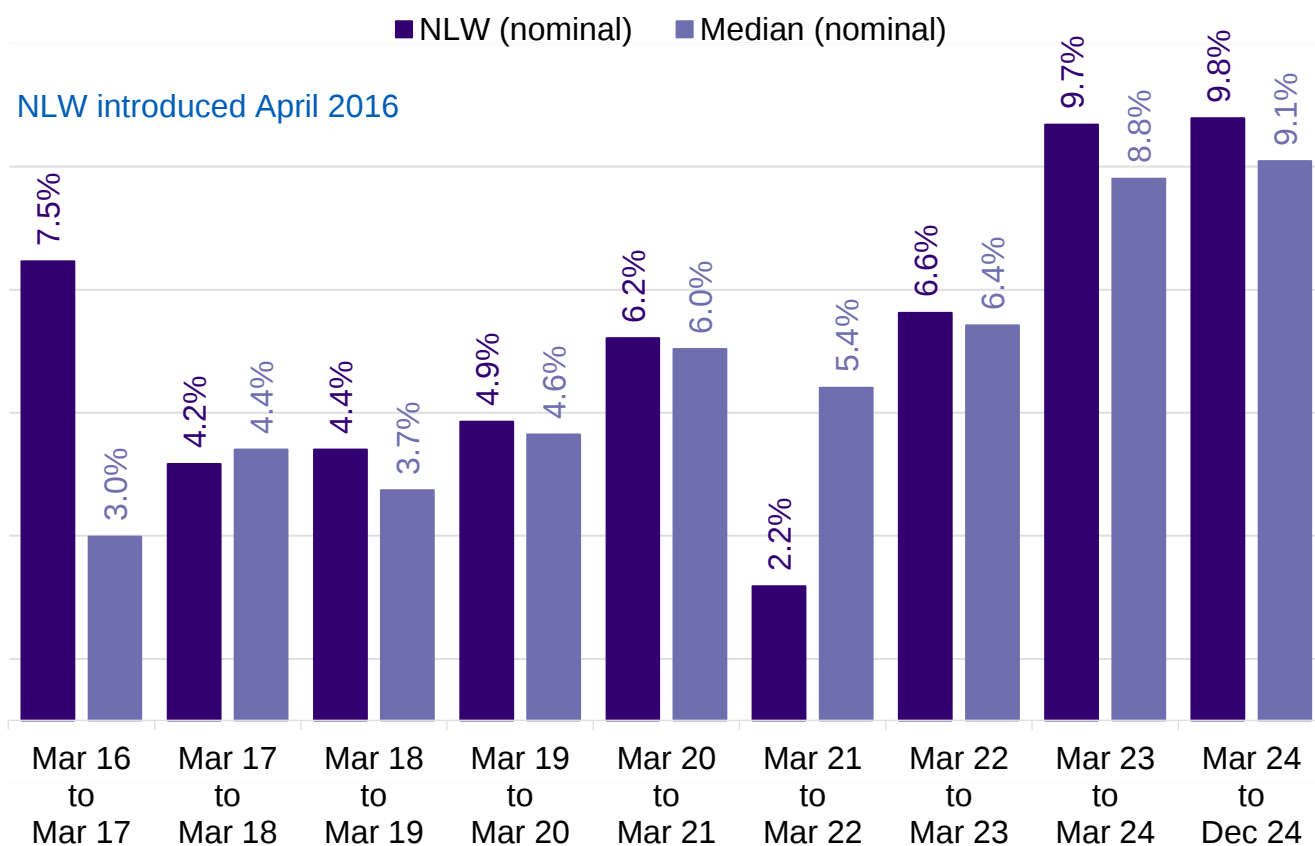
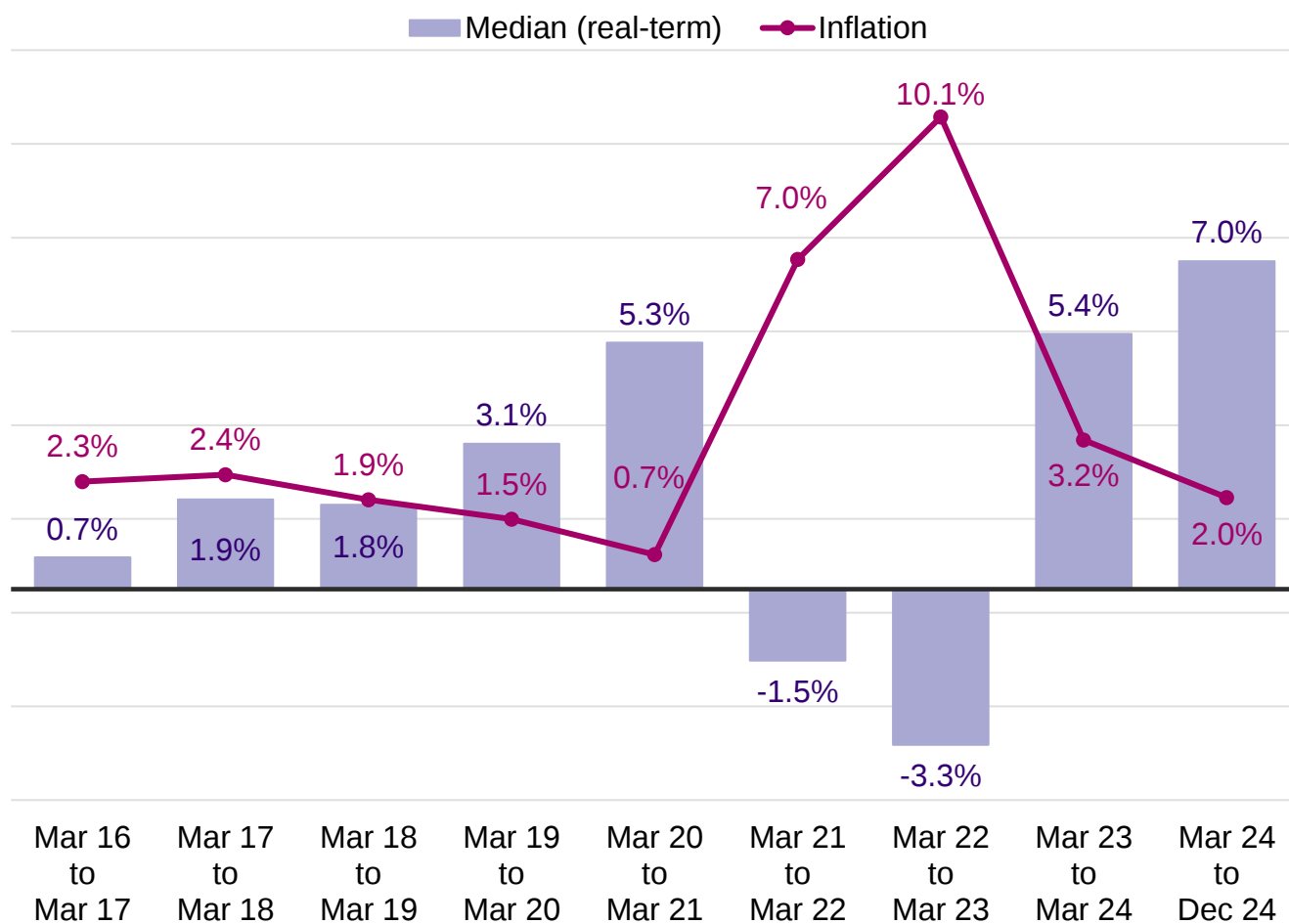


Chart 4 below shows wages for care workers have increased in real terms from March 2016 to December 2024. Inflation peaked at 10.1% in the March 2022 to March 2023 period, then decreased to 3.2% in the March 2023 and March 2024 period. Inflation decreased again to 2.0% in the March 2024 to December 2024 period, while real-term median wages increased by 7.0%. This was the largest increase across the reporting period and was more in line with previous periods covered in the report.

Please note that inflation is normally calculated year-on-year; however, in this instance we are using a reduced period for both pay growth and inflation, which are both likely to be higher over the full year.

**Chart 4. Change in care worker real term median hourly rates compared to the rate of inflation, March 2016 to December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



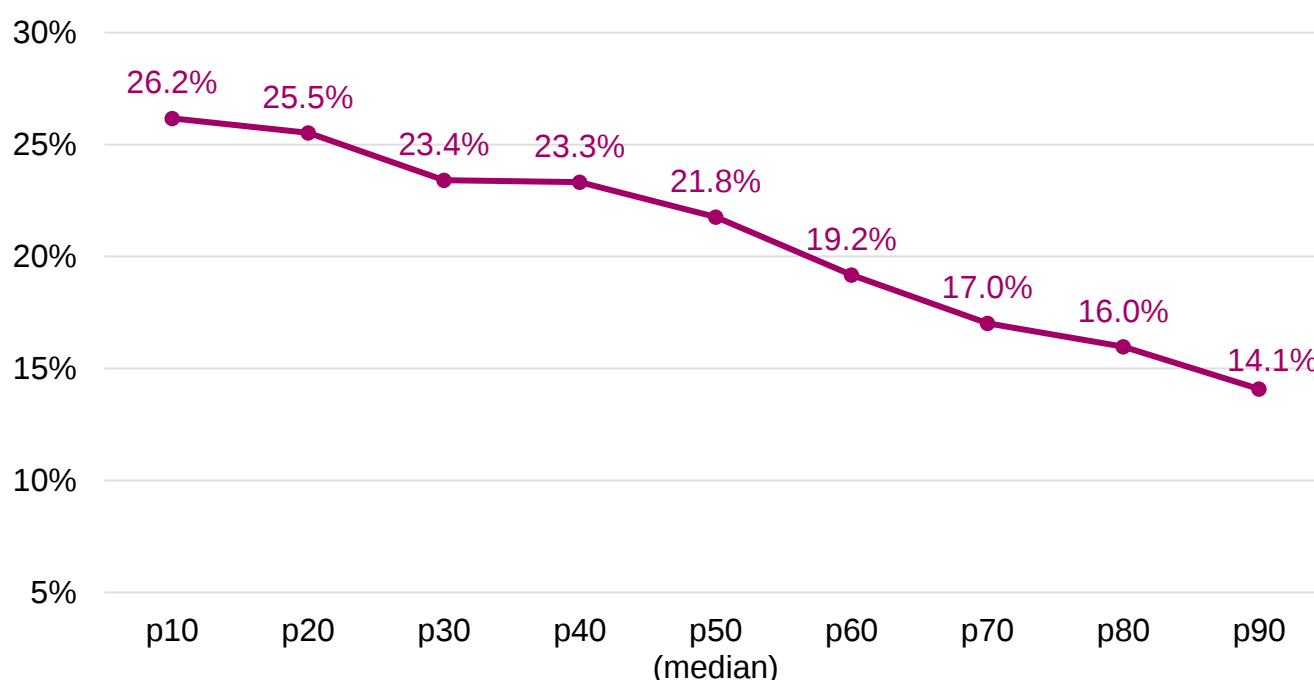
## 2. Side effects of the increasing wage floor

## 2.1 Care worker real term hourly rate change

Chart 5 shows that the real term hourly pay for care workers among the bottom 10% of earners increased by 26.2% between March 2016 to December 2024. This was much greater than for those care workers higher up the pay ladder, where the top 10% of earners increased by approximately 14.1% in real terms. With the increasing wage floor, some social care providers have not maintained the pay differential, with funding going towards increasing the hourly rate of the lowest paid workers and higher paid staff receiving slower pay growth.

**Chart 5. Care worker real term hourly rate change by percentile distribution, March 2016 to December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



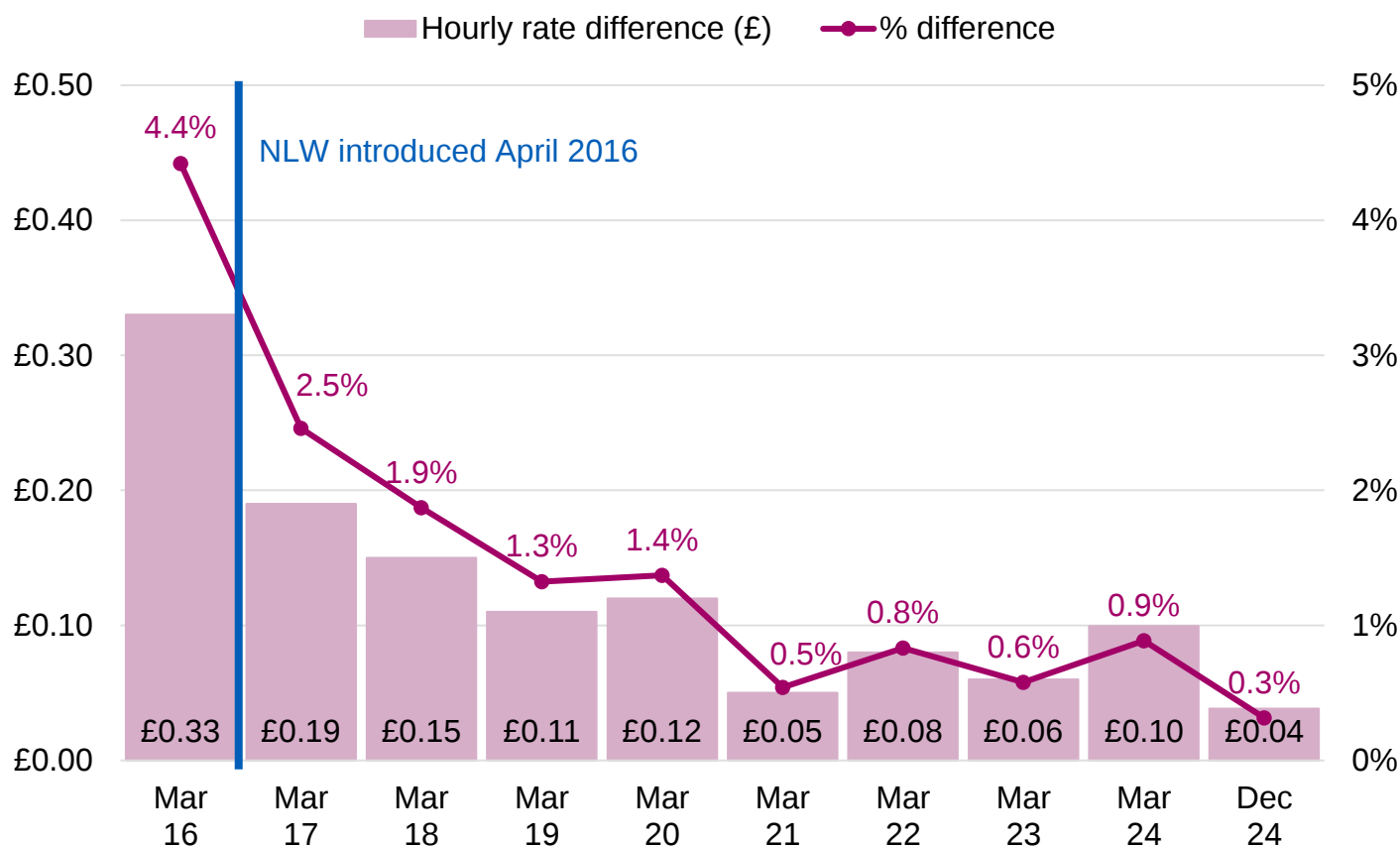
## 2.2 Care worker pay by experience in the adult social care sector

Chart 6 below compares the hourly rate of care workers based on their experience in the adult social care sector. In March 2016, care workers with five or more years of experience in the sector could expect an hourly rate which was around 33 pence higher, on average, than a care worker with less than a year of experience. This was equivalent to an increase of 4.4%. However, since March 2016, the experience pay gap has reduced to just 4 pence (or 0.3%) per hour by December 2024.

It will continue to be challenging for providers to reward workers with more experience, greater responsibilities, or those who are more qualified that are already paid above the NLW rate as the NLW rate continues to increase.

**Chart 6. Average care worker pay by experience in the sector (less than one year vs five years or more), March 2016 to December 2024**

Source: ASC-WDS unweighted data, March 2016 to December 2024



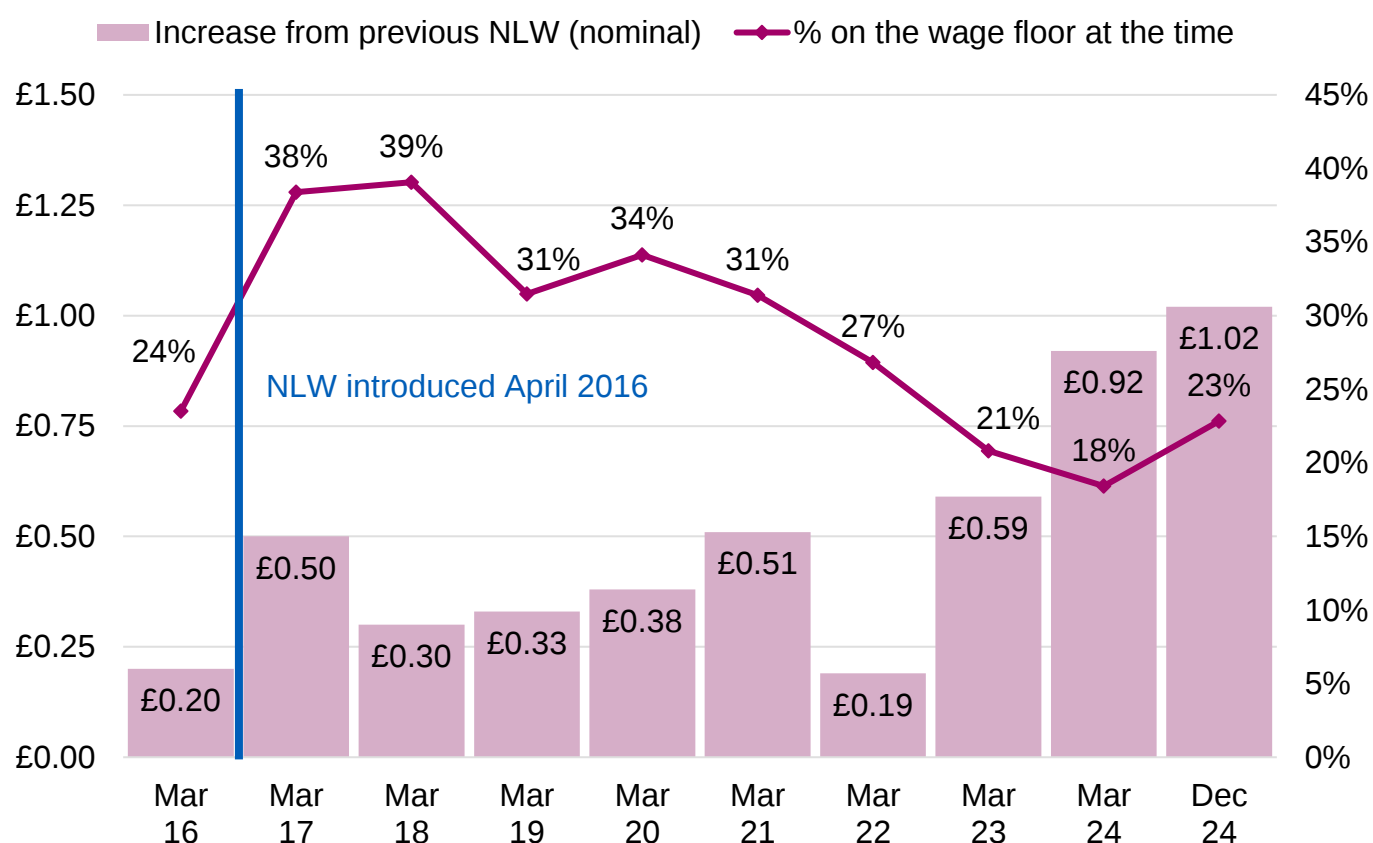
## 2.3 Proportion of care workers on the wage floor

Another potential side effect of the larger NLW increments is a higher proportion of care workers on the wage floor.

Chart 7 below shows that after the introduction of the NLW, the proportion of care workers on the wage floor increased steeply from 24% prior to its introduction in 2017, to 38% in March 2017. Since March 2021, the proportion of care workers on the wage floor has typically decreased and it was 18% in March 2024, the lowest proportion since 2016. However, this increased to 23% by December 2024.

**Chart 7. Proportion of care workers on the wage floor, March 2016 to December 2024**

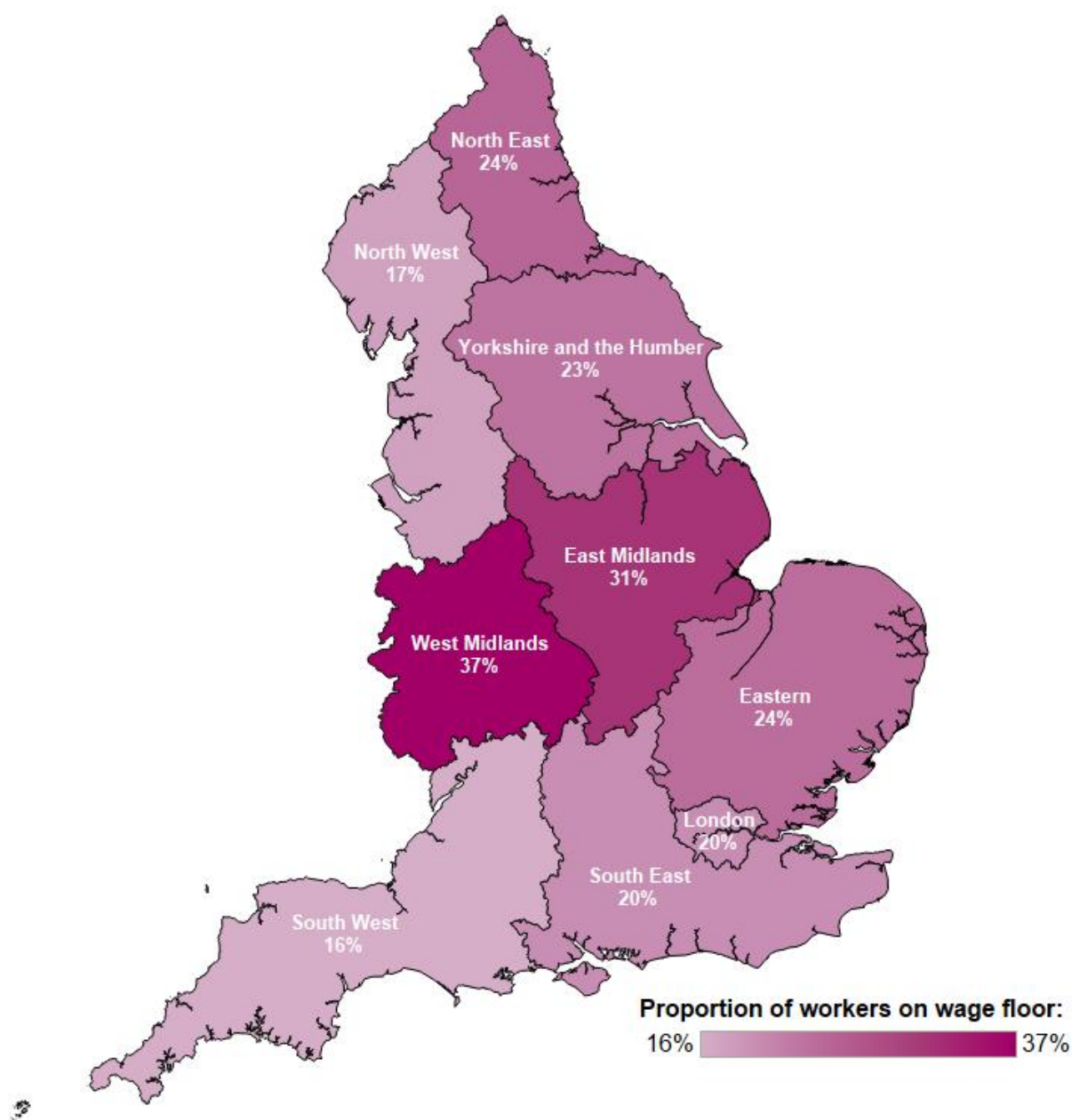
Source: Skills for Care estimates



The proportion of care workers on or under the wage floor varied greatly by location. Map 2 below shows the proportion of care workers who were paid on the wage floor by region. The West Midlands (37%) had the highest proportion of care workers being paid on the wage floor overall while the South West (16%) had the lowest proportion.

## Map 2. Proportion of independent sector care workers who were paid on the wage floor by region, December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates



## 2.4 Comparison to household expenditure, by region

Table 2 compares the average weekly take-home pay of a care worker, to the average weekly expenditure per person<sup>2</sup> (used here as a proxy for the cost of living) at regional level.

<sup>2</sup> [Family spending workbook 3: expenditure by region](#): financial year ending March 2023, Office for National Statistics (Table A33)

The table shows that, in general, average care worker pay varies according to the cost of living in each region, i.e. care worker pay is higher in regions where the cost of living is higher. However, the cost of living shows more regional variation than care worker pay. As a result, in regions where the cost of living was lower (e.g. the North East), average care worker pay was relatively high compared to the cost of living.

**Table 2. Weekly take-home pay of a care worker vs weekly expenditure per person, March 2023 to December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates and ONS data\*

| Region                   | Average weekly expenditure per person | Average weekly take home care worker pay | Difference |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------|
| North East               | £196                                  | £387                                     | £191       |
| London                   | £249                                  | £413                                     | £164       |
| West Midlands            | £218                                  | £379                                     | £160       |
| North West               | £227                                  | £383                                     | £156       |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | £225                                  | £378                                     | £153       |
| Eastern                  | £246                                  | £392                                     | £147       |
| East Midlands            | £232                                  | £377                                     | £144       |
| South West               | £255                                  | £381                                     | £126       |
| South East               | £274                                  | £379                                     | £123       |

\* Note: ONS data has been adjusted to account for inflation (CPI) between March 2023 and December 2024.

## 2.5 The Real Living Wage

Although the wage floor is increasing and boosting the pay of most care workers, 48% of care workers were paid under the Real Living Wage in December 2024. This was a higher proportion than in March 2024 (40%).

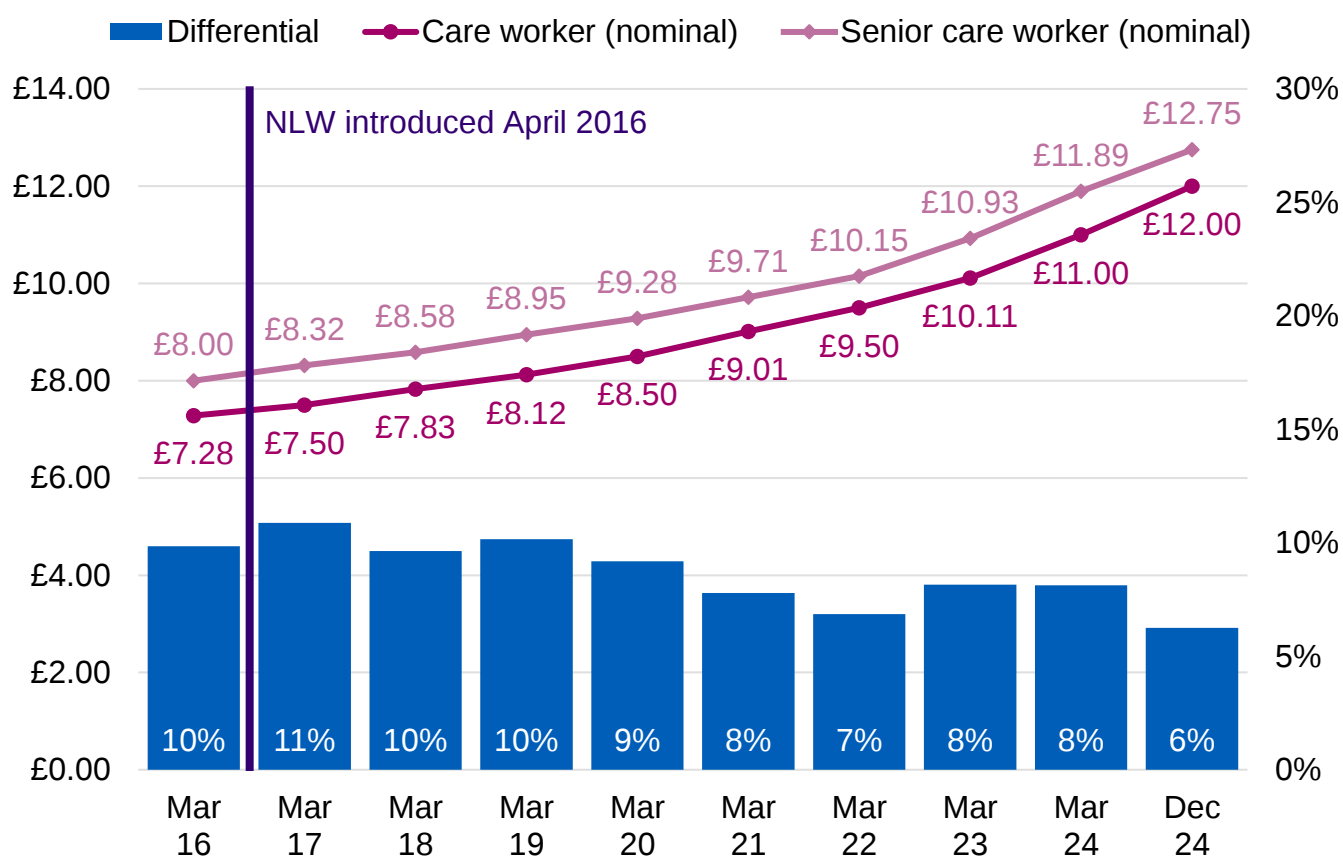
## 2.6 Pay differentials between care workers and senior care workers

In addition to social care employers funding the pay rises of the lowest paid workers to comply with the NLW, they are likely to try to increase the pay of other workers to maintain the pay differentials between job roles and other providers. This section investigates the median hourly rate and pay differentials between care workers and senior care workers.

Over the period from March 2016 to December 2024, care workers received an hourly rate increase of 65%, while senior care worker hourly rates increased by 59%. Chart 8 below shows that the pay differential between these two job roles has decreased over time. The difference in pay peaked at 11% in 2017 but has decreased to 6% as at December 2024.

**Chart 8. Median senior care worker and care worker nominal hourly pay trend and differential, March 2016 to December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



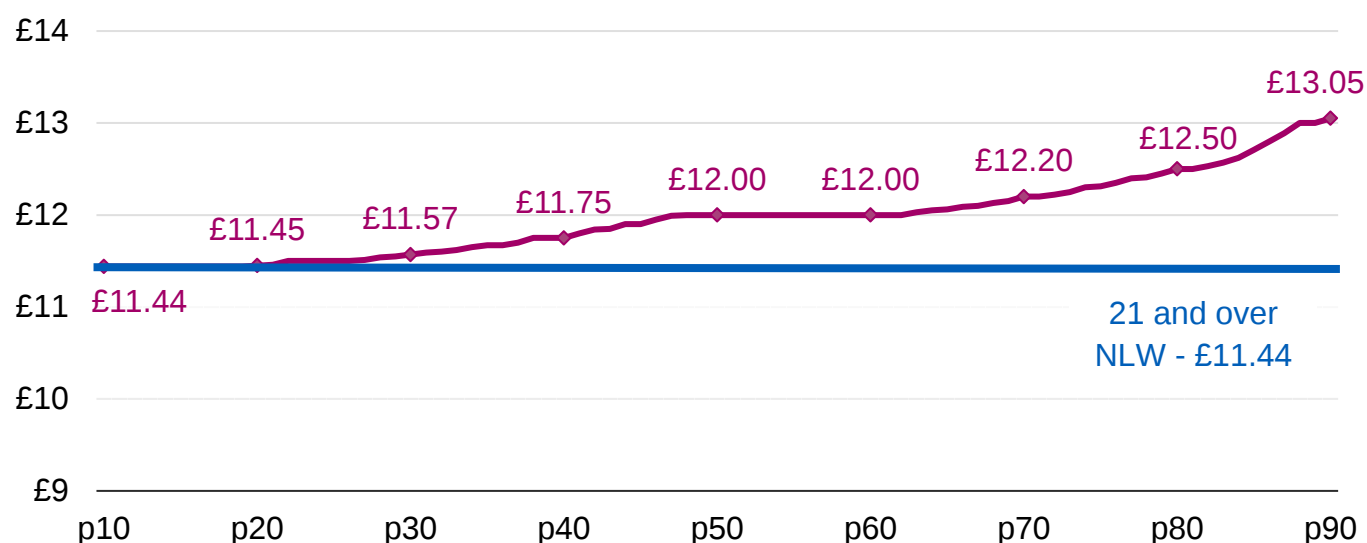
## 2.7 Under 21s

Approximately 3% of the adult social care workforce were under 21 years old (3% of care workers) in December 2024 and were therefore not entitled to the 21 and over NLW pay rate of £11.44.

While not directly benefitting from the NLW, over 80% of care workers under the age of 21 were paid more than the £11.44 per hour rate. This is clear evidence that social care employers are voluntarily rewarding workers aged under 21 with an increased rate of pay, as well as those aged 21 and over.

**Chart 9. Care workers aged under 21 hourly rate distribution, as at December 2024**

Source: Skills for Care estimates



## 2.8 Comparison with other sectors

Social care has been defined as a low-paying industry by the Low Pay Commission (LPC) every year since the 'First Report of the Low Pay Commission' on the National Minimum Wage in 1998 and remains so in their latest report in 2024<sup>3</sup>.

The introduction of, and subsequent increase in, the NLW will have the most significant impact on the lowest-paying sectors. Unless the higher-paying sectors can increase wages at the same rate, adult social care will become proportionally closer to these other sectors in terms of pay. As the NLW rate continues to increase, more sectors are likely to begin to cluster close to the NLW rate. This could reduce the issue of pay as a barrier to entering the adult social care workforce. However, it could equally mean that roles in other sectors with low pay will grow closer in pay to social care filled posts than they were before.

Chart 10 below compares median care worker hourly pay to some of the other lowest paid jobs in the wider UK economy (as defined by the Low Pay Commission), as well as healthcare assistants (HCAs) due to the similarities in the roles. Although these sources (ASC-WDS, ONS<sup>4</sup> and NHS<sup>5</sup>) were published at different times the data collection periods overlap and are therefore comparable. As at December 2024, median care worker pay (£12.00) was 36 pence above the 10th percentile across the whole economy, however, it was 50 pence below the 20th percentile.

<sup>3</sup> Low Pay Commission Report 2024: Table A3.2: Low-paying industries and occupation definition  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/679ce5e8a9ee53687470a34e/Low\\_Pay\\_Commission\\_2024\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/679ce5e8a9ee53687470a34e/Low_Pay_Commission_2024_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> ONS: PROV - Occupation SOC20 (4) Table 14.5a Hourly pay - Gross 2024  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/occupation4digitsoc2010ashtable14>

<sup>5</sup> NHS: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/pay-scales-202425>

As at December 2024, median care worker pay was 4 pence higher than median hourly pay for sales and retail assistants. It was also 3 pence higher than cleaners and domestics and 36 pence higher than kitchen and catering assistants. Median care worker pay was 8 pence lower than Band 2 HCAs both new to the role and with more than 2 years' experience, while it was 31 pence lower than Band 3 HCAs who were new to their role and £1.13 lower than Band 3 HCAs with more than 2 years' experience.

This analysis was previously shown for the 2023/24 financial year in Chapter 5 of our annual report [The State of the Adult Social Sector and Workforce in England](#), published in October 2024. There is little difference in the findings, however the difference between median hourly pay for care workers and Band 3 HCAs new to the role decreased from 67p in the previous analysis to 31p in December 2024.

### Chart 10. Median independent sector hourly care worker pay in adult social care and selected low paying jobs across the wider UK economy, as at December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (April 2024) and NHS agenda for change pay data (2024/25)

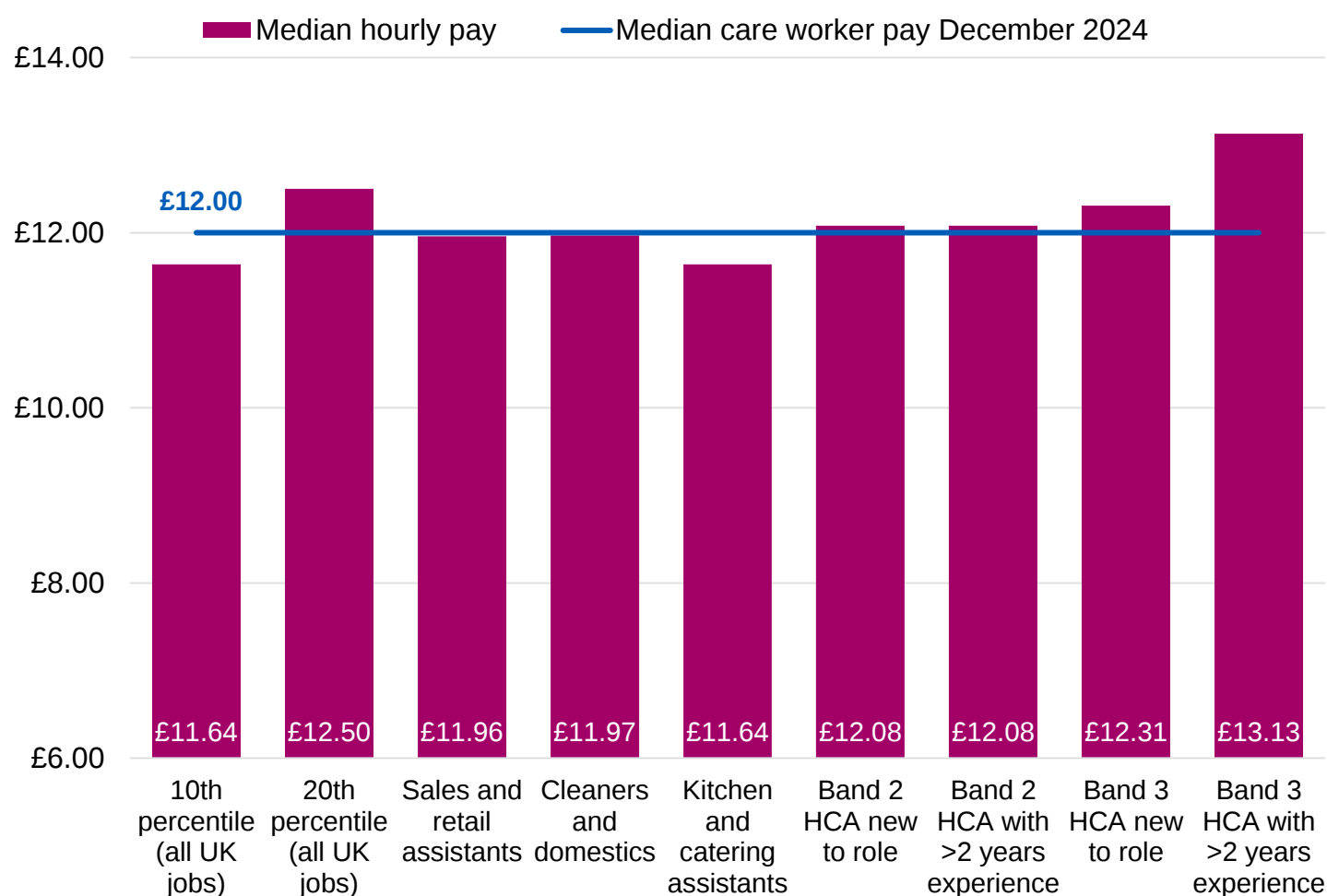


Chart 11 below shows the percentage change in nominal pay for the same job roles as in Chart 10, between 2023/24 and December 2024. Independent sector care worker pay for the 2023/24

reporting period was derived as at March 2024. Comparable data from the ONS and NHS have used the most recent available. The care worker median pay increase (9.1%) was similar to the 10th percentile (8.8%) and higher than the 20th percentile (8.3%). This was slightly higher than sales and retail assistants at 8.7% and lower than cleaners and domestic workers at 9.7%. Although HCAs are paid more, their pay increase was much lower compared to the other job roles, with Band 2 and Band 3 HCAs new to the role and HCAs with more than 2 years of experience having an increase of 5.5%. Kitchen and catering assistants had the highest increase at 9.8%.

### Chart 11. Percentage change in independent sector nominal median care worker pay compared to other job roles, March 2024 to December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (April 2024) and NHS agenda for change pay data (2024/25)

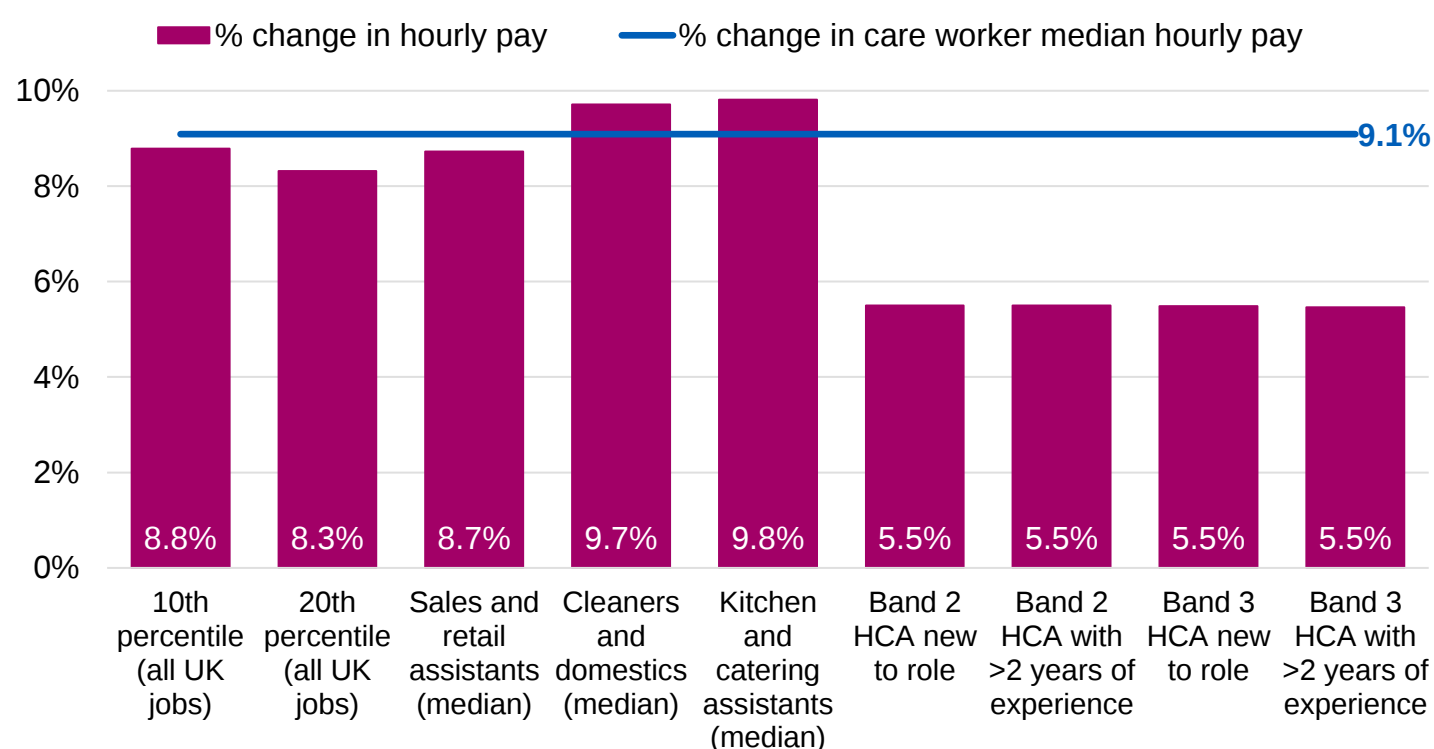
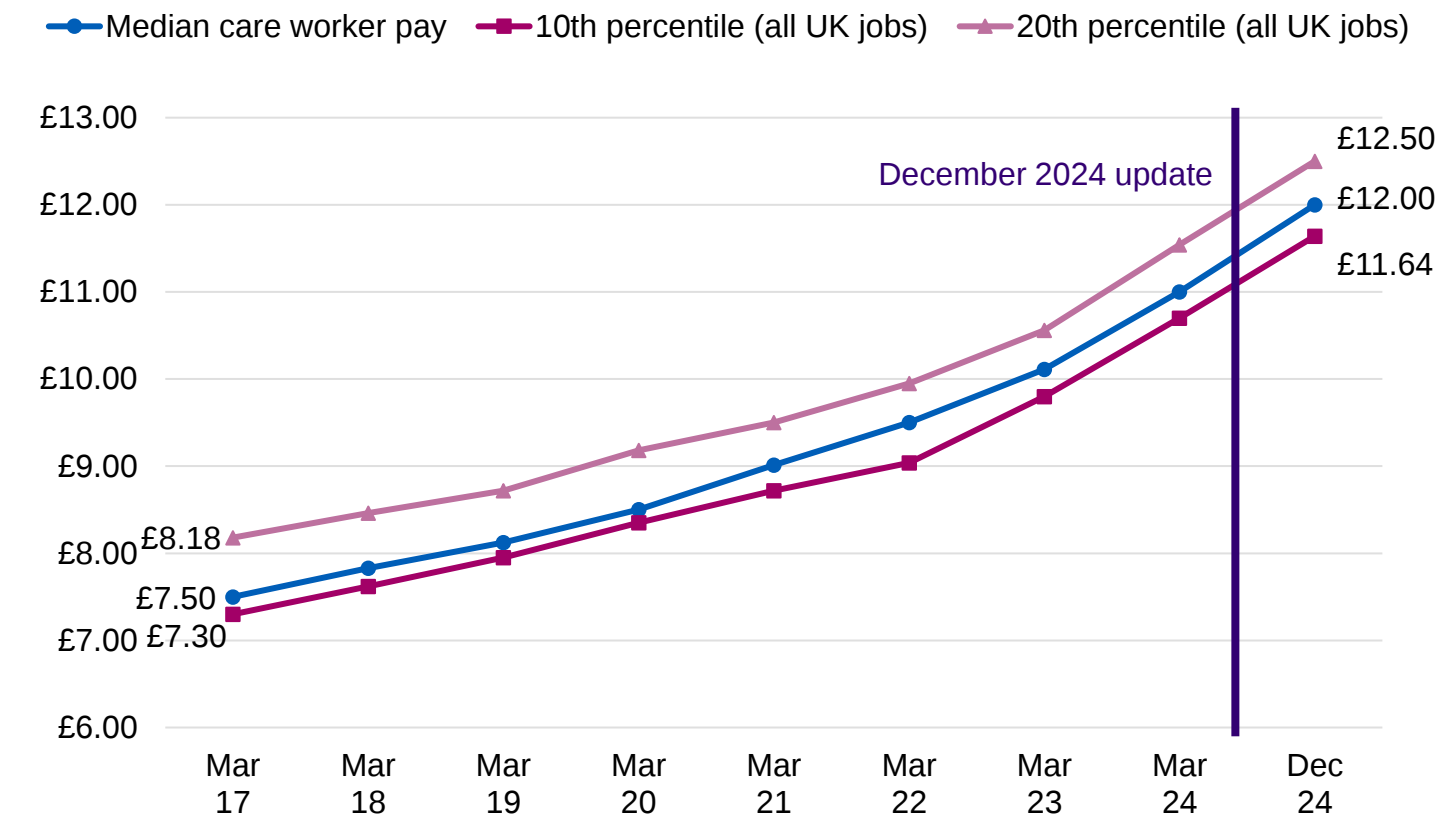


Chart 12 below shows the trend of median care worker pay compared with the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> percentile across the whole UK economy between March 2017 and December 2024. Care worker pay has remained between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> percentiles over time. An update of March 2025 data will be available in the next 'The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England' report, due to be published in October 2025.

**Chart 12. Nominal median independent sector care worker pay compared with 10<sup>th</sup> percentile (all UK jobs) and 20<sup>th</sup> percentile (all UK jobs), March 2017 to December 2024**  
Source: Skills for Care estimates, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (April 2016 to April 2024)



### 3. The impact of the NLW rate from April 2025 (£12.21)

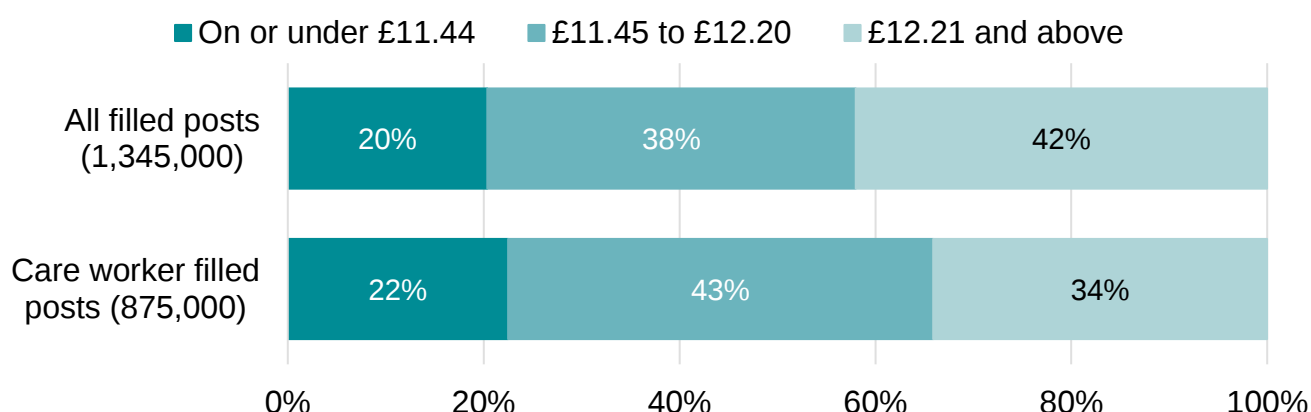
On 1 April 2025, the mandatory NLW will increase to £12.21 for workers aged 21 and over.

Chart 13 shows that, as at December 2024, over half (58%) of independent sector workers, including two thirds (66%) of care workers, were paid less than the upcoming mandatory NLW rate. This equates to around 780,000 filled posts directly affected by the upcoming increase in the NLW, including 575,000 care worker filled posts.

Many of the 42% of workers that were already paid on or above the 2025 NLW rate prior to its introduction may also receive a pay rise if pay differentials are to be maintained.

### Chart 13. Hourly pay distribution of workers prior to the 2025 NLW, as at December 2024

Source: Skills for Care estimates



## 3.1 Adult social care providers

As at December 2024, around 93% of adult social care providers in the independent sector were paying at least some of their workers below the upcoming mandatory £12.21 NLW and will therefore be directly affected by its introduction. The remaining providers may also be indirectly affected if they want to maintain the pay differential between themselves and other employers, as well as between job roles within their own organisation.

From 6 April 2025, changes to UK employers' National Insurance contributions (NICs) will mean that adult social care employers will face increased costs to accommodate the increase in National Insurance for their workers. At the same time, Employment Allowance will increase, minimising the impact on small businesses Skills for Care will continue to monitor the status and effects of these changes.

# Glossary

## 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> percentile

Percentiles are used to analyse a range distribution. The median (average) is the middle, or the 50th percentile (p50), meaning the pay at which half of care workers earned more than that amount, and half earned less. The 10th percentile (p10) is the value at which 10% of workers earned less than that value and 90% earned more. The 20th percentile (p20) is the value at which 20% of workers earned less than that value and 80% earned more, and so on.

## ASC-WDS

The Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (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 ASC-WDS collects information on the size and structure of the whole adult social care sector, including the types of care services provided, as well as a detailed picture of the workforce, including retention, demographics, pay rates and qualifications, both by job role and employment status.

## Consumer Price Index (CPI)

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the official measure of inflation of consumer prices in the UK. We apply the percentage change in the CPI between the latest period and each historical period to adjust historical pay figures for inflation. This allows for comparison in real terms.

## Job role

ASC-WDS users can select one main job role for each filled post at their establishment. We then use their main job role to categorise workers into the groupings below.

- **Managers** - Grouping of individual managerial roles which include senior management, middle management, first line manager, registered manager, deputy manager, supervisor, team leader, data governance manager, IT manager, IT service desk manager, and managers and staff in care-related but not care-providing roles.
- **Regulated professions** - Grouping of individual roles which require registration with a regulatory body. This includes social worker, occupational therapist, registered nurse, allied health professional, safeguarding and reviewing officer and registered nursing associate.
- **Direct care** - Grouping of individual direct care providing roles which include senior care worker, care worker, support worker, community support and outreach work, employment support, advice guidance and advocacy, nursing assistant and other care-providing job roles\*.
- **Other** - Grouping of individual roles which includes administrative or office staff not care-providing, ancillary staff not care-providing, other non-care-providing job roles\*, activities worker or co-ordinator, occupational therapist assistant, assessment officer, care co-ordinator, any children's/young people's job role, learning and development lead, data analyst, IT and digital support, and software developer.

\*Other care/non-care providing role is a category directly chosen by employers submitting data and is used when a role does not fit into another selection in their opinion.

### Median pay

The median is a type of average - it indicates the middle value of a range. The median is different from the mean average, which is calculated by summing all the values in a range and dividing by the number of values.

### National Living Wage (NLW)

The National Living Wage (NLW) is set by the Government and is the amount of money per hour employed workers are legally entitled to. It was first introduced on 1 April 2016 for workers aged 25 and over. In 2021, the age threshold for the NLW was reduced from 25 years to 23 years. This was reduced further in 2024 to 21 years.

### Nominal pay

'Nominal' pay shows the actual pay rates as they were at the time. This isn't adjusted for inflation.

### Real Living Wage (RLW)

The Real Living Wage (RLW) is set by the [Living Wage Foundation](#) charity each Autumn and is separate to the NLW. This is a voluntary scheme which employers can sign up to; the hourly rate is independently calculated to reflect the basic cost of living.

### Real term pay

'Real term' pay means that pay rates have been adjusted to take inflation into account. Inflation adjustments have been calculated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the official measure of inflation of consumer prices in the UK. Inflation adjustments are expressed in prices in line with the latest reporting period i.e. if the latest analysed data is from December 2024, adjustments will be expressed in prices as at December 2024.

### Sector

Within our reports we use four sector groupings:

- **Local authority** - The workforce employed by local authorities in England.
- **Independent** - The workforce employed by private sector, voluntary and other services in England. ASC-WDS users can select one of four different sectors to describe their establishment: local authority, private sector, voluntary/charity and other.
- **Direct payment recipients (DPRs)** - The workforce employed by direct payment recipients. These employers are individuals who receive direct payments from their local authority to pay for their care.
- **NHS** - The workforce employed by the NHS to undertake adult social care related work. Please note, the NHS sector is only included when analysing the size of the whole adult social care sector, workforce characteristics are not analysed for this part of the workforce.

## Service

ASC-WDS users can select one main service and many additional services from a list of 36 different types that describe their establishment. We use their main service to categorise establishments into the groupings below:

- **CQC Care home with nursing** - Care homes that provide nursing services regulated by the CQC.
- **CQC Care only home** - Care homes that do not provide nursing services regulated by the CQC.
- **CQC Non residential** - A grouping of non-residential CQC-regulated services which includes domiciliary care, extra care housing and supported living services.
- **CQC Other** - A grouping of other CQC-regulated services not in the above categories which includes shared lives and community based services amongst others.
- **Non CQC** - A grouping of non-regulated services which includes day care centres, community outreach services and domiciliary services which are not personal care providing such as cooking and cleaning amongst others.

## Wage floor

The wage floor includes any worker who is paid no more than 10p higher than the National Living Wage (NLW) at the time of data collection.

## Workforce estimates

We use data collected by the ASC-WDS to create workforce models that, in turn, allow for estimates of the whole adult social care workforce to be produced. We use ASC-WDS data to make estimates of workforce characteristics (e.g. demographics, pay rates, employment statuses) for each geographical area, service type, employer type and job role combination that we report by. These estimates are then 'weighted' according to the coverage/completeness of ASC-WDS data for the sector in each of the above areas. For example, an area with 50% coverage would use more weighted data in the final analysis than an area with 90% coverage. Using this methodology allows for the analysis to be representative of all adult social care workers, even if the ASC-WDS contains uneven levels of data coverage.

The ASC-WDS is a mandatory return for local authorities and is non-mandatory for the independent sector; therefore, it doesn't have 100% coverage of the adult social care sector. However, it does have a sufficiently large sample to provide a solid basis for creating reliable and precise adult social care sector and workforce estimates at both a national and local level.

Skills for Care is confident in the quality of these estimates and the methodologies used have been peer reviewed by universities and an independent statistician. For a detailed methodology of how these estimates are produced please follow the link below to read more.

# Further resources

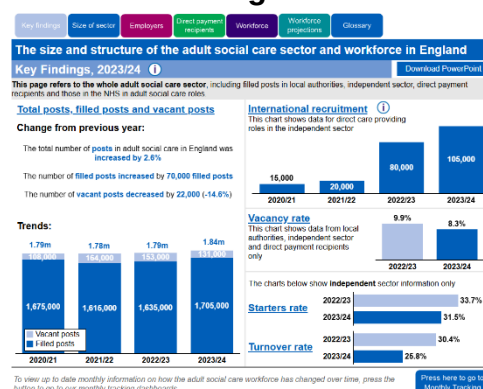
Skills for Care provide outstanding workforce intelligence which the Government, strategic bodies, employers, and individuals rely upon to help them make decisions that will improve outcomes for the people who use care services. The ASC Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is recognised as the leading source of workforce intelligence for adult social care. Skills for Care manages the service on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care and has been collecting information online since 2007. This chapter provides an overview of some of the reports and resources published by our Workforce Intelligence team.

Skills for Care workforce intelligence publications can be found at:  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforceintelligence](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforceintelligence).

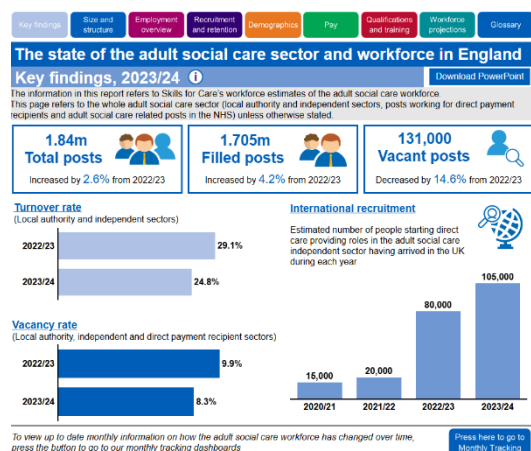
## The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England

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](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/sizeandstructure).

Latest version, July 2024. Updated information is due in July 2025.



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



This visualisation provides comprehensive workforce characteristics about the 1.84 million total 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](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof).

Latest version, October 2024. Updated information is due in October 2025.

## Regional reports

These nine regional reports provide an annual overview of adult social care services and the workforce in each region. Each of these nine reports examines regional findings in light of the findings for England as a whole, which are presented in this report. To access these, please visit  
[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/regionalreports](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/regionalreports).

Latest version, October 2024. Updated information is due in October 2025.

## Monthly monitoring

For monthly updates on key adult social care statistics, including recruitment and retention, filled posts, and international recruitment, please visit <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/Monthly-tracking/Monthly-tracking.aspx>.

## Commission our services

Our Workforce Intelligence team are the experts in adult social care workforce insight. The data we collect in the ASC-WDS gives an unrivalled overview of the adult social care workforce in England. 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.

## How we can help you

- We can partner with you or form part of your project team on tenders and bids. By using our expertise and sector knowledge we can add value to your research or project.
- We can use advanced analytics techniques to help you understand how key outcomes such as CQC scores, turnover and vacancy rates can be improved.
- We can produce bespoke reports and analysis to help you solve problems and provide data solutions to help you improve your services.
- We can provide a detailed analysis into the adult social care workforce in your local area or look at performance in comparison to other areas.
  - You can request a feed of data to enhance or improve a product or service.

## 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, visit [our website](#).

All analysts leading on the production of this report are certified statisticians, meaning we work to the standard of the 'five safes'. 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.

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.

In 2023 Skills for Care became an official statistics provider, having been added to the [Official Statistics Order 2023](#). We, Skills for Care's Workforce Intelligence team, are committed to the

three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value, as well as the principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics. Please see our website for our full [statement](#).

For more information about the services listed above, please email:  
[analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk).

## **A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England**

The Workforce Strategy, published in July 2024, was developed by Skills for Care in collaboration with the adult social care sector – including people who draw on care and support. It seeks to set out where we are now, the drivers and case for change, and where we want to make changes to build the workforce of the future.

The recommendations and commitments in the Workforce Strategy fall into three areas: [attract and retain](#); [train](#); [transform](#). The attract and retain area includes a focus on [pay and terms and conditions](#) of the unregulated social care workforce.

For further information about the Workforce Strategy, please visit  
<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Workforce-Strategy/Home>.



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