The Approved Mental Health Professional Workforce in the adult social care sector

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Foreword

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The Chief Social Workers Office is delighted to once again support the publication of the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) workforce data summary for 2020-21. This is the third year that Skills for Care and the AMHP leads network have produced a summary of the AMHP workforce. Having this information helps us understand the workforce, demographic characteristics and retention rates of our AMHP workforce and helps us plan to provide the best mental health support to the people that need it. We now have clear information to consider what actions the sector will need to take to ensure we have the right number and right people in place to undertake this essential role, both now and in the years ahead.

This information has been very useful to our colleagues working on the role and number of AMHPs required within the Mental Health Act Review white paper, both in the recommendations produced and the impact statement prepared alongside it.

This year AMHP services have had to deal with the very substantial challenge of Covid 19. We commissioned our friends at BASW and the AMHP Leads network to report on how this has affected AMHP services. This was published in December 2020. We know that detention rates were increasing and AMHPs were dealing with increased challenges in local systems before Covid 19. We have been very impressed with how the AMHP workforce has risen to these challenges and provided the best service that they can.

The data held in this report helps in the workforce planning of our mental health services, ensuring that Social Workers continue to train as AMHP’s and we can demonstrate the need to invest in AMHP services.

None of this would be possible without the excellent collaborative working between the Department of Health and Social Care, Skills for Care, the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads network and of course the local authorities who responded to the data request through their ASC-WDS returns. Thank you for your work.
Skills for Care, as the leading source of adult social care workforce intelligence, helps to create a skilled, valued and better-led adult social care workforce. We provide the practical tools and support to help adult social care organisations in England recruit, retain, develop and lead their workforce. We work with employers and related services to ensure dignity and respect are at the heart of service delivery.

This report presents data collected via a dedicated Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) leads survey, as at December 2020. Skills for Care conducts this survey on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care and the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network. This report also includes data on social workers from local authorities collected via the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) as at September 2019.

We have carried out this survey since 2017, and it has provided important information for the Department of Health and Social Care and the AMHP Leads Network to better understand this key role. The survey provides data on the overall number of AMHPs and intelligence about their role and working patterns. The findings from this survey have been used along with data collected by the ASC-WDS on the characteristics of individual social workers.

An AMHP is a registered professional (social worker, nurse, occupational therapist or psychologist) who has undertaken additional training, approved by the Secretary of State and regulated by Social Work England (formerly by The Health and Care Professions Council - HCPC), to carry out specific duties under the Mental Health Act 1983. In addition, the AMHP will have been approved by a local social services authority to act on its behalf in carrying out these duties.

AMHPs are (amongst other duties) responsible for setting up and coordinating assessments under the Mental Health Act and, if necessary, making applications to detain (“section”) people in hospital for assessment and treatment of their mental health needs.

This year the survey was completed by 98% of local authorities in England (145 out of 148). The results of this survey, and data from the ASC-WDS, enables Skills for Care, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network and other stakeholders to have clear, robust workforce intelligence and to better understand this key role. This information is vital to help improve the planning and quality of social care services, which will improve outcomes for people who use these services, both now and in the future.
Findings from the AMHP Survey

Overview of findings from the AMHP survey, 2020

- The survey found that 95% of AMHPs were Social Workers.
- The majority of AMHPs were employed in the local authority sector (80%), 15% were employed in the NHS and 4% agency and freelance.
- Around two thirds (65%) of AMHPs combine their role with another role while around one in four AMHPs solely perform the role of an AMHP (24%). The remaining 11% were not primarily working as an AMHP or regularly as an AMHP.
- The survey showed that 15% of AMHPs only work out-of-hours, for example in emergency duty teams.

1.1 Introduction

The survey collected data from 145 out of 148 local authorities in 2020, a 98% return rate. For this survey, Rutland was included with Leicestershire, the Isles of Scilly were included with Cornwall and City of London was included with Hackney as these local authorities operate a shared service without any of their own AMHP’s.

The raw data from the 145 local authorities showed an overall number of 3,848 AMHPs approved by local authorities. Skills for Care’s modelled estimate for the overall number of approved AMHPs in England was 3,900 (this refers to headcount rather than full time equivalent (FTE)). Chart 1 below compares the estimated overall number of AMHP’s between 2018 and 2020.

Chart 1. Estimated number of AMHP’s and percentage change by year

Source. AMHP’s survey December 2020

Please note that the number of AMHPs in previous years was checked for data quality, and therefore these estimates may differ from previous publications. Some local authorities showed significant volatility in the number of AMHPs between years, which was determined to be incorrect at the time of collection. To estimate the number of AMHPs from local authorities that did not respond to the survey, or were received incorrectly in previous years, we have modelled the relationship between social worker jobs (using data from the ASC-WDS) and the number of AMHPs (using the survey). These estimates were checked against the average number of AMHPs between years if a local authority had responded previously.
1.2 AMHP comparison 2019 to 2020

The chart below shows the change in the estimated number of AMHP’s between 2019 and 2020. The overall number of AMHPs increased by 1%. Most regions showed a similar pattern of increase, and this was most evident in the North West (up 6% since 2019).

Chart 2. Change in the estimated number of AMHPs between 2019 and 2020
Source. AMHP survey December 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>NHS</th>
<th>Agency or freelance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and the Humber</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Findings from the AMHPs Survey

The survey showed that the majority of AMHPs were employed by the local authority (80%), compared to 15% who were employed by the NHS and the remaining 4% who were agency or freelance workers. This pattern was reflected in each region, however there was some variance, for example the Eastern region had much higher proportion employed by the NHS and London had a higher proportion employed by agencies or freelance.

Chart 3. Proportion of AMHPs by employer
Source. AMHP survey December 2020
The survey found that 95% of AMHPs were social workers, with 4% employed registered nurses along with less than 1% occupational therapists and very few psychologists. In over half (59%) of local authorities, all AMHPs were employed as social workers, this means no AMHPs from these local authorities were from nursing, occupational therapy or psychology professions.

Chart 4. Proportion of AMHPs by profession
Source. AMHP survey December 2020

Around two thirds (65%) of AMHPs combine their role with another role, while around one in four AMHPs solely perform the role of an AMHP (24%). The remaining 11% were not primarily working as an AMHP or regularly as an AMHP. Therefore, of the overall 3,900 AMHPs, around 450 were not regularly performing the role (e.g. seasonal, senior management working occasional duty shifts).

Chart 5. Proportion of AMHPs by status of role
Source. AMHP survey December 2020
The survey showed that 15% of AMHPs only work out-of-hours, for example in emergency duty teams. This proportion varied from 7% in the South East to 25% in the North East.

The survey also asked local authorities whether they shared their daytime and/or out-of-hours AMHP service with any other authority. Of the 145 local authorities that responded 71% of authorities did not share services, 23% shared out-of-hours services while 6% of authorities shared both daytime and out-of-hours services. None only shared daytime services without also sharing out of hours services.

**Chart 6. Proportion of local authorities that share AMHP services**
*Source. AMHP survey December 2020*
Findings from the ASC-WDS

Overview of social workers and qualified AMHPs from ASC-WDS data 2020

- Skills for Care estimate that of those qualified as an AMHP 33% were aged 55 and over compared to 23% of social workers.
- Around two thirds (61%) of those qualified as an AMHP had ten or more years experience in the social care sector.
- 85% of AMHPs remained in their job and local authority between 2019 and 2020.

2.1 Introduction

The Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) is the new name for the updated National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) service. The NMDS-SC had been collecting information about social care providers and their staff since 2006. The NMDS-SC was dated in its look and feel but had performed well and provided Skills for Care and the Government with high-quality workforce and sector intelligence to help shape and inform the sector for 14 years.

The ASC-WDS will maintain equally high standards by giving our users an improved experience and ensuring that our service reflects the needs of our users, whilst delivering the level of data and intelligence that the data set has been created to collect. For more information about the ASC-WDS please see www.skillsforcare.org.uk/workforceintelligence

The ASC-WDS continues to collect 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.

For the past eight years, ASC-WDS has been the means of collection for the adult workforce data return for local authorities. In 2020, for the eighth year in a row, all 151 local authorities in England met the criteria of a full ASC-WDS return for people working in adult social services departments.

This chapter focuses on social workers and AMHPs, as collected in the ASC-WDS. Social workers are shown alongside AMHPs because the survey, detailed in the previous chapter, showed that 95% of AMHPs were social workers.

Within the ASC-WDS, we were able to identify 1,263 social workers that were employed within local authorities and defined as an AMHP or held an AMHP qualification. We have used these records to identify some of the key characteristics of AMHPs.
2.2 AMHP Demographics

2.2.1 Age

The ASC-WDS showed that around 23% of social workers were aged 55 and above, and this proportion is higher for those qualified as an AMHP (33%). From a workforce planning perspective this group may retire within the next ten years. The ASC-WDS also showed there were notably fewer qualified AMHPs under 30 compared to social workers.

Chart 7. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by age group
Source. ASC-WDS September 2020

2.2.2 Gender

Across England, the AMHP role had a higher proportion of people identifying as male (27%) compared to social workers overall (18%). This difference was greatest in the South East region (18% male social workers / 35% male AMHPs) and lowest in the South West region (20% male social workers / 25% male AMHPs).

Chart 8. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by gender
Source. ASC-WDS September 2020
2.2.3 Ethnicity

The ASC-WDS showed that 73% of social workers identified as being of white ethnicity and 27% identified as being of an ethnicity that was black, Asian, mixed or minority ethnic (BAME). Social workers qualified to perform as an AMHP were less ethnically diverse (21% BAME) than social workers overall. London showed the highest ethnic diversity with 60% of social workers and 55% of AMHPs from BAME backgrounds. Whereas in the North East, diversity was lower with 6% of social workers and AMHPs from BAME backgrounds. These proportions generally reflect the population of these regions. The West Midlands had the largest difference in BAME ethnicity between all social workers (39%) and AMHPs (27%).

Chart 9. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by ethnicity
Source. ASC-WDS September 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Social Workers</th>
<th>AMHPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 AMHP retention

To get an understanding of workforce retention, we tracked social workers between September 2019 and September 2020. This method used a unique anonymous identifier for each worker and includes 800 AMHPs employed by local authorities.

The majority (85%) of AMHPs remained in post at the same local authority. The remaining 15% represent those who changed their circumstances. These changes include leaving the local authority sector entirely (9%), moving into a new role (4%) or moving to a new local authority (2%).

Chart 10. AMHP retention in local authorities
Source: ASC-WDS September 2019 and September 2020

- Still an AMHP in the same local authority: 85%
- Leave the local authority sector: 9%
- Move to a new role: 4%
- Move to a new LA: 2%
2.4 Experience in current role

ASC-WDS data also allows us to look at how long social workers have been performing their current role. The data shows that those who hold an AMHP qualification had generally been in post for a longer time. The average experience in current role for an AMHP was 8.2 years compared to 5.7 years for all social workers. Of those with an AMHP qualification, 35% had ten years or more experience, compared to 21% of those without the AMHP qualification. The main reason for this trend is that only social workers with at least two years post-qualification experience can embark on AMHP training.

Chart 11. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in role*
*Source. ASC-WDS September 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience in role</th>
<th>All social workers</th>
<th>AMHP qualified</th>
<th>Average (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6 years</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Those with less than two years in their current role in may have been trained as an AMHP in a previous role.

2.5 Experience in sector

Chart 11 shows that social workers with an AMHP qualification had more experience in the adult social care sector than social workers in general. The average experience in sector for an AMHP is 13.8 years compared to 10.3 years for all social workers. The largest difference was in the 10 or more years experience group where 61% of AMHPs have this level of experience compared to 41% of social workers. Again, this suggests that social workers can progress to becoming AMHPs later in their career.

Chart 12. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector
*Source. ASC-WDS September 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience in sector</th>
<th>All social workers</th>
<th>AMHP qualified</th>
<th>Average (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1 year</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All social workers AMHP qualified
2.6 Pay

The chart below compares the average salary of a social worker to those identified as an AMHP. As AMHP’s tend to have a greater amount of experience in the sector (shown above), only those with five years or more experience in adult social care are included in both groups. It is also acknowledged that many local authorities pay a premium for practicing AMHPs as either a fixed payment or an incremental increase, but this is inconsistent across the sector.

Across England, the average pay for an AMHP was £38,900, which was 8% higher than the £36,100 for all social workers. As shown in Chart 13 below, this uplift is still substantial for social workers with the most experience in the sector, at 5% for those with 20 years or more experience.

Chart 13. Average FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs by region
Source. ASC-WDS September 2020.
Note. Only those with five years or more experience in the sector were included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social workers</th>
<th>£36,100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMHP qualified</td>
<td>£38,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 14. Average FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector
Source. ASC-WDS September 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 to 6 years</th>
<th>£36,900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 to 9 years</td>
<td>£38,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19 years</td>
<td>£38,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years or more</td>
<td>£39,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Who wants to be an Approved Mental Health Professional? – King’s College London – 2018
Further resources

Skills for Care provides outstanding workforce intelligence relied upon by the Government, strategic bodies, employers and individuals to help them make decisions that will improve outcomes for the people who use care services. The ASC Workforce Data Set (ASCWDS) is recognised as the leading source of workforce intelligence for adult social care. This chapter provides an overview of some of the reports and resources published by our Workforce Intelligence team.

Workforce intelligence publications

The size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England
This report 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 report, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/sizeandstructure.
Latest version, August 2020

The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England
This report uses data from the ASC-WDS to explore characteristics of the adult social care sector, including demographic information, recruitment and retention issues, pay rates and qualification and training information. This report also includes information about workforce trends between 2012/13 and 2019/20, including turnover rates, vacancy rates, zero-hours contracts and pay rates. To access this report please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/stateof.
Latest version, October 2020

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.
Latest version, December 2020

Local authority area reports
This collection of summary reports gives an overview of the adult social care sector and workforce in each of the 151 local authority areas in England. They are accompanied by two interactive visualisations which look at individual areas in greater detail. To access these reports, please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/lasummaries.
Latest version, October 2020

Keeping informed
For a bespoke analysis of workforce information at a local level or to answer any specific questions you have about the adult social care workforce please contact: analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk. To be kept up to date with Workforce Intelligence news please join our mailing list by registering with us and selecting ‘Workforce Intelligence publications’. You can also follow us on Twitter @Sfc_NMDS_SC or visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/contactWI.