

# **Health Education England National Workforce Census of Social Workers and Social Care Workforce within Mental Health Services**

**National report**  
February 2023

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# Key project findings



192 data submissions received, 66% from NHS, local authority and independent sector providers, 34% VCSE sector contribution



3,576 social workers (WTE) working within NHS mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 – 20% increase from comparable position on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019



Confirmed social worker contribution within both inpatient and community NHS mental health services – highest rates reported in generic CMHT (82%) and Early Intervention (79%) services



40% of providers reported an increase in the number of directly employed social workers in the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022



Greater diversity in staff ethnicity demographics of social workers, and particularly social care staff, compared to wider England population demographics



From the 65 submissions received by VCSE providers, circa 180,000 people with mental health conditions were reported as being supported by the social support workforce working for these providers



59% of VCSE providers reported localised arrangements; 41% of providers reported providing support nationally, regionally, or across multiple ICS areas



Health and wellbeing and peer support/group session services were most widely offered by VCSE sector providers – confirmed by 85% and 83% of providers respectively

# Acknowledgements

The NHS Benchmarking Network (NHSBN) would like to extend our thanks to the Programme Leads of the Health Educational England (HEE) National Mental Health Programme, who offer invaluable insight, defining the collection and providing interpretation on findings for this project and across the wider HEE workstream.

We would also like to thank Karen Linde, Duncan Tree and Jason Brandon along with the wider project oversight group, who have been instrumental in shaping both the data specification templates and the national findings across the NHS, local authority, independent and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors.

Additionally, we would like to extend our thanks to Julian Emms, Chair of the NHSBN Mental Health Reference Group, for his ongoing support.

Finally, we would like to thank the services who participated in the project, with 188 submissions received in total spanning NHS Trusts, local authorities, independent sector providers and services from within the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.



# Project background and participation

The NHS Benchmarking Network was commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) to deliver a workforce census focusing on social worker and social care staff provision within mental health services as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The project builds on a desktop review compiled in spring 2022 which synthesised existing available datasets and data collected as part of a bespoke commissioned report published by NHS Benchmarking Network in June 2020 (National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services).

The census is a detailed workforce census describing the role of social workers and social care staff in mental health services delivered across NHS Trusts, local authorities, independent sector organisations, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. Data were collected as on the census date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, or for the duration of the year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, where applicable.

The NHS Benchmarking Network (NHSBN) is the in-house benchmarking service of the NHS and undertakes projects across commissioning, community healthcare, acute and mental health sectors. All statutory mental health providers in England as well as national bodies such as the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, and Health Education England are members of NHSBN.

The aim of this work is to provide a detailed profile of the social worker and social care workforce, with areas of interest including:

- Workforce size and composition, including employment arrangements
- Social worker positioning within mental health services
- Social worker activity
- Workforce demographics and key performance indicators
- Service model and workforce composition of VCSE sector services supporting people with mental health conditions

A total of 192 data submissions were received from 179 organisations (Mind branches counted as individual entities). Of these, 66% of submissions were from NHS organisations, local authority and independent sector providers; 34% of submissions were from VCSE sector providers.



# Project methodology

Data has been presented throughout the report to best illustrate the variation reported by providers nationally, with NHS, local authority and independent sector data analysed in its totality, except where explicitly stated. Where all data is displayed together within a column chart, the bars are colour coded by organisation type. Data provided by services within the VCSE sector, detailing the social support workforce supporting people with mental health conditions, is reported separately from page 62 onwards.

References to mental health services relate to care offered in both inpatient and community-based settings, with services spanning children and young people's mental health teams along with adult and older adult mental health services.

Population benchmarks applied to metrics throughout the report relate to providers' all-age resident population coverage. Due to independent sector providers not covering specific geographical footprints, they do not subsequently appear on charts where 'per 100,000 population' has been applied as the applicable metric denominator.

Where NHS Trusts were unable to participate in this project, data from the NHS Benchmarking Network annual projects has been included in specific sections to provide a more comprehensive NHS position (see pages 8 and 9). Data have been taken from the 2021/22 NHS Benchmarking Network annual benchmarking projects which provides organisational data as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (Adult and Older People's Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22; Children and Young People's Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22). To note, however, the annual benchmarking figures are likely to be an underrepresentation as they relate to directly employed staff only – they do not include qualified social workers working in other job roles or externally employed social workers (e.g. from local authorities) working within NHS mental health services.

Further, where providers reported social worker headcount numbers but were unable to submit corresponding WTE figures these have been calculated for use within overall positions (pages 8 to 10 only) using the average headcount: WTE ratio reported by project participants of 0.89.

In reference to the social care workforce dataset, this is the first time that data has been collected and so varying levels of completeness are evident for different metrics. This may, therefore, in some places provide an indicative only position.

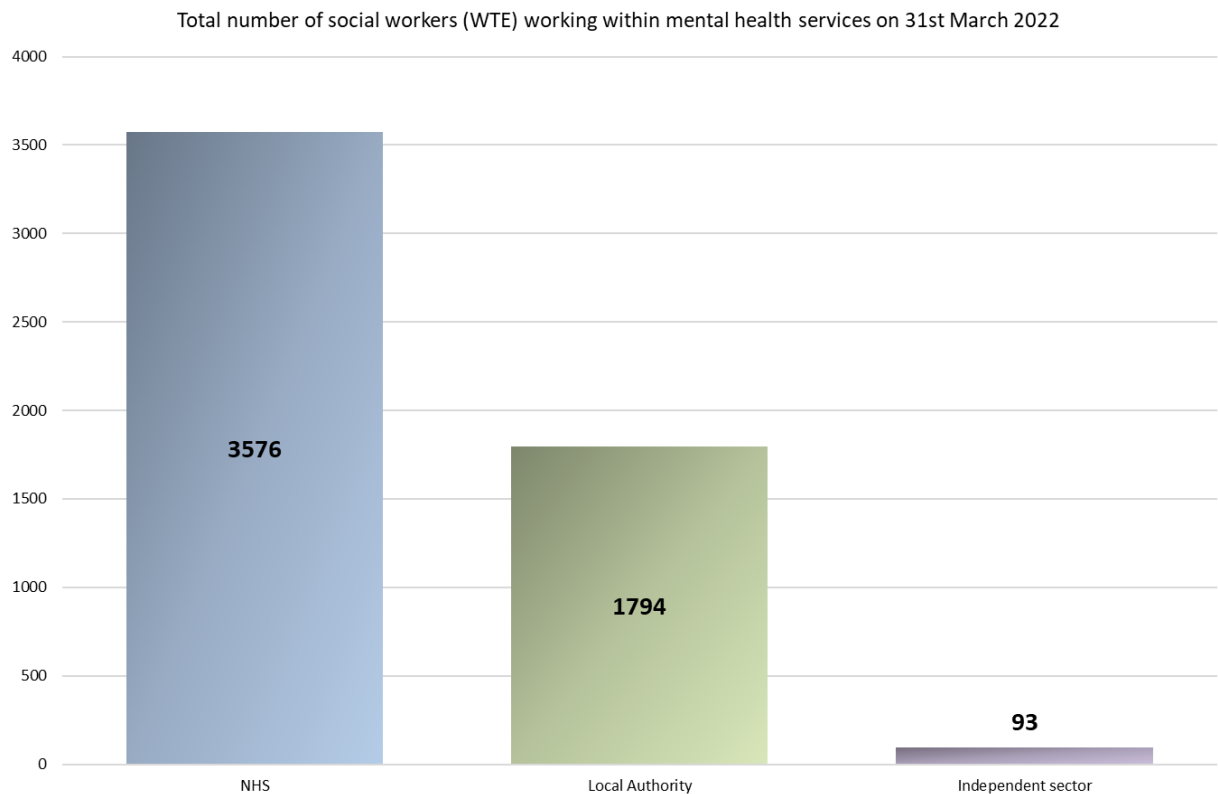


# Social workers in mental health services

## Workforce summary



# Social workers in mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022



The adjacent chart illustrates the number of social workers (Whole Time Equivalent - WTE) reported by participants within mental health services on 31st March 2022. Data are presented by sector: NHS, local authority, independent sector.

In NHS mental health services 3,576 social workers (WTE) were reported to be in post on the census date across 58 Trusts. This totality position includes data taken from the 2021/22 NHS Benchmarking annual projects\*: 462 social workers (WTE) from 11 NHS Trusts. To note, however, the data taken from the annual benchmarking projects for the 11 Trusts who were not able to participate in the census are likely to be an underrepresentation as they do not include qualified social workers working in other job roles, or externally employed social workers (e.g. from local authorities) working within NHS mental health services.

There were 1,794 social workers reported to be working within local authorities. Data submissions were received from 63 of 152 local authorities (excluding eight councils who confirmed employment of zero social workers or social care staff within their mental health services) and therefore is a representative rather than a comprehensive picture for local authorities.

Data was also provided by four providers from the independent sector, who confirmed 93 social workers in post on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

To note, where providers reported headcount numbers but were unable to submit corresponding WTE figures (10 providers in total), these have been calculated for use within these overall positions (pages 8 to 10 only) using the average social worker headcount: WTE ratio reported by providers of 0.89.



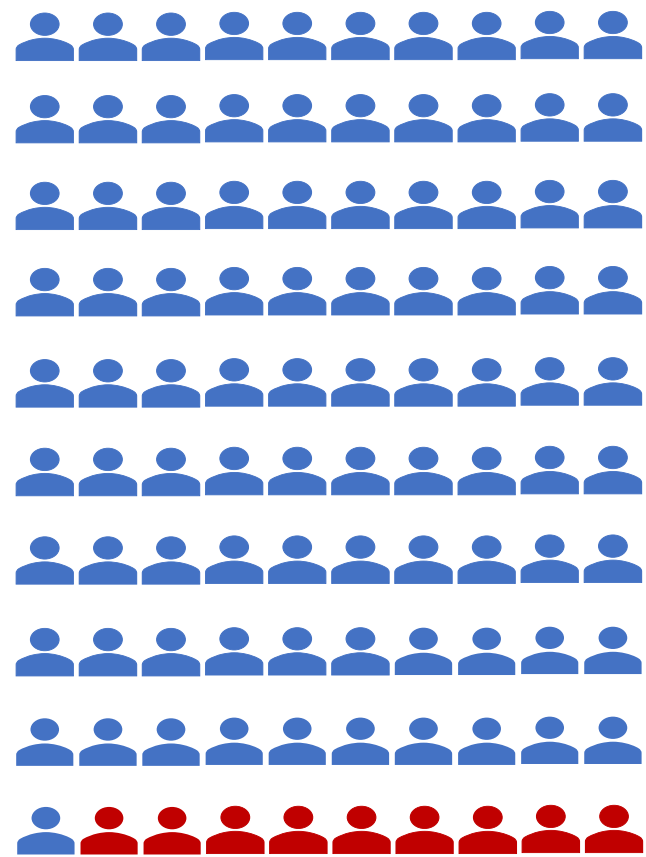
# Social workers in mental health services – NHS

**3,576 social workers (WTE)  
working within NHS  
mental health services on  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

**of which:**

**Employed by NHS:  
3,260 (91%)**

**Employed by an  
external organisation:  
315 (9%)**



As part of the workforce census, NHS Trusts were asked to quantify the number of social workers supporting their mental health services – including both directly employed staff and staff employed externally (for example, by local authorities).

In total, 3,576 social workers (WTE) were reported to be working within NHS mental health services on the census date of 31st March 2022. This compares to a previous position of 2,894 social workers reported as part of the 2019 stocktake\* (30<sup>th</sup> September 2019) and equates to a 24% increase between the two census dates. However, the 2022 census position includes a greater number of CYPMH Trusts (i.e. Trusts providing only CYP mental health services and not providing adult mental health services), who reported 99 social workers (WTE) on 31st March 2022. However, an increase of 20% remains even when the additional social workers are removed to allow for comparable analysis.

As shown in the infographic, 91% of social workers working in NHS Trusts were directly employed by the NHS, with the remaining 9% employed by external organisations (typically local authorities). This marks an increase from the 76% proportion of social workers who were confirmed as directly employed on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019. As in 2019, the externally employed social worker contribution is likely to be understated, with some organisations unable to report the number of social workers employed externally but working within NHS mental health services.

\*NHSBN National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services

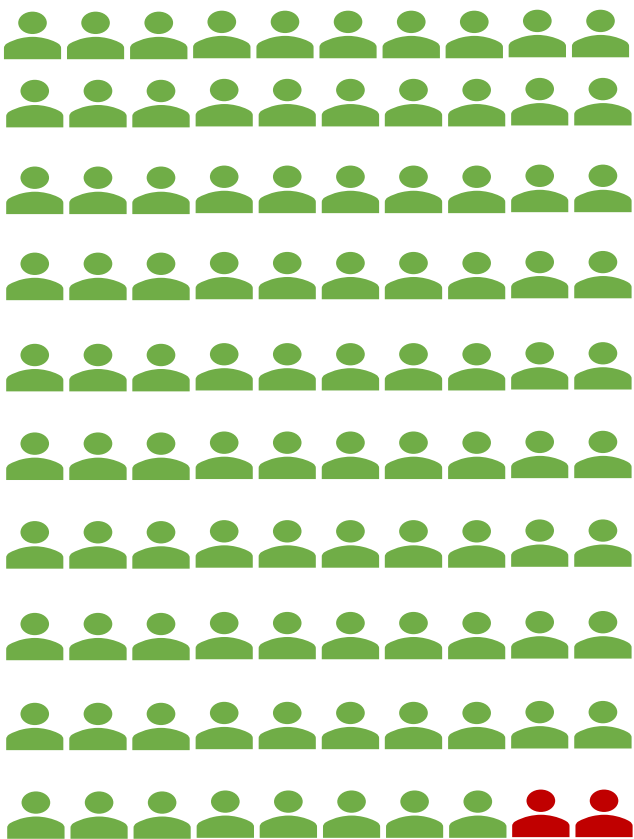
# Social workers in mental health services – local authorities

**1,794 social workers (WTE)  
working within local  
authority mental health  
services on  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

**of which:**

**Employed by local  
authorities:  
1,761 (98%)**

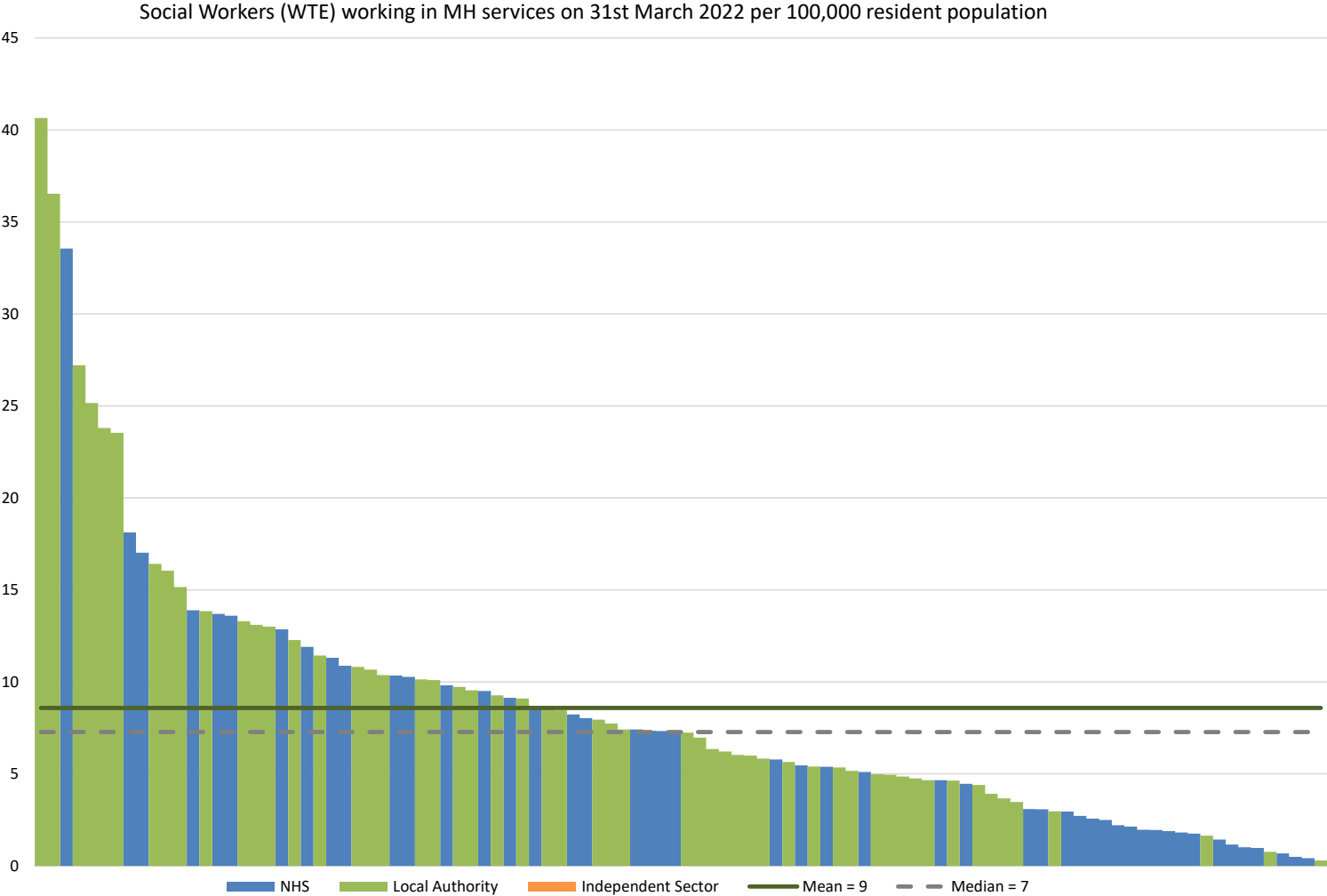
**Employed by an  
external organisation:  
33 (2%)**



In the local authority sector 1,794 social workers (WTE) were reported by 63 providers on the snapshot date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

In contrast to the NHS, local authorities were less reliant on externally employed social workers with just 2% of staff numbers not employed directly by local authority teams; this compares to 9% in NHS mental health services.

# Social workers (WTE) per 100,000 population



Social worker (WTE) staffing levels per provider are detailed within the adjacent chart. In this chart and throughout the remainder of the report, local authority responses are illustrated in green, NHS providers shown in blue, and independent sector providers are in orange.

Social worker staffing numbers varied by provider ranging from 1 to 41 staff (WTE) when benchmarked per 100,000 resident population (all-age).

The majority of providers in the upper quartile were local authorities who generally reported more social workers (WTE) per capita compared to NHS providers.

On average, providers reported nine social workers (WTE) working within their mental health teams when benchmarked per 100,000 resident population.

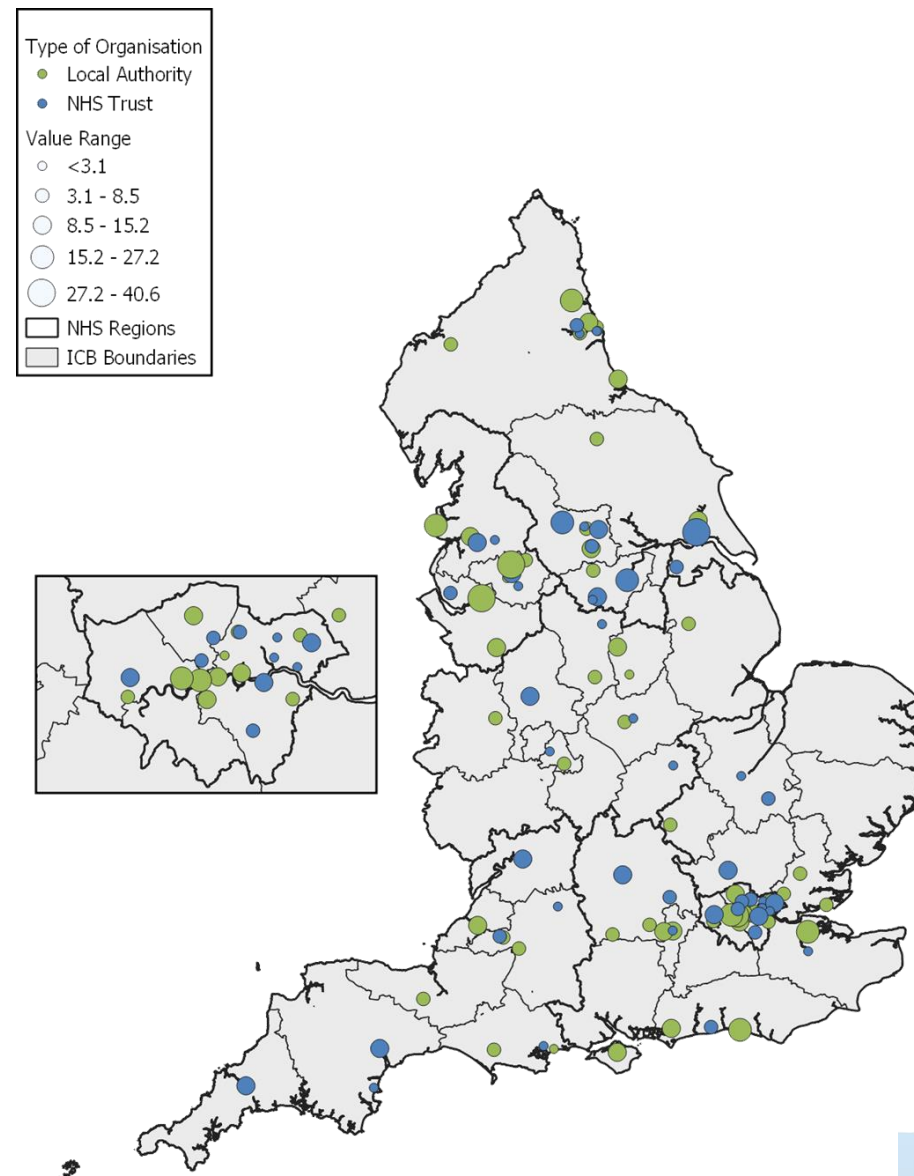


# Social workers (WTE) per 100,000 population – geographical variation

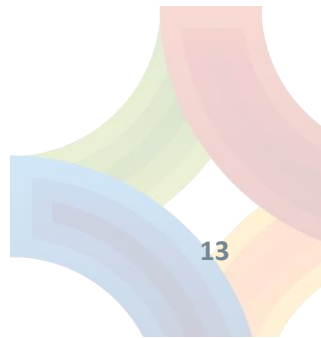
There is regional variation in the number of social workers (WTE) per capita working within mental health services in England both in the NHS and local authorities. The larger dots on the map are indicative of greater provision and smaller dots demonstrate lower levels of social workers.

Comparably higher levels of social worker (WTE) provision per capita were reported within the North West of England and London, both across NHS and local authority services.

In some areas, more localised regional variation is evident. For example there is a mix of high/low social worker (WTE) provision within the same geographical footprint in the Midlands.

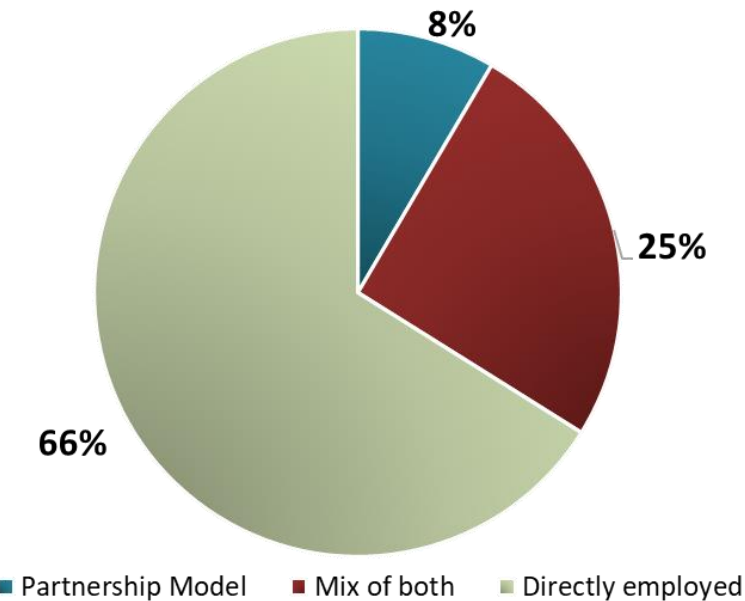


# Service model



# Employment arrangements

Are social workers employed in your services or accessed through partnership arrangements (including secondment)?



There were different employment arrangements for social workers working within mental health services including direct employment, partnership models, or a combination of these two approaches.

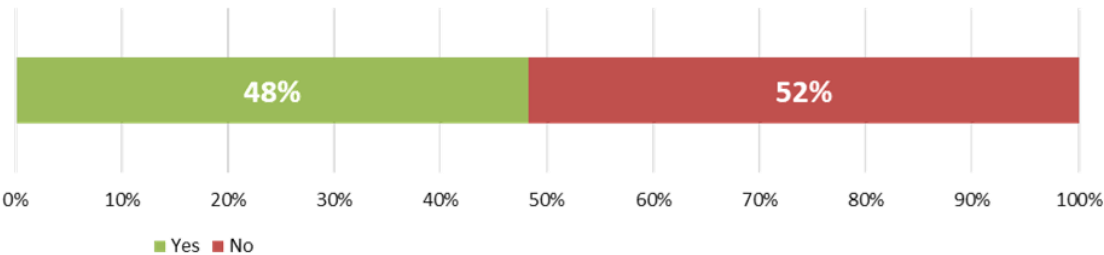
Across NHS, local authority and independent sector providers, two-thirds of respondents (66%) confirmed that social workers working within their mental health teams were directly employed. Approximately a quarter of providers reported employing social workers through both directly employed and partnership models (25%), with the remaining 8% of providers confirming employment through a partnership model.

When NHS provider data is analysed in isolation and compared to the results from the 2019 stocktake\*, the 2022 results showed a marked increase in the proportion of Trusts confirming social workers in post who were directly employed (27% in 2019 vs 57% in 2022), compared to those employed via a partnership model or a mix of both approaches. In 2019, for example, 61% of NHS respondents confirmed a mix of direct employment/partnership model arrangements, versus 40% in 2022.

Across all sectors, where partnership agreements were confirmed by respondents in the 2022 census just under half of participants (48%) advised that social workers were co-located as part of this agreement.

## Partnership Agreement

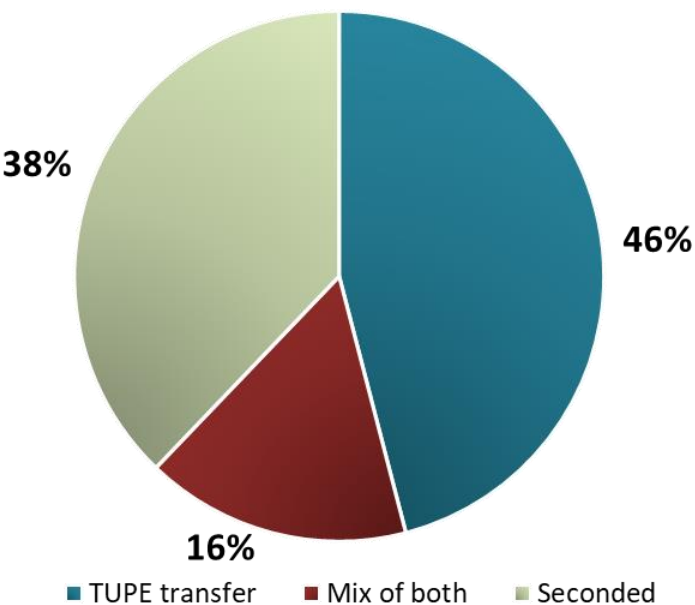
Are your social workers co-located as part of a partnership agreement?



\*NHSBN National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services

# Employment arrangements - continued

If staff were transferred from another organisation, how were staff initially employed?

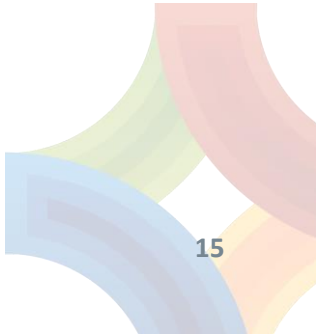
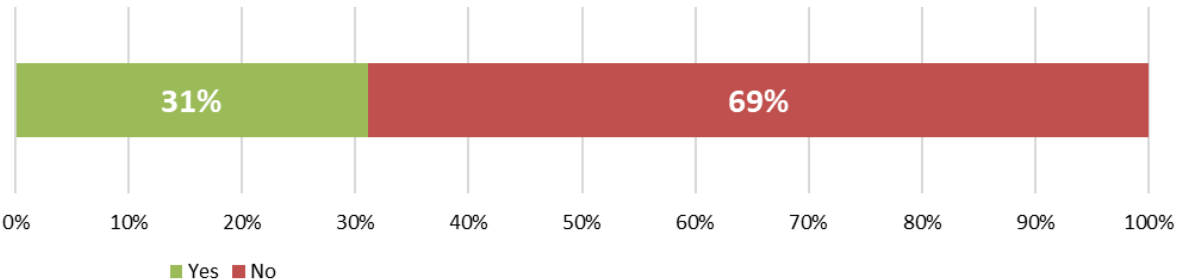


31% of respondents confirmed that social workers had previously been transferred from another organisation.

Just under half (46%) of respondents confirmed that social workers had moved to their current employment arrangements via formal TUPE transfer. 38% of respondents confirmed that staff transfers had taken place only via secondments with the remaining 16% reporting using a combination of the two methods.

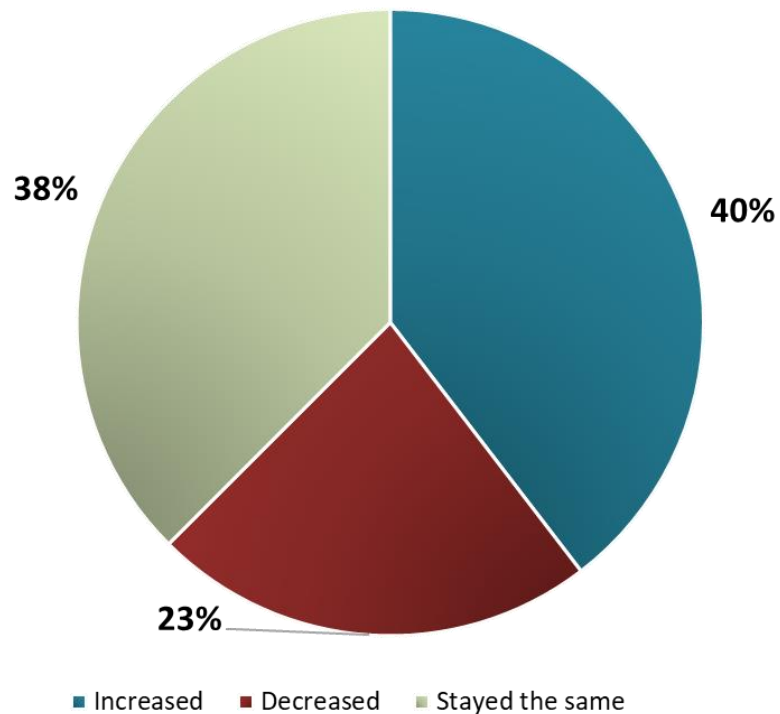
Staff transfers

Have staff been transferred from another organisation? (at any point)



# Workforce expansion/contraction

Has your directly employed workforce increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the last 12 months?



40% of providers reported an increase in directly employed social worker staff numbers in the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

In contrast, 38% of providers across sectors (NHS, local authorities and independent sector) reported no change in the number of directly employed social workers over the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Further, 23% of providers reported a decrease in the percentage of directly employed social workers.

Narrative responses provided alongside the quantitative data highlighted that where increases in directly employed social worker numbers were reported, this was commonly due to additional posts being created, increased funding, and/or increased levels of demand for mental health social workers in the area.

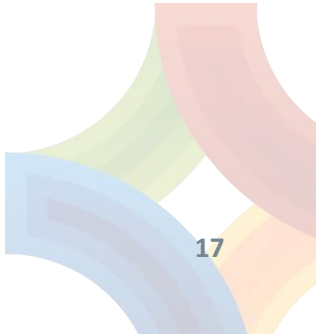
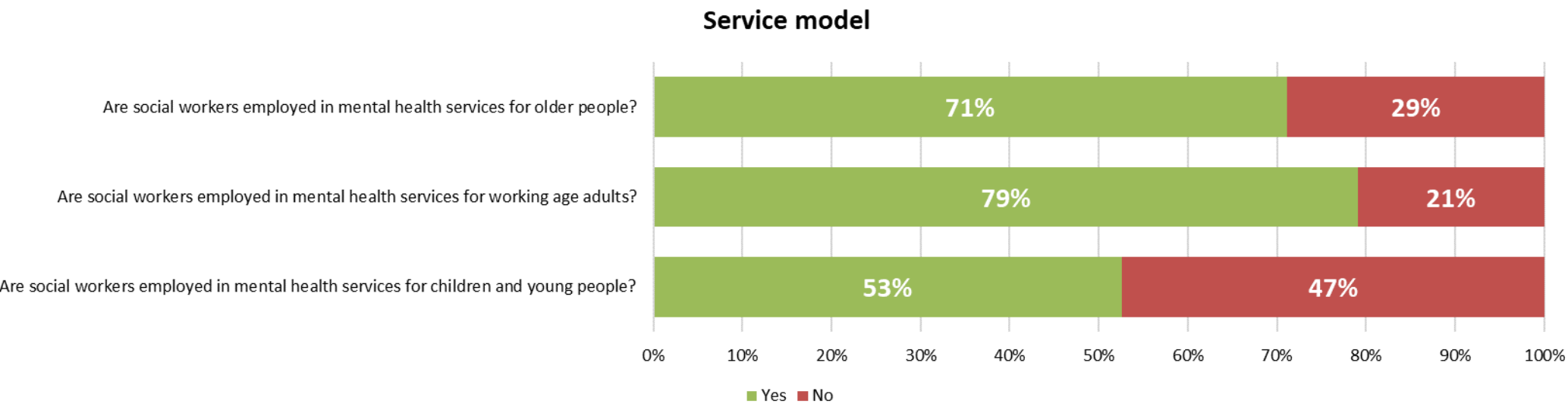
Providers who reported no change or a decrease in directly employed social worker staffing reported challenges in retaining qualified social workers, citing increased turnover and vacancy rates.

When comparing NHS providers in isolation, just under half of providers (49%) reported an increase in directly employed staff. This aligns with the 20% increase in overall social worker numbers reported by NHS Trusts between 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, along with the greater proportion of Trusts reporting direct employment arrangements for social workers detailed on page 14.



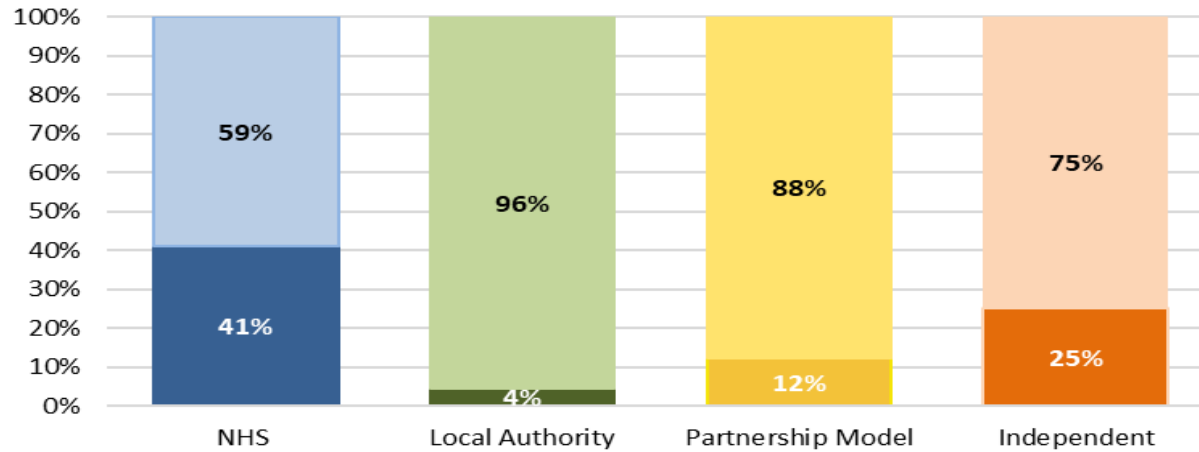
# Service model

Of all respondents 79% confirmed that social workers were employed in mental health services for working age adults (ages 16-64). The majority of providers (71%) confirmed social workers were employed within older people’s mental health services (65+). Just over half (53%) of respondents reported that social workers worked within children and young people’s mental health services.



# Recovery college and out of hospital care

Recovery College



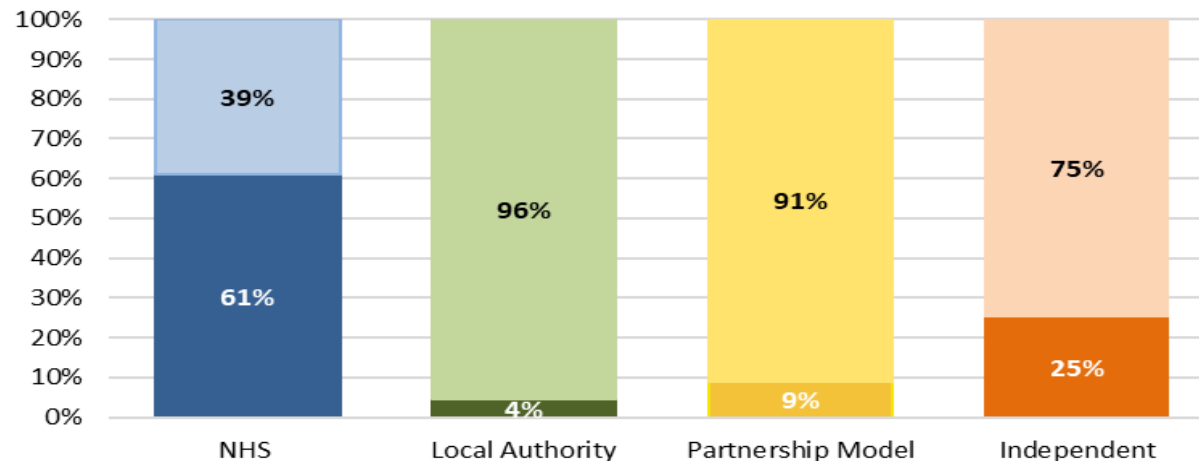
The adjacent charts illustrate the proportion of providers, by sector, where social workers contributed to mental health service delivery for recovery colleges and NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression services.

Of NHS respondents 41% reported social worker contribution to service delivery in recovery college compared to 4% of local authority respondents.

Of NHS providers 61% also reported social workers contributed to the delivery of NHS Talking Therapies services compared to 4% of local authority respondents.

To note, the data for independent sector providers should be interpreted with caution given the small number of providers that participated in this project.

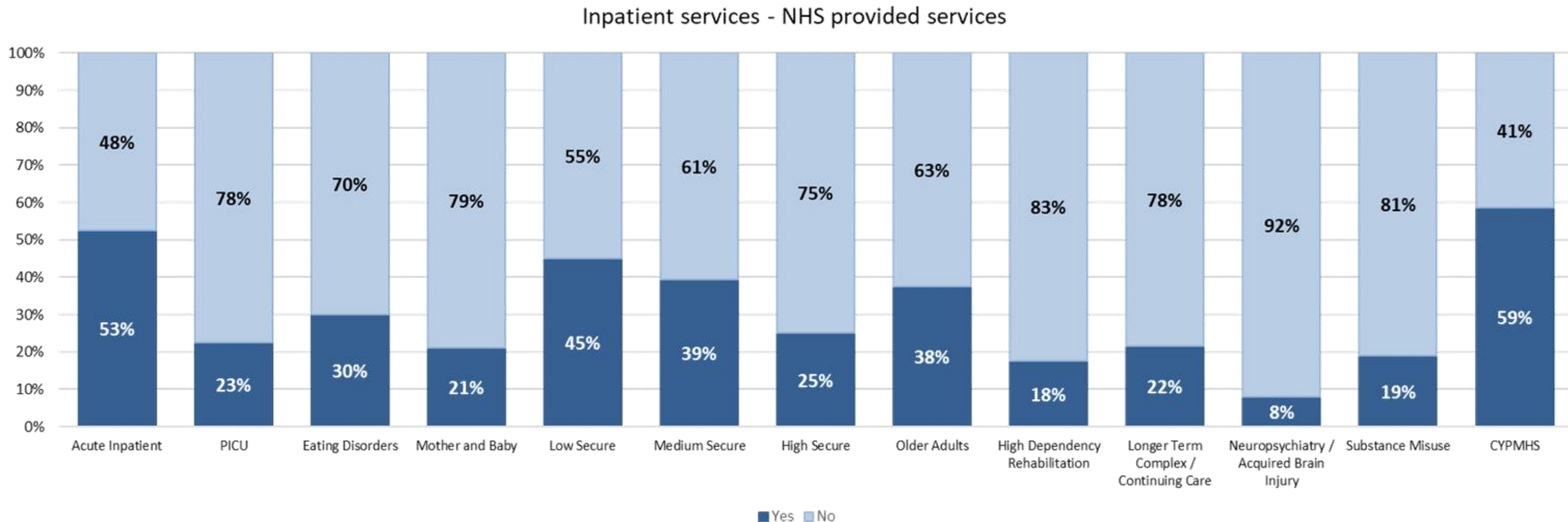
NHS Talking Therapies



# Inpatient services – NHS

The chart below shows the proportion of NHS inpatient services where social workers contribute to mental health service delivery for working age adults, older adults and children and young people.

Over half of general inpatient service providers, i.e. adult inpatient and children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS), reported the presence of social workers within their mental health teams. Specialist NHS mental health inpatient services displayed varying degrees of social worker contribution, with 8% of neuropsychiatry/acquired brain injury services confirming social worker support, compared to just under half (45%) of low secure inpatient services.

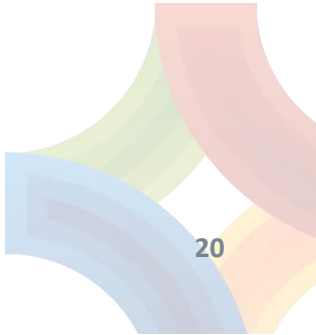
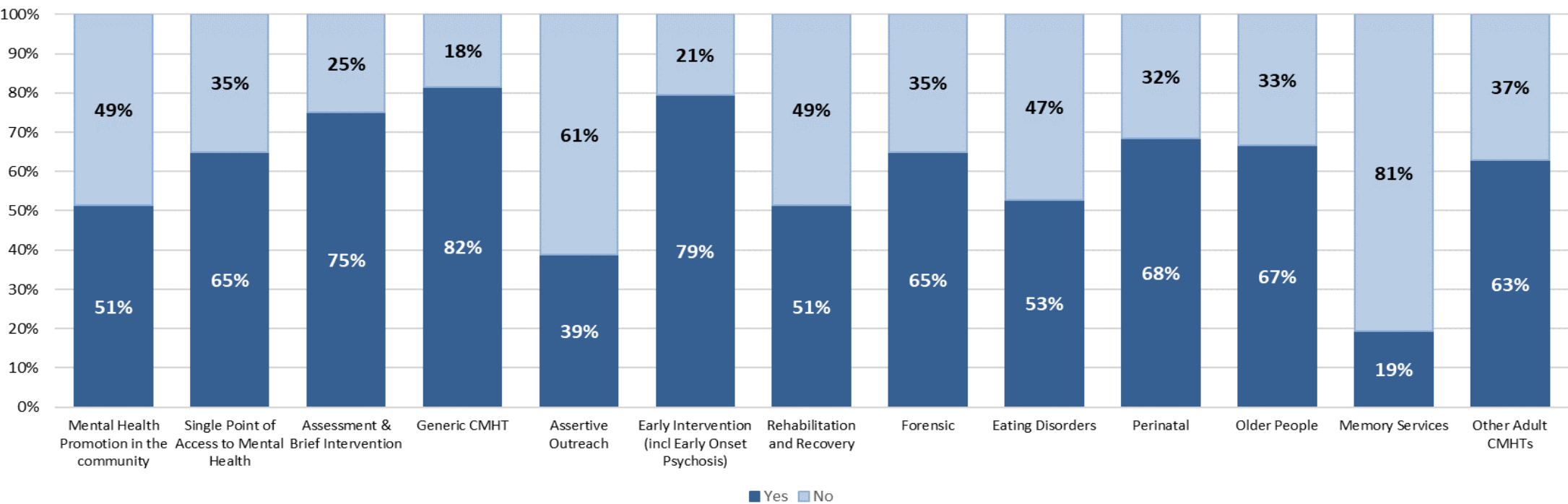


# Adult and older adult community services – NHS

Overall, there was a higher proportion of NHS providers who reported social workers working within adult and older adult community mental health services compared to mental health inpatient services.

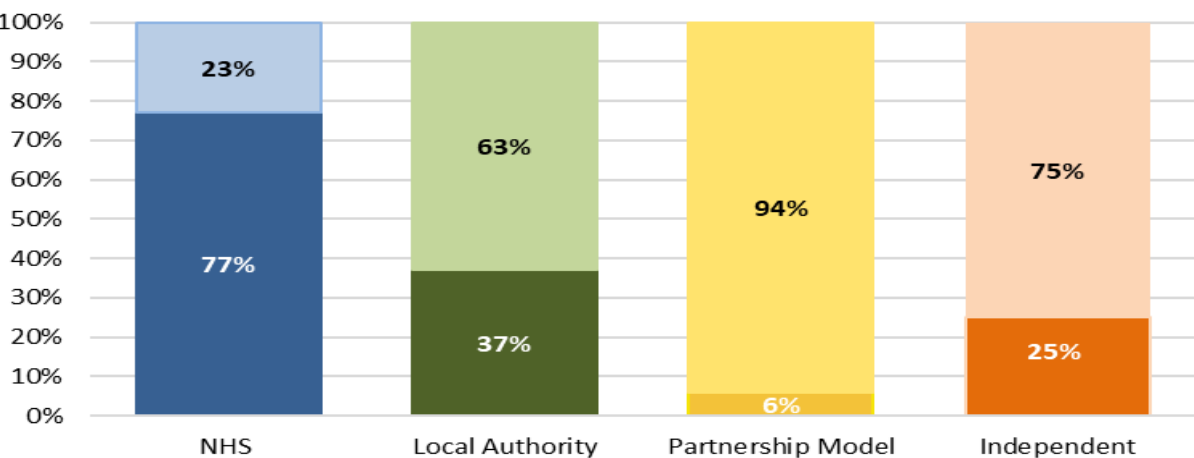
Of all respondents 82% confirmed social workers were part of generic community mental health teams; over two-thirds of providers confirmed social workers supported the delivery of assessment and brief intervention, early intervention, perinatal services, and older people’s services. Assertive outreach and memory services reported comparatively lower utilisation levels of social workers supporting mental health services, 39% and 19% respectively.

Community services - NHS provided services



# Children and Young People's community services

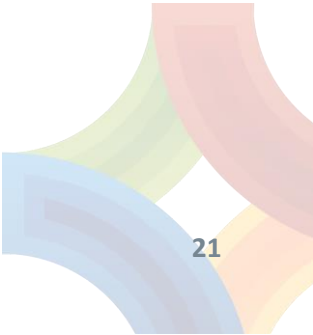
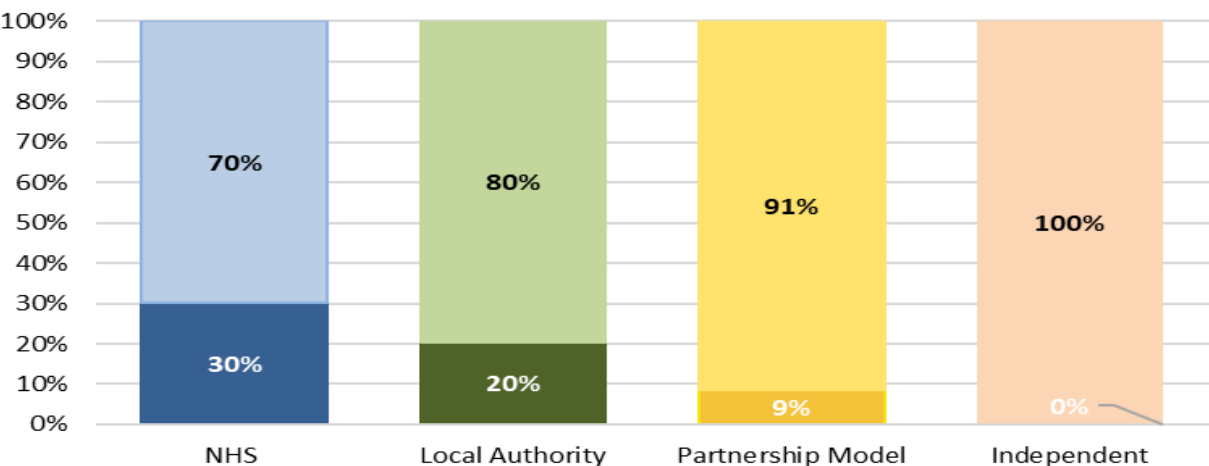
Children and Young People's Mental Health services



Over three-quarters (77%) of NHS respondents confirmed social workers contributed to the delivery of children and young people's community mental health services (CYPMHS). There was a smaller percentage of local authorities where social workers were confirmed to be supporting CYPMHS (37%). This rate was lower still among services operating via a partnership model (6%).

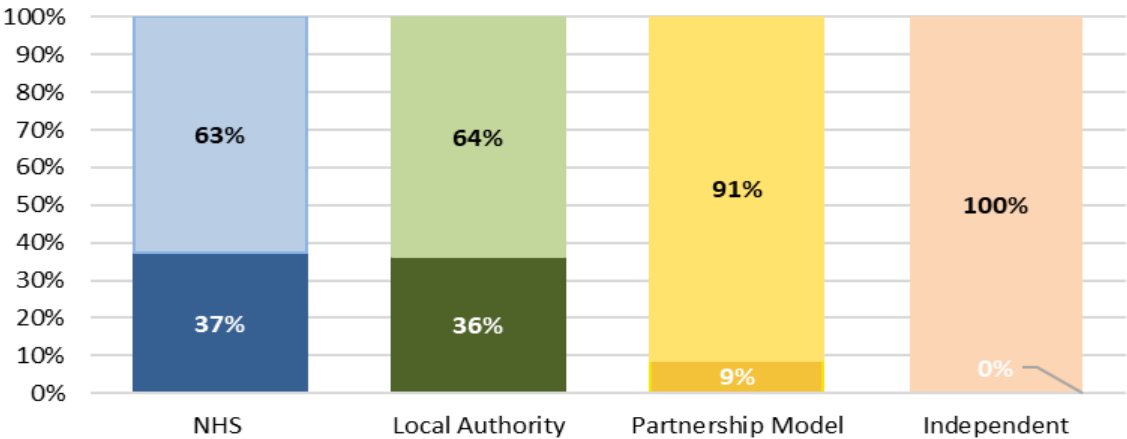
Social workers were reported within a smaller percentage of youth offending teams across all sectors - 30% of NHS Trusts and 20% of local authorities, respectively.

Support to Youth Offending teams



# Children and Young People’s community services – continued

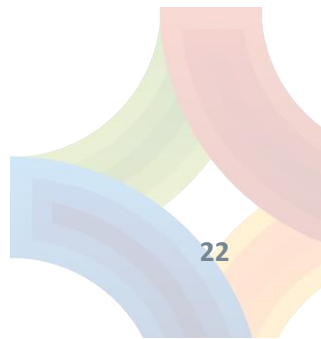
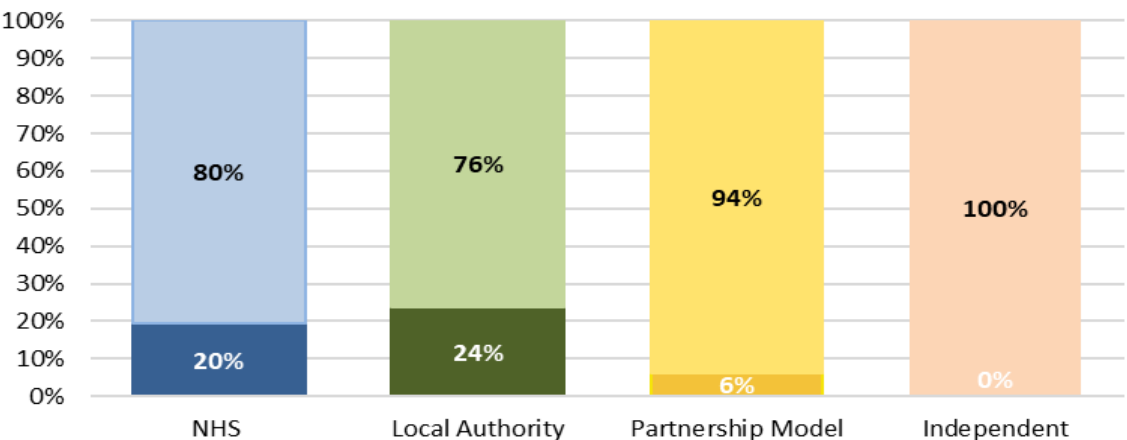
Specific services for children in and leaving care, adopted children and foster carers



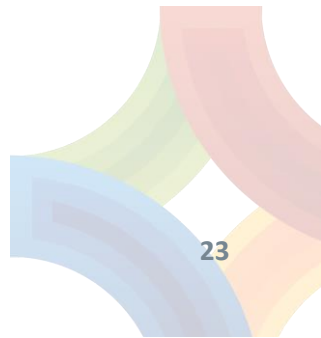
Of all respondents 37% of NHS Trusts and 36% of local authorities reported social worker supported specific services for children in and leaving care, adopted children and foster carers. Comparatively fewer providers reported that social workers supported delivery of local authority behaviour support and inclusion services, 20% of NHS and 24% of local authority respondents, respectively.

Providers operating services via a partnership model reported lower utilisation rates of social workers supporting specialist children’s services - 9% of respondents confirmed social workers supported services to children in and leaving care, adopted children and foster carer services, and 6% of providers reported social workers contributing to local authority behaviour support and inclusion services.

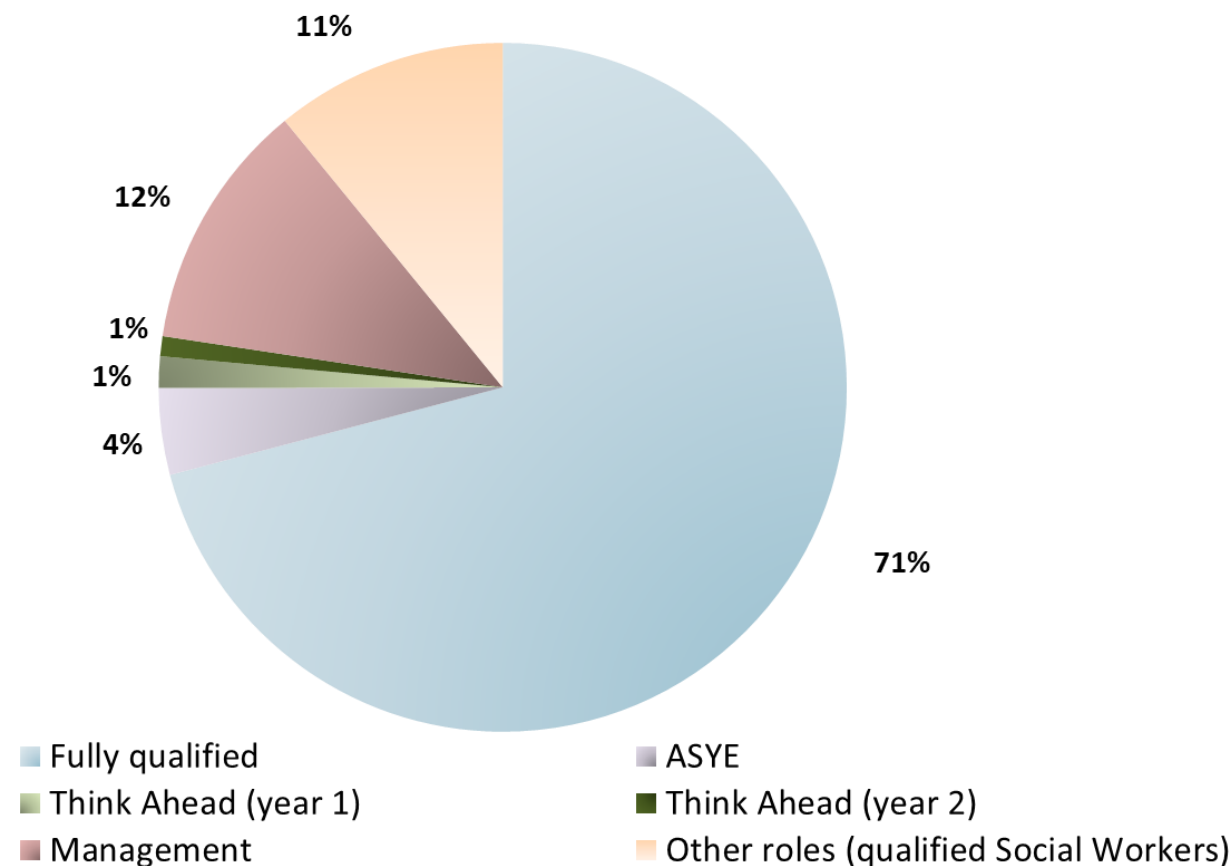
Support to LA behaviour support and inclusion services



# Workforce composition



# Workforce composition



Of the 4,351 social workers (WTE) reported in post on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (excluding additional data from other sources; including staff employed both directly and non-directly), 3,084 social workers were identified as fully qualified – representing 71% of the overall sample.

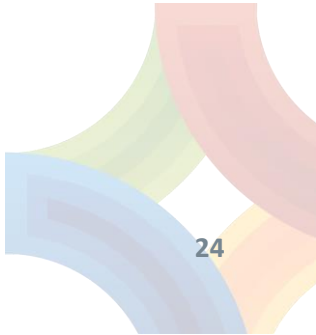
Qualified social workers were also working in management (12%) and in other roles (11%). When taken together, qualified social workers comprised 93%\* of the total workforce numbers.

Respondents were asked to provide additional narrative for qualified social workers in ‘other’ roles. The ‘other’ role included qualified social workers in a variety of positions including principal mental health social worker, senior support worker, and social care practitioners.

Social workers on the Think Ahead scheme represented 2% of the social worker staff in post on the census date - 1% in year 1 and 1% in year 2.

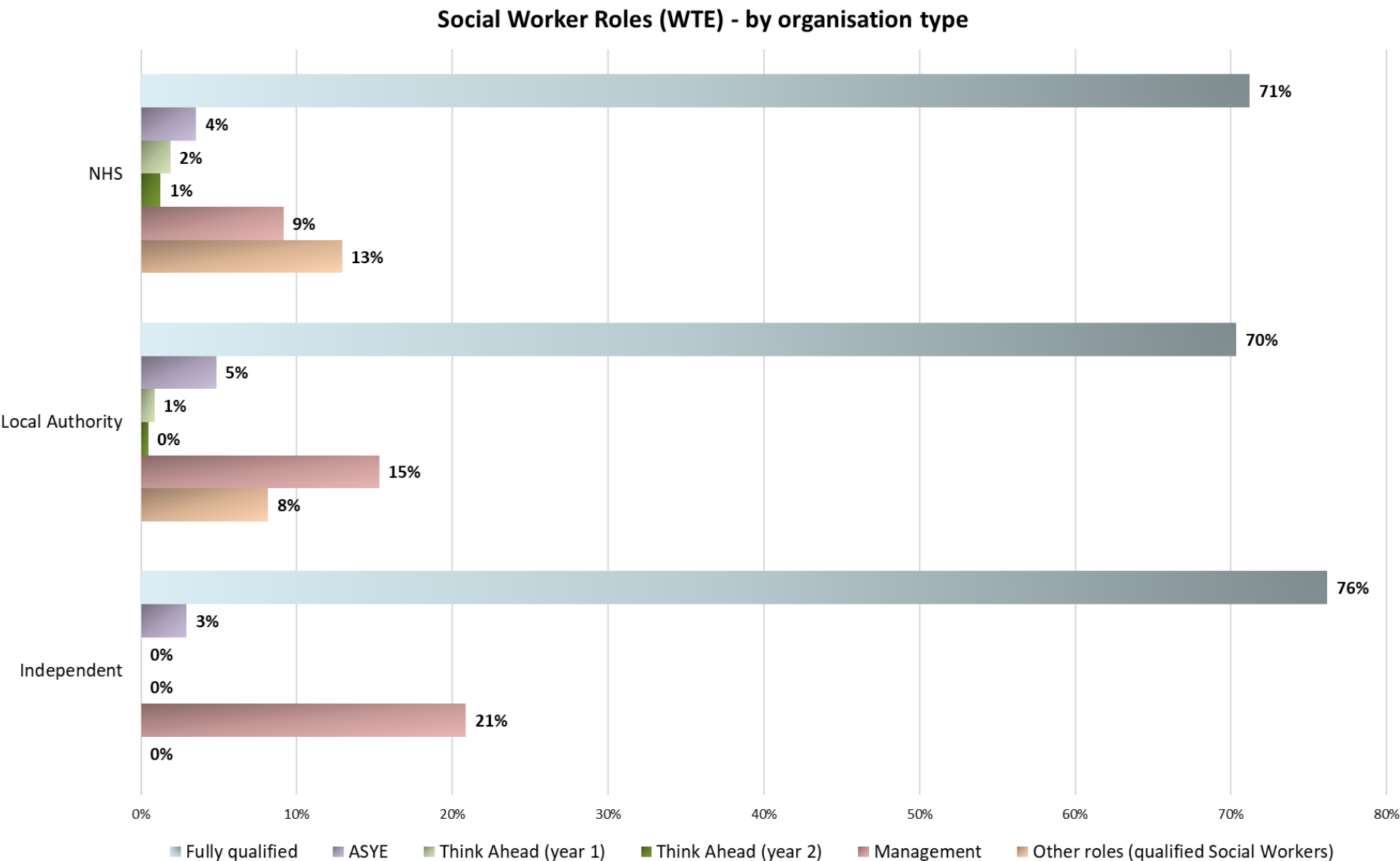
A further 4% of social workers (who were not on the Think Ahead scheme) were reported as undertaking their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

$$*93\% = 70.9\% + 11.8\% + 10.8\%$$





# Workforce composition - by sector



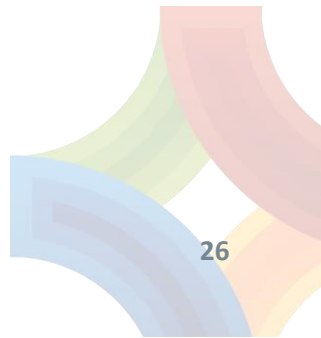
The graph opposite shows the breakdown of social worker roles within each organisation type: NHS, local authority and independent sector.

Independent sector providers reported the highest percentage of social workers working in management roles (21%) compared to the 9% and 15% in NHS Trusts and local authorities, respectively.

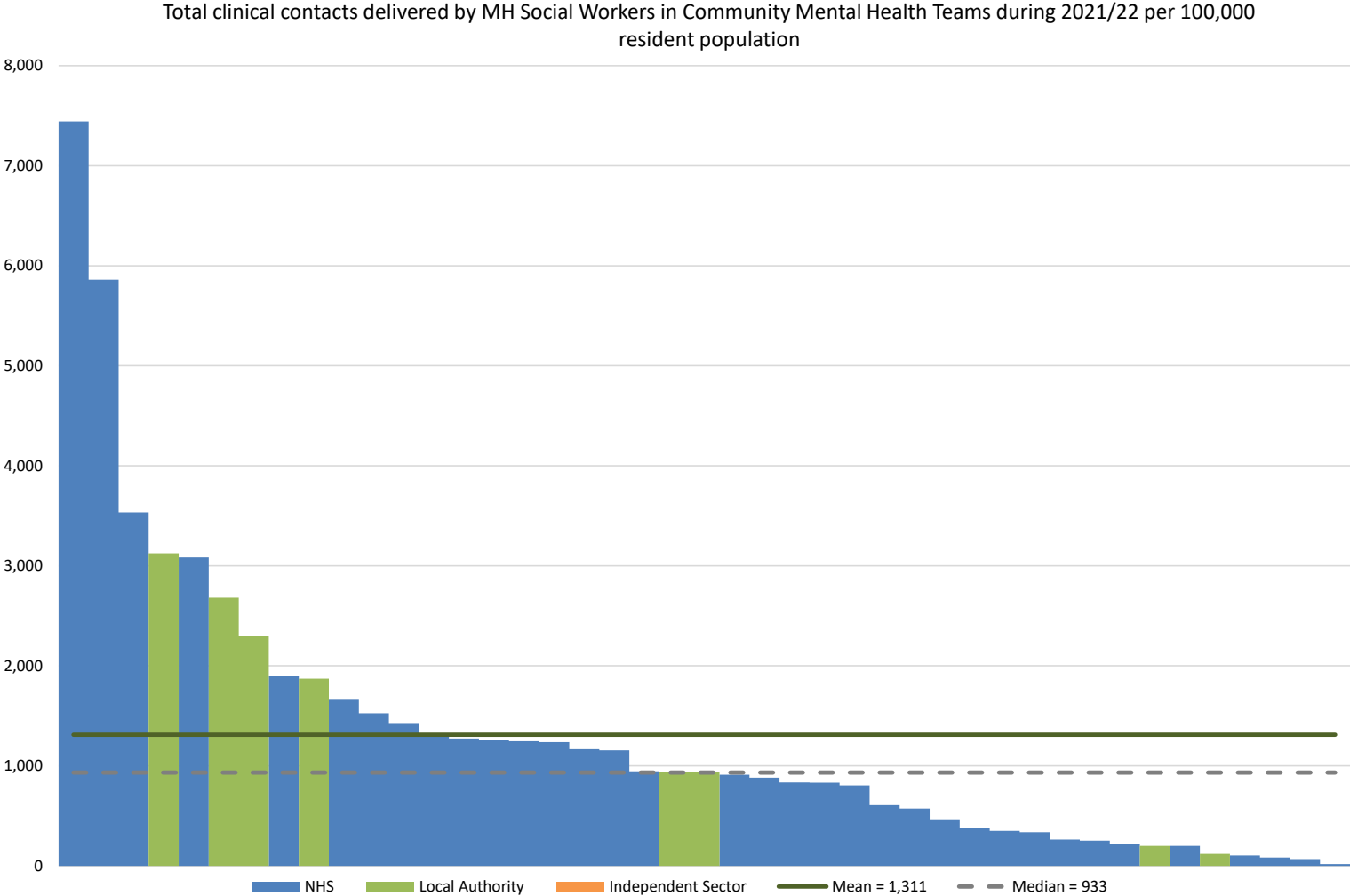
NHS Trusts confirmed 3% of social workers were working as part of the Think Ahead scheme (2% in year 1, 1% in year 2), compared to the 1% reported by local authorities.



# Workforce activity



# Social worker activity – community mental health teams



On average 1,311 clinical contacts were delivered by social workers per organisation in community mental health teams nationally during 2021/22, when provider-level data is benchmarked per 100,000 resident population. This comprises both in-person and non-face to face contacts such as telephone or digital consultations.

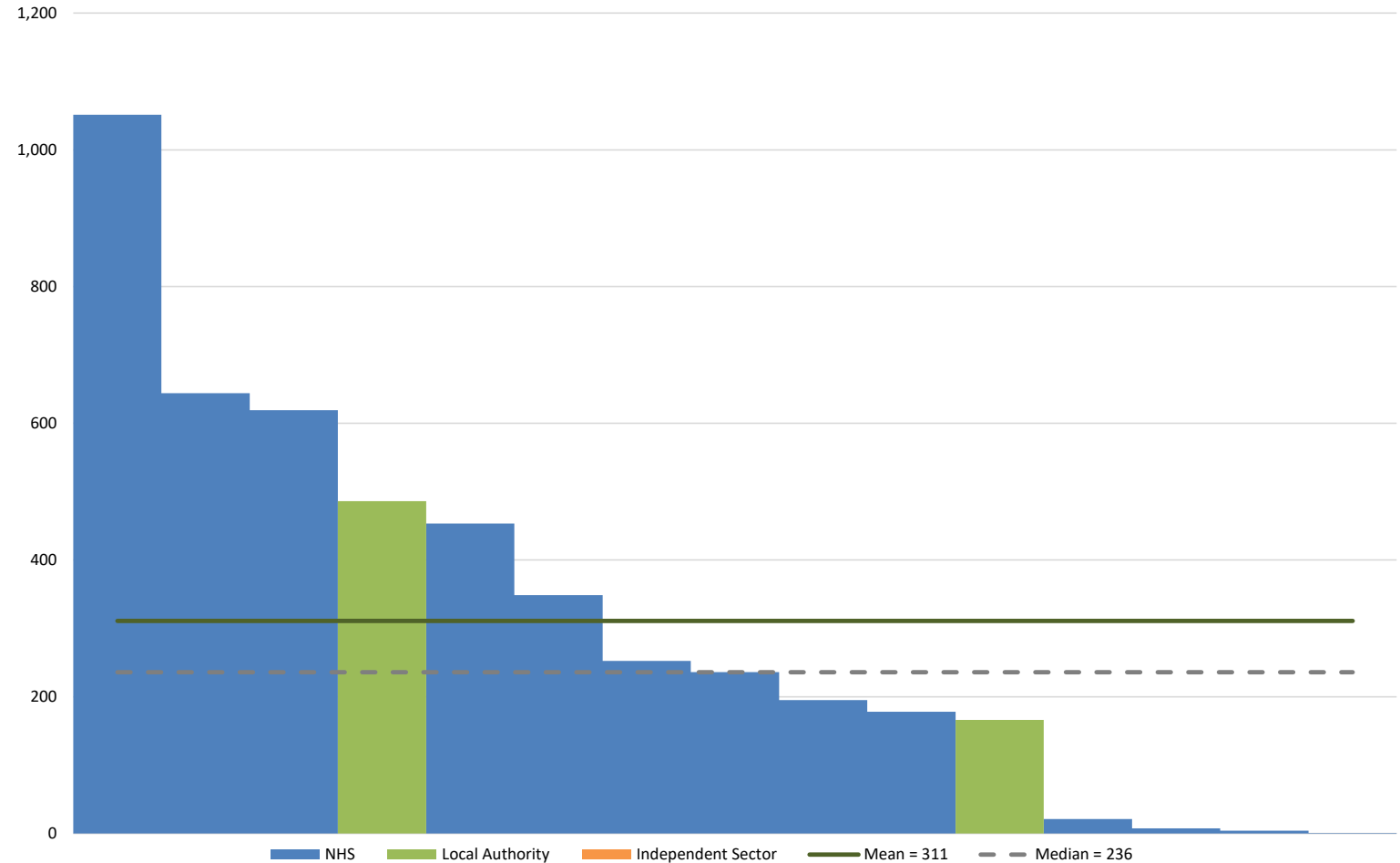
There is notable variation in the benchmarked contact numbers delivered per provider ranging from 17 to 7,443 nationally.

The majority of responses were provided by NHS Trusts. However, local authorities were also among providers with contact rates within the upper quartile. In total, 8 local authorities provided data for this metric.

By way of context, a UK-wide mean average of 17,331 contacts per 100,000 resident population were delivered by generic community mental health teams during 2021/22 and 26,243 (also benchmarked) by general children and young people’s community mental health teams (all roles – NHS only)\*.

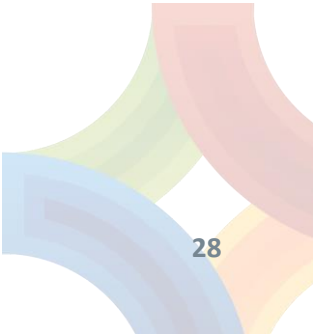
# Social worker activity – other community / day care settings

Total clinical contacts delivered by MH Social Workers in Other community and day care settings during 2021/22 per 100,000 resident population



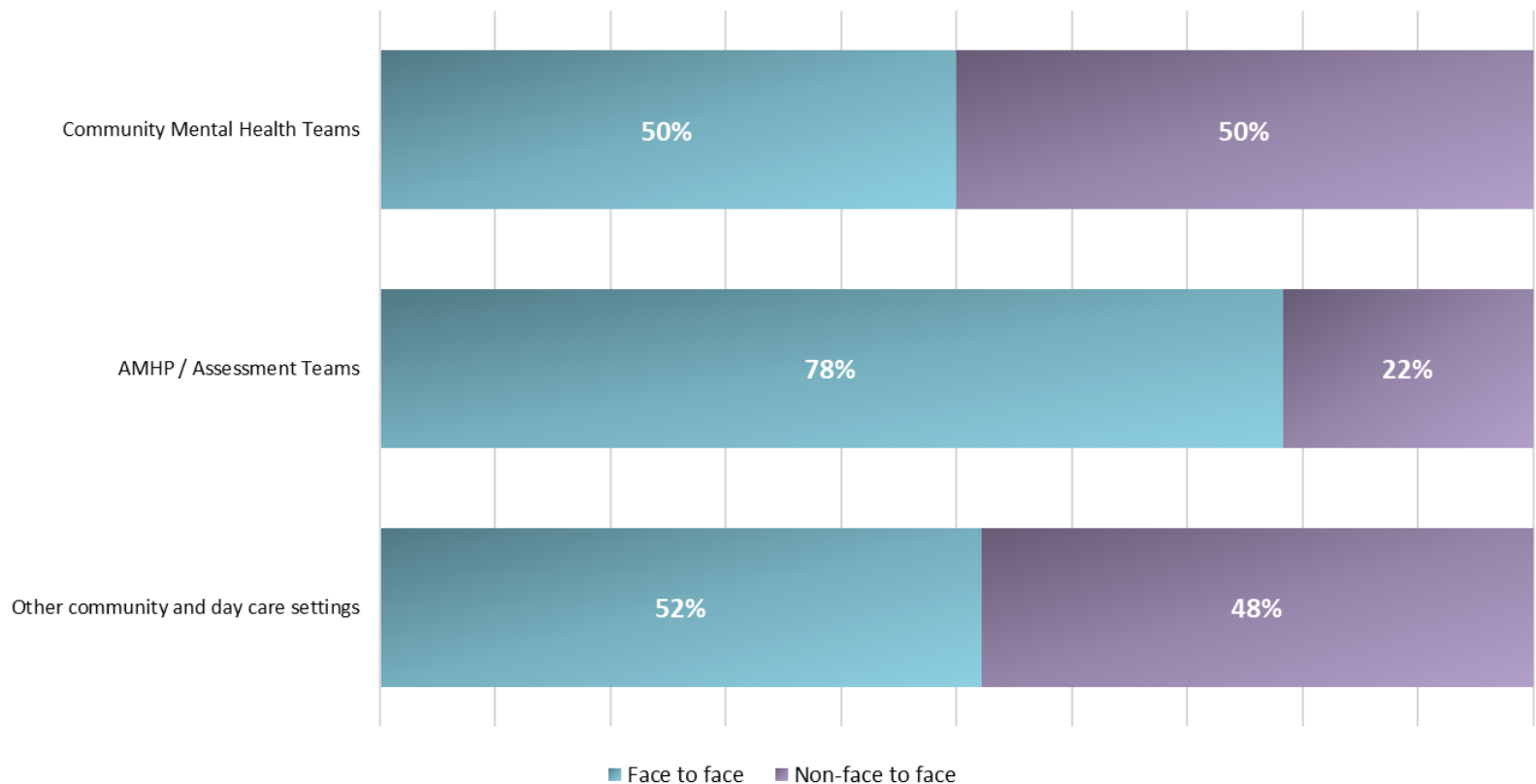
Fewer providers reported activity delivered by social workers within other community day care mental health settings, when compared to the results supplied for community mental health teams.

Nationally, the mean contact rate during 2021/22 within other community and day care settings totalled 311 contacts per 100,00 resident population. The majority of responses were submitted by NHS providers, in addition to two local authority responses.



# Social worker activity – delivery of care

Clinical contacts delivered during 2021/22 - face to face vs non-face to face activity



The adjacent chart shows the proportion of face to face versus non-face to face clinical contacts delivered by mental health social workers during 2021/22 across all sectors, presented by team/service type.

The highest percentage of in-person care was reported within AMHP/Assessment Teams; 78% of social worker activity was delivered face to face during 2021/22.

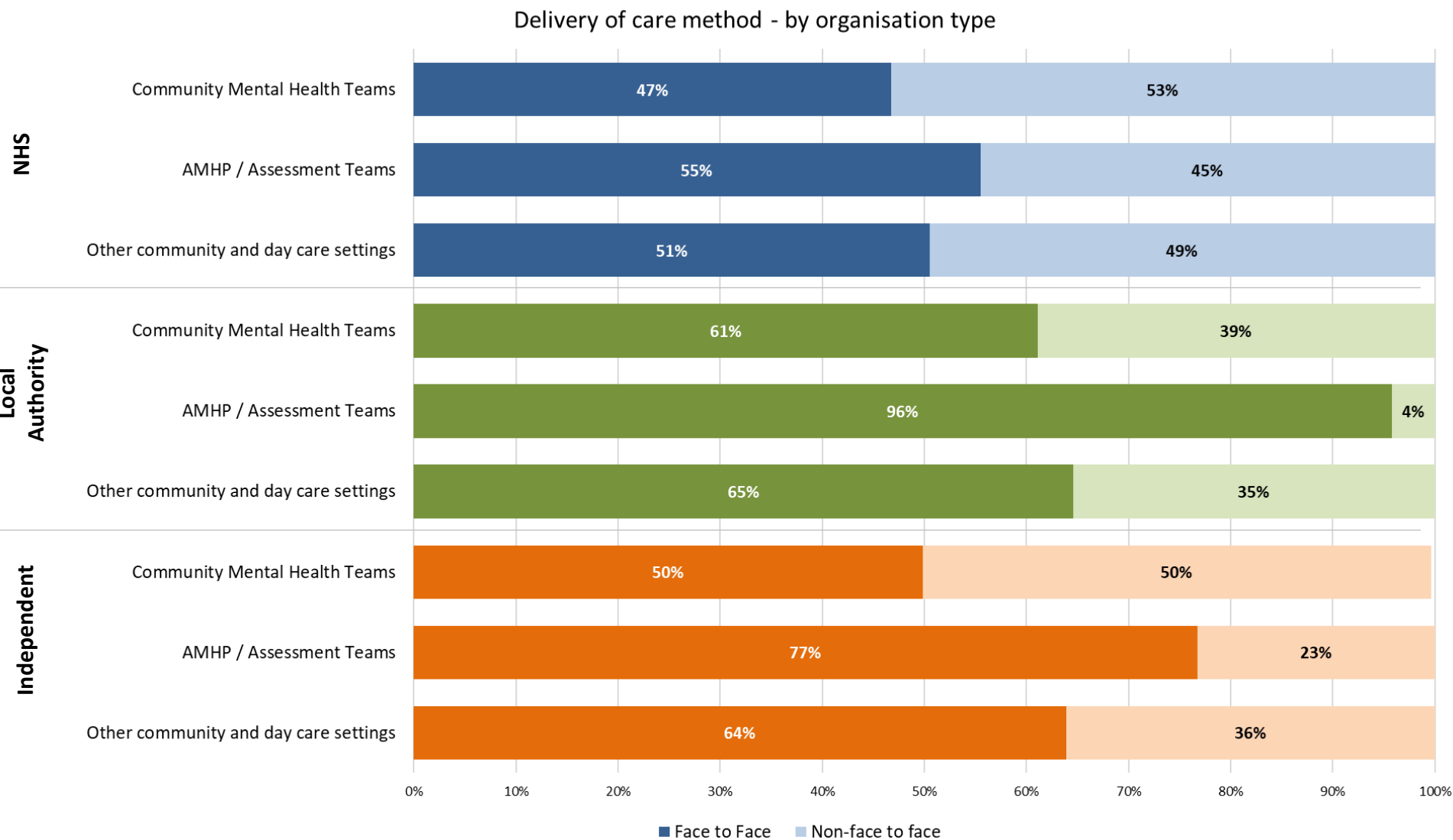
In contrast, social workers within community mental health teams and other community and day care services delivered around half of clinical activity via non-face to face methods (i.e. telephone/digital consultations). This aligns with the findings of the 2021/22 NHS Benchmarking adult/older adult annual project\* which showed 49% of activity was delivered via non-face to face methods by NHS adult and older adult community mental health teams nationally (all roles).

The table below summarises the total reported contacts assigned to mental health social workers within each team categorisation during 2021/22.

Contacts delivered during 2021/22	
Community Mental Health Teams	407,246
AMHP / Assessment Teams	46,692
Other community and day care settings	67,020

\*Adult and Older People’s Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22

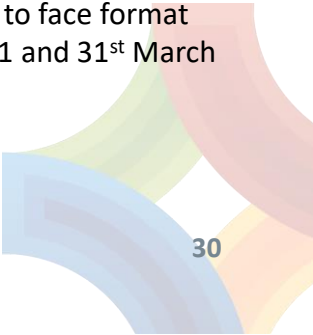
# Social worker activity – delivery of care by sector



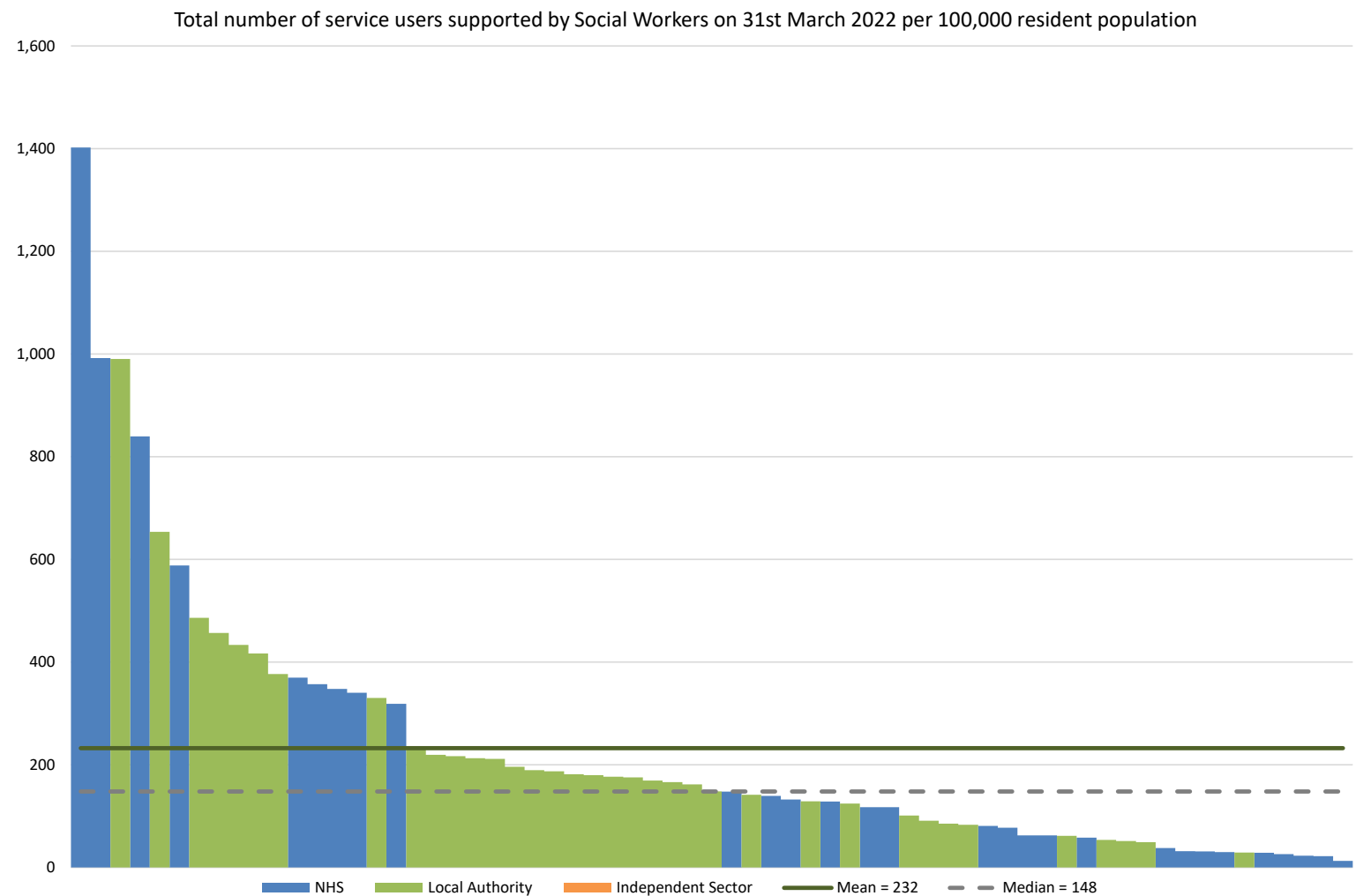
Additional analysis has been undertaken on delivery of care methods, with data segregated by organisation type. This reflects data reported by 63 organisations: 37 NHS providers, 25 local authorities, and 1 independent sector organisation.

Local authorities reported the highest levels of face to face care delivered by social workers within CMHTs; 61% compared to 47% by NHS Trusts and 50% by independent sector providers (1) during 2021/22.

Local authorities also confirmed the highest proportion of in-person activity delivered by AMHP/Assessment teams, with almost all care (96%) delivered by social workers in face to face format between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

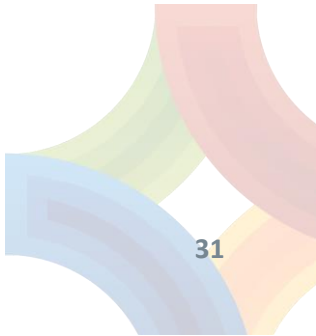


# Social worker activity – patients supported

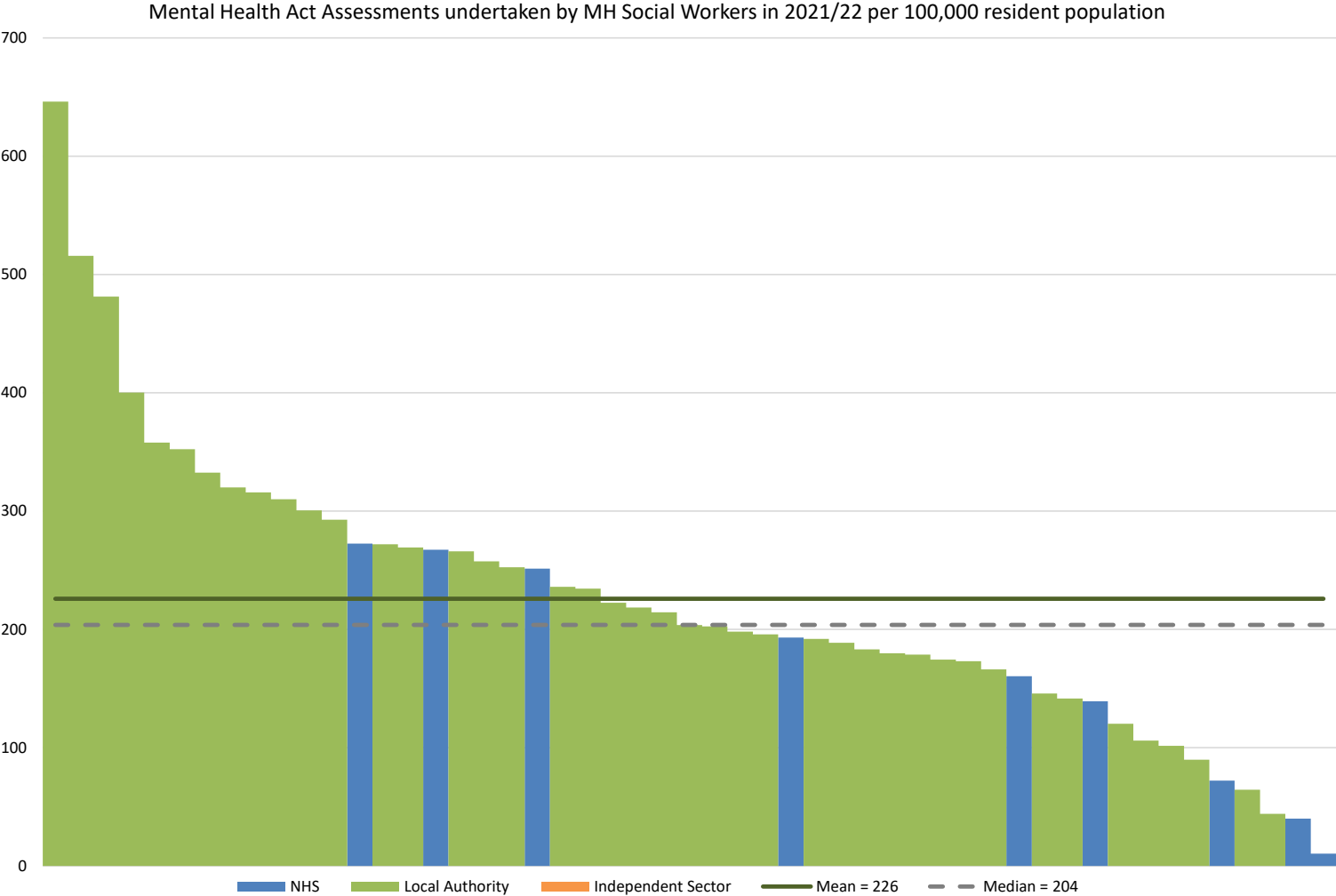


The total number of patients on caseload who were supported by social workers averaged 232 nationally per 100,000 resident population, as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 – comprising service users supported by community mental health teams, AMHP/assessment teams, and other community/day care setting teams.

Results varied between providers, with results ranging from 66 to 1,402 patients supported per 100,000 resident population (all age).



# Social worker activity - Mental Health Act assessments



The project also explored the volume of legal assessments undertaken by mental health social workers.

This chart displays the contribution of social workers in delivering Mental Health Act assessments during 2021/22.

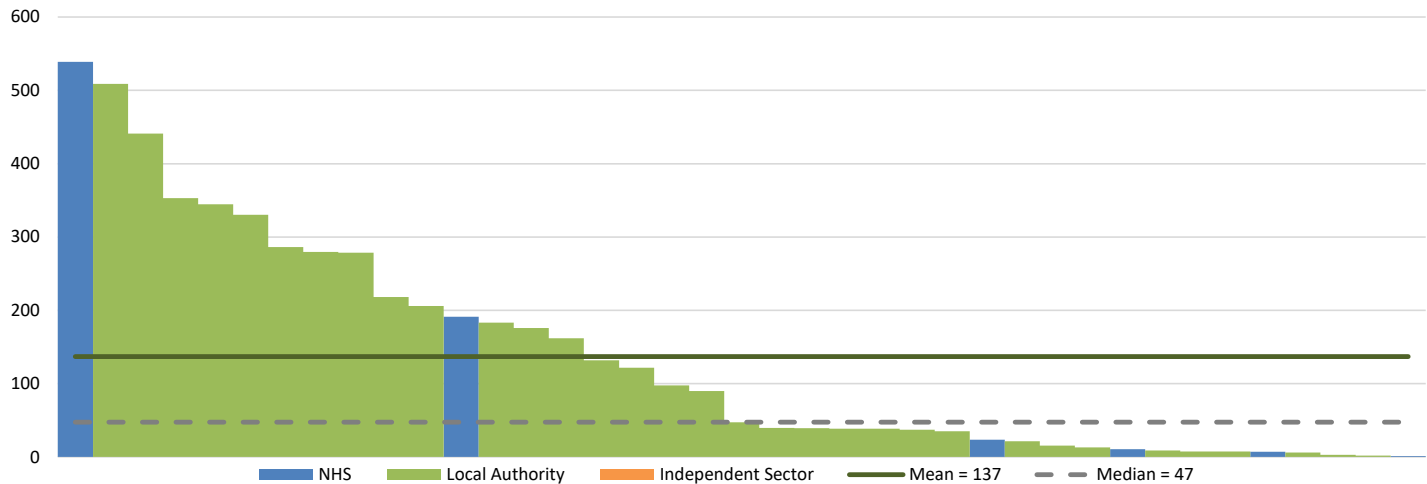
When benchmarked, the mean position nationally was 226 assessments per 100,000 population.

Most responses for this and the assessment metrics detailed over the following two pages have been provided by local authorities, with record keeping the responsibility of local authorities rather than NHS Trusts.



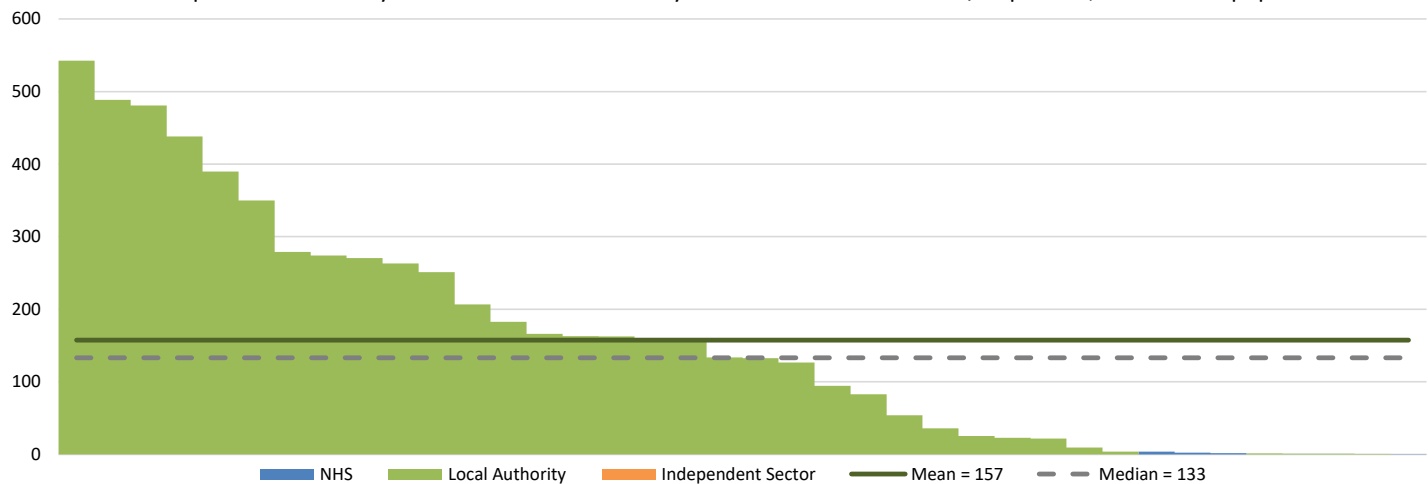
# Social worker activity – assessments

Mental Capacity Act Assessments undertaken by MH Social Workers in 2021/22 per 100,000 resident population

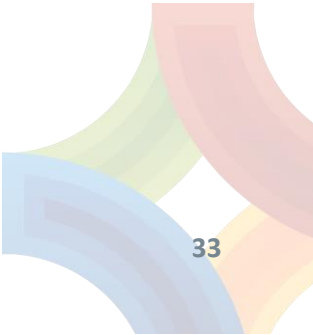


Nationally, a mean of 137 Mental Capacity Act assessments were undertaken by mental health social workers during 2021/22 when data was benchmarked per 100,000 population. The highest reported rate of 539 assessments (benchmarked) was submitted by an NHS Trust, with the majority of the remaining responses submitted by local authorities.

Deprivation of Liberty Assessments undertaken by MH Social Workers in 2021/22 per 100,000 resident population

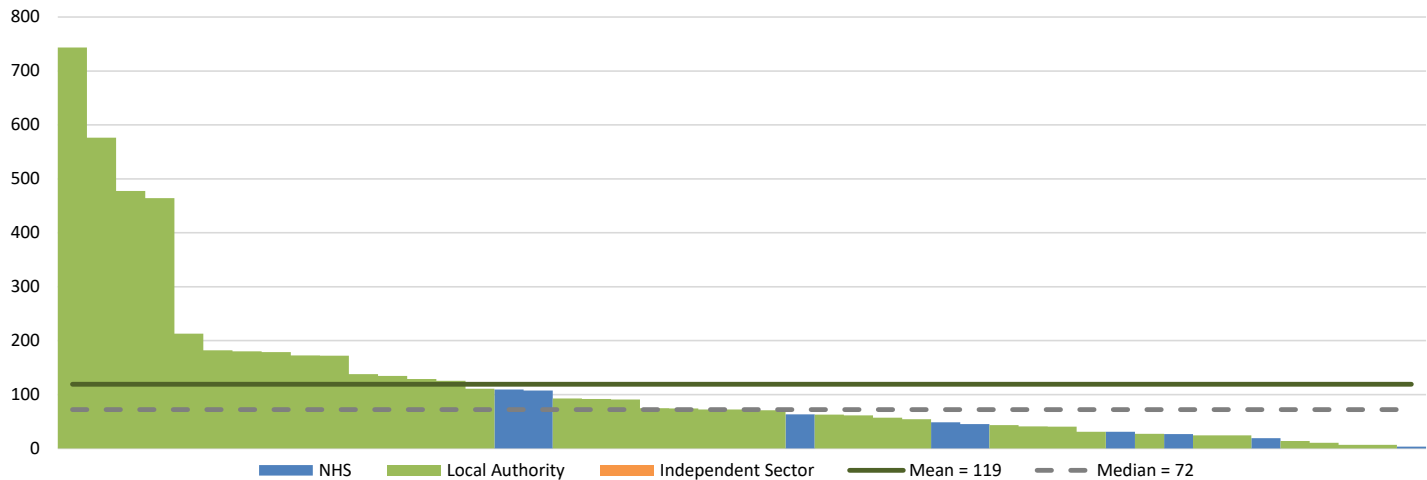


Similar activity rates were reported in relation to Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) assessments, with a mean of 157 DoL assessments undertaken by mental health social workers in 2021/22 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). Results nationally ranged from 1 to 543 per provider.



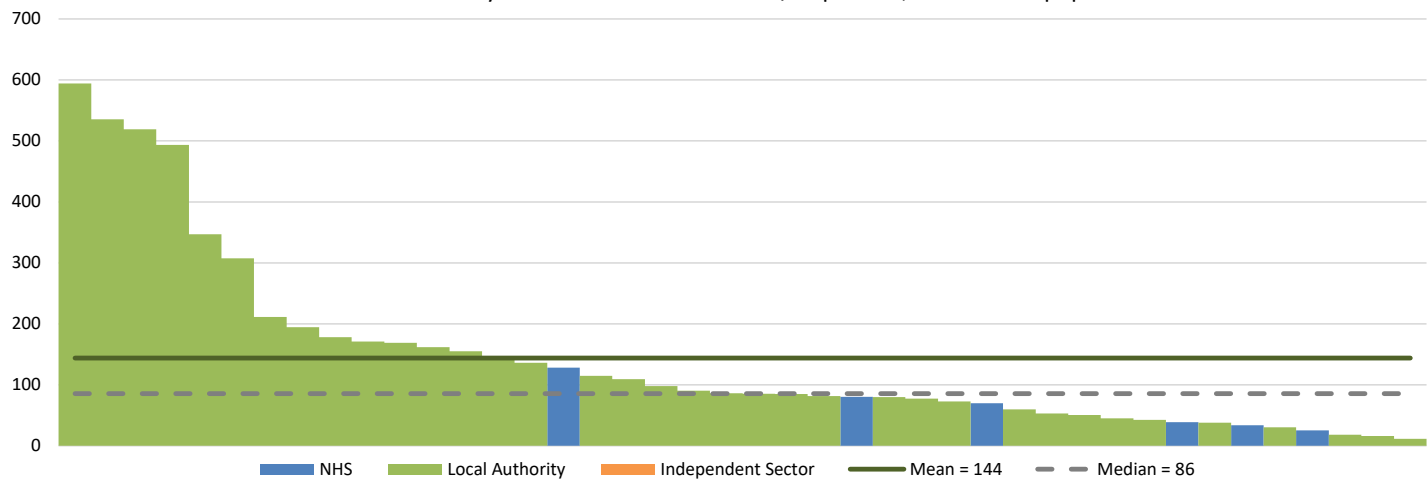
# Social worker activity – assessments continued

Care Act Assessments undertaken by MH Social Workers in 2021/22 per 100,000 resident population



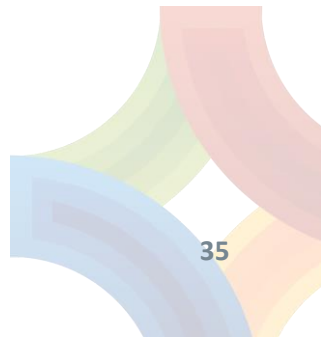
The number of Care Act assessments undertaken by mental health social workers ranged from 3 to 744 per provider (benchmarked per 100,000 resident population). On average, 119 Care Act assessments were delivered nationally per 100,000 population.

Care Act Reviews undertaken by MH Social Workers in 2021/22 per 100,000 resident population

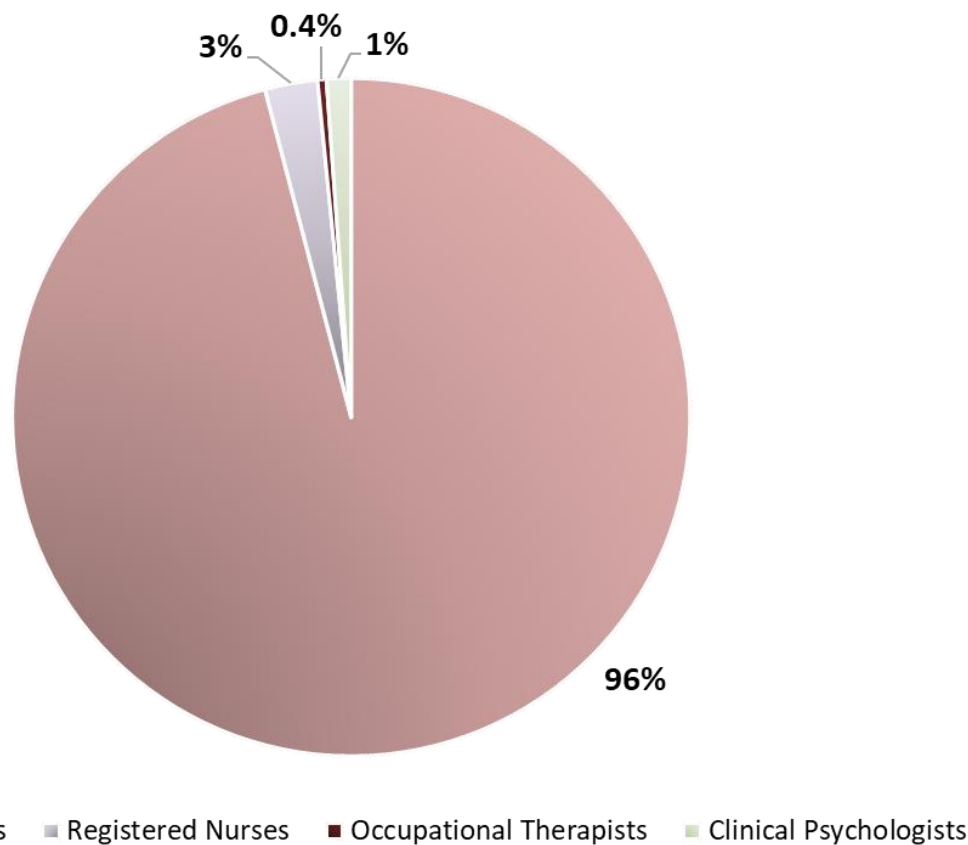


Providers reported a mean of 144 Care Act reviews delivered by mental health social workers per 100,000 resident population.

# Enhanced roles



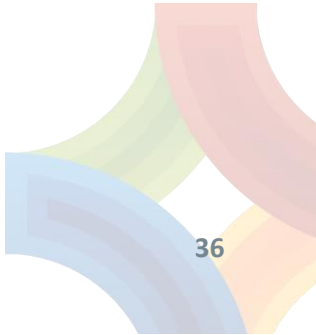
# Approved Mental Health Professional by professional background



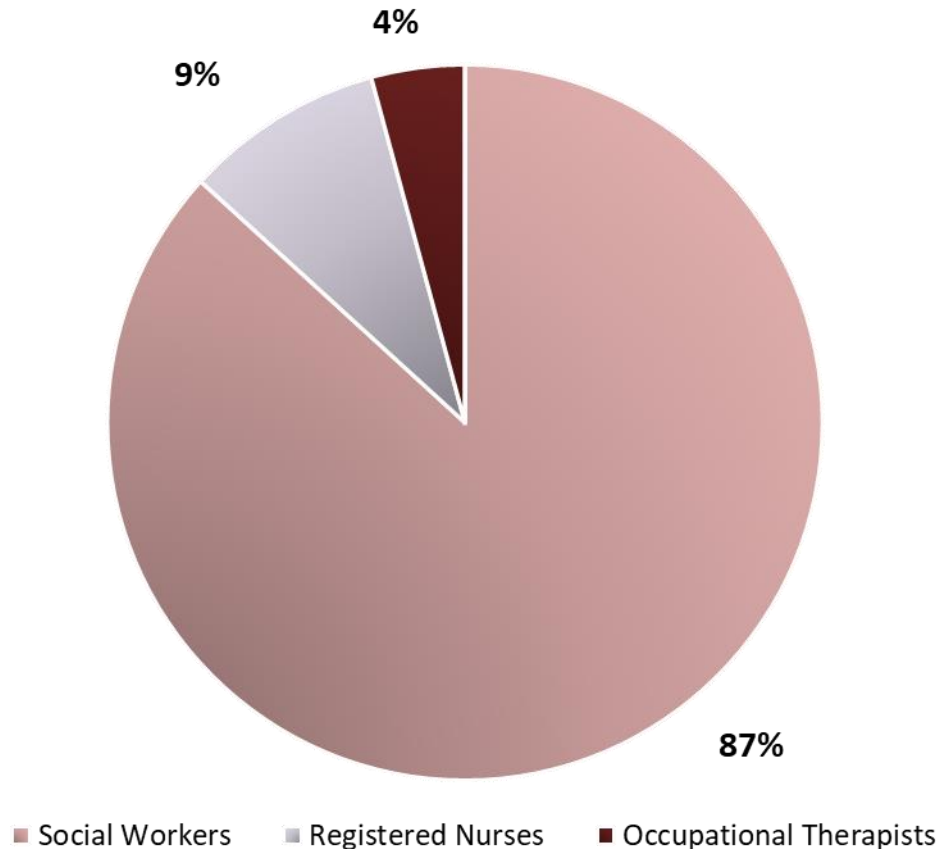
Although staff within various specialist roles (social workers, registered nurses, occupational therapists and clinical psychologists) undertake training to become Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) it is widely recognised that most AMHPs are from social worker backgrounds.

In the current census 96% of the directly employed AMHPs (WTE) (on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) were from a social worker background. The remaining 4% of AMHPs were registered nurses, occupational therapists and clinical psychologists.

Similarly, 95% of AMHPs were reported to be social workers in the third [AMHP Workforce Data Summary for 2021/22](#) which describes the AMHP workforce and follows on from the National AMHP Workforce Plan (2019).



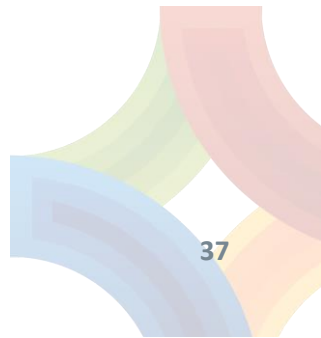
# Best Interest Assessors by professional background



The role of Best Interest Assessors (BIAs) is to help ascertain whether a person is to be detained under the Mental Health Act (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding process), by assessing whether it is in the best interest for that person. The majority of BIAs tend to be located within local authority services, with a lower response rate for this metric obtained for NHS Trusts (30 x local authority responses, 5 x NHS).

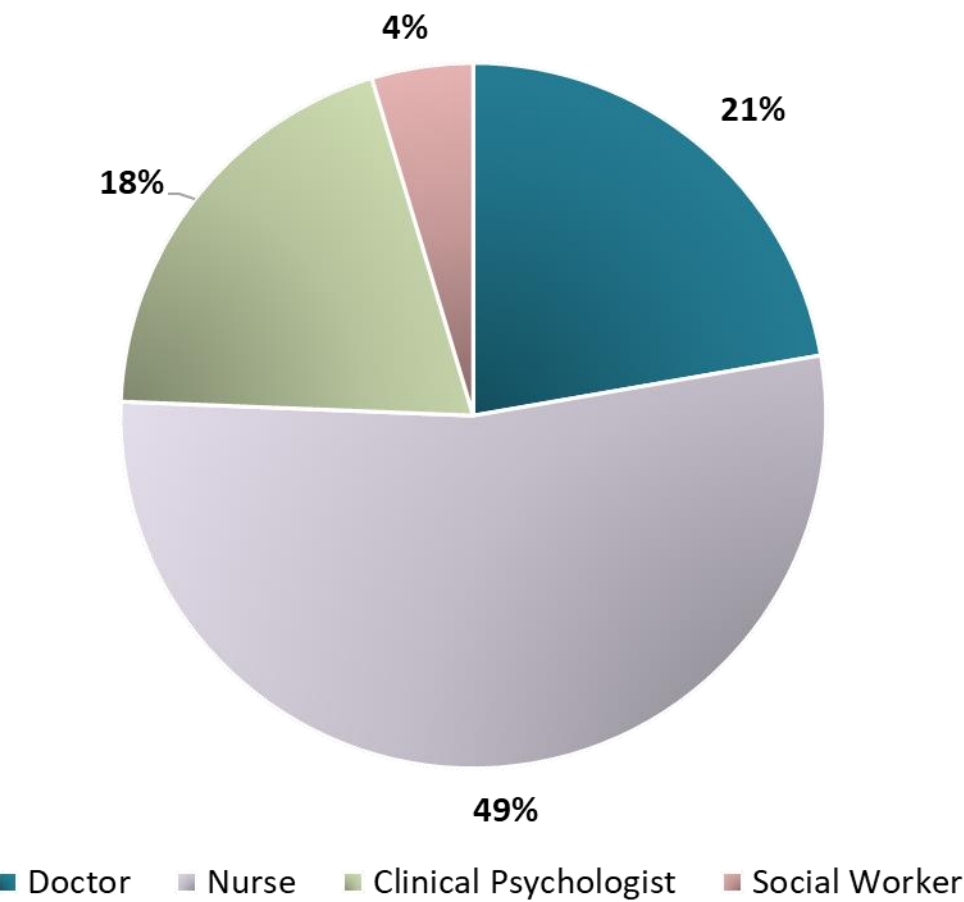
Of directly employed BIAs, 87% were from a social worker background, 9% were registered nurses and 4% were occupational therapists. No staff on BIA rotas on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 were reported to be clinical psychologists.

Of the workforce identified as part of this census, 115 staff (WTE) were reported to be on both AMPH and BIA rotas (104 from local authorities, 11 from NHS Trusts).



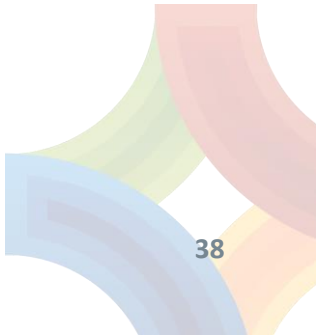
# Approved clinicians

Approved Clinicians - Employed Role (WTE)

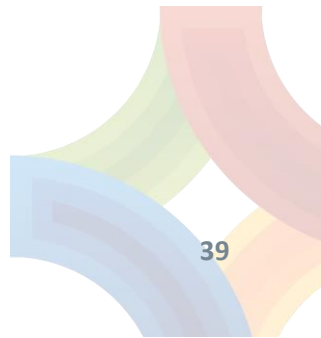


All providers were asked about approved clinician roles within their organisations. The majority of the 1,842 directly employed approved clinicians (WTE) reported as part of the census worked within NHS settings (99%), with a small number of approved clinicians (WTE) directly employed within local authority and independent sector service teams.

Nurses comprised just under half (49%) of the total directly employed approved clinicians reported by providers. Doctors comprised 21% of the overall total, with 18% of approved clinicians employed as clinical psychologists. Social workers made up the smallest proportion of this cohort at 4%.



# Workforce demographics



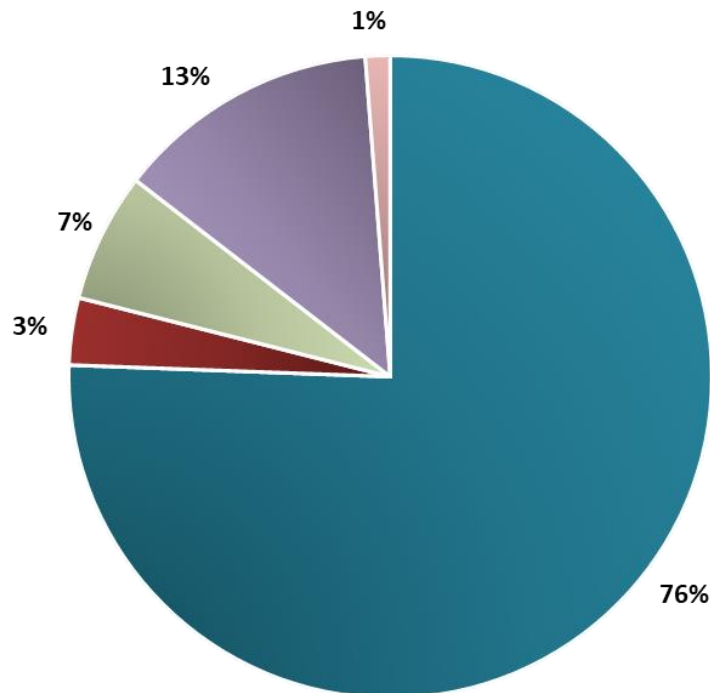
# Ethnicity demographics

Social worker demographic data was collected in relation to ethnicity, gender and age, with results provided across all sectors (unless specifically stated).

The ethnicity profile of social workers working within mental health services showed greater diversity compared to the general England population for those aged 16-64.

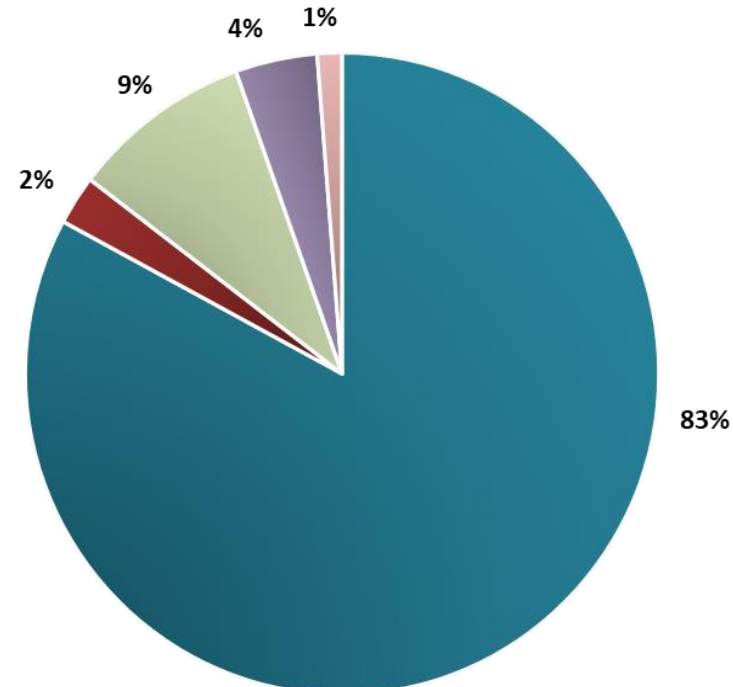
Of all social workers 76% identified as White/White British, with the remaining 24% identifying as mixed race, Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British or Chinese/other backgrounds. To note, this broadly aligns with data reported for NHS Trusts and CCGs as part of the [Workforce Race Quality Standard 2020 Report](#) where 21% of NHS staff were reported to be from a black and minority ethnic background on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

Social workers - ethnicity



n = 5,026

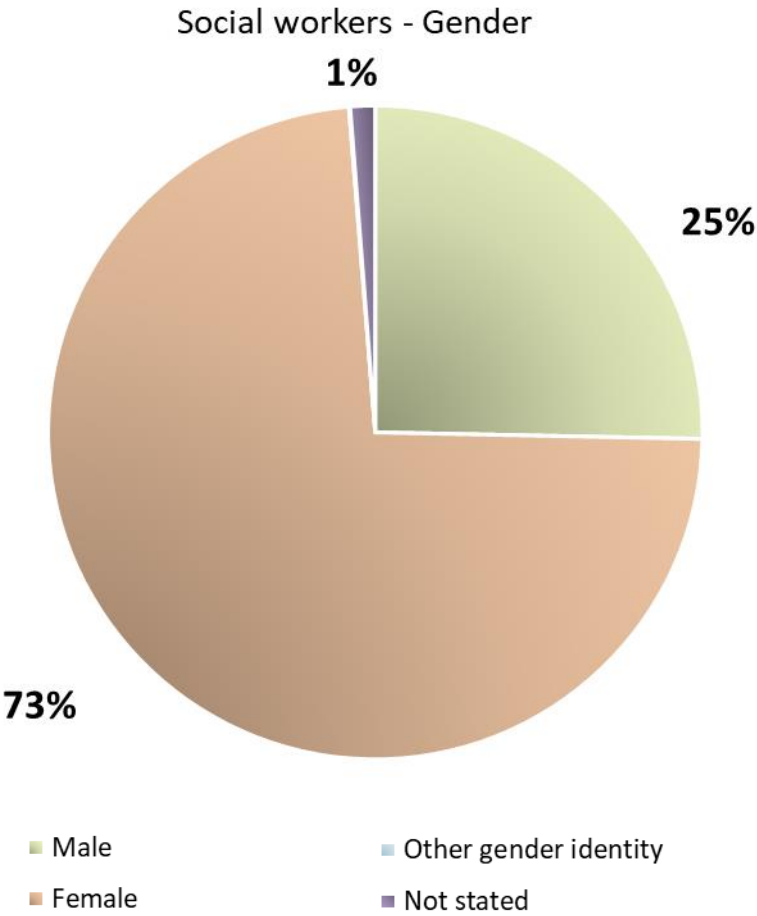
England-wide ethnicity demographics - ages 16-64



- White or White British
- Mixed
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Chinese / Other



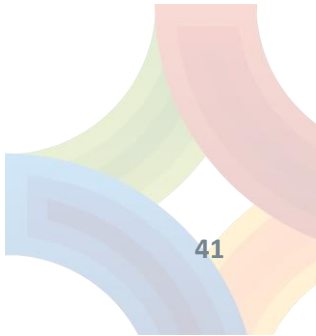
# Gender demographics



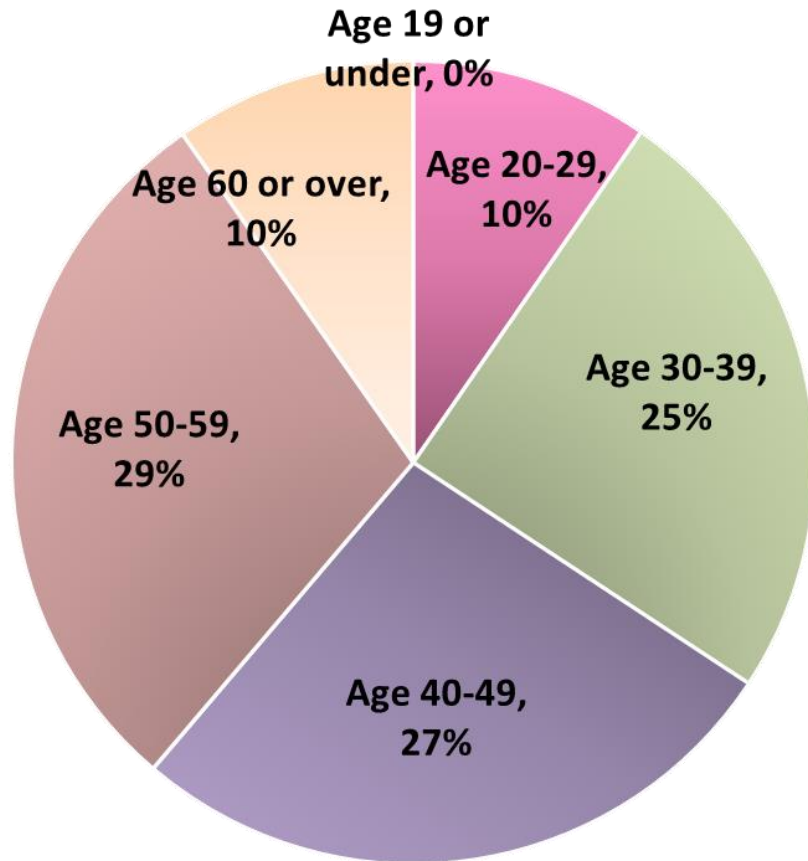
As on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 just under three-quarters (73%) of social workers working within mental health services were reported as female.

Of all social workers 25% were recorded as male; there was no gender stated for 1% of social workers. Additionally, 3 social workers (WTE) identified under other gender identity.

To note the gender composition of the social worker workforce is similar to the position reported for social care staff (see page 57).



# Age demographics



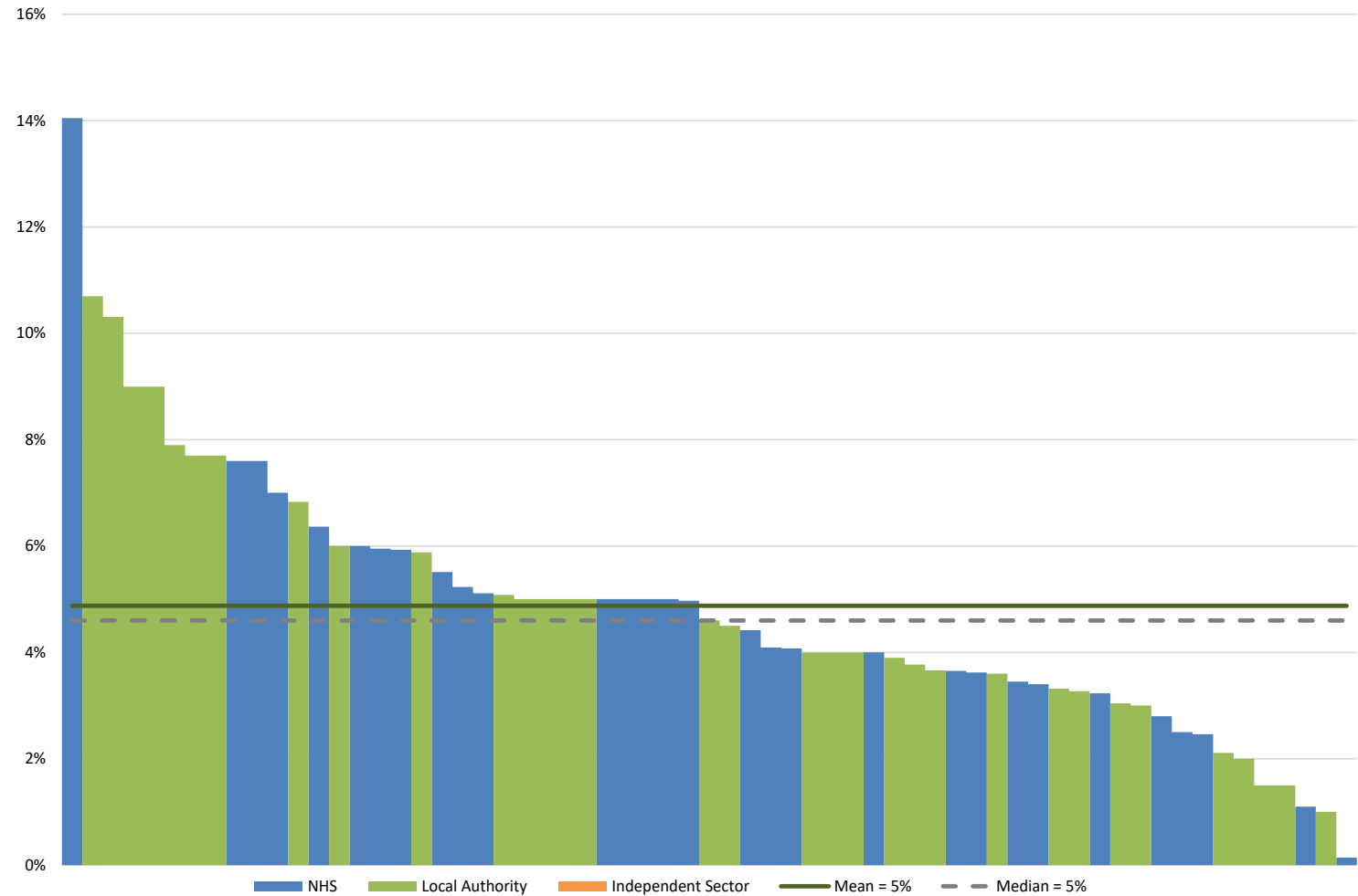
Data was also collected in relation to workforce age demographics, with no social workers reported within the 'age 19 or under' age bracket.

The largest number of social workers were aged 40-49 and 50-59; these two age groups comprised over half (56%) of the total number of staff for whom age-related data was supplied.

Of all social workers 10% were aged between 20-29 and 60+ with the remaining 25% of social workers aged between 30 and 39 years of age.

# Sickness absence rate

Average sickness absence rate of Social Workers working in MH services during 2021/22



Providers were asked about key workforce performance indicators including sickness and vacancy rates. Providers were also asked about the number of social worker leavers and joiners within NHS Trusts, local authorities and independent sector providers.

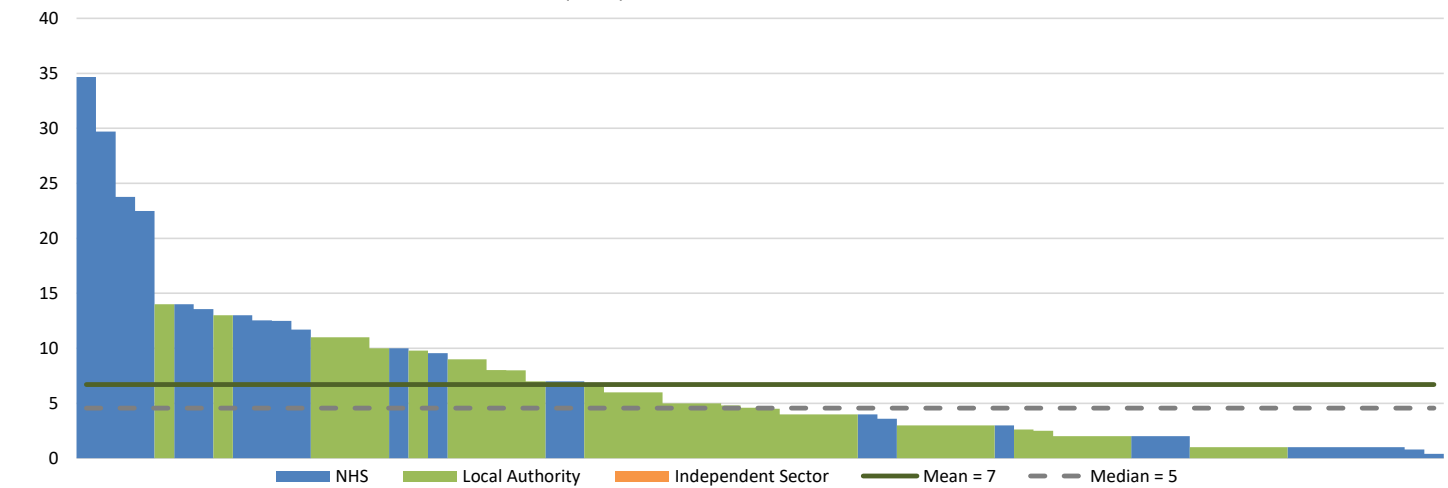
The adjacent chart illustrates the sickness absence rates reported during 2021/22, with a mean of 5% reported by providers nationally. Results varied per provider, with rates reported ranging from 1% to 14%.

For context, this rate is similar to those reported by UK-wide generic community mental health teams (mean – 7%) and general children and young people’s community mental health teams (mean – 4%) during 2021/22 (all roles – NHS only)\*.

\*Adult and Older People’s Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22; Children and Young People’s Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22

# Staff leavers and joiners

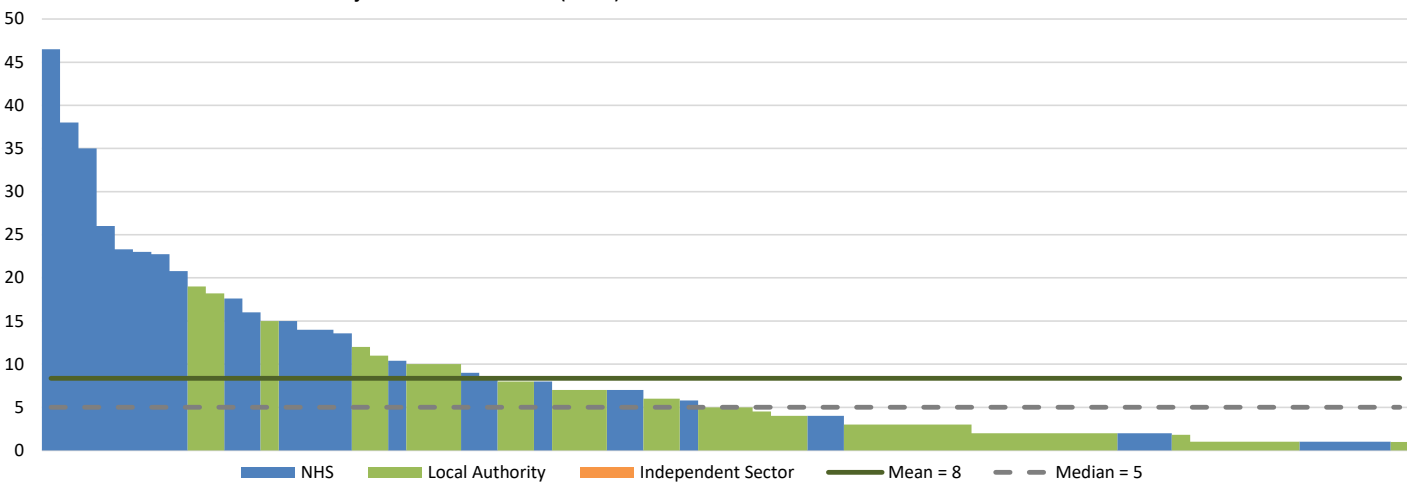
Social Workers who left MH services (WTE) in the 12 months to 31st March 2022



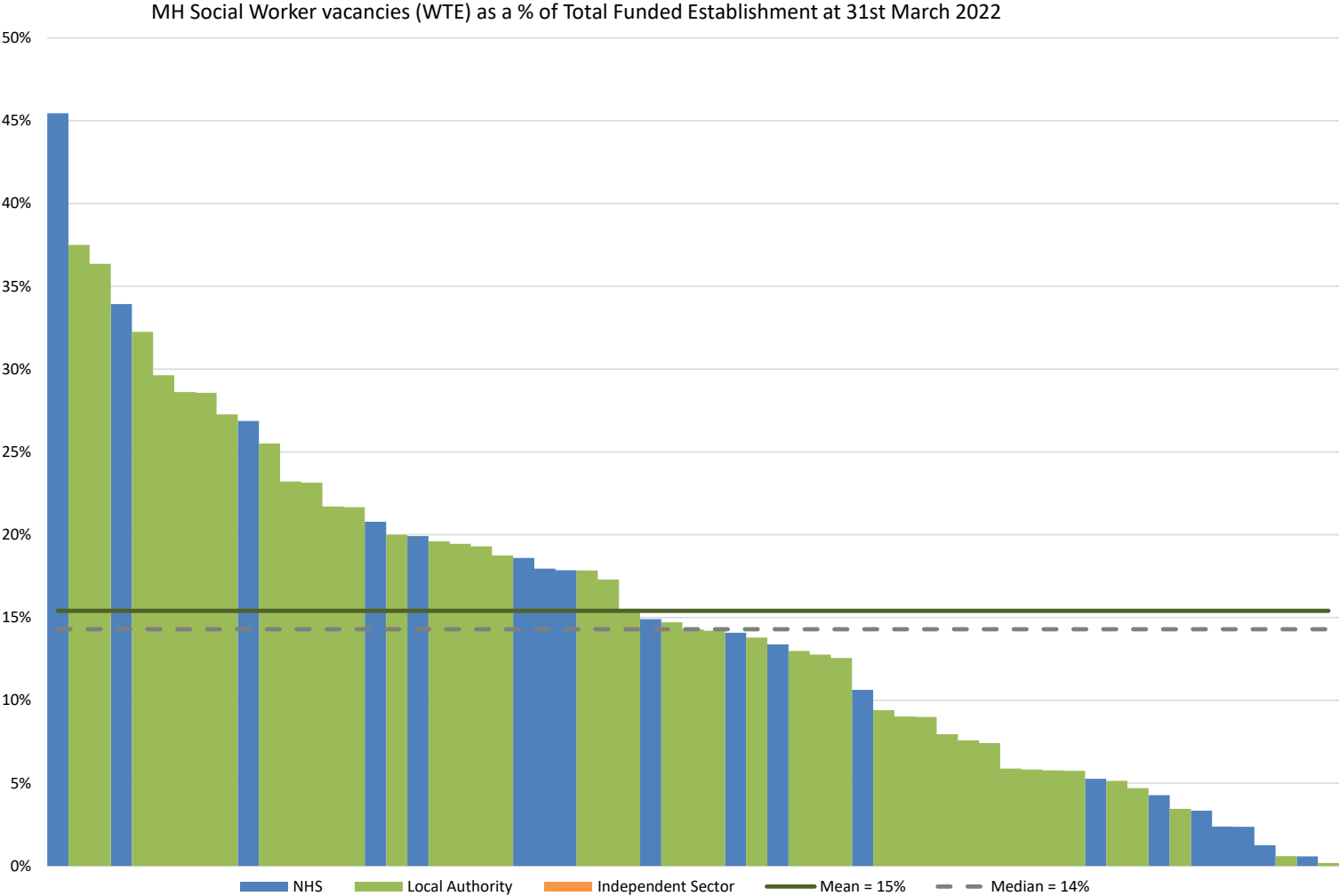
Across sectors, there was a mean of 7 social worker leavers per provider for the reporting period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. In contrast, a national mean position of 8 social workers joining mental health services was reported over the same time period.

The majority of providers within the upper quartile of both charts were NHS Trusts, with lower numbers of leavers/joiners reported by local authorities.

Social Workers who joined MH services (WTE) in the 12 months to 31st March 2022



# Vacancy rate



On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the mean vacancy rate of social workers working within mental health services averaged 15% (mean) nationally across all providers.

A broad range of results were reported by providers, with results varying from 1% to 45%. Additionally, there is no clear pattern in NHS or local authority provider placement, with results of both organisation types reflecting the national spread.

For context, this rate is similar to those reported by UK-wide generic community mental health teams (mean – 13%) and general children and young people’s community mental health teams (mean – 17%) during 2021/22 (all roles – NHS only)\*.

# Pay bands

Social Workers – Agenda for Change bands	
Band 1	-
Band 2	-
Band 3	-
Band 4	1%
Band 5	5%
Band 6	51%
Band 7	30%
Band 8a	9%
Band 8b	3%
Band 8c	1%
Band 8d	0.1%
Band 9	0.3%

Social Workers – LA scale bands	
Up to £15,000	0.3%
£15,000 - £19,999	0.2%
£20,000 - £29,999	5%
£30,000 - £39,999	47%
£40,000 - £49,999	40%
£50,000 - £59,999	5%
£60,000 - £69,999	1%
£70,000 - £79,999	1%
£80,000 - £89,999	0.0%
£90,000 - £99,999	0.1%
£100,000 and above	0.1%

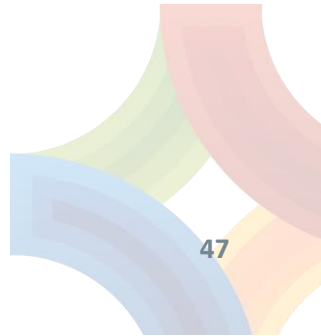
To compare salaries across sectors both Agenda for Change bands and local authority pay bands were included as part of the data collection.

Providers that recorded staff under the Agenda for Change bands reported approximately half of social workers were working as a band 6. The next largest cohort comprised mental health social workers employed at band 7, which accounted for just under a third (30%) of the workforce. Smaller proportions were then seen for bands 4, 5, 8 and 9, with no social workers reported within bands 1-3.

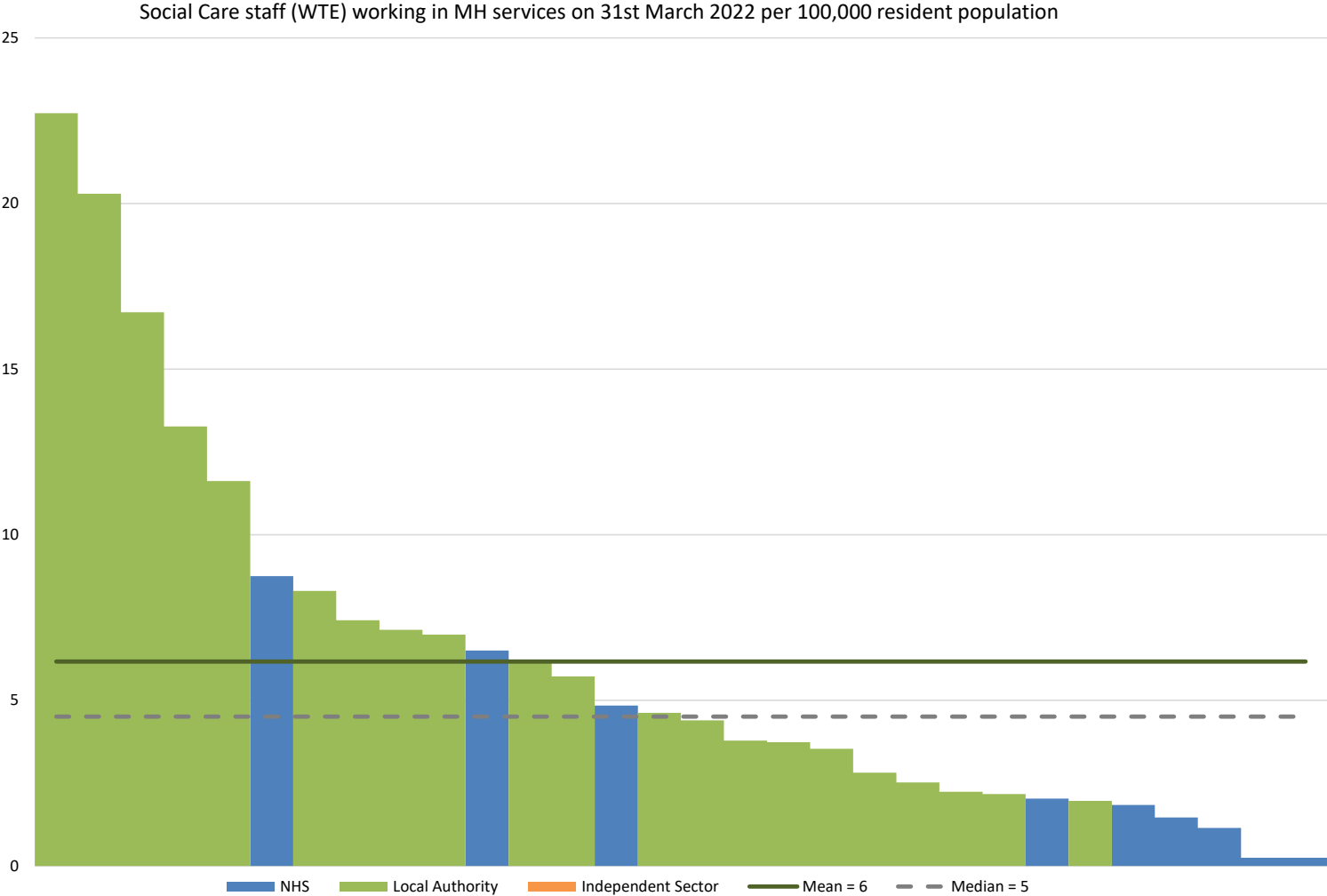
Providers recording local authority pay bands reported 87% of mental health social workers within the £30,000 to £49,000 pay band (per annum). A lower percentage of staff were reported in the lower and upper pay bands, with approximately 98% of social workers working within mental health teams reportedly earning between £20,000 and £59,999.

# Social care staff in mental health services

## Workforce summary



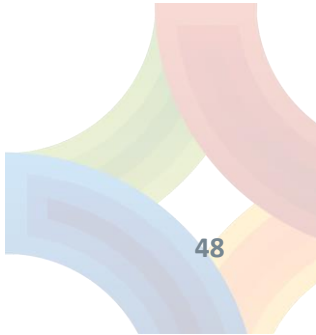
# Social care staff (WTE) per 100,000 population



The majority of respondents providing data relating to social care staff were local authorities (21), with a small number of NHS Trusts (nine) reporting social care staff working as part of the mental health workforce. As such the data primarily reflects the position for local authorities.

Nationally, mean social care staff numbers (WTE) working in mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (benchmarked per 100,000 resident population) were six per provider although this varied from 1 to 23 staff (WTE) in post per 100,000 population.

Almost all social care staff were directly employed within the local authority sector, with just 1% of social care staff (WTE) employed externally. A higher rate of externally employed staff was reported by NHS Trusts, comprising 10% of total social care workforce numbers.

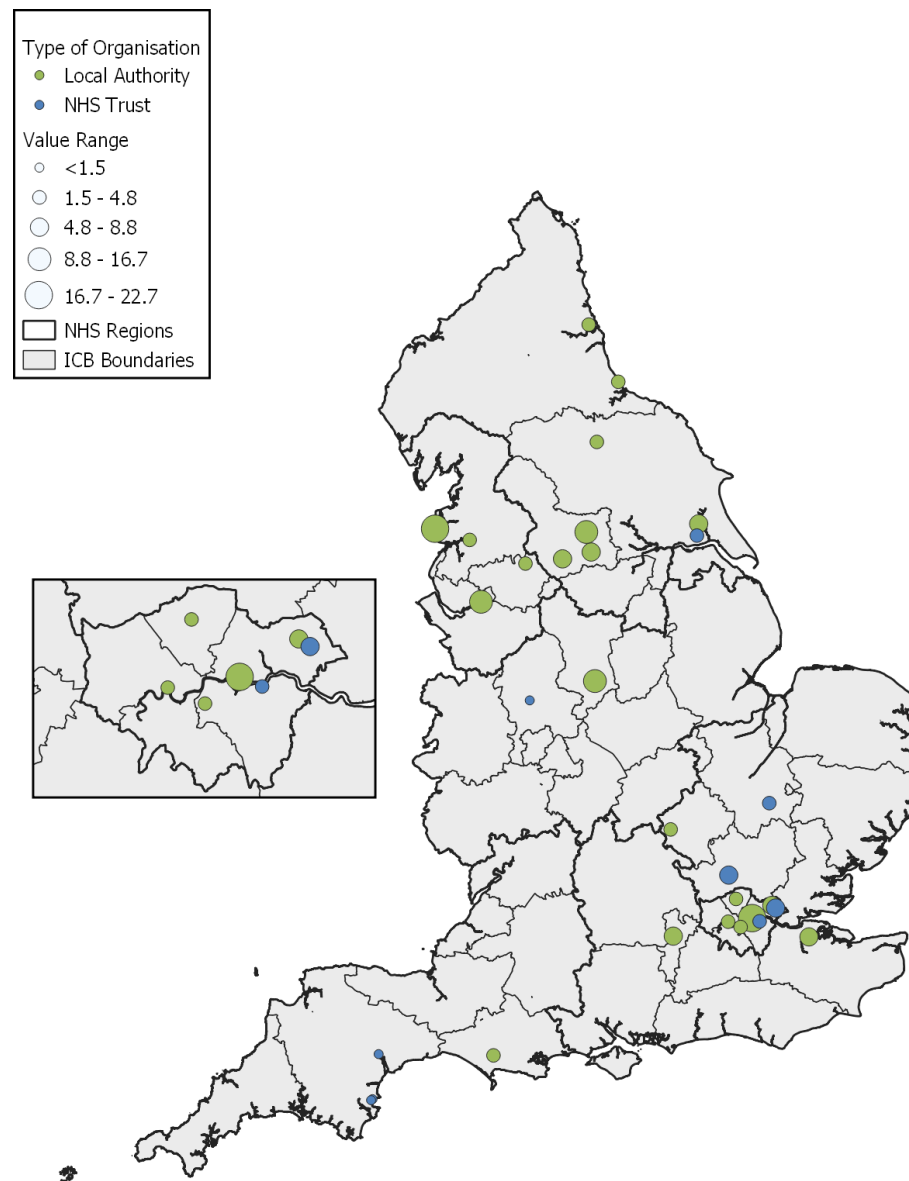




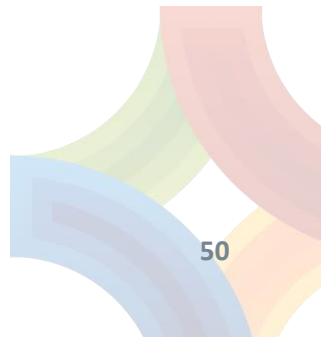
# Social care staff (WTE) per 100,000 population – geographical variation

The adjacent map illustrates the regional variation in social care staff (WTE) working in mental health services across England, encompassing both directly and externally employed staff across NHS Trusts and local authorities.

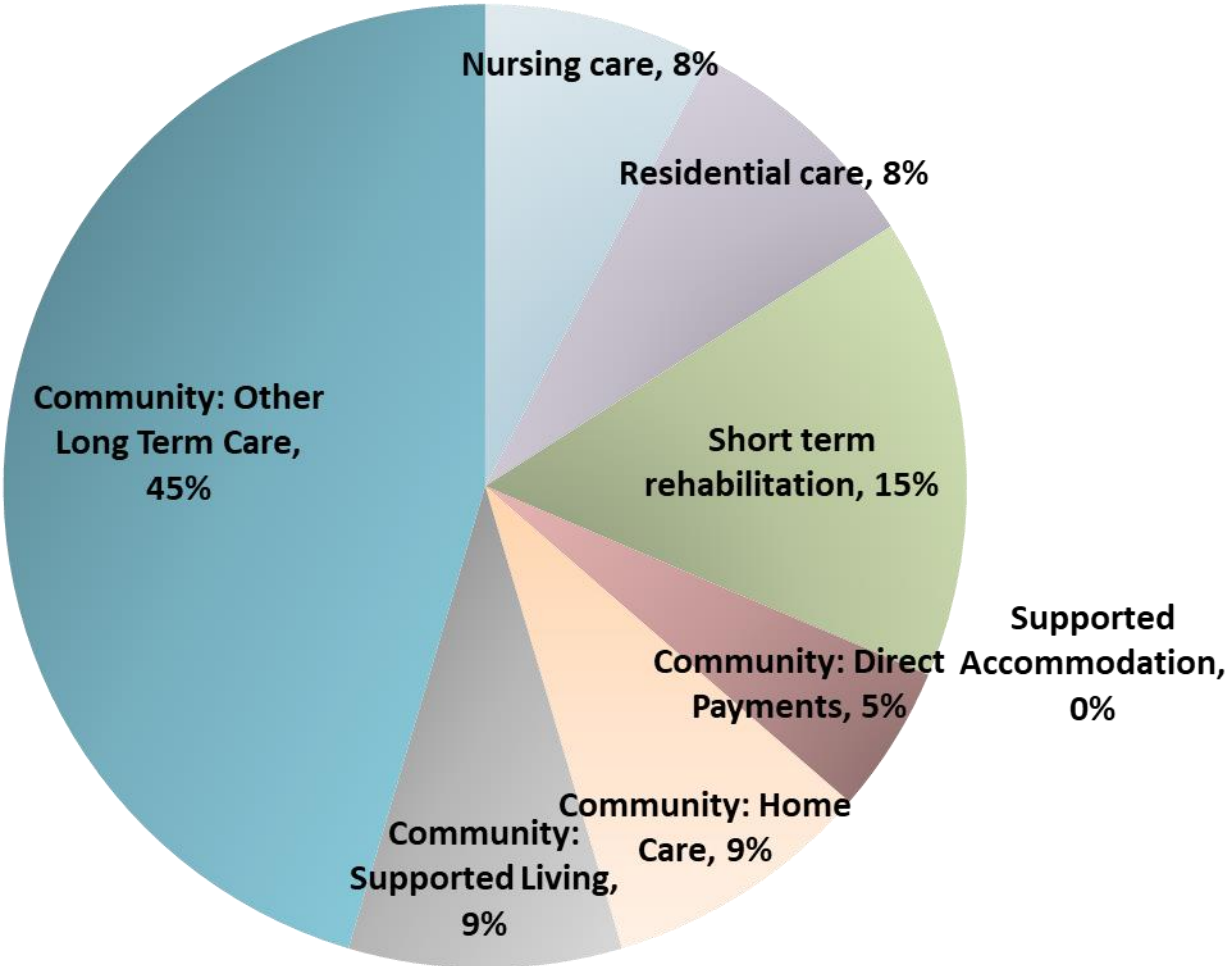
To note, the map is representative only of those 30 providers (local authority = 21; NHS Trusts = 9) that provided data. As such the map is not a comprehensive picture of all social care staff working within mental health services and should be viewed with caution.



# Workforce composition



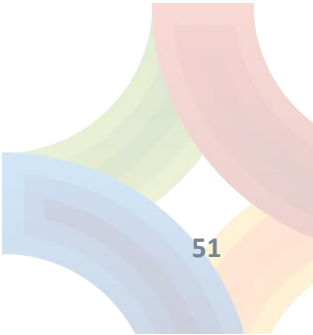
# Social care staff by service area



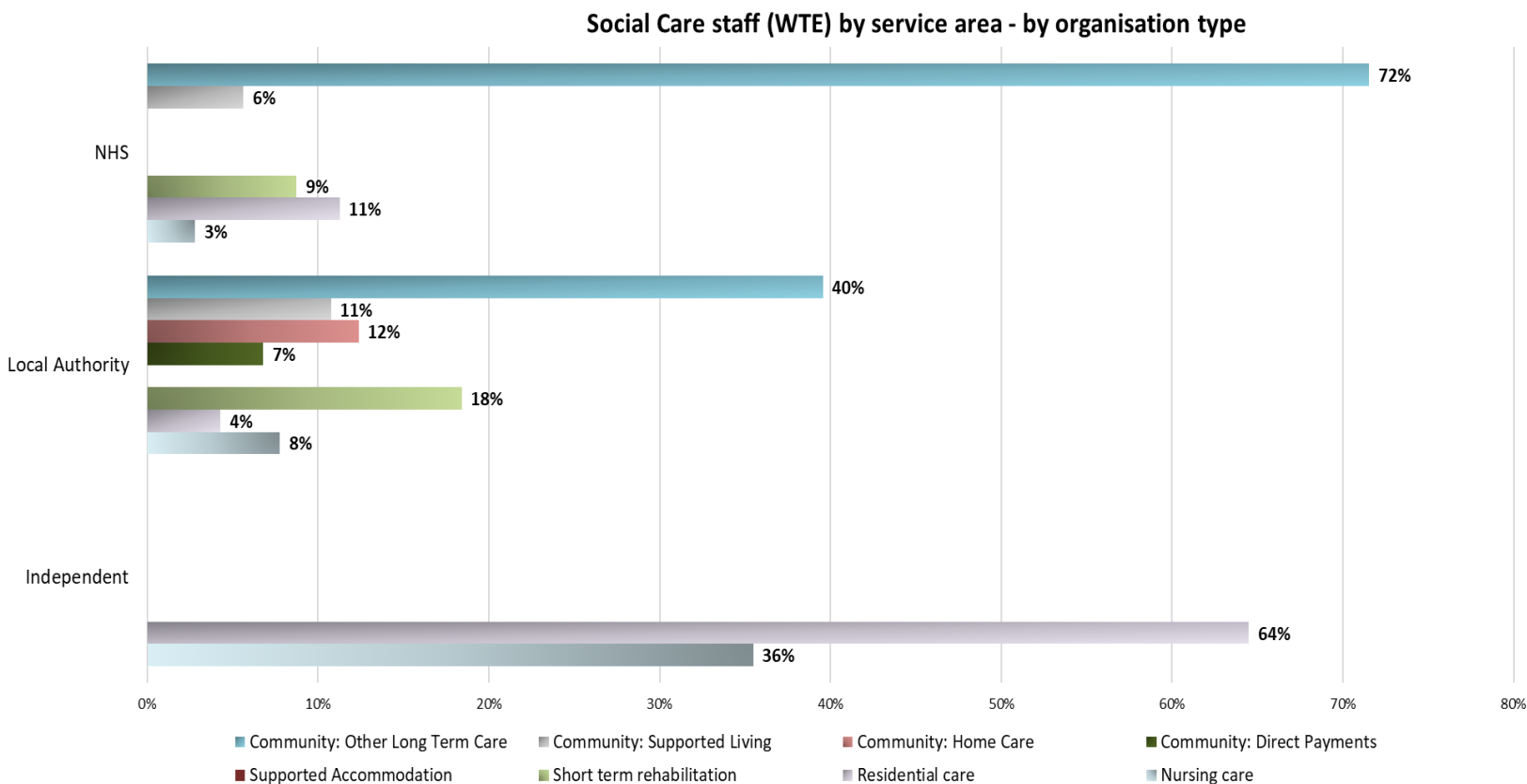
As part of the workforce census, providers were asked to allocate mental health social care staff (WTE) to one of eight designated service areas. Data were provided by nine NHS Trusts, 21 local authorities and two independent sector providers.

The highest percentage of social care staff were working within community other long term care services (45%). Short term rehabilitation service staffing comprised 15% of overall social care staff numbers (WTE), with 9% working within community supported living and community home care teams.

A smaller percentage of social care staff were working in residential care (8%), nursing care (8%) and community direct payments (5%) services. There were no social care staff reported to be working in supported accommodation services.



# Social care staff by service area - by sector

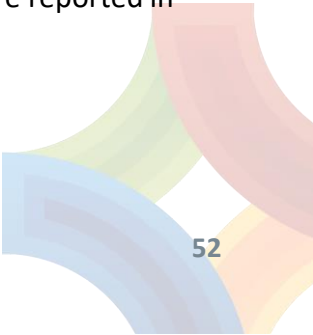


The chart on the left demonstrates the proportion of social care staff (WTE) by service area, presented by sector.

Just under three-quarters of social care staff reported by NHS providers (72%) were working in community other long term care settings, with a smaller percentage of social care staff working in residential care, short term rehabilitation, community supported living and nursing care services.

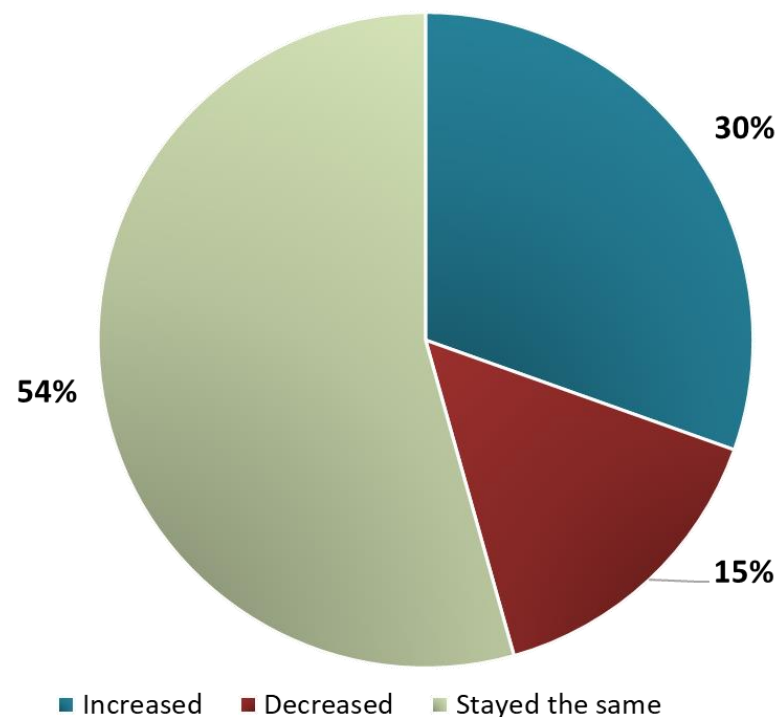
Community other long term care services also represented the most common service area for social care staff reported by local authorities (40%). The percentage of social care staff in other service areas varied from 18% of staff (WTE) working in short term rehabilitation services, 12% in community home care services and 11% in community supported living services. A smaller percentage of social care staff comprised the workforce in nursing care (8%), community direct payments (7%), and residential care (4%) services, respectively.

Of the social care staff reported by independent sector providers, approximately two-thirds were reported in residential care settings.



# Workforce expansion/contraction

Has your directly employed workforce increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the last 12 months?



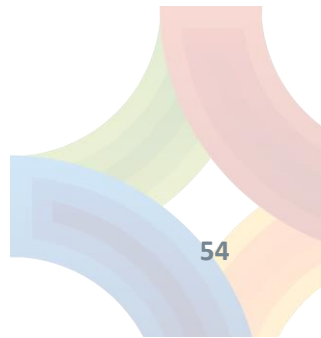
As part of the workforce census, providers were asked to confirm whether directly employed social care workforce had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

Over half of respondents (25, 54%) reported that their workforce numbers had remained stable in the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. An additional 30% reported an increase in the size of their directly employed workforce, with 15% of respondents confirming a decrease in directly employed social care workforce numbers in the last 12 months.

Narrative responses provided alongside the quantitative data highlighted that service expansion and changes to new working models had led to an increase in directly employed social care staff. Some, however, highlighted that the increase in social care staff was due to inability to recruit fully qualified social workers.

Those who reported a decrease in directly employed social care staff referenced issues with recruitment and retention.

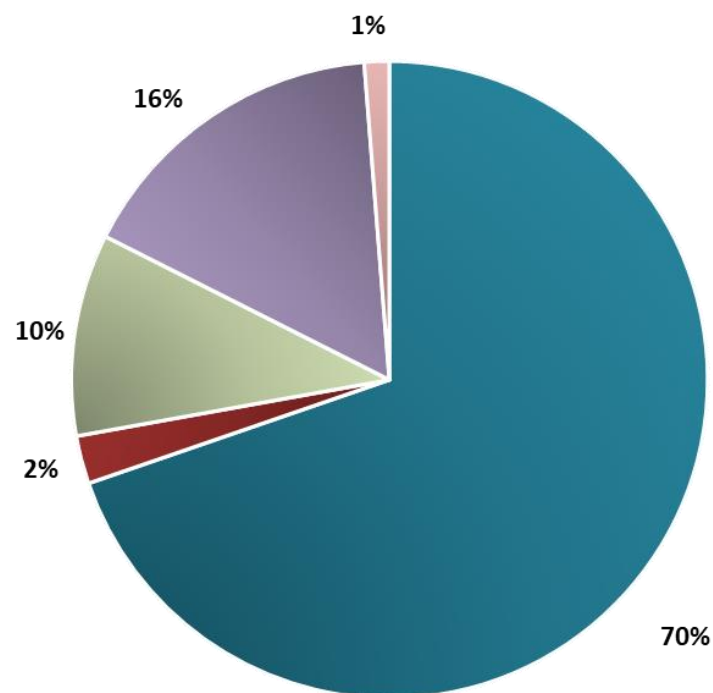
# Workforce demographics



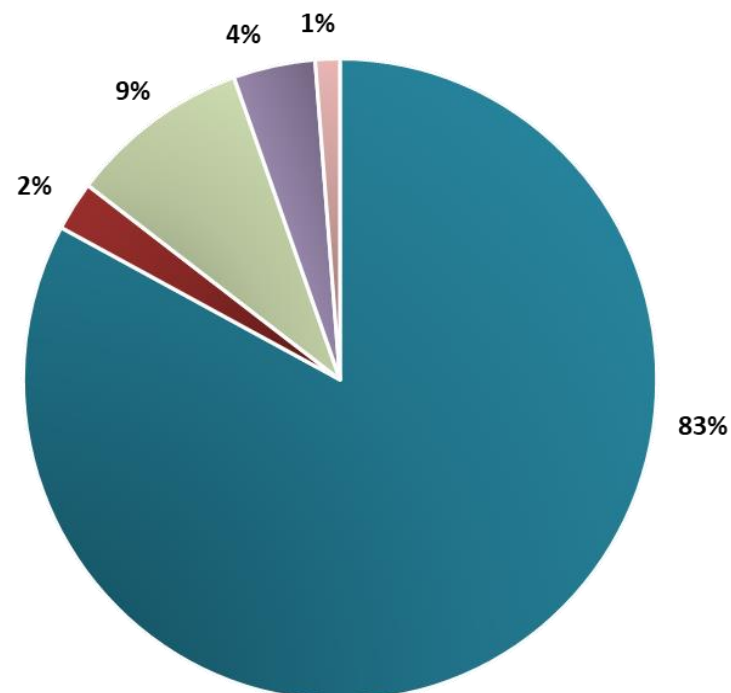
# Ethnicity demographics

Similar to the ethnicity profile for social workers the social care workforce within mental health services is more diverse compared to the general England population (ages 16-64). Of 43 providers reporting ethnicity for social care staff 70% of staff identified as White/White British; 30% of staff were from Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, Chinese/other or mixed ethnicity. The social care workforce is also more diverse than reported in the [Workforce Race Quality Standard 2020 Report](#) where 21% of NHS staff were reported to be from a black and minority ethnic background on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

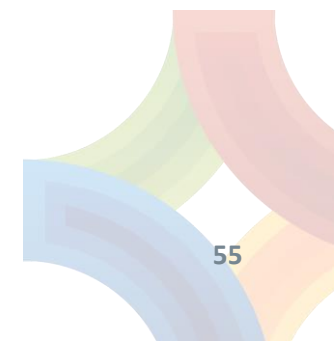
Social Care staff - Ethnicity



England-wide ethnicity demographics - ages 16-64

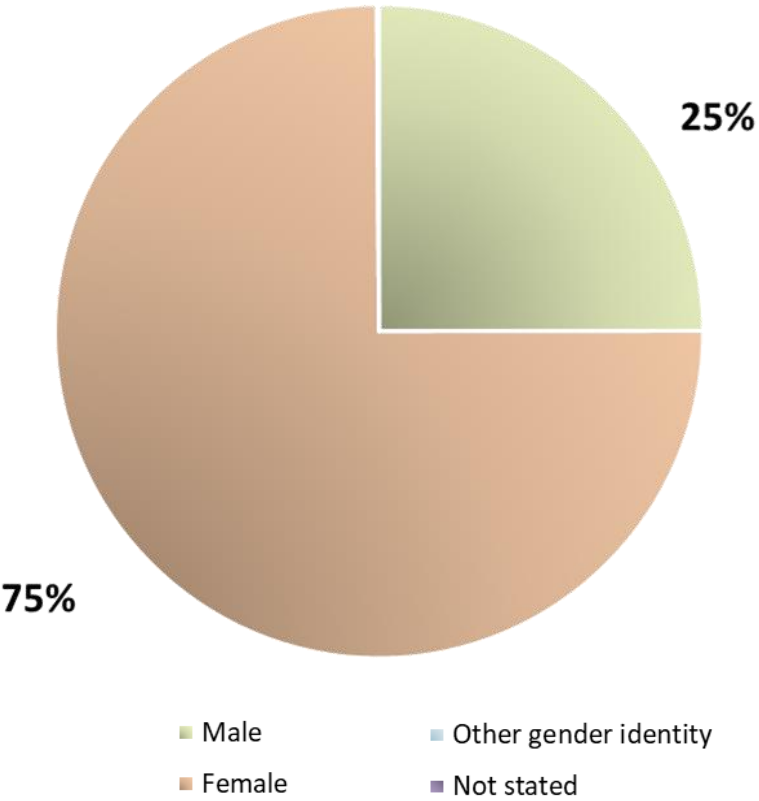


- White or White British
- Mixed
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Chinese / Other



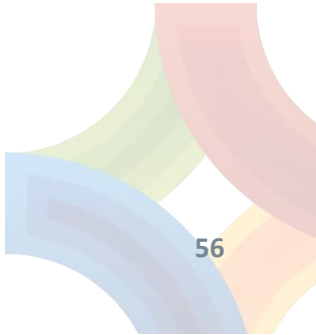
# Gender demographics

Social Care Workforce - Gender



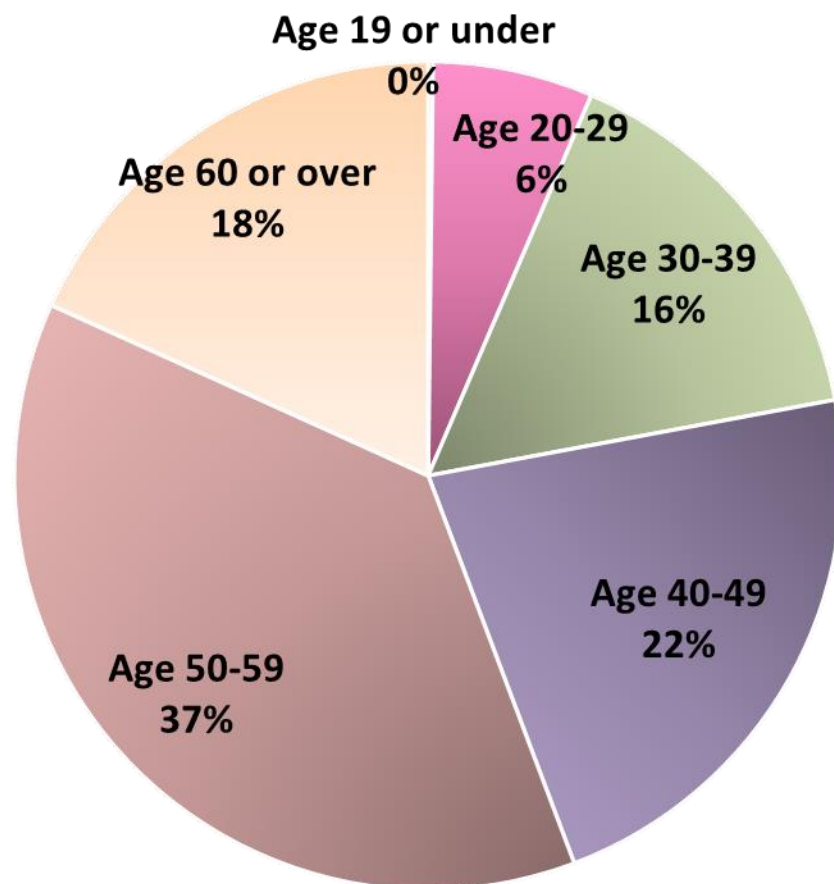
42 providers reported the gender of their social care workforce. Gender was reported for 2,174 social care staff working within mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, with three quarters of staff in post (WTE) reported as female. This aligns with the position reported for social worker staffing (details found on page 42 of this report).

25% of social care staff were male, with 0 staff reported under 'other gender identity'.



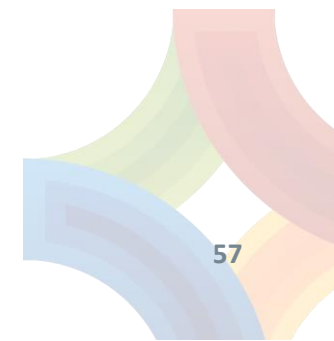


# Age demographics



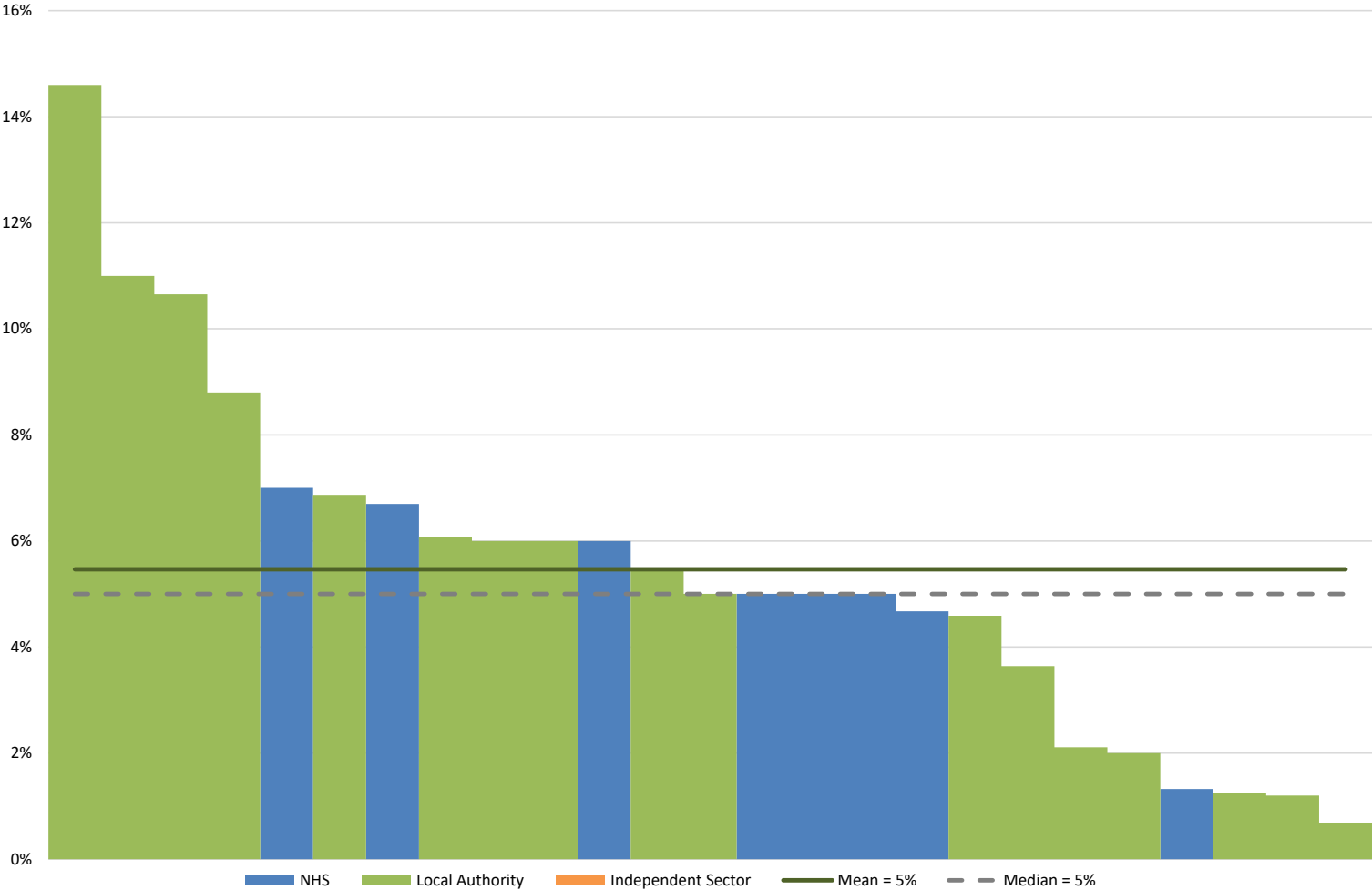
The highest percentage of social care staff were aged between 50 and 59 years of age (37%). When added to workforce numbers of staff aged 60 and over, the 50+ age group comprised 56% of the social care staff reported within mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This is greater than the 39% reported for the social worker workforce and is a consideration for future workforce planning.

Of social care staff 6% were aged between 20 and 29, with over a third of staff (38%) aged 30-49 on the census date.



# Sickness absence rate

Average sickness absence rate of Social Care staff working in MH services during 2021/22



An average sickness absence rate of 5% was reported across sectors during 2021/22. Results varied by individual provider ranging from 1% to 14%; providers with the highest and lowest sickness absence rates nationally were local authorities.

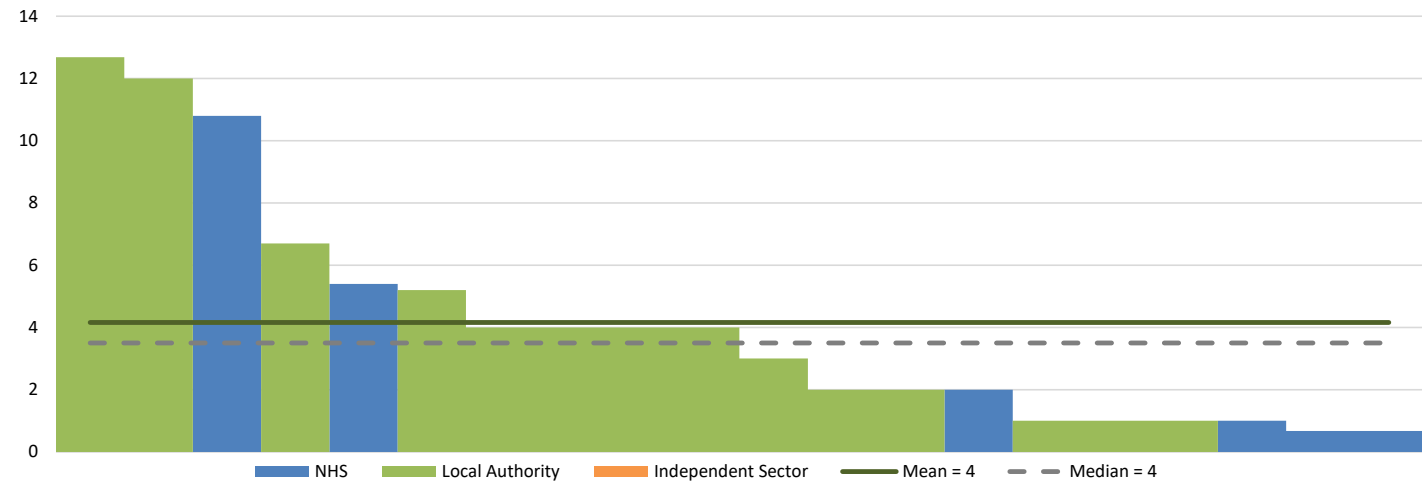
Sickness absence rates were largely similar when reviewed by sector; there was a 6% sickness rate for social care staff working within local authorities and a 5% sickness absence rate for staff working in NHS organisations.

For context, this rate is similar to those reported by UK-wide generic community mental health teams (mean – 7%) and general children and young people’s community mental health teams (mean – 4%) during 2021/22 (all roles – NHS only)\*.

\*Adult and Older People’s Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22; Children and Young People’s Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22

# Staff leavers and joiners

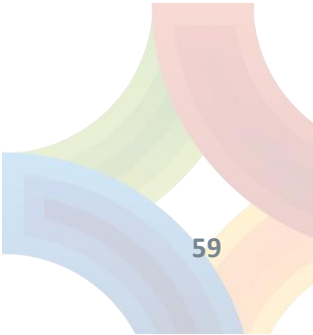
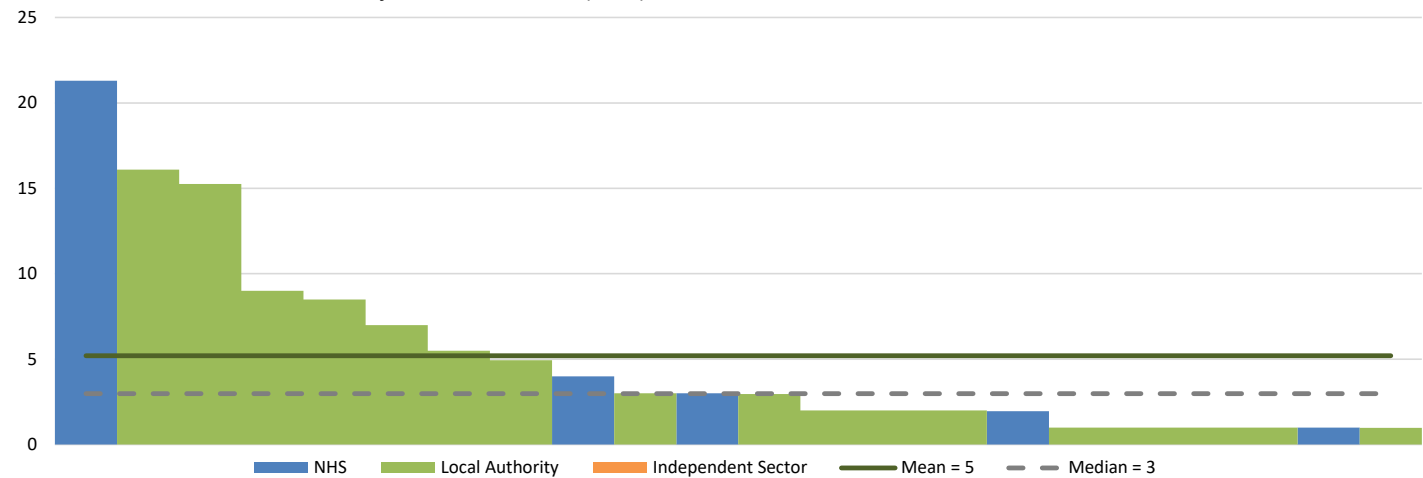
Social Care staff who left MH services (WTE) in the 12 months to 31st March 2022



Across all sectors, there was a mean of four social care leavers per provider during the reporting period covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

In comparison, there was a mean of five social care workers, per provider, who joined mental health services over the same time period. To note this position is reflective of those providers supplying data for this metric within the project (22) and is not a comprehensive picture for all organisations employing social care staff.

Social Care staff who joined MH services (WTE) in the 12 months to 31st March 2022



**NHS**  
Benchmarking Network

The chart displays the distribution of staff percentages for three sectors: NHS (blue), Local Authority (green), and Independent Sector (orange). The y-axis represents the percentage of staff, ranging from 0% to 35% in 5% increments. The x-axis represents the percentage of staff, with bins of 2% each. The NHS distribution is centered around 16%, while the Local Authority distribution is centered around 12%. The Independent Sector distribution is centered around 16%. A solid line indicates the mean at 16%, and a dashed line indicates the median at 12%.

Percentage Bin	NHS (%)	Local Authority (%)	Independent Sector (%)
0-2	0	33	0
2-4	32	30	0
4-6	0	28	0
6-8	0	25	0
8-10	25	20	0
10-12	0	13	0
12-14	13	12	0
14-16	0	11	0
16-18	8	11	0
18-20	7	7	0
20-22	0	6	0
22-24	4	4	0
24-26	0	4	0
26-28	0	0	0

The median was 12%, with results ranging from 1% to 33% nationally.

For context, this rate is similar to those reported by UK-wide generic community mental health teams (mean – 13%) and general children and young people’s community mental health teams (mean – 17%) during 2021/22 (all roles – NHS only)\*.

\*Adult and Older People's Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22; Children and Young People's Mental Health Benchmarking 2021/22

# Pay bands

## Social Care staff – Agenda for Change bands

Band 1	-
Band 2	-
Band 3	<b>13%</b>
Band 4	<b>27%</b>
Band 5	<b>5%</b>
Band 6	<b>16%</b>
Band 7	<b>11%</b>
Band 8a	<b>27%</b>
Band 8b	<b>0.1%</b>
Band 8c	<b>0.3%</b>
Band 8d	-
Band 9	-

## Social Care staff – LA scale bands

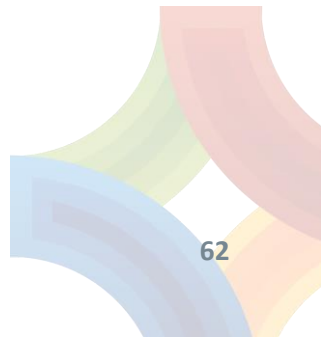
Up to £15,000	<b>1%</b>
£15,000 - £19,999	<b>6%</b>
£20,000 - £29,999	<b>59%</b>
£30,000 - £39,999	<b>20%</b>
£40,000 - £49,999	<b>12%</b>
£50,000 - £59,999	<b>2%</b>
£60,000 - £69,999	<b>0.2%</b>
£70,000 - £79,999	<b>0.1%</b>
£80,000 - £89,999	-
£90,000 - £99,999	-
£100,000 and above	-

Providers who recorded social care staffing details using the Agenda for Change bands reported 27% of staff working at bands 4 and 8a. Banding reflects seniority/experience of social care staff working within NHS mental health services.

Providers who reported staff under the local authority pay bands reported an average of 59% of social care staff earning between £20,000 and £29,999 per annum. The majority of social care staff were earning between £20,000 and £49,999 – 91% of all staff.

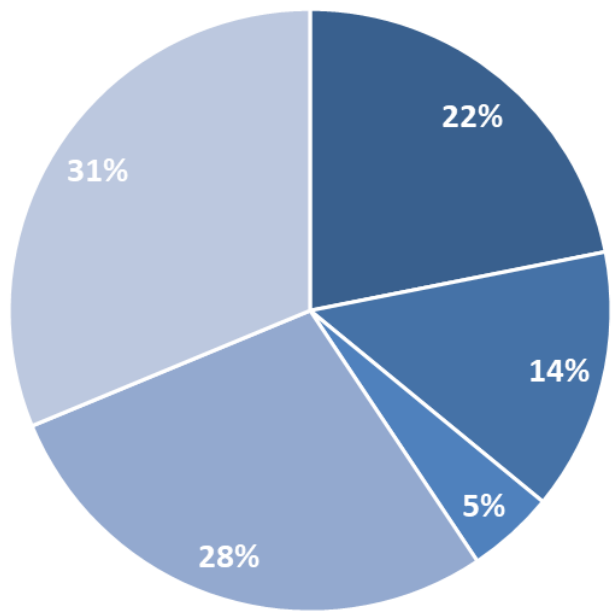
# VCSE sector social support for people with mental health conditions

## Workforce summary



# Geographic coverage of providers

Geographic coverage

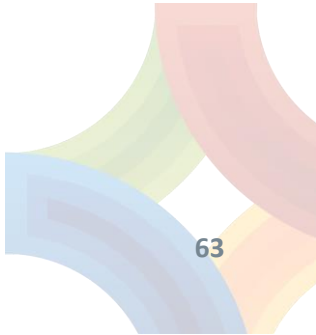


■ National ■ Regional ■ Multiple ICS ■ Multiple localities within an ICS ■ A single locality or borough

As part of the broader scope of work examining the role of social workers and the social care workforce within mental health services a separate data collection template was issued to the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, focusing on the social support workforce supporting people with mental health conditions.

From the 65 submissions received, an approximate total of 181,770 people were being supported by the social support workforce working for these providers (as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022).

The adjacent chart demonstrates the geographic coverage of provides who submitted data. Of these providers 59% reported localised arrangements – i.e. operating within a single locality or borough. In contrast, 41% of providers reported providing support nationally, regionally, or across multiple ICS areas.

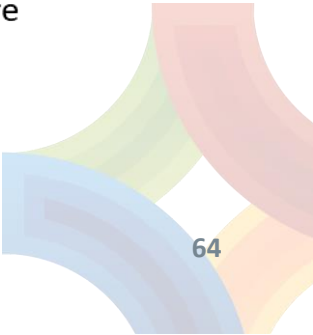
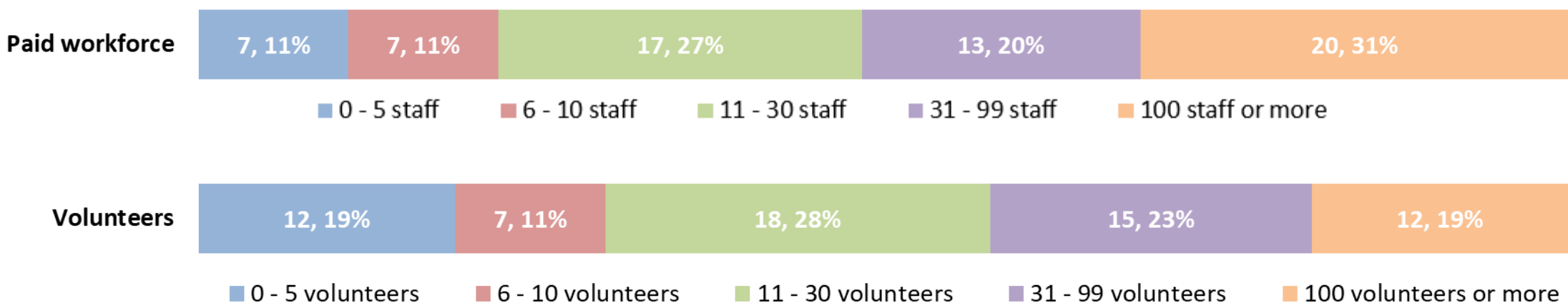


# Workforce and volunteer numbers

Providers were asked to report paid workforce and volunteer numbers (headcounts); responses were categorised within the following groups: 0-5, 6-10, 11-30, 31-99 and 100+. Both the number and percentage of responses are presented in the stacked bar chart below.

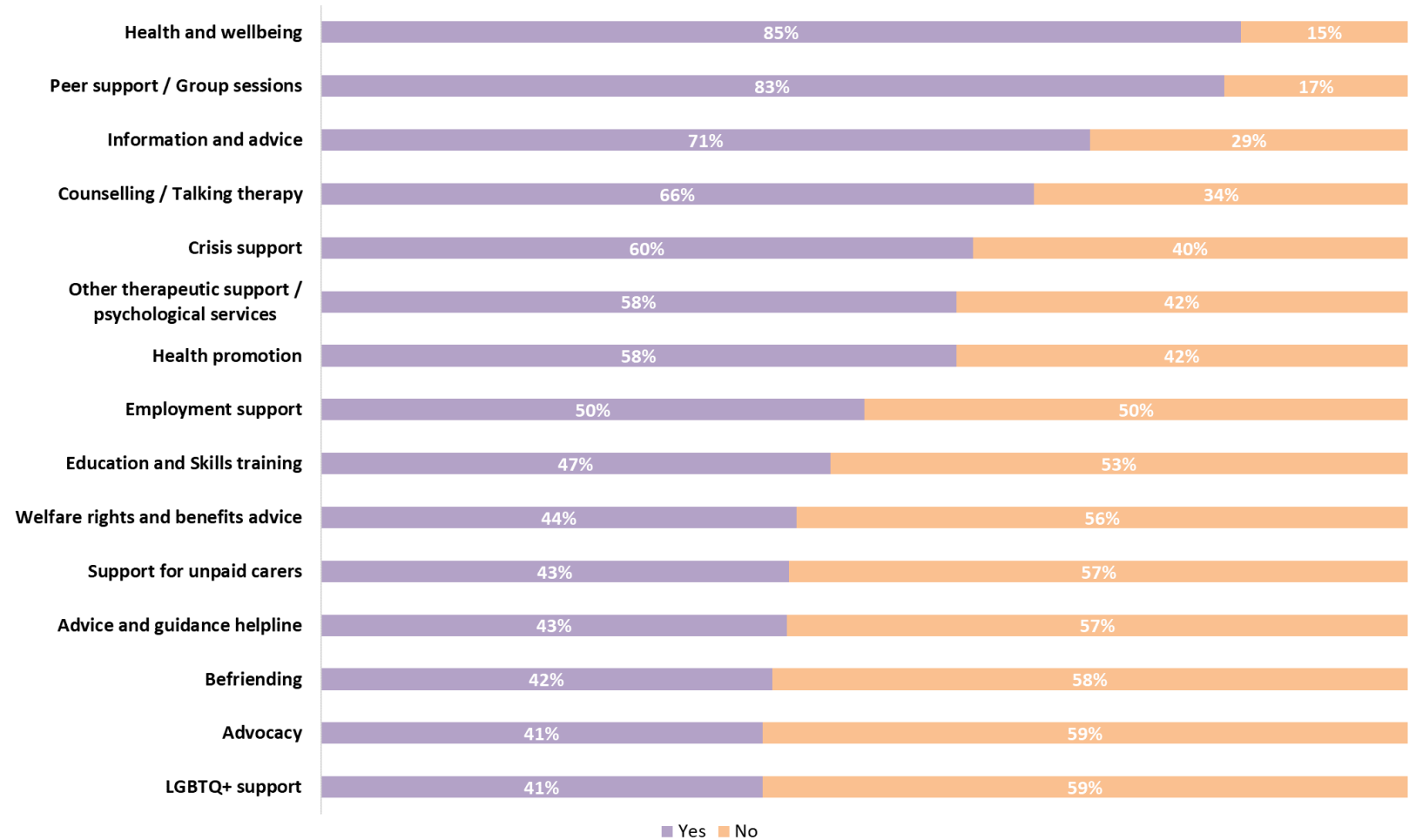
Of all respondents 78% confirmed a paid workforce size of 11 or more staff, compared to 70% of respondents who reported a volunteer workforce of 11 or more people. This compares to 11% of providers who reported a small paid workforce of between 0-5 staff, with 19% of providers reporting a small volunteer workforce of 0-5 people.

There were fewer VCSE organisations reporting a large volunteer workforce (12; 19%) compared to 20 (31%) organisations which reported a paid workforce of 100 staff or more (as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022).





# Service offer

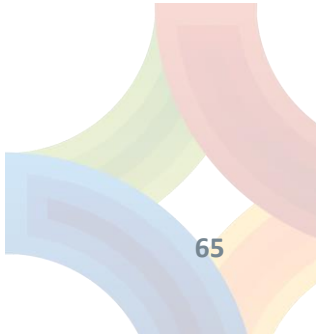


As part of the project scope providers were asked to detail their service offer in relation to 29 mental health service areas; results are presented on this slide and overleaf. The data reported here do not distinguish which staff groups (paid, volunteer) deliver the service.

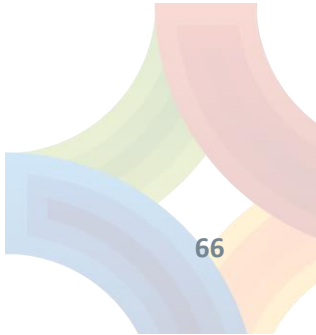
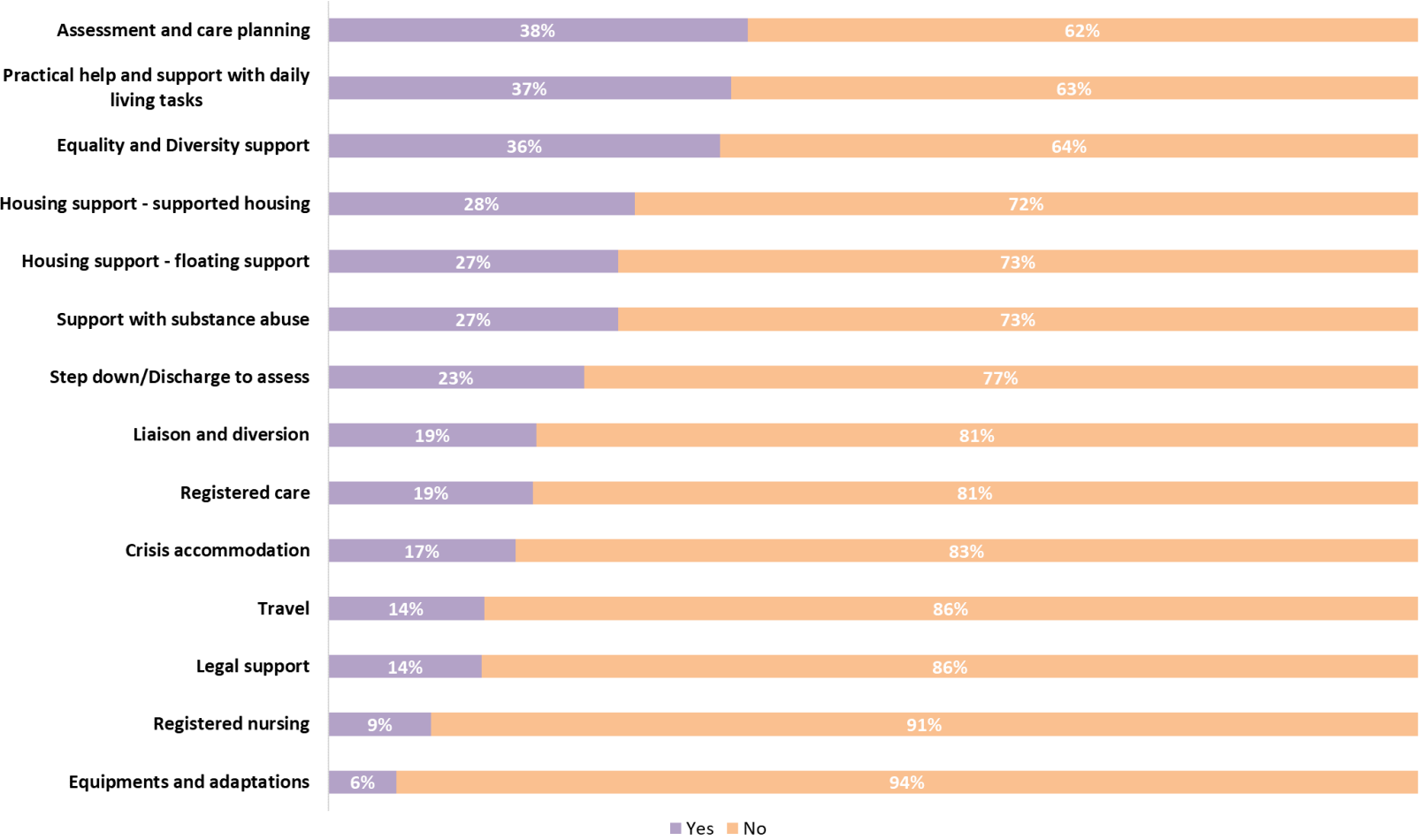
Health and wellbeing and peer support/group session services were the most widely offered among providers, with 85% and 83% of providers confirming this as part of their service offer.

Other commonly offered mental health related services included information and advice (71%), counselling/talking therapy (66%) and crisis support (60%) services.

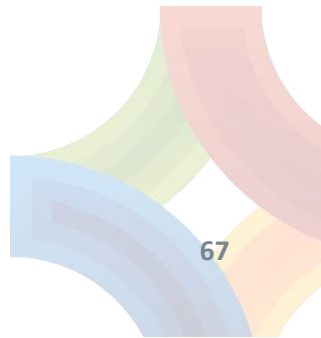
Service offer may vary for multiple reasons, e.g. organisation size or requirement for qualified staff to deliver services such as legal support (14%) and registered nursing (9%) services.



# Service offer - continued



# Conclusions



# Conclusions

A total of 192 data submissions were received, with 66% of submissions from NHS, local authority and independent sector providers. The remaining 34% of returns were submitted by VCSE sector providers. Key findings include:

- Within the context of this project, a total of 5,463 social workers (WTE) were reported to be supporting the delivery of mental health services across NHS Trusts, local authorities and the independent sector. To note data submissions were incomplete for both independent sector and local authority sector organisations and are therefore indicative rather than comprehensive.
- 3,576 social workers (WTE) were working within NHS mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, inclusive of additional data included for 11 NHS Trusts that did not provide data directly for this project. Additional data was taken for these Trusts from their submissions to the 2021/22 NHS Benchmarking Network annual Adult/Older Adult Mental Health and Children and Young People's Mental Health benchmarking projects (positions also as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). Note that these data are likely to be an underrepresentation as figures do not include qualified social workers working in other job roles, or externally employed social workers (e.g. from local authorities) working within NHS mental health services. However, the additional data from the national benchmarking sources do approximate a more comprehensive position for the social worker workforce working in NHS Trusts.
- Overall, there was a 20% increase from the comparable position in the NHS social worker workforce when compared to the previous census on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (NHSBN National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services).
- The majority of social workers were directly employed within NHS Trusts - 91% of social workers (WTE) working within NHS mental health services on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 were directly employed compared to 76% reported in the census taken on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (NHSBN National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services).
- An additional 1,794 social workers (WTE) were working in local authority mental health services; 93 social workers (WTE) were working in independent sector mental health services.
- Providers reported a mean of 9 social workers (WTE) in post per 100,000 population on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Results varied by provider; the majority of providers in the upper quartile were local authorities.

# Conclusions – continued

- Over half of NHS providers reported social workers were working in inpatient children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) and adult acute inpatient units – 59% and 53% of providers, respectively. There was also a comparatively greater presence of social workers within specialist secure services (particularly low and medium). Within community NHS adult and older adult mental health services 82% of providers reported social workers working within generic community mental health teams (CMHTs), with 79% of early intervention teams also confirming social workers as part of the workforce (as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022).
- 40% of providers reported an increase in directly employed social workers in the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- Social workers within community mental health teams delivered 50% of clinical contacts during 2021/22 via non-face to face means (i.e. telephone/digital consultations). This aligns with data submitted to the 2021/22 NHS Benchmarking Network's annual Adult/Older Adult Mental Health project which reported 49% of activity was delivered non-face to face by community mental health teams nationally (all roles).
- There was greater ethnic diversity in both the social worker and social care workforce compared to the general population in England (ages 16-64). Further, there was greater ethnic diversity reported by providers in the current census compared to the data reported in the 2020 [Workforce Race Quality Standard Report](#) where 21% of NHS staff were reported to be from Black or ethnic minority background (as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020). In the current census 24% of social workers and 30% of social care staff in mental health services were from non-white backgrounds (as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022).
- Approximately three quarters of the social worker and social care workforce were female.
- From the 65 submissions received from the VCSE sector, an approximate total of 181,770 people were reported as being supported by these providers as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. 59% of providers reported localised arrangements – operating within a single locality or borough although 41% of providers reported national, regional, or multi-ICS location coverage.
- Health and wellbeing and peer support/group session services were most widely offered mental health services by VCSE sector providers – confirmed by 85% and 83% of providers, respectively. Additionally, other more commonly offered mental health related services included information and advice (71%), counselling/talking therapy (66%) and crisis support (60%) services.

We would like to reiterate our thanks to all providers who participated in the workforce census, and to Health Education England and the project oversight group for their ongoing guidance and support.

# Contact details

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