

# Care sector Workforce Planning

## Trends, challenges and opportunities

This briefing provides insights and analysis of the Scottish residential care workforce and how you can help

May 2022



# Workforce planning

## Innovation investment and the future

### *Why read this?*

Adult social care is at a tipping point. Chronic underfunding and underpayment, physical and emotional pressures, and broken business models – all rendered more intense by COVID and Brexit regulations – have demoralised experienced professionals who are leaving in droves, causing a recruitment, retention and planning crisis.

The Health Foundation suggests that over 600,000 additional care workers will be required to meet demand in the UK over the next decade, on top of the 1.5 million posts we already have. Care service providers and solution providers need to act together on insights to plan and innovate services, and attract and retain the workforce.

Here we highlight key insights and explore factors that need to be addressed to stabilise the sector. Our aim is to help service providers and solution providers who are interested in care workforce recruitment, retention, planning and supporting care staff, and to enable investment with confidence.

The four megatrends explored in this briefing series are: care sector structure, the Care workforce, accelerating technology, and the impact of COVID.

These briefings are essential reading for service providers, care workforce planners, solution designers within (or considering entering) the care sector, or anyone investing in innovation.

***“This is the most acute recruitment and retention crisis that we are aware of historically...”***

***“Without the social care workforce, we have no care system”***

National Care Forum 23.09.21

# Care Workforce 2022

## Pressure and potential

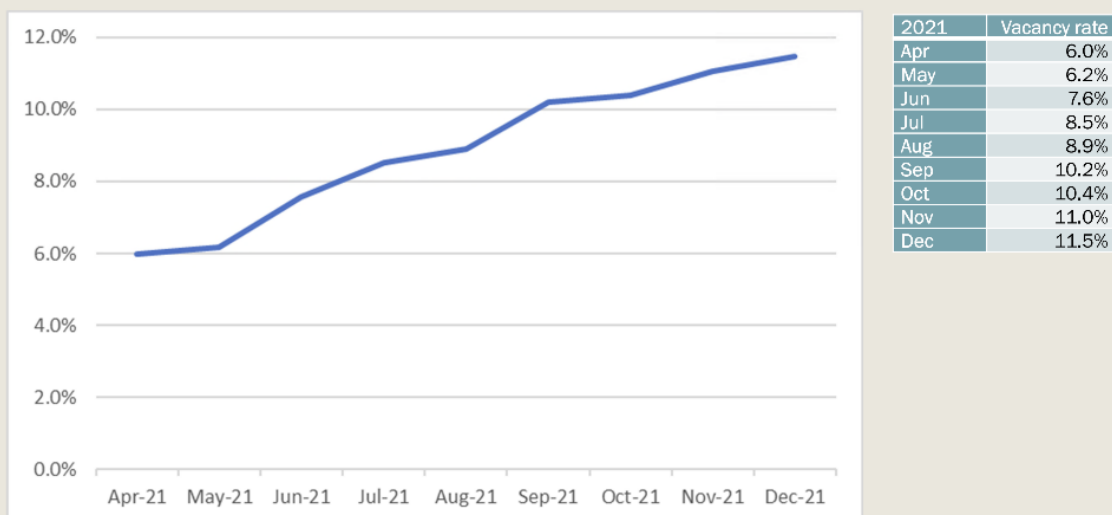
Care homes and staff are under more pressure than ever before. Workforce problems that existed before the Covid-19 pandemic have increased significantly, staff vacancy rates are soaring, and change is urgently demanded by the sector and the public alike.

**74%** of providers have reported an increase in staff exits since April 2021, with **half** of workers leaving due to stress and **44%** finding better pay elsewhere.

Staff turnover across the sector is estimated to be **30%** and rising, at a time when more and more people need care services.<sup>i</sup>

In Scotland, **44%** of care staff leave their job within one year of starting, and **24%** within 2-5 years. Even pre-Covid, **57%** of staff were expecting to leave within the next decade. However, **68%** would still recommend working in social care, suggesting that staff generally *want* to stay if issues within the sector could be addressed.<sup>ii</sup>

Figure 1: Staff vacancy rates in residential adult social care services, April to December 2021, England



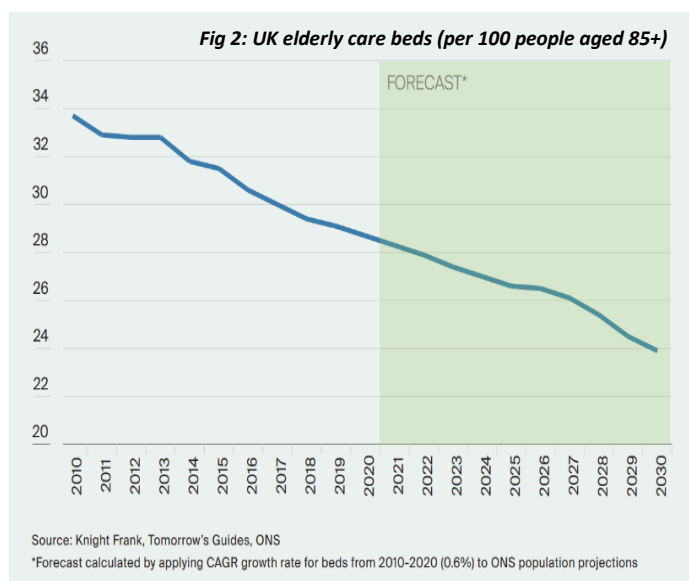
Source: CQC residential adult social care PIRs, returned 1 April to 31 December 2021. Some PIRs were excluded from the analysis due to failing data validation. Data validation is under continuous review which may result in changes to historical figures when applied retrospectively.

Lower staff turnover is associated with, among other things, shorter travel to work time (work-life balance), higher age of staff/more experience in sector (knowledge and sector stability), access to training (careers and professionalism), more contracted hours and greater permanence of posts.

## Insights and impacts

Our discovery work has identified three significant challenges for those working in residential care. These form a starting point from which **HWL** will explore and co-develop innovative, sector-leading and transformational solutions.

### Healthy ageing populations



As our population ages, older people's care needs increase – especially for those aged over 85, whose needs are more complex. Currently, **70%** of care home residents have dementia or memory problems. This is predicted to increase over the next 20 years,<sup>iii</sup> due to residents being admitted into care homes at later stages in life, adding to the levels of complexity and need faced by care home staff.<sup>iv</sup>

Faster 'turnover' of residents inhibits meaningful long-term relationships and contributes to a more stressful environment. Despite this, the number of care home beds available for those aged 85+ has fallen since 2010 – a trend that is predicted to continue (Fig.2).<sup>v</sup> As such, residential care must adapt and evolve to reflect the changing needs of its population.

However, **the care workforce is also ageing**. The sector already has a higher proportion of older workers compared to the total working population. The mean age of all staff in care homes for older people is 44 in England and 45 in Scotland (2020). Over a quarter of staff in both England and Scotland are over 55, with only 10% under 25 (2019). In Scotland, staff aged 55+ increased from 21% in 2014 to 26% in 2019.

**What this means:** The sector is struggling to recruit younger workers but has a wealth of skills and experience in its existing workforce, especially among those aged 44+. If current workforce trends continue, the care staffing crisis will worsen. Innovation in all areas is needed to recruit, retain and support staff to meet increasingly complex demands.

## Regional variation

Location matters, in terms of funding sources and workforce availability. While such disparities reflect wider patterns of inequality, we can learn a great deal about how care homes in different regions manage their local circumstances and address challenges.

## Resources

Care homes in the most deprived areas had a lower proportion of self-funded residents (21.6%) than in the least deprived areas (53.8%). Those with higher numbers of self-funders are likely to be more financially sustainable and able to innovate. Unsurprisingly, this also reveals a strong North-South divide. The Southeast had the highest proportion of self-funders (45.4%) compared with the Northeast, which had the lowest (24.6%).<sup>vi</sup> More financially secure care homes are in a stronger position to trial novel solutions, which we can learn from to understand what kinds of approaches might be useful elsewhere.

## Migrant labour

A higher proportion of the BAME community works in the care sector in England (21%) than in Scotland (c.5%), although over 80% of staff in both England and Scotland identify as British. Most non-EU/UK care workers are employed in the private sector.<sup>vii</sup> In England, an estimated 9% of the adult care workforce were from non-UK or EU countries.<sup>viii</sup> Despite the sector's recruitment issues, care work was only recently (24 Jan 2022) added to the UK government's list of 'shortage occupations'. This means that care staff can now apply for a 'Skilled Worker' visa. However, the process is undeniably more difficult for EU citizens post-Brexit and excludes many ancillary roles, such as cleaners and cooks, which the sector also relies upon. This is likely to change the nature of many care workers' roles.

***[Designating care staff as skilled workers] will support getting more people into care as we implement our long-term strategy for a fair and sustainable care sector that meets the needs of everyone.***

Gillian Keegan MP  
Minister of State for Care, DHSC

December 2021

**What this means:** Post-Brexit changes to immigration rules make it harder for parts of the care sector to fill vacancies and meet increasing demand, particularly in areas that have had higher proportions of non-UK or EU staff. Innovation is needed a) to maximise the limited government funds available; and b) to scale ideas that may be trialled in more financially stable care homes (i.e., those with more self-funders) to public care homes with limited capacity to invest in innovation.



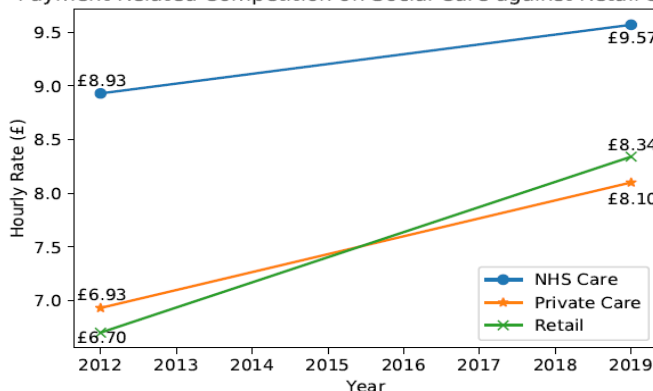
## Pay and conditions

The biggest problem for many carers is pay. While this is a perennial issue affecting many sectors, it is also linked with factors that can be addressed, such as professional status, training and development, and general working conditions.

### Salaries, feeling valued and local competition

A typical independent care sector worker's hourly rate went from £6.93 per hour in 2012/13 to £8.10 in 2018/19 – but staff can earn more in other sectors. An NHS Healthcare Assistant can earn £8.93 to £9.57 per hour, while sales or retail assistants have overtaken care workers in average earnings. This

Payment Related Competition on Social Care against Retail Sector



impacts negatively on social care recruitment and retention, and suggests that care staff are not properly valued by society. Among more senior staff, those with 5 years+ experience earn just 15p per hour more than inexperienced staff. More profound gaps in managerial salaries, of up to £10,000 pa., exist between public and private sector care homes.

### Gender

Over 80% of care staff in England and Scotland are female (2019-20). This shows no sign of changing and is consistently linked to it being a low-pay sector.

### Physical and emotional demands

The pandemic has focussed greater attention on the emotional labour care work entails. Between March 2020 and June 2021, sickness rates for adult social care staff nearly doubled, from 2.6% to 5%.<sup>ix</sup> This was partly attributed to 'burnout' from the extra emotional strain of working through the pandemic, rather than illness due to Covid itself.<sup>x</sup>

**What this means:** Better pay and conditions, career pathways and professionalisation, and a wider range of roles would improve recruitment and retention, yet the care sector remains financially stretched and time-poor. Original ideas are needed in all areas of workforce planning and support. There is considerable scope for innovators within and outside the sector to initiate or co-produce changes that will help to meet increasing, complex demand.

## Summary

The care home sector needs innovation in all areas of workforce planning and support. Staffing challenges are deepening, caused by multiple factors including pay levels, career opportunities, Brexit and migration, Covid, and increasing needs for dementia care. While care work is highly valued by those in receipt and their families and friends, it is undervalued in terms of pay and conditions, and opportunities for future development. Many workers find it fulfilling but also demanding. The impact of Covid and the number of deaths in care homes has also left many concerned at the responsibility and risk factors.

### Key areas of concern are:

- The recruitment and retention of staff; reducing staff turnover rates and establishing a stable, fulfilled workforce able to deliver care for a population with increasingly complex needs
- Improving the image of work in the sector; addressing pay gaps and encouraging people to see the wider opportunities within the care home sector, and that a career as well as career pathways are possible
- Ensuring the provision of training and support to address specialist care and public health challenges such as Covid

### Providers need innovative tools and resources to:

- Improve the recruitment of staff who are new to the sector to deal with increasing care needs
- Retain skills and know-how by enabling older, experienced members of the workforce, especially those aged 50+, to stay in the sector, by supporting health, wellbeing and a work-life balance
- Improve and expand training, especially in leadership, emotional wellbeing, technology and data analysis, and create training and qualification pathways that take better account of individual skills and experience
- Address the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and Brexit on the care workforce
- Increase digitisation and data use to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of care and workforce planning, communication, training needs, and understanding demand, local and national labour markets and competition
- Expand the use of flexible 'work pools', i.e. pooling labour within and across the care home sector (learning the lessons from the pandemic)
- Develop the care home worker of the future: e.g., fostering creativity and critical thinking

## Join in today

The care sector is on the cusp of significant change, and we want to discover and listen to the experiences of 'care trailblazers' leading that change, breaking new ground and disrupting the market. This will enable us to identify market failures and gaps, key themes and opportunities, and areas of focus for future industry development.

We want to hear from the leading pioneers in the care sector, to explore their ideas and understand their approaches. We'll also be identifying a series of real-life stories based on the latest understanding of the challenges facing the sector. These stories will showcase the key actors and generate on-the-ground evidence, with the aim of galvanising the energy and focus required to develop ideas for novel products and services in the market.

If you are an innovator, business leader or entrepreneur working, or seeking to become involved with, the care sector, please contact us today:



Join the HWL campaign at:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/global-affairs/healthier-working-lives-for-the-care-workforce-registration-form>

For further information contact: [dilesh.shah@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:dilesh.shah@kcl.ac.uk)

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/voice/workforce-pressures/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.totaljobs.com/media-centre/social-care-exodus-one-in-three-social-carers-plan-to-leave-the-sector-in-the-next-five-years>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec\\_report\\_november\\_2019.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://scottishcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Care-Homes-Then-Now-and-the-Uncertain-Future.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> <https://content.knightfrank.com/research/336/documents/en/healthcare-development-opportunities-2020-7355.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/socialcare/articles/carehomesandestimatingtheselffundingpopulationengland/2019to2020>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2018/07/contribution-non-uk-eu-workers-social-care-workforce-scotland/documents/00538124-pdf/00538124-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00538124.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/Workforce-nationality.aspx>

<sup>ix</sup> [https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20211021\\_stateofcare2021\\_print.pdf](https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20211021_stateofcare2021_print.pdf)

<sup>x</sup> House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee, Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care, June 2021