

Skills for Care data: adult social care workforce growing again, but challenges remain

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The adult social care workforce in England started growing again in 2022-3, according to new data from Skills for Care.

The annual [Size and Structure of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England](#) report from the strategic workforce development body found that the number of filled posts - roles with a person working in them - increased by around 1% (20,000) between April 2022 and March 2023. The previous year, the number of filled posts fell for the first time on record, by around 4% (60,000).

The new figures – based on data from Skills for Care’s Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) and other sources – show that, at the same time, the vacancy rate decreased to 9.9%, or around 152,000 on any given day, compared with 10.6% (around 164,000) the previous year.

The number of vacant posts includes posts vacant in the short term due to recent or anticipated staff turnover, posts created by employers who want to expand their businesses, as well as more persistent vacancies where the offer to potential staff is not sufficiently competitive in the local labour market. Some vacant posts may be covered by agency staff.

Some employers are using international recruitment to help them address recruitment and retention challenges, with around 70,000 people recruited from abroad into direct care-providing roles. [Home Office figures](#) show that around 58,000 received Skilled Worker visas after adult social care was added to the Shortage Occupation List in February 2022. Others will have arrived in the UK via other routes such as family permits.

The level of international recruitment has contributed to the rate of new starters increasing from 32% to 34% in the independent sector.

At the same time, the turnover rate in the independent sector decreased from 32% to 30%. Early evidence from ASC-WDS suggests the turnover rate for international recruits was around half that of people recruited from within the UK.

The total number of filled posts in adult social care in 2022-3 was estimated at 1.635 million. These posts were filled by 1.52m people which is 5.2% of the total workforce

in England, and more than the number of people working in the NHS, schools or food and drink manufacturing.

For independent sector care homes, the number of filled posts was up by 3% (16,000). In independent sector domiciliary care services, the number of filled posts increased by 2% (10,000). There was a small drop in the number of Personal Assistants and posts employed by Local Authorities.

The total number of posts in adult social care in England, including filled posts and staff vacancies, was 1.79 million in 2022-3 - an increase of 0.5% from the previous year.

The figures continue to point to long-term challenges for the social care workforce. If it grows proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population, the number of posts will need to increase by around 445,000 posts to around 2.23 million by 2035.

Oonagh Smyth, CEO of Skills for Care said: “We want to thank everyone who works in social care for the work that they do supporting people to live the lives they choose every day. Social care is a very fulfilling career.

“It is encouraging that the number of filled posts has gone up and the vacancy rate has come down. Nevertheless, the data shared by employers with our Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set still show significant pressure on them to find and keep people with the right values needed to work in care.

“It’s positive that we now have a workforce plan for the NHS, which recognises how health and social care are dependent on each other. Our data support the case for a social care workforce plan, including consideration of terms and conditions to support social care roles to be competitive in local labour markets. This will help to make sure that we have enough people with the right skills in the right places to support people who draw on care and support now, and for future generations.

“Any workforce plan needs to involve a range of partners as social care is a large and diverse sector. Skills for Care is ready to work with local and national Government, employers, people who draw on care and support and our sector partners to help deliver a sustainable plan for the adult social care workforce.

“We’re hugely grateful to all the care providers who share their data with us, as this helps us to build a rich and accurate picture of what’s happening in the sector and identify and address the challenges it faces.”

Notes:

- An embargoed copy of the report is available on request.
- Oonagh Smyth is available for interviews.
- The link to the data in the press release will display our 2021-2 data until the web page is updated with the 2022-23 data on Wednesday 12 July.
- Figures for 2021-2 may be slightly different from those previously published. This is because figures from previous years are retrospectively changed when new information becomes available or methodologies improve.
- Skills for Care will publish more detailed data and analysis of the adult social care sector and workforce in October, in its annual State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England report.