

A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in South East

2023/24

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Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England. We work with employers, Government, and partners to ensure social care has the right people, skills, and support required to deliver the highest quality care and support, now and in the future. Our role is to respond and adapt to the emerging trends and needs within social care, using data and evidence to drive forward wide scale change.

The information within this summary has been produced by Skills for Care using the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS). We use the data collected by the ASC-WDS to create workforce models that, in turn, allow for estimates of the whole adult social care workforce and its characteristics to be produced. The * notation indicates a figure has been suppressed.

Throughout this report, charts and tables will display rounded whole numbers and percentages. Therefore, it should be noted that charts and tables may not always total to 100%.

The independent sector information in this report was collected between April 2023 and March 2024, and local authority information dates from September 2023.

Louise Whitley, Head of area:

This year the national workforce strategy for adult social care in England was launched. This strategy was the result of collaboration across the sector and it sets 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. Analysis of the workforce data we collect clearly provided the evidence to support this.

I am pleased to share the latest adult social care workforce intelligence regional report for the South East area. This intelligence helps us understand the regional workforce landscape and helps the Health and Social Care system target support and resources where it is needed most through workforce planning and commissioning. It also helps us with regional implementation of the workforce strategy.

Without Care Providers and Local Authority colleagues supplying their workforce data we would not have access to such rich intelligence, and I would therefore like to thank all those who have contributed.

A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in South East, 2023/24

In 2023/24, the adult social care sector in the South East region had an estimated **3,200** organisations with **6,900** care-providing locations. The total number of posts was **290,000**, an increase of 2.6 % since 2022/23. Of these posts **270,000** were currently filled by a person, called 'filled posts' (an increase of 4.7 % since 2022/23) and **21,000** vacant posts (vacancies) that employers were actively seeking to recruit somebody into (a decrease of -18.5% since 2022/23).

In the South East region, there were an estimated **270,000** filled posts. There were **17,900** filled posts in local authorities, **220,000** in the independent sector, **15,000** filled posts working for direct payment recipients and **14,000** social care related posts in the NHS.

From this point, the figures in this report refer to the **238,000** filled posts in local authorities and the independent sector in the region. Filled posts for those working for direct payment recipients and adult social care related posts in the NHS are not included.

Employment overview

The majority (**88%**) of the workforce in the South East region were employed on permanent contracts. Over half of the workforce (**63%**) usually worked full-time hours and **37%** were part-time.

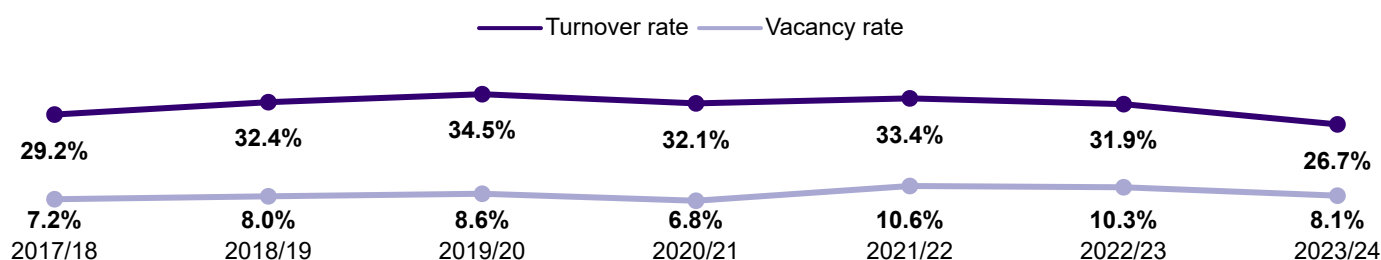
Around **20 %** (or **48,000** filled posts) of the workforce were recorded as being employed on a zero-hours contract.

The full-time equivalent (FTE) ratio in the region was **0.77**, which was higher than the England average of **0.76**.

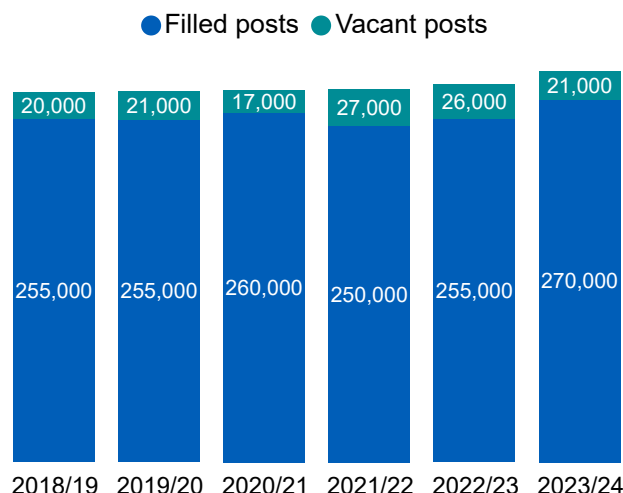
Recruitment and retention

Skills for Care estimate that the staff turnover rate in the South East region was **26.7%**. Not all turnover resulted in workers leaving the sector, since **56 %** of starters were recruited from within the adult social care sector. Therefore although employers need to recruit to these posts, the sector retains their skills and experiences.

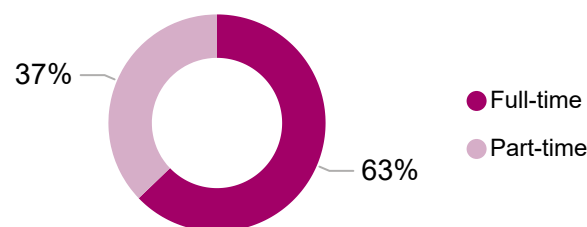
Turnover and vacancy rate trends



Number of posts from 2017/18 to 2023/24 (all sectors)

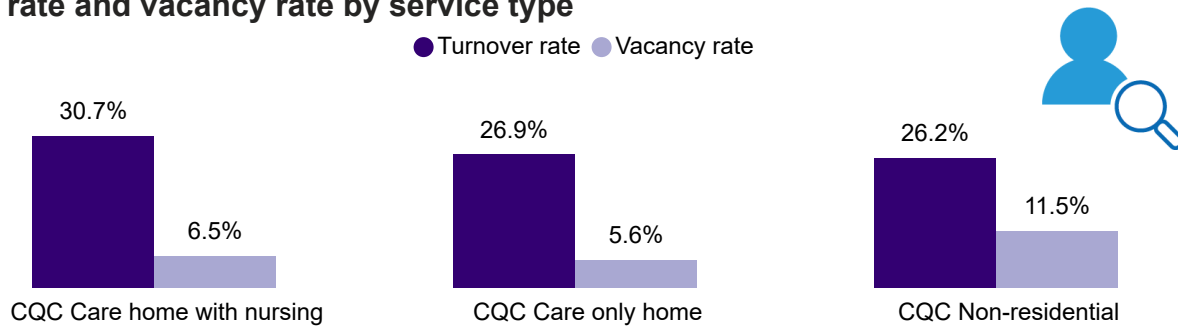


Working time status



Turnover and vacancy rates varied between service type in 2023/24, as shown in the chart below.

Turnover rate and vacancy rate by service type



The starters rate in the South East region between 2022/23 and 2023/24 changed by **-2.1 %** from **34.1 %** to **32.0%**.

5.1

average sickness days taken

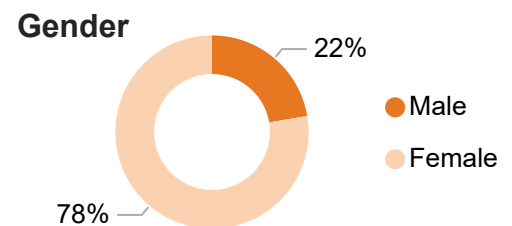
The South East region had an estimated sickness rate of **5.1** days per employee. This was **0.2** days lower than the England rate of **5.3** sickness days.

Adult social care has an experienced 'core' of workers. Workers in the South East region had an average of **9.1** years of experience in the sector and **71 %** of the workforce had been working in the sector for at least 3 years.

For more information about changes in the workforce since March 2024 please see our [monthly trackers](#) on the Workforce Intelligence website.

Demographics

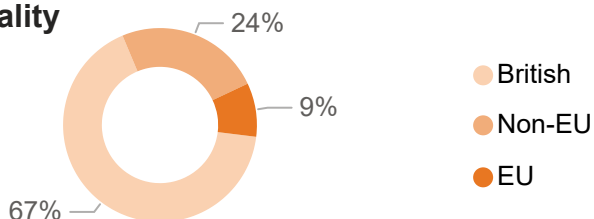
The adult social care workforce comprised of **78 %** of female workers in the South East region, compared to 51% of the economically active population in England (Census, 2021). Female workers were less likely to be in managerial roles, especially senior management roles (**67 %**), compared to direct care providing roles (**78 %**).



For further information about this topic, including further detail of why 'other' gender is collected but not yet included in analysis, click to read the [Workforce Demographics](#) chapter in full.

The average age of the adult social care workforce in the region was **43.6**. Around **26 %** of adult social care workers were aged 55 and over, compared to 21% of the economically active population. From a workforce planning perspective, these workers may retire within the next ten years.

Nationality



In the South East region, around **67 %** of the adult social care workforce were British, **24 %** were of a non-EU nationality, and **9 %** were of an EU nationality.

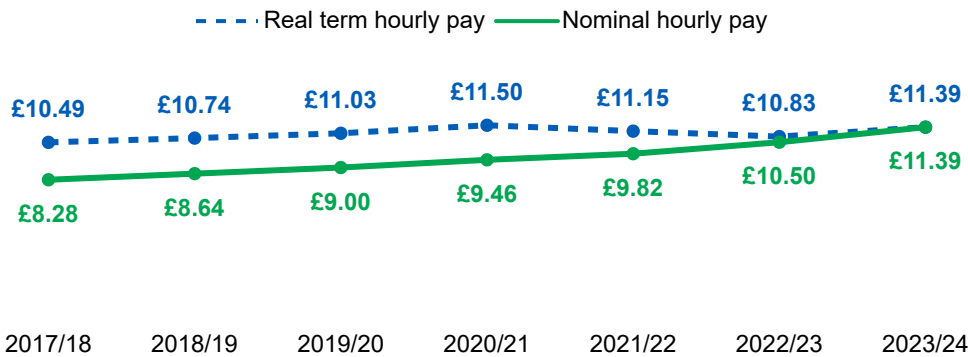
Staff with a white ethnic background made up **66 %** of the adult social care workforce in the region. People with an Asian/Asian British ethnicity made up **13 %** of the workforce. People with a Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnicity made up **17 %** of the workforce. Registered nurses remained one of the most diverse job roles, with **44 %** of workers with a white ethnic background. Senior managers and occupational therapists were among the least ethnically diverse job roles (both reported **85 %** and **86 %** respectively of workers with a white ethnic background).

Pay

At the time the data was collected, the National Living Wage (NLW) of **£10.42** per hour. For more information about the NLW, please see Chapter 5 of 'The State of the adult social care sector and workforce, 2024' available at: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Stateof

In April 2024, after the data in this report was analysed, the National Living Wage had increased to **£11.44**. Nominal pay shows pay rates as they were at the time, whereas real term rates are adjusted to take inflation into account. Hourly rates are expressed in 2023/24 prices.

Care worker average pay (independent sector)



The chart shows that in the South East region, real term pay peaked in 2020/21. It decreased the following two years, due to high inflation over the period. Real term pay increased in 2023/24; in the South East region, this was lower than the 2020/21 peak.

Pay varies by sector as shown in the chart, local authority pay is generally higher than independent sector pay. Average care worker pay in the local authority sector was **£12.36**, **£0.97** more than in the independent sector.

Care worker average pay by sector, 2023/24

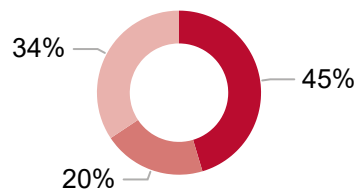


Qualifications and training

Skills for Care believe that everyone working in adult social care should have access to learning and development so they can carry out their roles effectively and provide high-quality care and support.

Direct care workers' Care Certificate standard status

● Complete ● In progress / partially completed ● Not started



In the South East region, around **66%** of direct care-providing staff had engaged with (achieved, partially completed, or were working towards) the Care Certificate.

Around **43%** of direct care-providing staff held a relevant adult social care qualification in the South East region. This was lower than the England average of **47%**.

Direct care workers' highest social care qualification held

● Entry/Level 1 ● Level 2 ● Level 3 ● Level 4+ ● No relevant social care qualification



Workforce projections

If the adult social care workforce grows proportionally to the number of people aged 65 and over in the population, the number of total posts needs to **increase by 33 % (95,000 additional posts)**.

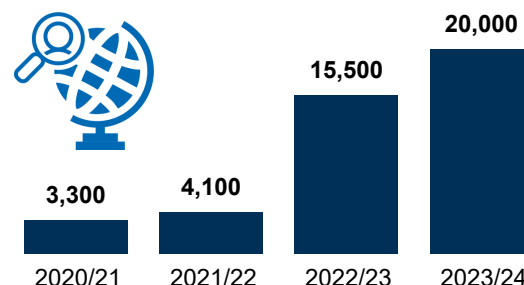
This would take the number of **total posts in 2040** to around **385,000**.

Current and projected required total posts



International recruitment

The chart shows data for direct care providing roles in the **independent sector** in the South East region. International recruitment increased since 2022/23, mostly due to care workers being added to the Shortage Occupation List in February 2022. In April 2024, this was replaced by the Immigration Salary List, with the same adult social care sector job roles eligible occupations on the skilled worker route.

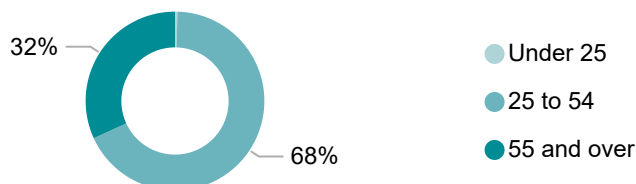


International recruitment continued to increase in 2023/24. However, across England in the first quarter of 2024/25, only **8,000** workers were recruited internationally compared with **26,000** workers recruited internationally per quarter in 2023/24.

For more information about quarterly international recruitment trends, please see our [international recruitment tracker](#) on the Workforce Intelligence website.

Registered managers

Registered manager age bands



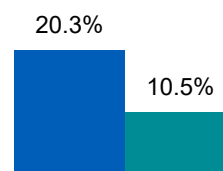
In the South East region, the proportion of registered managers that were aged 55 and above was **32%**. From a workforce planning perspective, these workers are close to retirement age.

The proportion of registered managers in the South East region with a Level 5 or above qualification was **59 %**.

The vacancy rate of registered managers changed from **11.0%** in 2022/23 to **10.5%** in 2023/24, higher than the England rate of **9.8%**.

Registered manager turnover & vacancy rate

● Turnover rate ● Vacancy rate



The turnover rate of registered managers changed from **24.2%** in 2022/23 to **20.3%** in 2023/24, higher than the England rate of **19.4%**.

Click to find out more information about [registered managers](#) on our topic page. Skills for Care also **provide support** for registered managers. You can follow the links below to find out more.

[Registered manager networks](#)



[Developing new managers and deputies](#)



[Membership for registered managers](#)



Factors affecting turnover

Using ASC-WDS information, we assessed which variables influenced adult social care workers' propensity to leave their posts. From this, key variables were identified that could be compared to turnover rates. The information below shows the relationship between these key variables and turnover between March 2023 and March 2024.

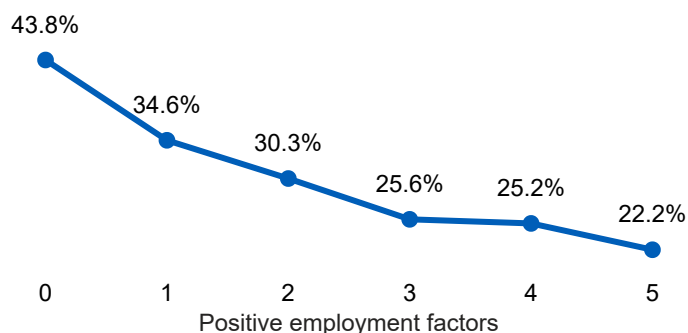
Care workers in a role with several positive employment factors were more likely to remain in post than care workers in a post that did not. Five of the variables which affect turnover were analysed to observe their combined effect.

These variables were:

- Pay above £10.42
- Not being on a zero-hours contract
- Receiving training
- Having a qualification relevant to social care
- Working full-time

For more information please see Chapter 9 of 'The State of the adult social care sector and workforce, 2024' available at: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Stateof

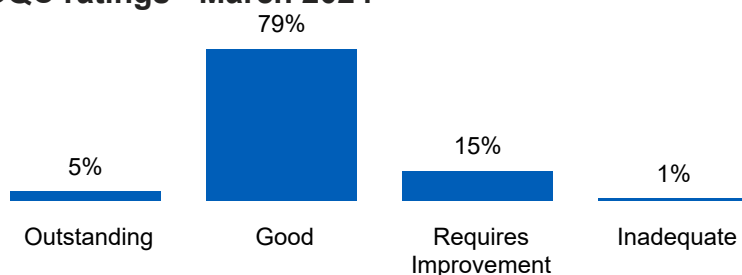
Care worker turnover rate by number of positive employment factors



CQC ratings

As at March 2024, the South East region contained **5,198** CQC-regulated locations.

CQC ratings - March 2024



In the South East region, the majority (**79%**) of CQC ratings were reported as **good**. This was similar to across England, where **78%** of CQC-regulated services were recorded as **good**.

Further Resources

National level data

The state of the adult social care sector and workforce data visualisation and report can also be found on our website. This allows you to understand the adult social care sector at a national level.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Stateof

Local level data

Interactive visualisations have been created at local levels, to enable you to see and understand your workforce intelligence in a more visual way. One allows you to see your area in more detail and another to compare areas. To access the visualisations, please see

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/localinformation

Commission our services

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. www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Commission-our-services

For more information please email analysis@skillsforcare.org.uk