
Meeting of the Adult Social Care Select Committee - 5th March 2025

Report of the Interim Director of Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care Workforce

Purpose

1. To provide the Members with workforce analytics and recruitment initiatives for the Adult Social Care Workforce.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Members
 - Review the contents of the report
 - Raise and refer any identified issues or queries to the Interim Director of Adult Social Care

Background

3. This report provides Select Committee with workforce analytics and recruitment initiatives as at December 2024.
4. The Council has over 770 permanent staff in Adult Social Care. They are supported by agency workers, volunteers, and casual workers.
5. As at 31 December 2024, Adult Social Care workforce analytics were:
 - 774 staff in post (669.46FTE).
 - 2% of staff (excluding casual and agency) are on a Fixed Term or Temporary contract (Total of 15 employees).
 - 85.5% of workforce are female. Ethnic Minority groups make up 16.0% of the workforce and 8.1% of employees have declared a disability.
 - 59% of the workforce are aged 40 - 59.

- There were 1.38 days lost per FTE in December 2024.
- The top four reasons for sickness are Stress related, Post Operation Recovery / Surgery, Cold/Flu/Cough and Muscular Pain/Strain/Joint Problems.
- For the Directorate as a whole, 97.0 % of “Return to Work” interviews and 78.8% of My Year Reviews were completed.

Workforce Budget

6. The 2024/25 budget set by the Council shows an adverse gap between expenditure and resources. The latest budget monitoring, based on actual expenditure has identified a favourable forecast variance against the budget.
7. Spending controls have been approved by the Cabinet which are designed to minimise spending except where an exception applies. The exceptions are designed to maintain essential services and the Council’s ability to function. The External Auditor’s statutory recommendations included a recommendation that spending controls should be strictly enforced.
8. The Council is working in times of unprecedented change and challenges. We are experiencing severe challenges in recruiting and retaining essential staff across Adult Social Care, and it is essential that we address workforce shortages to continue to deliver accessible and supportive services.
9. The Pay Cost Control Board has been established to monitor and approve all recruitment across the Council.

Workforce Planning

10. Dudley Council’s People Strategy sets out our ambition to create a positive, inclusive and healthy working environment where our workforce feels valued, supported and able to fulfil their potential in delivering the Council’s ambitions and priorities. It supports the delivery of our Council’s priorities by identifying how we will equip our workforce with the skills and abilities necessary to meet the changing demands of delivering public services, as well as the ever-changing world of work

11. Workforce Planning is the process of analysing the current workforce, determining future needs, and identifying the gap between the present and the future. The goal is to ensure the council has the right people with the right skills at the right time. Factors such as people, skills, positions, and timing, need to be aligned to fulfil strategic objectives. It is a core business process which aligns organisation needs with the people strategy. It is key to achieving strategic goals.

Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy

12. The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy outlines Dudley's commitment to the workforce across the whole of Adult Social Care from Access and Prevention, Assessment and Independence, Dudley Disability Service, Mental Health, Safeguarding and Commissioning.
13. A Workforce Group has been established to develop the Workforce Strategy further and identified actions. The group will provide governance and assurance.
14. The ASC Workforce Strategy aims to improve on past successes. It seeks to address challenges by promoting and celebrating best practices. It stresses the need for innovation and flexibility to attract and keep employees. It aims to set a benchmark in the sector. The Council aims to exceed other Councils in attracting skilled workers. Local Authorities face widespread challenges in this area. We aim to improve results and care quality. We will do this by using innovative solutions and fostering a supportive work environment.

Challenges with the Adult Social Care Workforce

15. Nationally the adult social care workforce is struggling with high vacancy and turnover rates set against a growing demand for social care. In 2022/23, the vacancy rate in the adult social care sector in England was 9.9% – higher than the NHS vacancy rate in England (8%) and substantially higher than the UK vacancy rate (3.4%). There is also a critical shortage of all regulated professionals including social workers, occupational therapists and Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP). The LGA highlights the difficulty in recruiting and retaining mental health social workers and AMHPs but despite these challenges there are currently no vacancies in the Dudley AMHP hub.

16. To mitigate against the national shortage of qualified social workers and occupational therapists, one of our strategies is to "grow our own" talent. This focuses on succession planning and developing a future workforce.
17. To do this we work with corporate and external partners such as the West Midlands Teaching Partnership, Skills for Care and Universities. We aim to improve Adult Social Care staff access to leadership and management training. We offer diverse apprenticeships in various fields, including Business Support, Project Management, Commissioning, Coaching, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work. We also support the Think Ahead program to train mental health practitioners. We have an active ASYE program for newly qualified social workers. We have recently changed our AMHP continuous professional development training which is now co-produced with other Councils and includes staff from the mental health Trust. This enhances their skills to deliver high-quality care.
18. The Think Ahead programme offers several benefits for our workforce. Dudley MBC will receive up to £29,000 in Workforce Development Funding to support workforce development, covering costs associated with training and integrating new recruits. The programme attracts highly capable and committed individuals to the field of mental health social work, helping employers build a skilled and motivated workforce. Both new recruits and existing staff receive advanced training at no cost, including social interventions, leadership tools, and qualifications such as a postgraduate diploma and a master's degree in social work.
19. A significant percentage of Think Ahead trainees remain in mental health services long-term, with 80% of trainees still working in mental health services three years after qualification. This helps reduce turnover and maintain continuity of care. Think Ahead is part of our adult social care mental health workforce strategy and provides trained and skilled Dudley social workers at the end of the programme who can work within the wider ASC. We are committed to providing the trainees with 12-month fixed-term contracts at the end of year 2, starting with a salary. This is crucial to mitigate risk and enable us to continue to meet statutory delivery of services in a cost-effective way. Additionally, there are no fees for organisations to join the programme, making it a cost-effective way to enhance their workforce and improve service quality.

20. We also have developed in Dudley Adult Social Care a strong culture of continuous improvement and learning. We take pride in our workforce development approach. We offer a variety of ongoing development opportunities across the service. We use the apprenticeship levy to fund access to all levels of apprenticeships, from social work to level 7 senior leadership. We encourage all Senior social workers to achieve post-qualifying award(s) as Best Interest Assessors, Approved Mental Health Professionals and Practice Educators. These qualifications ensure our workforce are developing appropriately, meet the requirements of the regulatory body Social Work England, support Dudley to meet our statutory responsibilities and ensure outcomes are optimised for the local community.
21. In Dudley we have both a Principal Social Worker and a Principle Occupational Therapist. The Principal Social Worker (PSW) is a statutory post under the Care Act 2014 and plays a crucial role in raising and maintaining operational standards and works very closely Principal Occupational Therapist (POT) to align their actions and initiatives. They aim to promote professional values and standards. They ensure high standards in safeguarding and quality assurance. They also enhance practice across the council and the wider region.
22. The Learning and Development Strategy 2024-27 and Training Plan understands the policy and environmental drivers that surround the social care workforce. It acknowledges that future drivers will develop, and it is the intention for this strategy to be flexible and responsive enough to be effective as our environment changes. Please see the Learning and Development Strategy to understand the foundation of the Learning and Development offer and Training Plan.
23. [West Midlands Teaching Partnership](#) strengthens the quality of education and training for social work students and practitioners across the West Midlands. This includes Local Authorities, Children's Trusts, and Universities. The partnership reflects the strategic priorities of the West Midlands Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the West Midlands Association of Adult Social Services (ADASS). The partnership is led by Principal Social Workers, Workforce Development Leads and Senior Academics across Children's and Adult Services. It brings together practitioners, senior managers, academics, researchers and experts by experience to support us in our work.

Working with partners to address workforce challenges.

24. The Dudley Health & Care Partnership (DHCP) unites all health and care partners in Dudley. It aims to deliver timely care and improve health and outcomes. The partnership has a mission, vision, and values of courage, clarity, and respect. These support its strategic ambitions. Their 5-year plan, aligned with the Black Country ICB Plan, focuses on achieving Dudley's goals and priorities
25. The DHCP is improving resident well-being through its assessment, independence reablement and urgent care teams. A key focus of the Board, "Priority 5 - Best Place to Work," is to build a vibrant workforce across the Black Country health and care system. With about 60,000 sector employees, the partnership aims to make it a great workplace.

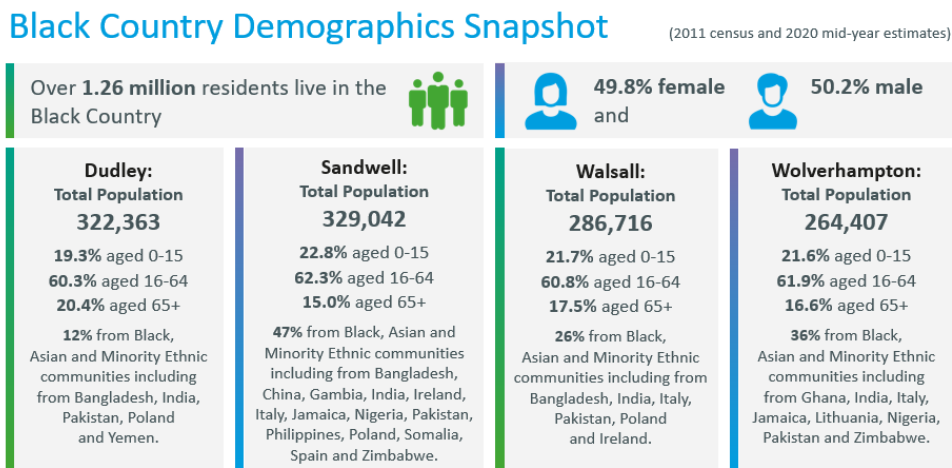
26.



27. A collaborative recruitment and training program has been launched. It involves the Local Authority, Dudley Group Foundation Trust, Dudley Integrated Health Care, and Dudley Integrated Commissioning Board. This program offers entry-level health and care jobs, like carers and support workers. It also provides paths to advance into regulated

professions, like nursing, therapy, and social work. The initiative aims to cultivate a skilled and knowledgeable workforce for Dudley's health and care sector.

28.



Workforce Equality

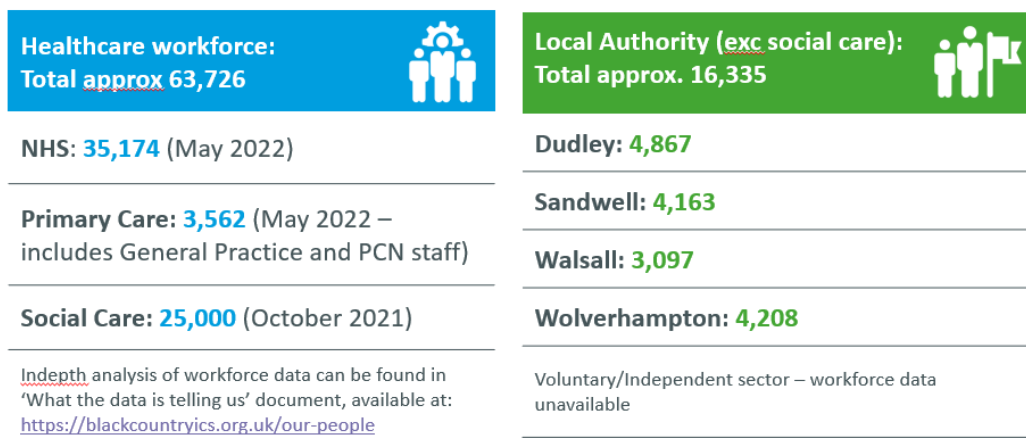
29. Research has consistently shown a need to improve race equality practices in the social care sector. The workforce is diverse. 26% of the adult social care staff are from Black, Asian, or minoritised ethnic backgrounds (2022-23). But these groups are underrepresented in leadership roles. Only 17% of registered and senior managers belong to these ethnic groups, according to "The State of the Adult Social Care Workforce in England, 2023." Addressing this gap in representation is a core objective of the SC-WRES initiative.
30. Our work to improve Workforce Equality shows a proactive approach. We are using the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) framework and responding to the BRAP review. The action plan, with ongoing evaluations, is critical. It will ensure the Council evolves to meet its diverse workforce's needs. It will also foster a culture of fairness, inclusion, and respect.
31. Dudley's launch of SC-WRES is a key step for race equality in Adult Social Care. This framework will help LA's address disparities faced by Black, Asian, and minoritised ethnic staff. It requires data collection on nine key indicators. The goal is to expose inequalities, spur change, and ensure accountability. This is backed by a detailed action plan.
32. The EDI Strategy 2022 - 2025 sets out our commitment for progressing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in our Borough and

workforce over the next three years. We endeavour to ensure our commitment to equality is firmly embedded across the whole of our organisation through its services, workforce, training, offering, policies, practices, and procedures. We aim to deliver appropriate services that are accessible for our changing Borough and responsive to all our customers, at the right place and ultimately at the right time.

33. We are also part of a wider Black Country focus on tackling workforce inequalities and discrimination. A joint Black Country ICS Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy has been developed with the ICB. It aims to address health inequalities that affect both staff and users. This four-year strategy aims to support the health and social care workforce. It will focus on system-wide EDI priorities. It seeks to create a workforce that reflects the communities served, including at the leadership level

34.

Black Country Workforce 2021/22



35. To track the success of these initiatives, Dudley will employ various evaluation tools. They will measure the effectiveness of new and revised People Policies. They will also assess if the action plan helps its intended recipients. This approach ensures a review of race equality efforts. It will adjust them, if needed, and hold them accountable for real progress.

36. ADASS and WM Employers Report EDI data to understand the representation of the ASC workforce, Nationally, Regionally and Locally

37. This Black Country Integrated System Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023 – 2027 is focused on developing a plan of

action to provide support to our health and social care colleagues to improve their work experience and thus their ability to impact positively in our communities. <https://blackcountryics.org.uk/our-people> executive summary includes context, a snapshot of our workforce and population data, key themes, main objectives, including pledges, and the governance process overseeing the implementation of the strategy.

External Workforce

38. The Independent Market Social Care Workforce in Dudley plays a crucial role in delivering adult social care, employing around 6,100 staff. This sector faces various challenges but benefits from a range of support mechanisms provided by the council, aimed at maintaining high-quality services while addressing workforce sustainability and development.
39. Dudley has a challenge. Its ASC workforce is aging, with an average age over 50. It's one of only three local authorities in the West Midlands with this demographic. With fewer than 2% of the workforce under 25, Dudley must attract younger workers. It needs more aggressive strategies to do this. Recruitment campaigns and partnerships with schools could help. They could encourage young people to pursue careers in adult social care.
40. Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) and Workforce Development (WDF) eligibility figures provides up with a summary of the adult social care workforce in Dudley includes data from the whole adult social care sector: local authorities, the independent sector, posts working for direct payment recipients and those working in the NHS.
41. Dudley's ASC sector has an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities. BAME workers make up 27.6% of the workforce. White workers are underrepresented compared to the local population. This shows the sector's success in hiring a diverse workforce.
42. A significant portion of the workforce operates on a part-time basis. The reliance on zero-hour contracts is relatively low, at 15.8%, which is notably lower compared to neighbouring areas where the figure ranges between 25% and 30%. This lower reliance may contribute to better job stability and staff retention.

43. The sector continues to exhibit a stark gender imbalance. This reflects broader trends in adult social care, where the field is traditionally female-dominated. Efforts to diversify the workforce by attracting more men into the sector could help address this imbalance. A key goal is to promote social care as a good career for men. To diversify gender representation, we could run targeted recruitment campaigns. For example, "Proud to Care Dudley" aims to attract men to the sector.
44. The average pay rate for social care staff in Dudley is £10.58 per hour, which is slightly below the West Midlands average of £10.82 but just above the national minimum wage of £10.42. While this pay rate is competitive in comparison to the minimum wage, the slight regional discrepancy could impact staff recruitment and retention, particularly in a competitive labour market.
45. Dudley stands out for having the highest proportion of qualified social care staff in the West Midlands, with 54.8% of the workforce holding relevant qualifications. This emphasis on qualifications is essential for ensuring high-quality care and supporting professional development within the sector.
46. The turnover rate in Dudley is 27.8%, slightly below the regional average of 28.8%. Although still relatively high, this indicates ongoing challenges with retention, a common issue in the social care sector. Addressing factors such as workload, pay, and career progression could help reduce turnover.
47. In the West Midlands, including Dudley, the Adult Social Care workforce faces demographic trends and challenges. These require urgent attention to ensure the sector's sustainability and inclusiveness. The key risks for the Dudley social care market and commissioning are
- Market Sustainability: Historic low rates have strained the social care market.
 - Workforce Issues: COVID-19 worsened recruitment and retention challenges. They hurt service quality and availability.
 - Service Quality: Low rates affect providers' ability to attract, train, and keep staff. This leads to inconsistent care and support.
48. The Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy in Dudley lists key elements to ensure the sustainability of social care services and their workforce. It stresses the link between the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and council rates. Fair pay is vital to sustaining social care

services. Providers must ensure their staff are trained, experienced, and competent. It includes proof of ongoing supervision and monitoring. It shows the need for continuous staff training and accountability in care. Providers must keep their staffing and workforce development policies up to date. They must meet the care sector's evolving needs. Providers must have enough qualified staff. This is key to maintaining consistent service delivery and, thus, the quality of care.

49. The Council has put in place support measures. They aim to help providers with workforce challenges and to maintain high care standards.
- Quality Assurance Visits: Providers benefit from advice on quality and training, as well as on recruitment and retention. These engagements offer critical support in maintaining workforce standards and improving service quality.
 - Recruitment Campaigns: Initiatives aim to attract new entrants to the care sector. They help address recruitment challenges and promote careers in social care.
 - Partnerships and Resources: We collaborate with groups like West Midlands Care Association, Skills for Care, and ADASS. They provide resources and support for recruitment, including international recruits. These partnerships widen the candidate pool and offer recruitment best practices.
 - Training and Forums: Providers can access vital, targeted training, like infection control training. It helps maintain high care standards. Provider forums enable discussions on workforce issues. They foster shared learning and problem-solving.

Finance

50. The Adult Social Care service has a total establishment budget of £37.9m for the financial year 2024/25.
51. Given the changes to employer national insurance, assumed pay award and incremental scale changes, the need for the council to deliver a balanced budget sees the 2025/26 Adult Social Care budget drop to £37.5m.
52. This is a result of deleting 46.33 full time equivalent vacant posts from the establishment and savings proposals that will affect a further 48 full time equivalent posts.

53. There are no financial implications in receiving this report

Law

54. There are no direct law implications in receiving this report.

Risk Management

55. There are no material risks in relation to performance.

Equality Impact

56. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity in noting and receiving this report.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

57. There are no specific direct human resource issues in receiving this report.

Commercial/Procurement

58. There is no direct commercial / procurement impact.

Environment / Climate Change

59. There is no direct environmental impacts arising from the content of this report.

Council Plan

60. This report highlights how Adult Social Care is working to meet the aims and objectives for workforce development aligned to the council's priorities and the improvement plan through Leadership and culture.

E. Matthews.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Adult Social Care Workforce Analytics (December 2024)