

## nmds-sc briefing



### Issue 20 - Meeting the future workforce challenges of adult social care

As the article [stretching the limits of social care](#)<sup>1</sup> published in the Guardian on 24th October 2012 made clear:

“Social care is booming. This may seem strange, given its well-publicised funding crisis, but demand for care and support of the growing numbers of older people is driving growth in the sector at a rate that most of the rest of the UK’s recessionary economy would dearly love to share.”

The Guardian article relied heavily on Skills for Care’s comprehensive report on the size and structure of the adult social care sector and workforce in England as at 2011. [The report](#)<sup>2</sup> draws on several data sources with much of the detail coming from the [National Minimum Data Set for Social Care \(NMDS-SC\)](#). The growth in the number of social care employers is highlighted below:

#### Growth in adult social care employers and associated workforce:

- An estimated 22,100 organisations were involved in providing or organising adult social care in England as at 2011 — an increase of one per cent from 2010.
- An estimated 49,700 establishments were involved in providing or organising adult social care in England as at 2011 — an increase of three per cent from 2010.
- The number of adult social care jobs in England as at 2011 was estimated at 1.85 million.
- The number of people doing these jobs was estimated at 1.63 million.
- The number of adult social care jobs was estimated to have increased by around 4.5% between 2010 and 2011.
- The majority of this increase came from jobs for direct payment recipients which rose by around 15%. The number of local authority jobs decreased by almost 10% over the same period.
- Around 178,000 adults, older people and carers were receiving direct payments from councils with social services responsibilities as at March 2011 – a 15% rise from 2010.

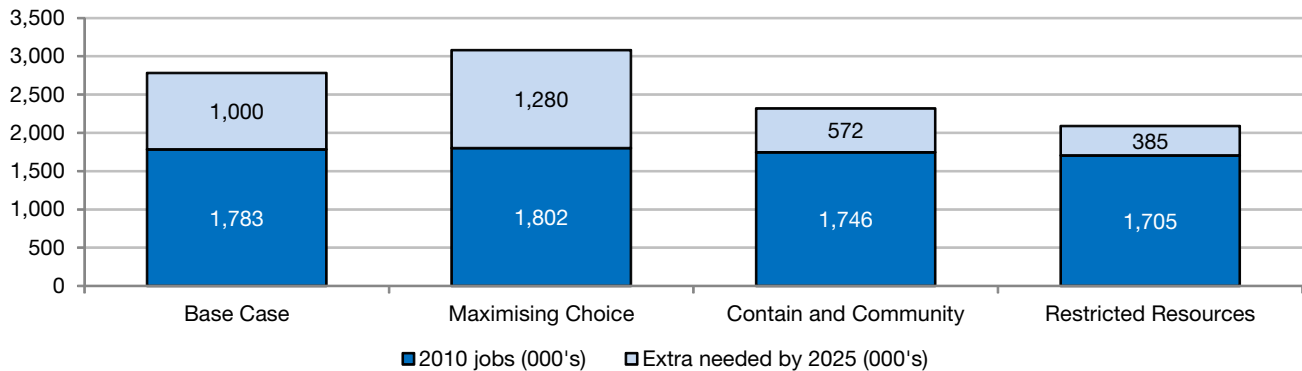
However, the Guardian article went on to make clear that:

“Not all is rosy in the social care garden: far from it. Growth is itself a source of difficulty in that it is running in line with Skills for Care’s previous forecast that, short of any unexpected game-changers, the sector may need to employ as many as 3.1 million people by 2025 – a staggering and seemingly impossible-to-achieve number.”

The projected growth in the adult social care workforce that could be required is highlighted under four scenarios ranging from growth being severely restricted due to limited resources to one where choice of service provision is maximised. Even in the current tough economic climate, demographic changes could mean that the sector requires at least half a million new workers by 2025 to meet the projected increases in demand.



**Chart 1: Summary of four projections of adult social care workforce jobs (000's) in England 2010 and projected growth by 2025**

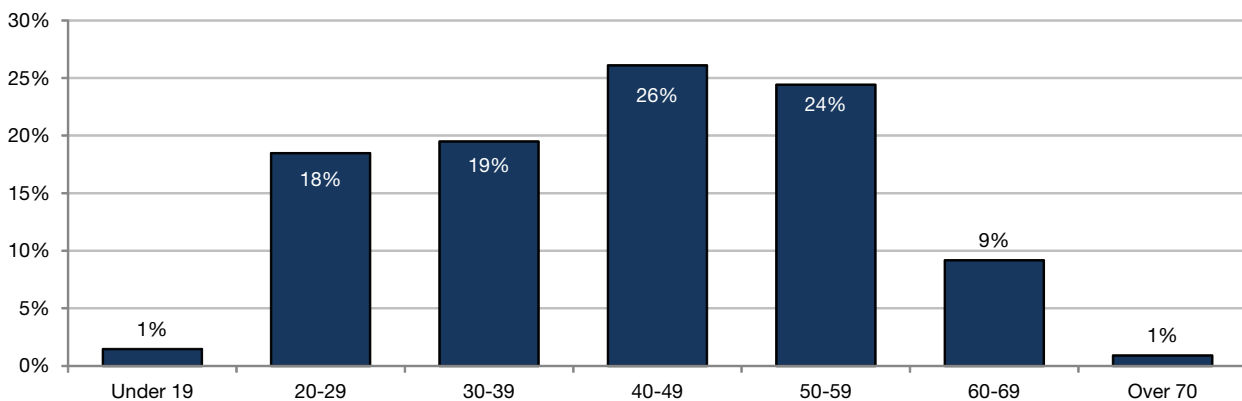


**Meeting the challenge: recruitment and retention of social care staff**

The same Guardian article concludes that:

“To get anywhere near that figure (3.1 million) the sector will need to radically change its recruitment practices. At present, 82% of employees are women and only one in five is under 30. More than 50% are aged between 40 and 60, with the average age being 43. This is surely far too narrow a profile, especially with employee turnover rates running at a typical 19% a year, but the job suffers from an image problem that deters young and male candidates”.

**Chart 2: Age profile of the social care workforce**



**Chart 3: Gender by main job role**

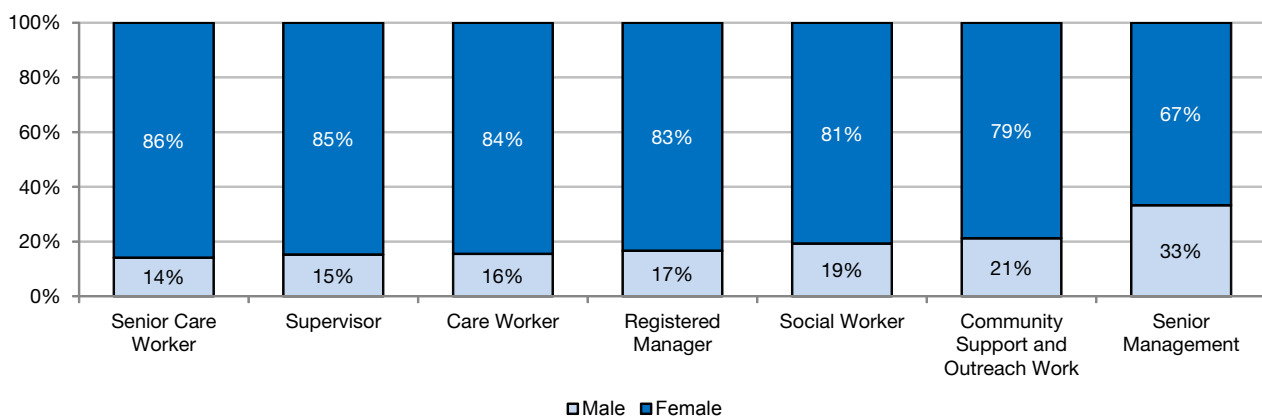
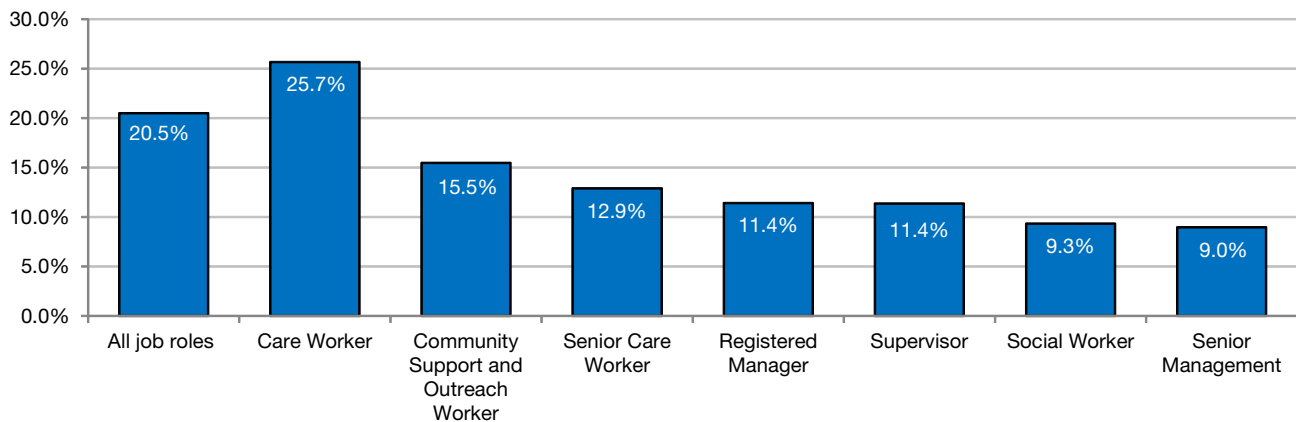




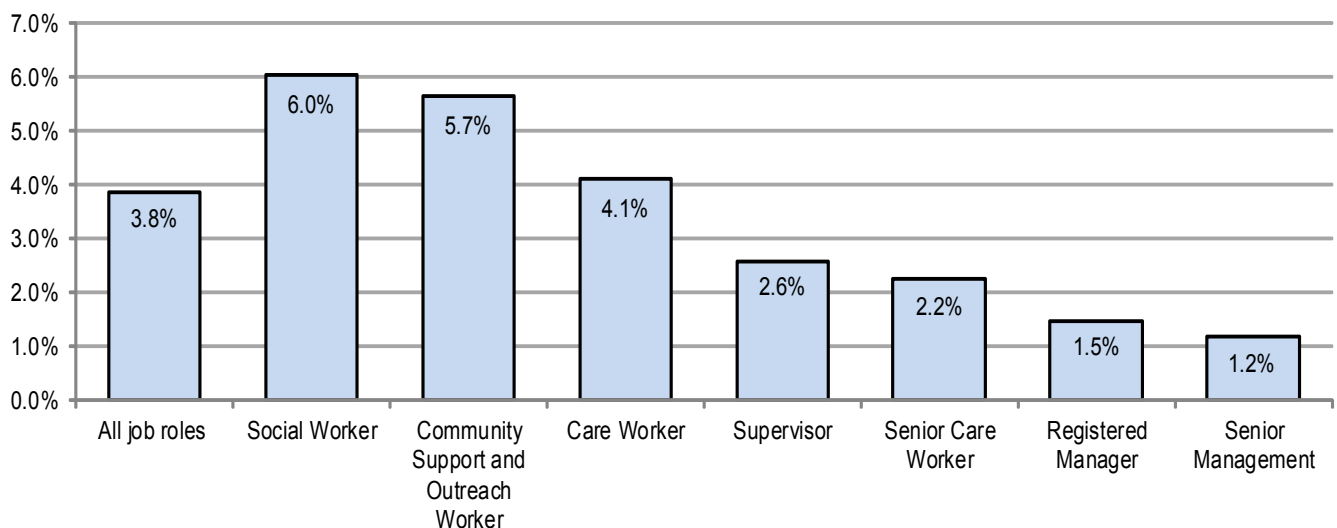
Chart 4 shows turnover rates in adult social care. On average 1 in 4 care workers leave their employer each year. Although some of this is 'churn' i.e. care workers that go and work for other care providers, this nevertheless represents a serious issue. Given the challenges identified to meet future workforce demand, the sector can't afford to lose so many workers each year. **Indeed replacement demand will far outstrip demand generated through the growth in worker numbers required to keep up with demographics changes in the wider population.**

**Chart 4: Turnover rates by job role**



High turnover rates can impact significantly on the quality of care that service users receive. The cost of recruiting new staff and inducting them is considerable. Improving the retention of staff through measures which we know staff value such as training and development as well as terms and conditions of work could potentially reduce employer costs and crucially improve the quality of care.

**Chart 5: Vacancy rates by job role**

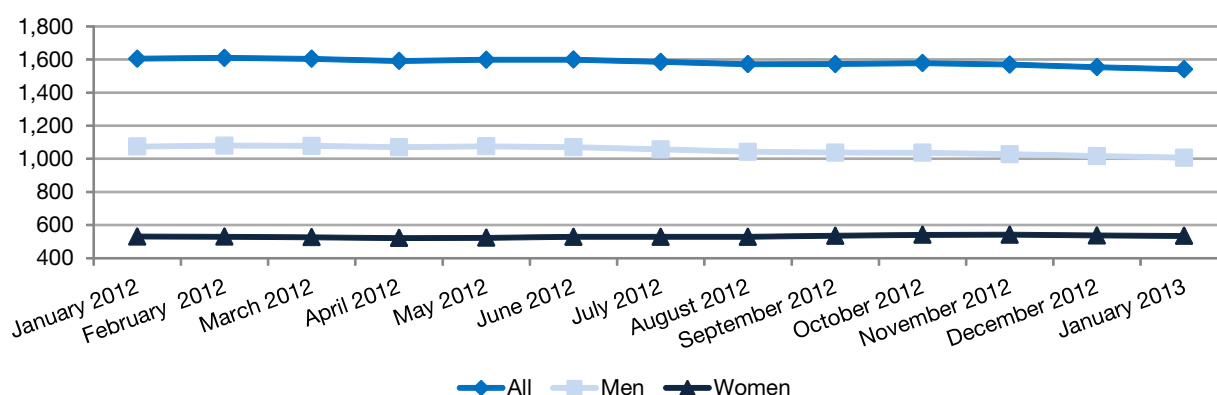


The greatest number of vacancies is for care workers since they form the bulk of the workforce. As the workforce projections make clear, social care is potentially a major area for employment growth and thus the absolute number of vacancies could increase again in the future. The measures to increase recruitment through the Skills for Care apprenticeship programmes will help job seekers to fill the gaps.

## High unemployment rates - can social care employers realise this potential?

Although there are a relatively high number of jobseekers who have expressed an interest in working in social care there is still a large number of vacancies and recruitment difficulties are well reported. Chart 6 shows the number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), at January 2013 there were 1.6 million people in receipt of this benefit. Overall unemployment is even higher,- the rate for September to November 2012 was 7.7% of the economically active population i.e. a total of 2.49 million unemployed people (ONS).

**Chart 6: Number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance January 12–January 13.**



Given this potential reserve of workers it seems strange that the sector should be facing concerns regarding how to meet issues caused by turnover, vacancies and the need to grow. However, as raised by The Guardian article – the sector needs to improve its image and widen the demographic pool from which workers are found to be able to meet current and future demand. Chart 6 shows that over two thirds of JSA claimants are male and currently less disposed to see social care as a career. As such the potential resource is not as great as it might seem.

Overall without some intervention and assistance – these unemployed people may not be attracted to work in social care. To try and help employers solve the potential supply side issues, Skills for Care have developed a [recruitment and retention strategy](#) and the [apprenticeship programmes](#)<sup>3</sup> in partnership with the Department of Health. The White Paper for adult social care, Caring for our future: reforming care and support made a commitment to doubling the number of apprentices in social care to 100,000 over the next 5 years.

However, if the current workforce is to meet the growing demands being placed upon it then other measures will be needed

How does your workforce compare to this sector picture? If you have a NMDS-SC account, log in and view your workforce via the NMDS-SC dashboards. If you've not seen the NMDS-SC dashboards, go to the NMDS-SC website and take a look at the [short introductory video](#)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/social-care-network/2012/oct/24/stretching-the-limits-social-care>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/newresearchreports/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications\\_and\\_training/apprenticeships/Informationforemployers.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training/apprenticeships/Informationforemployers.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/dashboardstutorial/>