

National Workforce Stocktake of Social Workers in Mental Health Services

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Executive Summary

The National Workforce Stocktake and Benchmarking Study of Mental Health Social Workers was commissioned by Health Education England and undertaken by the NHS Benchmarking Network between January and April 2020. The project's objective was to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the size and shape of the Social Worker profession's contribution to mental health services in England on 30th September 2019. It ran alongside a separate data collection on the prevalence of Peer Support Workers within mental health services in England.

A total of 55 NHS provider organisations took part in the project, equivalent to 100% of all NHS Mental Health Trusts in England. Of the 55 organisations who participated in the project, a total of 7 organisations (13%) reported that they did not directly employ any Social Workers within their mental health services on 30th September 2019.

In total, 2,894 WTE Social Workers were reported to be working within NHS mental health services on the census date of 30th September 2019. This compares to a wider position of around 5,000 Social Workers recorded as employed by the NHS on the national Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system. Whilst mental health is the single largest specialty where the NHS employs Social Workers, others are employed elsewhere including; Older People's medicine, specialist hospital discharge teams, children's services, and Emergency departments.

Of the 2,894 WTE mental health Social Workers identified by the project, a total of 2,211 mental health Social Workers working in NHS Trusts (i.e. 76% of total) were directly employed by the NHS, with the remaining 683 (24%) employed by external organisations (typically Local Authorities).

Data from a number of wider research projects are outlined in this report and point to a total quantum of around 5,000 mental health Social Workers employed by Local Authorities in England. Local Authorities are therefore the lead providers of mental health Social Workers and work alongside around 100,000 WTE NHS clinical colleagues in mental health services, which includes the 2,211 WTE NHS employed mental health Social Workers identified in this report. Mental health Social Workers provide support across the full spectrum of mental health care but are most likely to be employed in community based care. Mental health Social Workers work across services for children and young people, working age adults, and older people. Working age adults is the largest of these sectors and employs most mental health Social Workers.

A full demographic profile of mental health Social Workers employed within the NHS is provided in the report. Staff are predominantly female (76%), aged under 50 (62%), and have marginally more ethnic diversity than the general population.

A range of partnership models are in place that provide organisational level governance that enable Local Authority staff to contribute to mental health services. This includes a range of formal partnership vehicles, as well as often complex local secondment arrangements. The arrangements for employing staff often reflect the history of local partnership arrangements between the NHS and Local Authority sector. There isn't a standard model evident across local services and NHS mental health Social Workers have arrived in their current roles through a combination of arrangements including; being directly employed, seconded from Local Authorities, and subject to TUPE transfer. Most mental health Social Workers (84%) were fully qualified, with additional data on training roles, including the ASYE year also reported.



Introduction

The National Workforce Stocktake and Benchmarking Study of Mental Health Social Workers was undertaken between January and April 2020, with the objective of providing a comprehensive snapshot of the size and shape of the Social Worker profession's contribution to mental health services in England. A national census date for the project was agreed as 30th September 2019. The project ran alongside a separate data collection on the prevalence of Peer Support Workers within mental health services in England.

The project was commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) and undertaken by the NHS Benchmarking Network. The workforce stocktake aimed to provide a detailed profile of Social Workers employed within NHS mental health services and the associated delivery context including the following themes:

- Service provision and activity
- Workforce size
- Workforce demographics
- Workforce key performance indicators including sickness, vacancies and temporary staffing

All NHS Mental Health Trusts in England were invited to take part in the work and the project achieved data responses from all 55 NHS provider organisations. A full participant list is detailed in the appendix to this report. Of the 55 organisations who participated in the project, a total of 7 organisations reported that they did not directly employ any Social Workers within their mental health services on 30th September 2019. The focus of the report is therefore on the remaining 48 providers who shared data on the profile of the mental health Social Workers employed.

It should also be noted that a parallel data collection took place across Local Authorities as these organisations are key partners in the delivery of mental health services and employ substantial numbers of Social Workers who contribute to mental health services. The data collection across Local Authorities had not received contributions from all Authorities by the end of March when the collection was suspended due to the impact of Covid-19. The data collection may be resumed at some point in future if conditions allow. Prior to this year the NHS Benchmarking Network had previously undertaken a national data collection in partnership with the Adult Directors of Social Services. This project received data contributions from 100 Local Authorities and this content is referenced at selected points in this report to provide additional context to the analysis of the mental health Social Worker workforce evident in NHS Trusts. The findings in this report also reference for context a recent research project conducted by Laura Tucker at the University of York which aimed to estimate the number of mental health Social Workers and gain a better understanding of how social work is structured in both the NHS and Local Authorities.

Our project also invited data contributions from mental health providers in the independent and charity sectors where Social Workers are also employed to support mental health services. Analysis of the position from these sectors will be published in a report alongside Local Authority data when national pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic ease.

The NHS Benchmarking Network would like to express our thanks for the contribution made to the project by members of the project's oversight group, Health Education England, and the NHS providers who participated in the project. Particular thanks are due to; Mark Trewin, Sue Hatton, Debbie Hilder, Sarah Mahoney, Phil Hough, Simon Hough, Karen Morse, Nick Armitage, Samira Heinkel, Ania Kosicka, and Jill Clark. We would also like to extend thanks to colleagues at the University of York (Laura Tucker and Professor Martin Webber) for permission to use the early findings from their research in quantifying the number of mental health Social Workers..

Background: The NHS and Local Authority mental health workforce

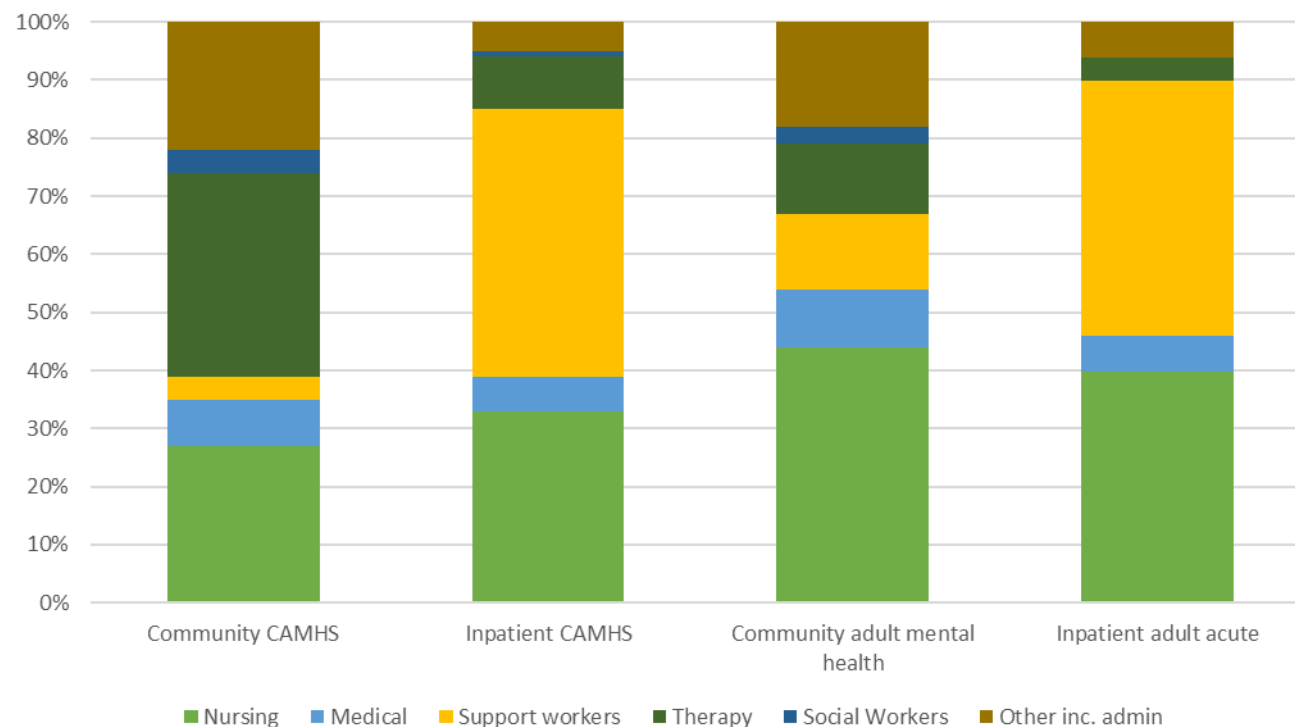


The NHS mental health workforce

Social Workers play an important role as part of the mental health multi-disciplinary team, bridging the gap between health and social care. Their role in discharge planning and reducing delayed transfers of care is particularly key, although it should be noted that Social Workers also play an important part in the MDT including care coordination, supervision and team management. Social Workers are unique among the MDT professionals due to their employment arrangements. Although the majority of Social Workers are employed by Local Authorities, those who specialise in supporting mental health service users can be employed in a wide variety of ways including directly employed by the NHS, Local Authorities, and specially created partnership vehicles. Employment status may reflect the history of these local agreements. Social Workers employed by Local Authorities commonly work alongside those directly employed by the NHS to offer an integrated approach.

Social Workers directly employed by the NHS can be found in many areas of mental health care. The chart to the right shows the MDT profile in different areas, and the proportion of Social Workers within them. This information was collected as part of the 2019 NHS Benchmarking Network's mental health and CAMHS data collections and suggests around 3% (3,000 WTE) of the 100,000 WTE NHS employed mental health staff providing patient care are Social Workers. Social Worker staff employed by the NHS are more commonly found in community mental health services for children and adults. Mental Health Social Workers are much less frequently deployed in inpatient mental health services with only a small number of staff shown on the chart opposite.

Social workers employed by NHS mental health services



Previous research - Mental Health Social Worker workforce in Local Authorities

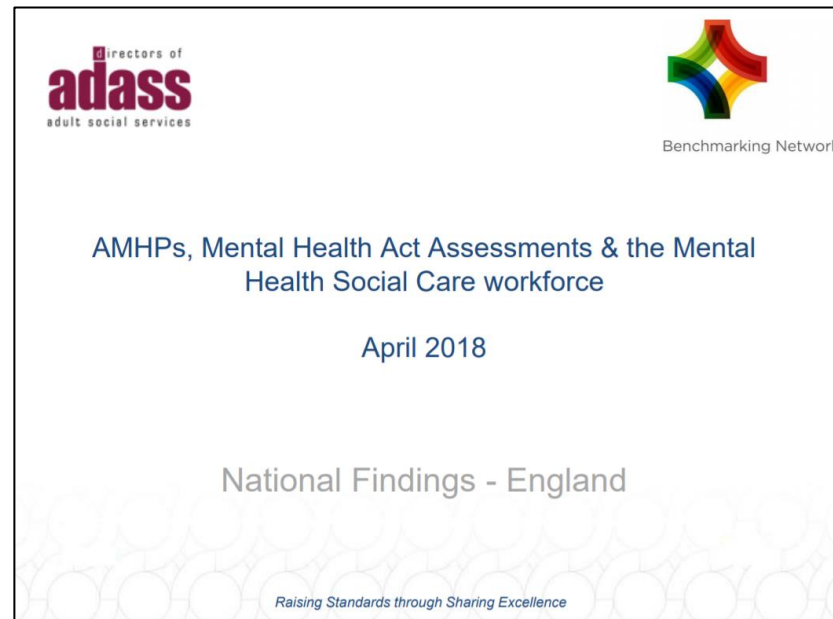
Previous attempts to quantify the contribution to mental health services made by Social Workers include a collaboration between ADASS and the NHS Benchmarking Network in 2018 which collected primary data from both the NHS and Local Authorities. The project received data contributions from all NHS Trusts and from 100 out of 151 Local Authorities.

When a population benchmark is applied, Local Authorities reported an average position of 9 WTE mental health social workers per 100,000 population. This extrapolates to a position of around 5,000 WTE mental health Social Workers employed in Local Authorities when an Office for National Statistics England population of 56 million is used as England's population denominator.

This position goes some way to scoping the question of how many Social Workers provide a contribution to mental health services. However, a definitive answer to this question is problematic due to the sometimes opaque nature of local partnership arrangements and supporting employment arrangements which can become obscured over time.

The project also explored the role of Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) in supporting mental health services and identified 3,250 WTE. Of these AMHPs, 86% were employed in Adult mental health services with the remaining staff supporting CAMHS, Older Peoples Care, and Learning Disabilities. A total of 95% of AMHP staff were recorded as Social Workers by professional background.

The report can be accessed through this link,
<https://www.adass.org.uk/media/6428/nhsbn-and-adass-social-care-national-report.pdf>



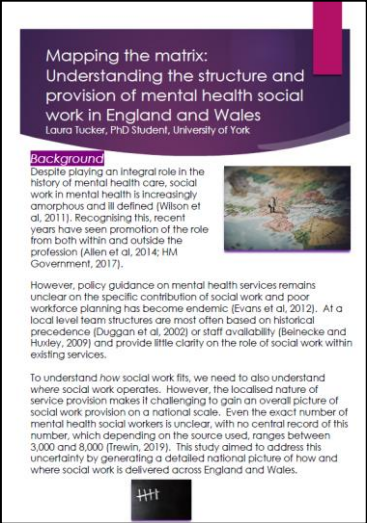
Current research - Mental Health Social Worker workforce in England and Wales

Laura Tucker is a PhD candidate at the University of York undertaking research on the number and profile of Social Workers contributing to mental health services in England and Wales. Laura’s work is supervised by Professor Martin Webber, Director of the International Centre for Mental Health Social Research and Senior Fellow at the NIHR School for Social Care Research, Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York, and also by Dr Hannah Jobling, Lecturer in Social Work and Programme Lead for Postgraduate Social Work programmes at the University of York. This work is currently unpublished although is being scheduled for a first phase of publication in the near future.

The research project invited all NHS Trust, Health Board, and Local Authority providers in England and Wales to identify how many Social Workers are employed in mental health services. The project had great success in collecting data from Local Authorities, NHS Trusts, and Welsh University Health Boards with 97% of organisations responding. A total of 6,584 staff were identified by the project’s participants and are detailed in the table opposite. The question of employing organisation is perhaps always difficult to adequately answer given the number of different partnership arrangements in place between the NHS and Local Authorities and the history of secondment and TUPE transfers of staff between the sectors. The great strength of the research is perhaps in succeeding in identifying a total quantum of Social Workers employed across different sectors to support mental health services. The data confirms that Local Authorities are often the lead employers for mental health Social Workers and provide up to two-thirds of the total Social Worker workforce in mental health. Further information on the research can be obtained by contacting Laura Tucker on laura.tucker@york.ac.uk

Tucker, L, Webber, M. and Jobling, H. (2019) *Mapping the matrix: understanding the structure and provision of mental health social work in England and Wales*. Unpublished research summary: University of York

Although some issues of comparability exist between the different research projects undertaken it is reassuring that the overall quantum of Social Workers identified as supporting mental health services appears to be broadly similar with up to 5,000 staff identified within the Local Authority sector and up to 2,500 employed by the NHS. More detail on the profile of NHS staff is provided in the rest of this report.



Organisation Type	Number of Mental Health Social Workers
NHS Trust (England)	2,144
University Health Board (Wales)	54
Local Authority (England)	4,105
Local Authority (Wales)	282
Total	6,584



Social Worker project findings

NHS workforce profile



NHS – Mental Health Social Workers

The data collection census on 30th September 2019 received responses from every Mental Health Trust in England. Trusts were asked how many Social Workers were supporting their mental health services, and to provide a breakdown of which were employed directly by their organisation, and which were supplied by an external provider - for example, the Local Authority.

In total, 2,894 WTE Social Workers were reported to be working within NHS mental health services on the census date of 30th September 2019. This compares to a wider position of around 5,000 Social Workers recorded as employed by the NHS on the national Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system. Whilst mental health is the single largest specialty where the NHS employs Social Workers, others are employed elsewhere including; Older People's medicine, specialist hospital discharge teams, children's services, and Emergency departments.

As shown in the infographic, over three quarters of mental health Social Workers working in NHS Trusts were directly employed by the NHS, with the remaining 24% employed by external organisations (typically Local Authorities).

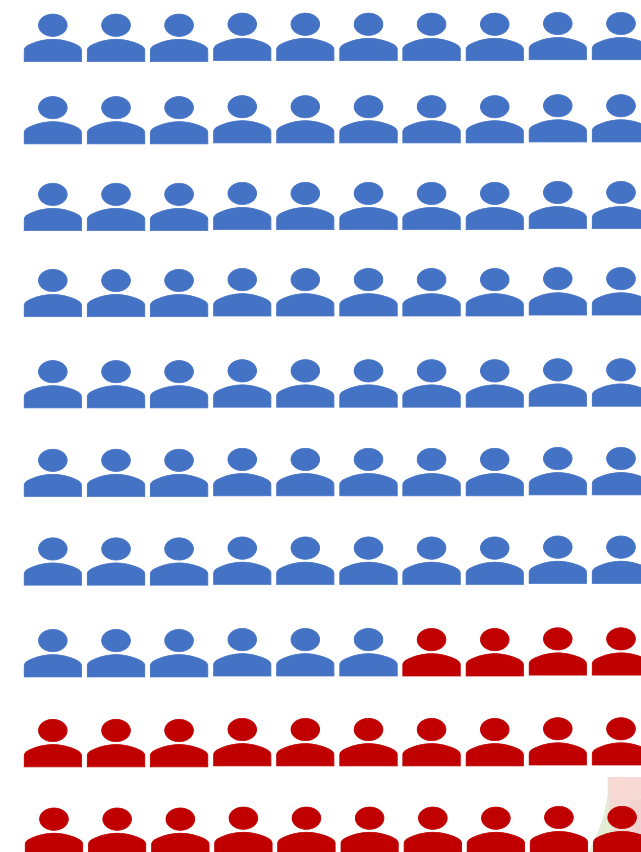
Data on the extent of external organisation support was problematic to quantify due to the absence of data submissions from all external organisations. Some organisations were not able to report the number of Social Workers employed elsewhere. Others reported access to a pool of support, but could not quantify the WTE input this provided to their teams. Therefore although the number of mental health Social Workers employed by the NHS is robust, it is likely that the number of Social Workers employed by external organisations but supporting NHS mental health services under-states the overall position. Data on the full extent of Local Authority provision of mental health Social Workers may be available later in the year subject to the situation with Covid-19.

**2,894 Social Workers
(WTE) working within
NHS mental health
services at 30th
September 2019**

of which:

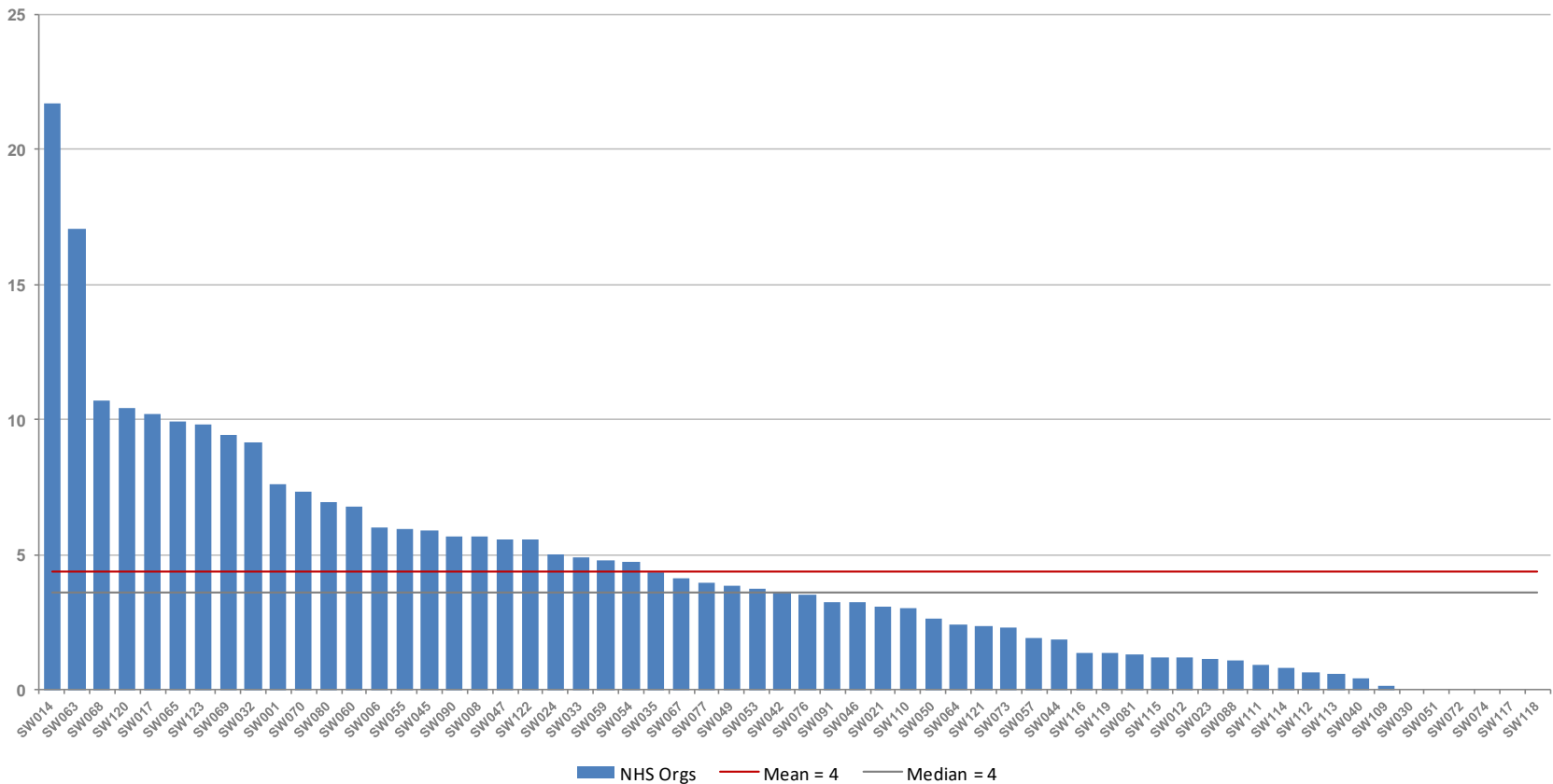
**Employed by NHS:
2,211 (76%)**

**Employed by an
external organisation:
683 (24%)**



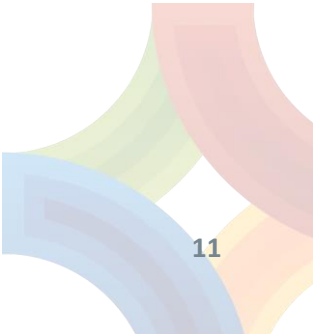
NHS Employed Mental Health Social Workers (WTE)

Total number of NHS employed Social Workers (WTE) per 100,000 registered population



On average, NHS Mental Health Trusts employ 4 WTE Social Workers within their mental health teams when benchmarked per 100,000 registered population in their geography, though this varies from 0 to 22 WTE per 100,000 population across NHS organisations.

- It should be noted that this data does not include either of the following:
- Mental Health Social Workers who are working within NHS services but who are employed by external organisations (e.g. Local Authorities)
 - Social Workers in other areas of healthcare (not mental health) e.g. frailty services for older adults



NHS Employed Social Workers by Region

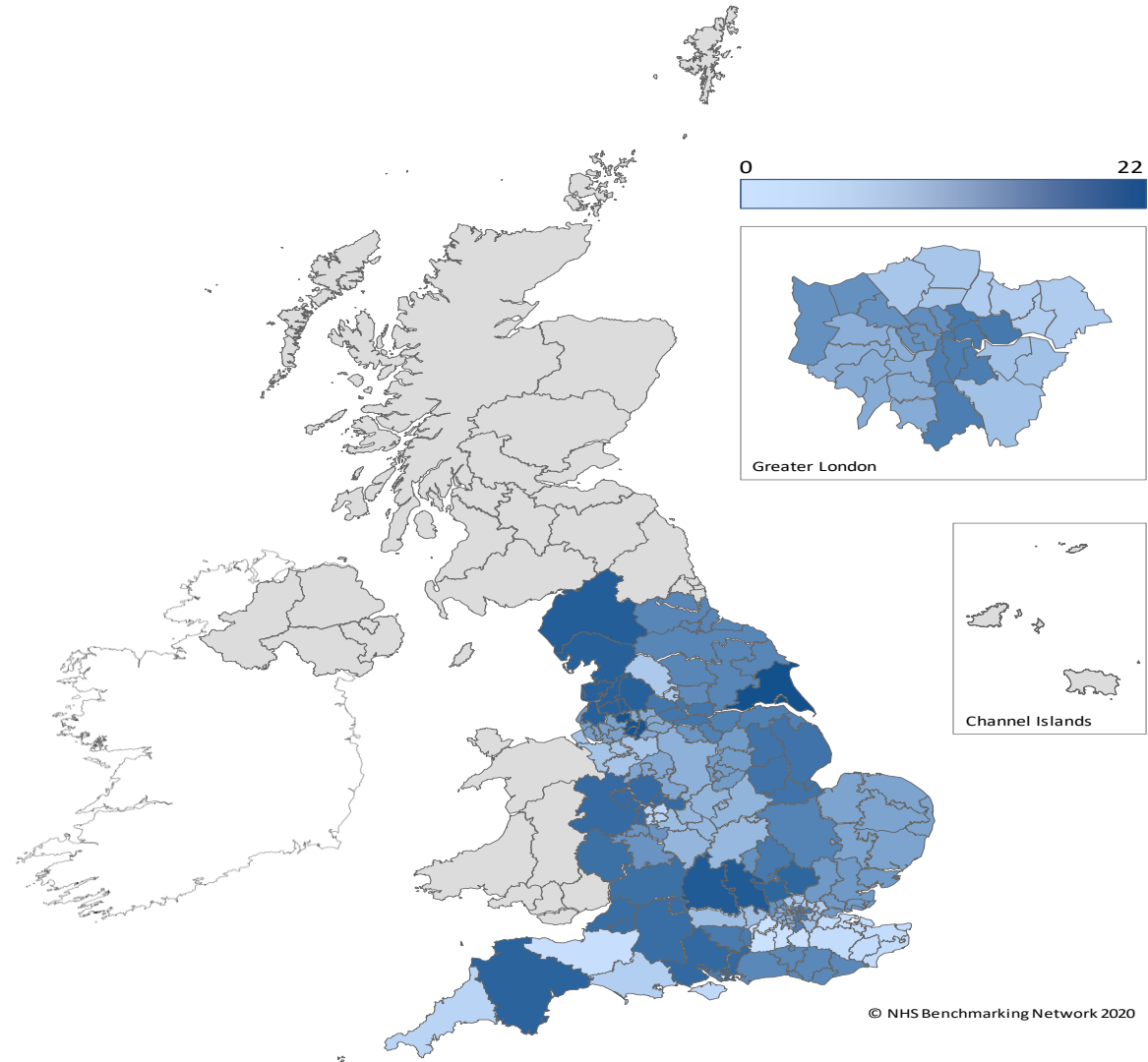
NHS employed Social Workers (WTE) per 100,000 registered population

The regional variation in the number of mental health Social Workers directly employed by the NHS in England is illustrated by this map. The map only shows NHS-employed Social Workers, and not the overall provision of Social Worker input to mental health services. Regional variation is evident in the data, for example higher levels of provision in the North West and low levels in the South East. London also shows surprising variation and an overall low level of capacity given the recognised high levels of severe mental illness in London.

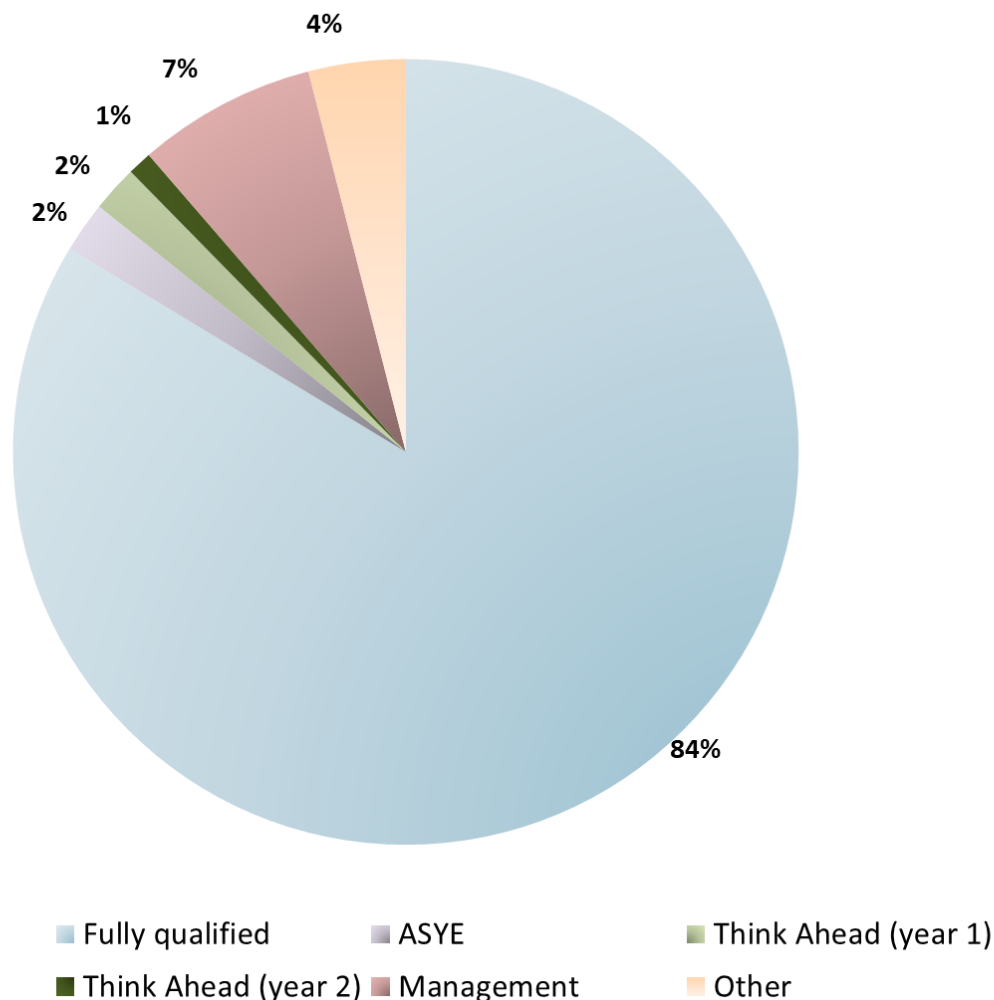
Wider analysis of mental health service needs and provision by the NHS Benchmarking Network generally confirms a clear North / South split in the data. Analysis of mental health Social Worker provision shows a more complex position as indicated by the darker blue colouring on the map (highest provision), and light blue areas (lower provision).

In some areas, more local regional variation is very evident, for example in the south west where there is a mix of high/low Social Worker numbers in the same geographical footprint and may reflect local partnership arrangements.

The extent to which mental health Social Workers are employed directly by Trusts may point to legacy commissioning arrangements and differential levels of baseline investment and capacity. NHS Trusts may also have chosen to employ Social Workers directly as part of the MDT in response to local needs.



Social Workers – Workforce Composition



The project invited NHS Trusts to provide additional details on the component parts of their mental health Social Worker workforce. The chart opposite shows the qualification status of the workforce. A total of 1,849 of the Social Workers detailed within the stocktake were fully qualified. This is approximately 84% of the overall sample.

Social Workers on the Think Ahead scheme represented 3% of the Social Workers in post (2% in year 1 and 1% in year 2).

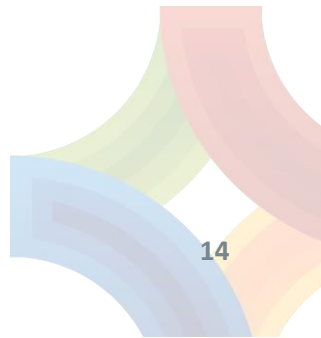
A further 2% of Social Workers (who were not on the Think Ahead scheme) were also undertaking their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE). Therefore in total, 3% of the workforce were at ASYE level at the point of the census. If those individuals remain within the workforce, they will progress to fully qualified status within the next 12 months.

A total of 7% of all staff were allocated to management roles illustrating the importance of Social Workers to MDT and service management roles.

The 'Other' category accounted for 4% of the Social Worker workforce with respondents detailing a variety of positions including Consultant Social Workers, unqualified Social Workers and Social Care Practitioners.



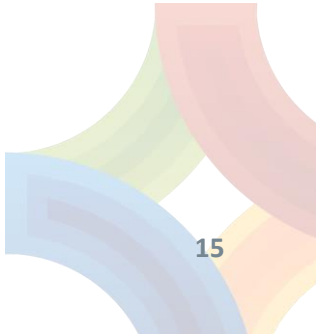
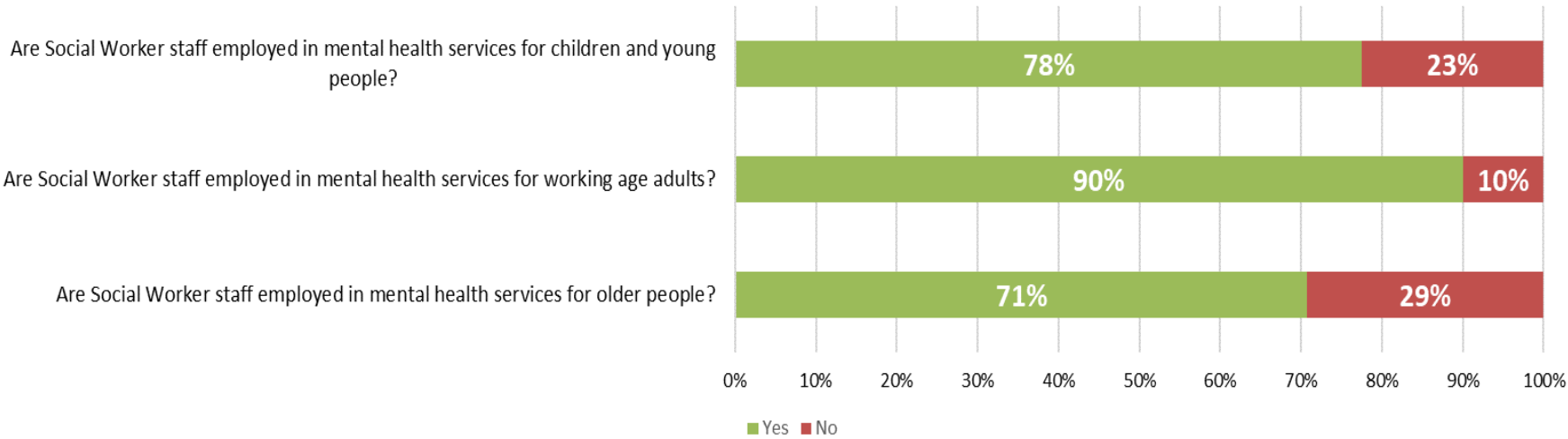
Service Models



Service Models

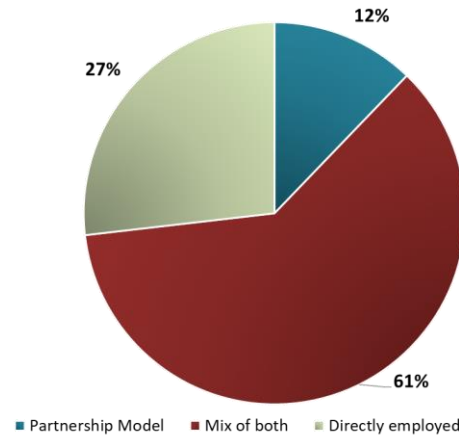
Mental Health Trusts provide a range of services to working age and older adults, and many also provide support through CAMHS to children and young people. A total of 90% of respondents confirmed that they have employed Social Workers working in services for working age adults. Providing mental health services to working age adults is the most frequently cited area of operation for mental health Social Workers.

Numbers within services for children and older people are slightly lower, at 78% and 71% respectively although this is still a robust baseline position with Social workers evident in most areas of NHS mental health Trust provision. There may of course be further involvement from Social Workers in these areas through the contribution from staff employed by Local Authorities.



Employment arrangements and transfers

Are Social Worker staff employed in your services or accessed through partnership arrangements (including secondment)?

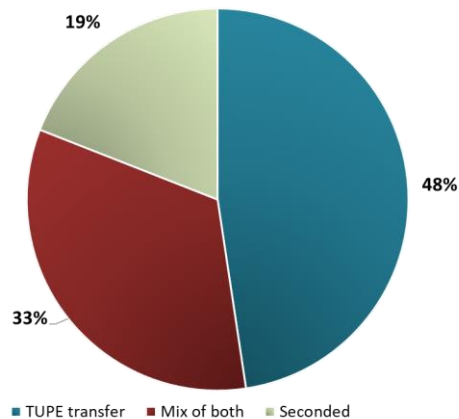


Employment arrangements

The large array of different local partnership agreements shapes the current and historic pattern of employment for mental health Social Workers. Over 60% of respondents advised that their mental health Social Workers are employed through a mix of direct employment and partnership models. This confirms that a mixed economy exists in terms of employment arrangements with local circumstances being key to how pragmatic employment and hosting models have been developed.

A total of 27% of respondents directly employed all of the Social Workers in their multi-disciplinary teams. This clearly defined model of local NHS Trust employment for mental health Social workers is therefore a minority approach with local pragmatic solutions and partnerships tending to dominate.

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



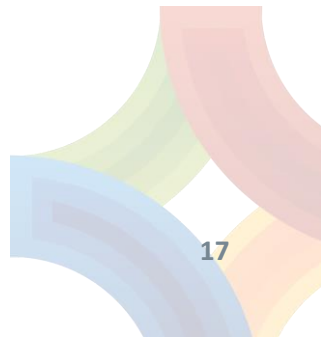
Transfers

The project undertook analysis on how Social Workers arrived in their posts in mental health providers. Almost half of respondents who had transferred staff from another organisation had done so via formal TUPE transfer to provide a clear legal basis for new employment arrangements.

In contrast, informal arrangements were less likely to be used with 19% of organisations reporting that staff transfers had been solely via secondments. The remaining 33% of participants cited a combination of the two methods being deployed, again highlighting the pragmatism evident in implementing local partnership arrangements and the employment arrangements that underpin these vehicles.

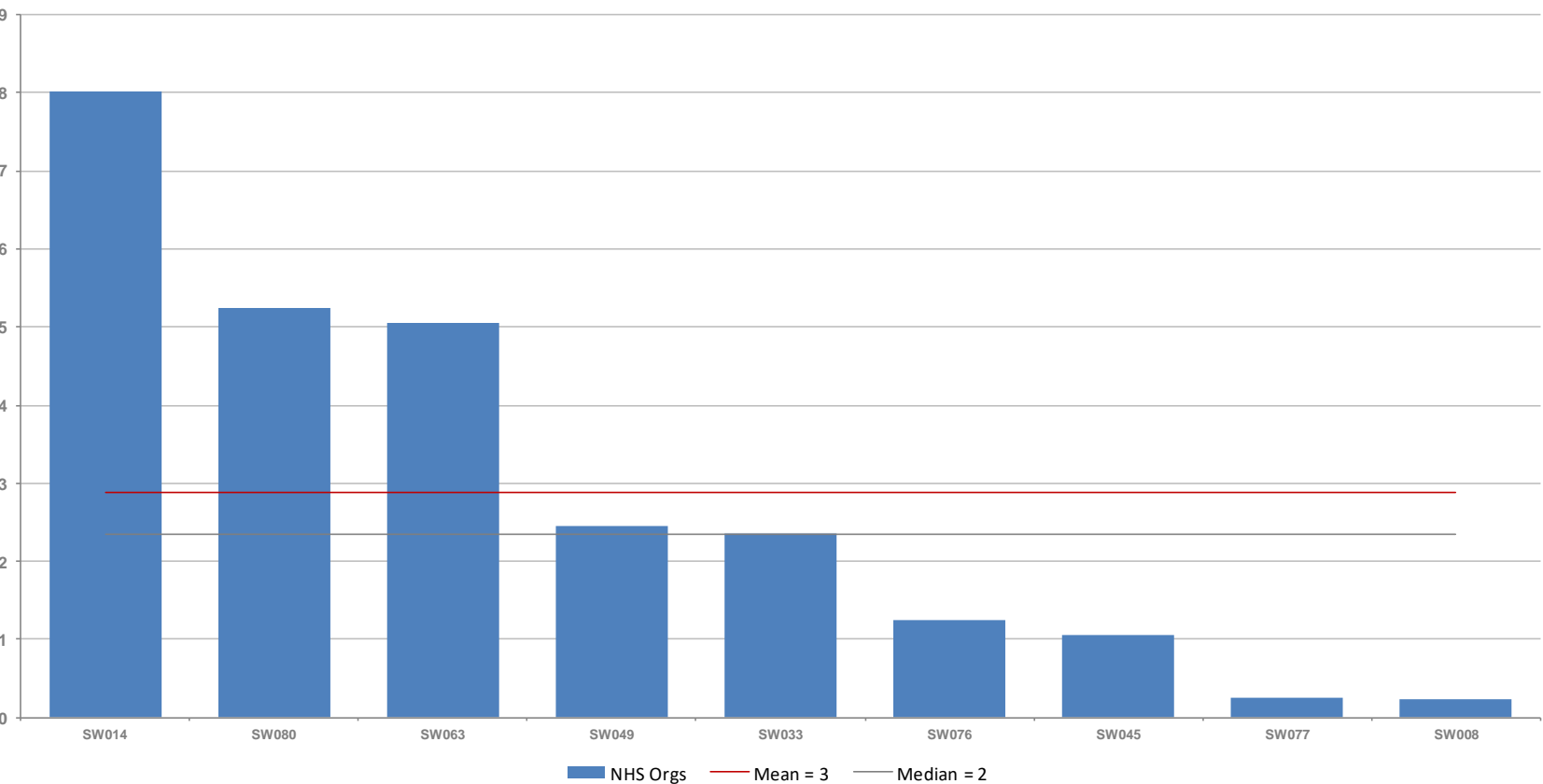
Enhanced roles:

- **Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)**
- **Best Interest Assessors (BIAs)**
- **Approved Clinicians**



Approved Mental Health Professionals (WTE)

Total number of NHS employed AMHPs (WTE) per 100,000 registered population

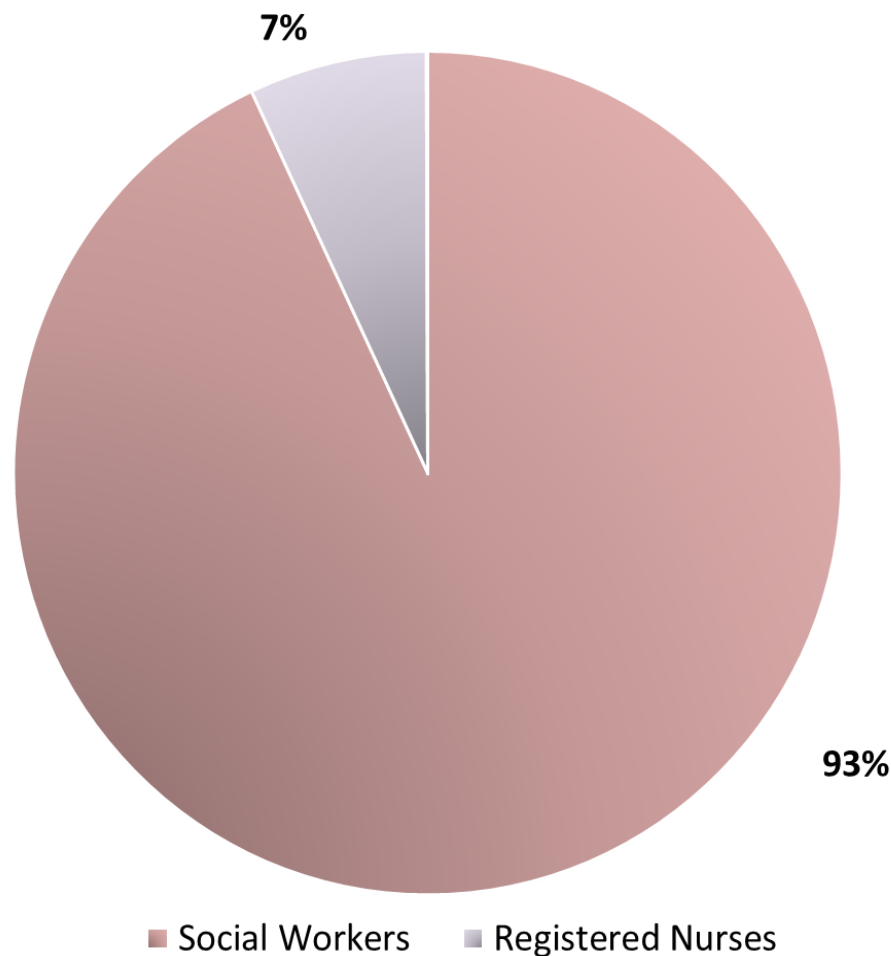


Whilst Local Authorities have a statutory obligation to provide sufficient Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) service coverage, Social Workers in other areas can also hold AMHP responsibilities and be part of the local rota.

Participants in NHS Trusts found it difficult to quantify the AMHP commitments. Only 9 of the 55 NHS participants were able to quantify this contribution. Across this sample, on average 3 WTE NHS-employed Social Workers per 100,000 registered population contributed to AMHP services locally. Across these 9 organisations, 187 WTE AMHPs were directly-employed by NHS providers.

Analysis of previous data from the NHS Benchmarking Network's collaboration with ADASS <https://www.adass.org.uk/media/6428/nhsbn-and-adass-social-care-national-report.pdf> suggests a larger contribution to AMHP rotas from Local Authorities. Overall mental health Social worker staffing in Local Authorities is 10 WTE per 100,000 registered population. Of these 10 WTE staff an average of 7 WTE are warranted / available AMHPs working in the Local Authority setting, more than double the rate reported by NHS Trusts.

AMHP by professional background



Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) are experienced and specialist professionals, trained to undertake Mental Health Act Assessments with Doctors. Since 2007, Mental Health Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists have joined Social Workers as being eligible to train as AMHPs. However, as this survey shows, Social Workers make up the vast majority of practicing AMHPs.

The Mental Health Act states that two doctors must agree that a person meets the criteria for detention under the Mental Health Act, with the AMHP holds the balance of decision making, and needing to decide whether, in the circumstances of the case, detention in hospital is the most appropriate way for the person to receive the care and treatment they need. Ideally, assessments should be undertaken jointly (the AMHP plus the two doctors) as this ensures that the patient is not subject to repeated assessments and allows for a sharing of risk and professional judgement. Unfortunately, pressures in the Mental Health system currently mean that joint assessments are not always possible.

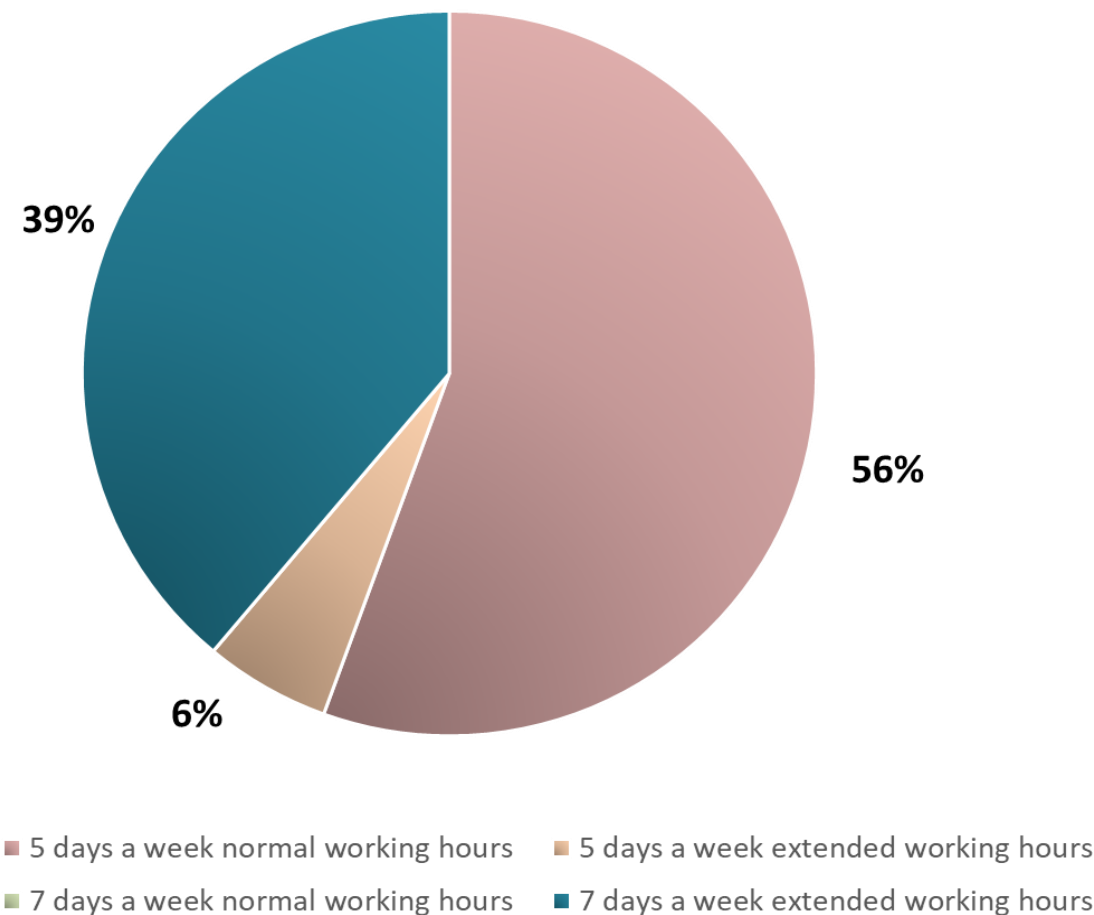
Local Authorities have a statutory obligation to provide enough AMHPs to deliver an accessible service 24hrs a day, 365 days per year. There have been concerns around ensuring sufficient capacity as the numbers of Mental Health Act Assessments have increased and the numbers of AMHPs available to undertake assessments has decreased. There are currently no routine data collections in place to accurately quantify the number of practicing AMHPs. Routine data on the number of MHA assessments undertaken by AMHPs is also not collected or reported nationally.

Data collected in this project from NHS Trusts confirms that although Registered Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Clinical Psychologists have been eligible to train as AMHPs since 2007, 93% of the AMHPs employed by NHS Mental Health Trusts are from a Social Worker background.

The remaining 7% of AMHPs within the workforce were Registered Nurses. No NHS employed Occupational Therapist or Clinical Psychologist AMHPs were reported by participant Trusts.

Approved Mental Health Professional rota

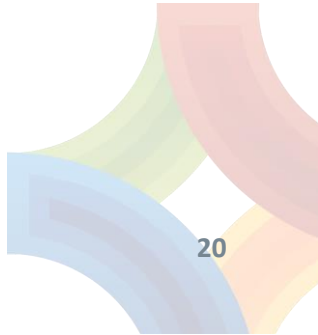
Core weekly hours of daytime AMHP availability



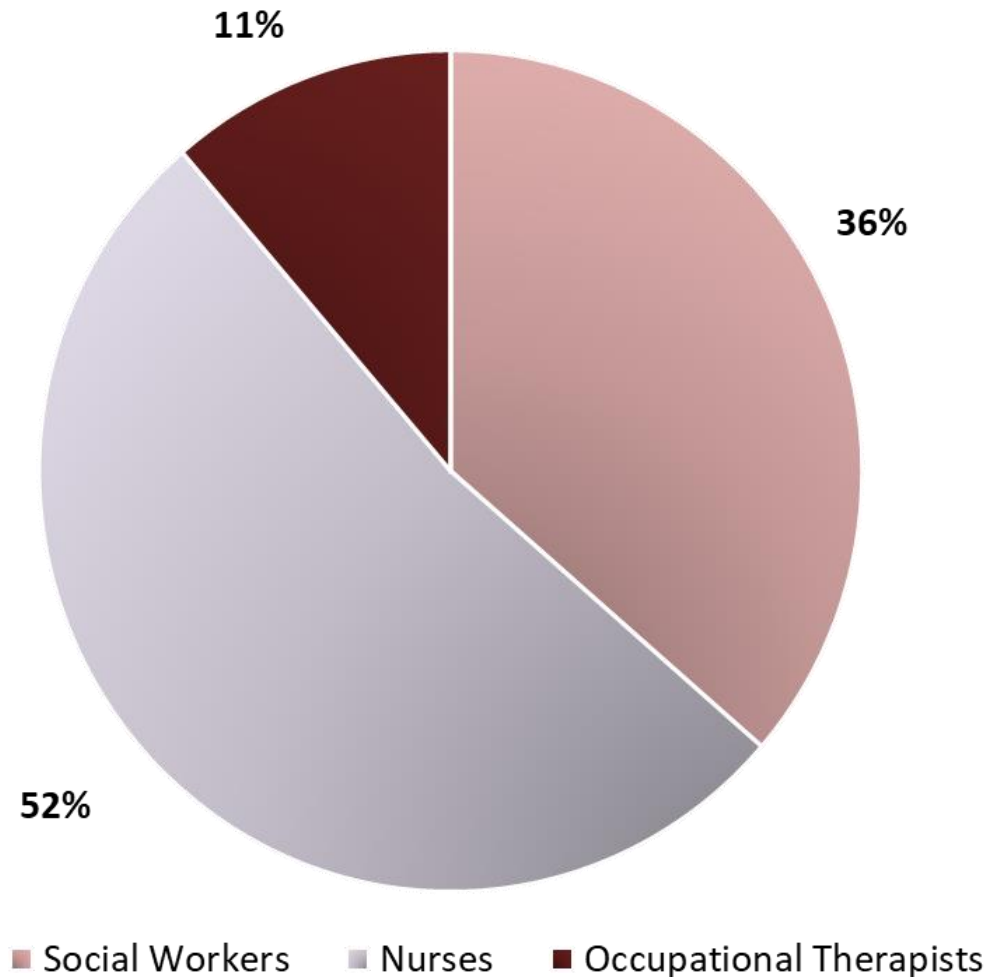
The project explored AMHP working patterns and rotas to understand how staff are scheduled to provide cover for rotas that extend into unsocial hours and weekends to ensure that 24/7 access to AMHP input can be secured by each local mental health system. The most common reported schedule of AMHP availability in NHS Trusts was 5 days a week normal working hours, which was in operation in the localities of 56% of respondents.

A further 6% reported coverage over 5 days per week but with extended working hours. The remaining 39% advised of AMHP availability covering 7 days a week with extended working hours each day. None of the participants reported a model that used a 7 days a week rota structured around normal working hours.

The variability in AMHP rotas suggests that local circumstances are key to the model deployed and reflect local demand for Mental Health Act assessments, as well as available capacity within both the Local Authority and NHS partner organisations.



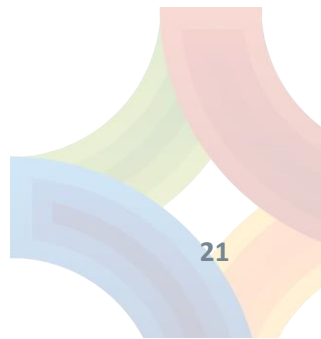
Best Interest Assessors – workforce composition



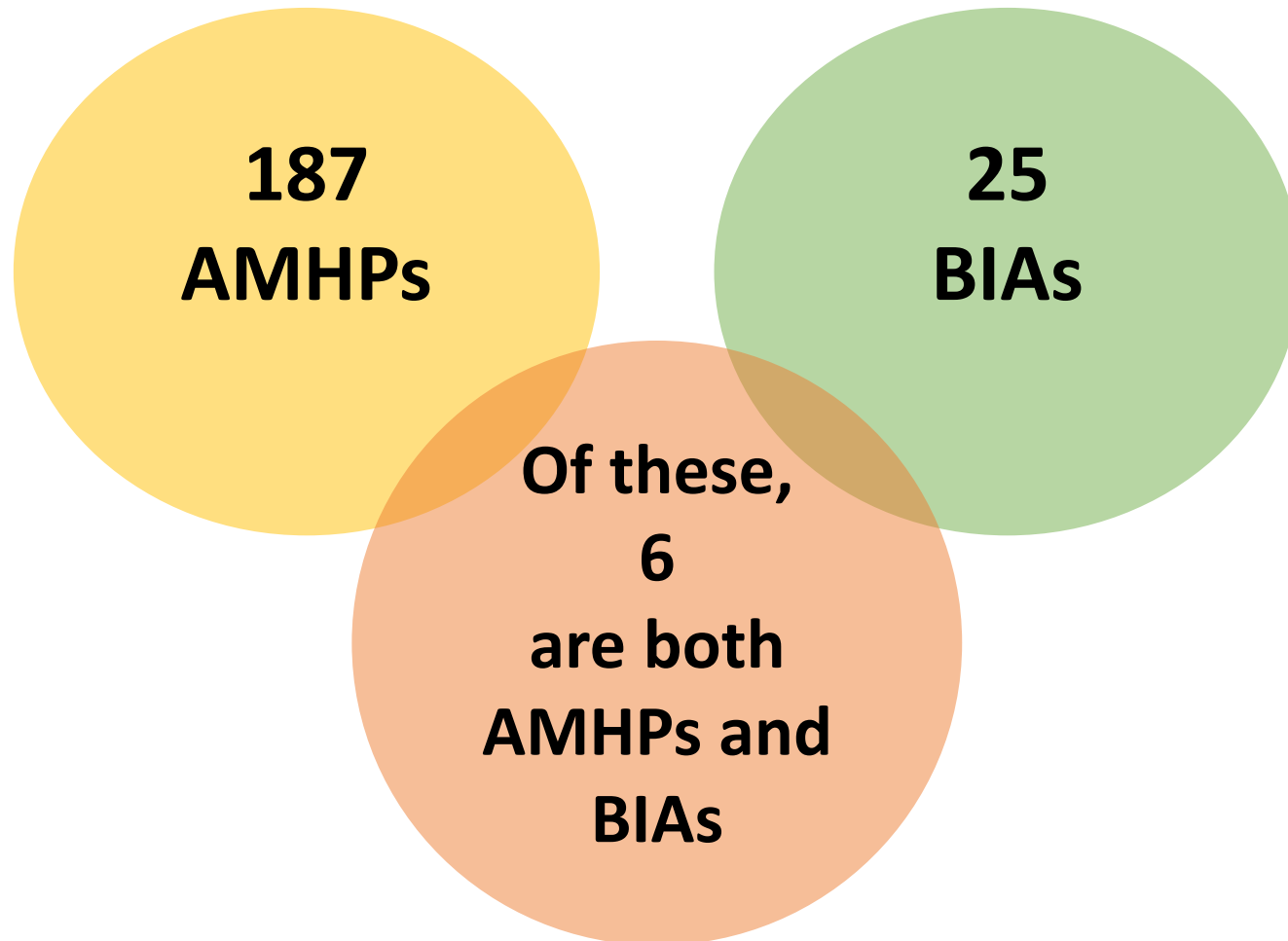
Best Interest Assessors (BIAs) have a key role in the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding process, providing an authorised legal framework when patients lack capacity.

The majority of BIAs are found within Local Authority services, which is reflected in the low response rate to this metric from NHS Trusts. Only 3 NHS Mental Health Trusts provided data on the composition of their BIA team. Between them, they employ 25 WTE BIAs.

Approximately half of these BIAs are Registered Nurses (52%), with the remaining BIAs composed of Social Workers (36%) and Occupational Therapists (11%). This is perhaps reflective of the mental health workforce within the NHS. The wider BIA workforce in Local Authorities is likely to feature more Social Workers taking on this role.



AMHPs and BIAs



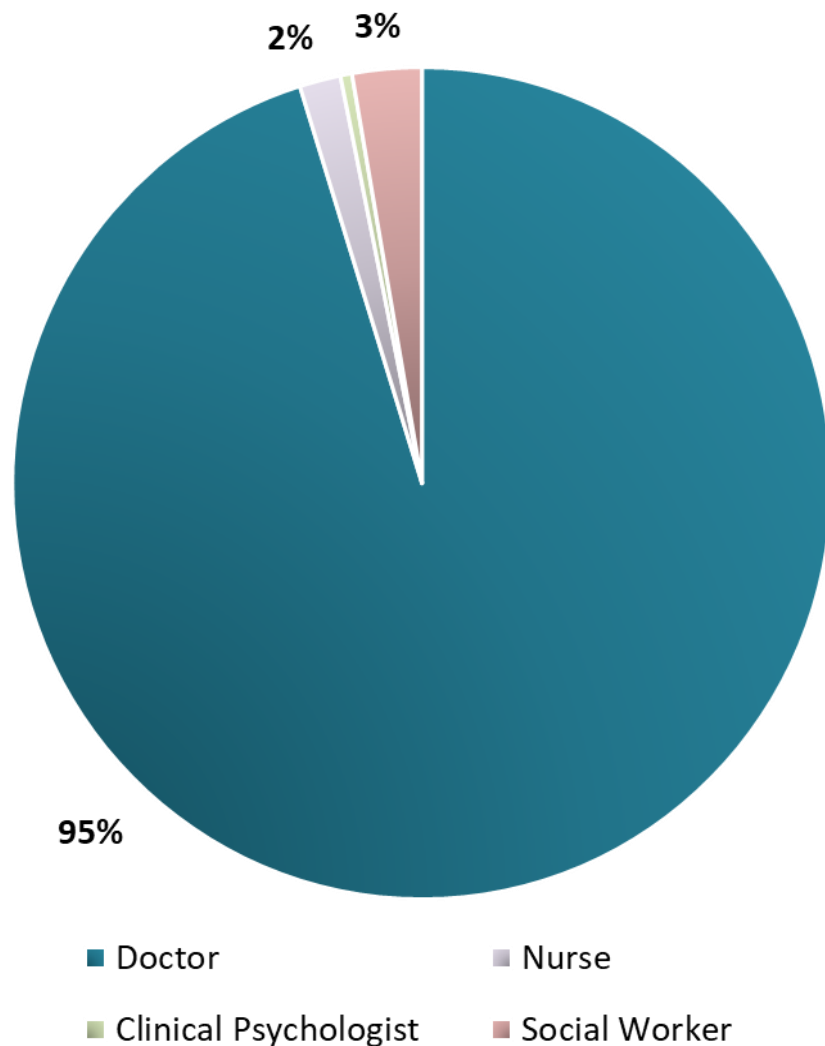
The project explored the crossover between AMHP and BIA roles within NHS Trusts. This analysis was perhaps limited by the relatively small number of participant Trusts who were able to provide quantitative data on the number of AMHP and BIA staff.

Analysis of the data provided suggested a limited crossover between the two roles. Where BIAs are also AMHPs, these staff are additionally able to decide whether patients' rights are best protected by the use of the Mental Health Act or the Mental Capacity Act.

However, census data confirms that most AMHPs in this cohort are not also BIAs, with only 6 WTE staff identified by responding Trusts of the directly employed NHS workforce within mental health services confirmed to be registered as both an AMHP and BIA.

This data therefore suggests that staff tend to specialise in one or other roles with mental health Social Workers in NHS Trusts typically prioritising AMHP duties.

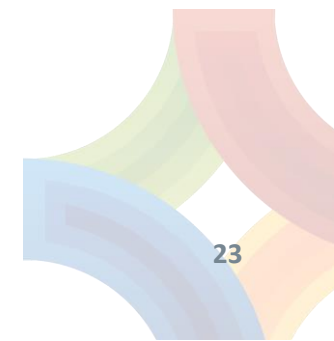
Approved Clinicians – workforce composition



In addition to exploring the roles of AMHP and BIA, the project also explored how Approved Clinician roles are fulfilled in NHS mental health services.

NHS Trust participants confirmed a total of 219 WTE Approved Clinicians directly employed in NHS mental health services.

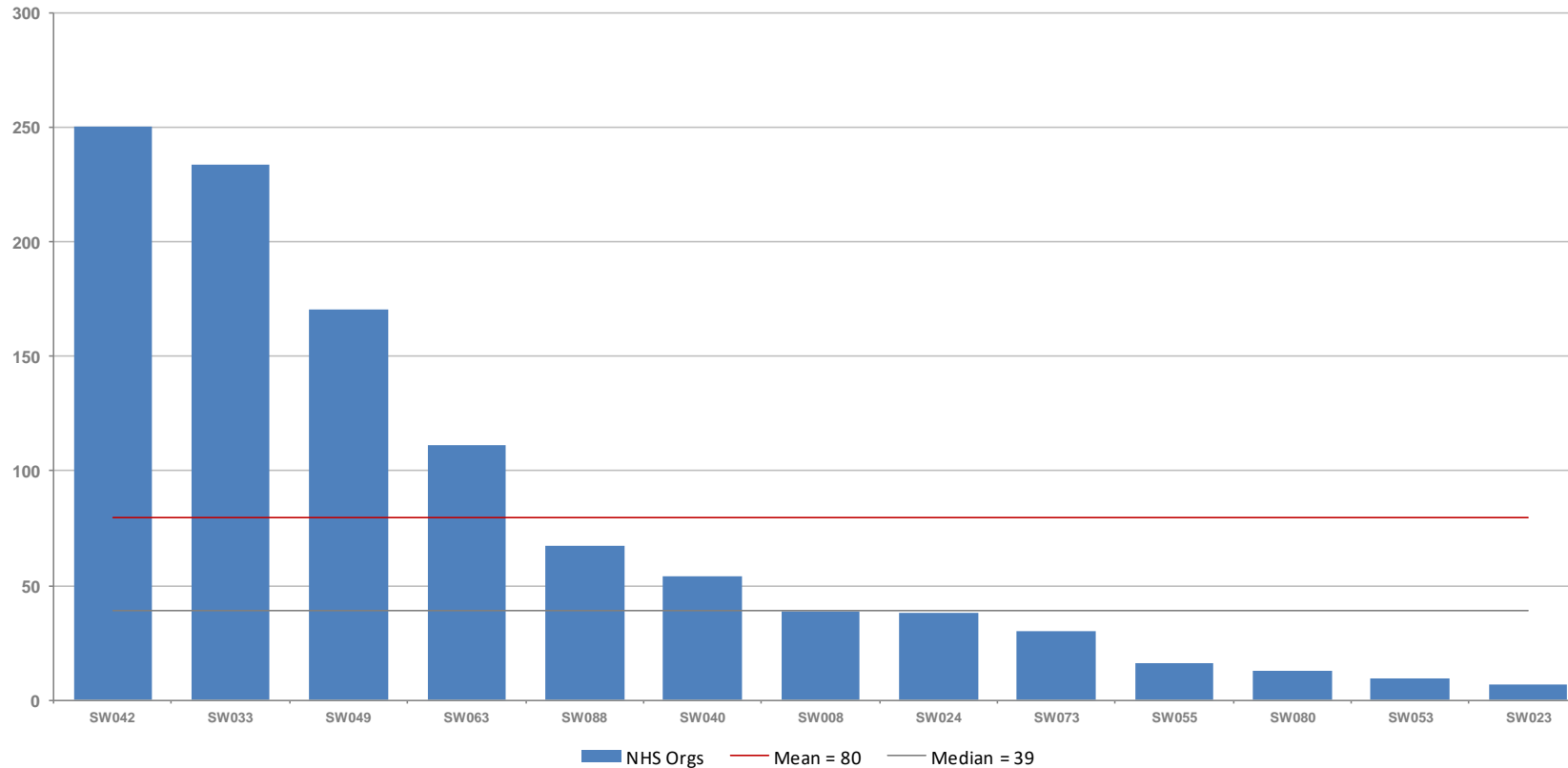
The vast majority of Approved Clinicians in post on the census date were Doctors (95%), with a small proportion of Nurses (2%) and Social Workers (3%) completing the overall workforce composition.



Assessments

Mental Health Act assessments

Total number of Mental Health Act Assessments undertaken in 2018/19 per 100,000 registered population



The project explored the volume of legal assessments undertaken by NHS Trust mental health teams.

This chart displays the contribution of Social Workers within NHS mental health services, regardless of employing organisation, in undertaking Mental Health Act assessments in 2018/19.

When benchmarked, the average position nationally is 80 assessments per 100,000 population per organisation. However, fewer than a quarter of respondents were able to quantify this data for the purposes of this study.

Wider data from the NHS Benchmarking Network's annual mental health benchmarking project confirms a position of circa 80 Mental Health Act detentions per 100,000 working age adults. In 2018/19 40% of all adult acute mental health admissions were for patients detained under the Mental Health Act at point of admission. A further 15% of patients were detained following admission.

Other assessments

Mental Capacity Act assessments

A total of 8 NHS Trust provider organisations submitted responses for this metric, with an average position of 13 Mental Capacity Act assessments undertaken per 100,000 registered population.

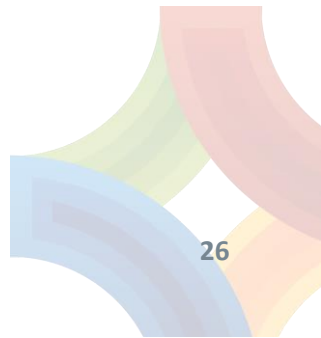
Deprivation of Liberty assessments

The majority of providers did not submit data regarding Deprivation of Liberty assessments. Of the 4 NHS provider organisations who submitted responses, an average of 4 Deprivation of Liberty assessments took place when benchmarked per 100,000 registered population.

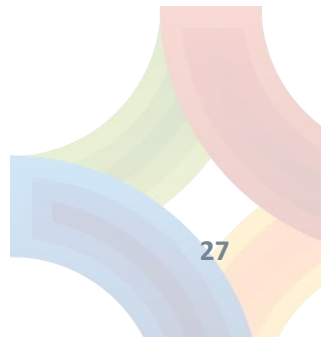
Care Act assessments

A total of 7 organisations submitted responses for this metric, with an average position of 26 Care Act assessments undertaken per 100,000 registered population.

It is worth noting that the low response rate for these metrics could be attributed to the majority of record keeping sitting within Local Authorities rather than NHS Trusts.



Workforce demographics

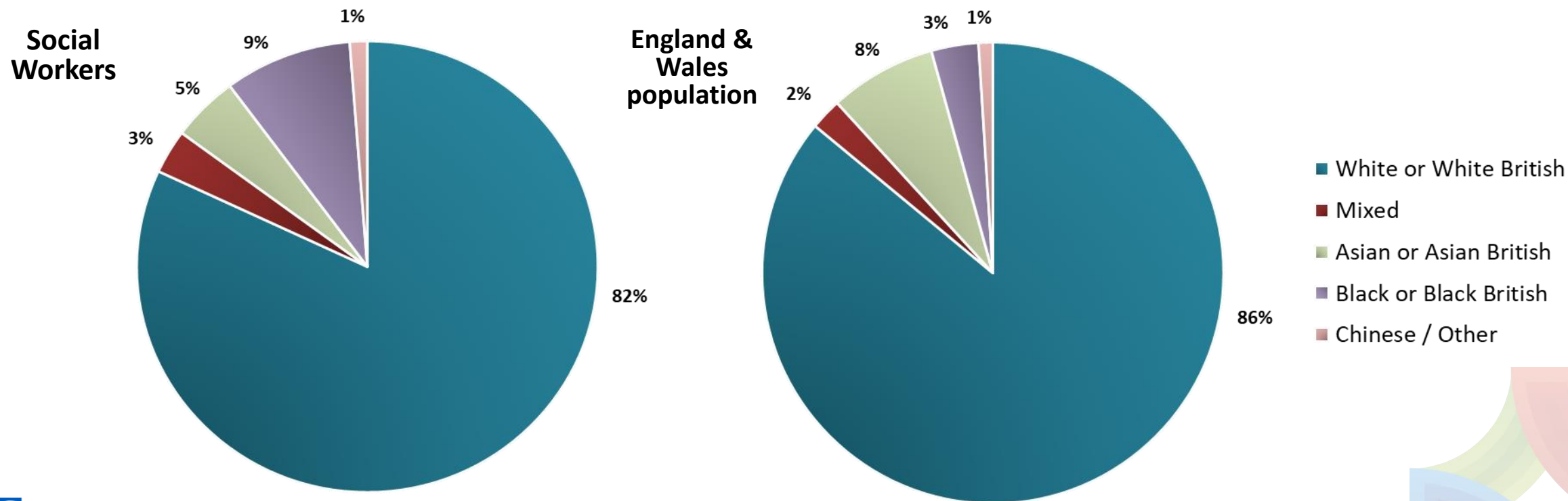


Ethnicity of Social Workers

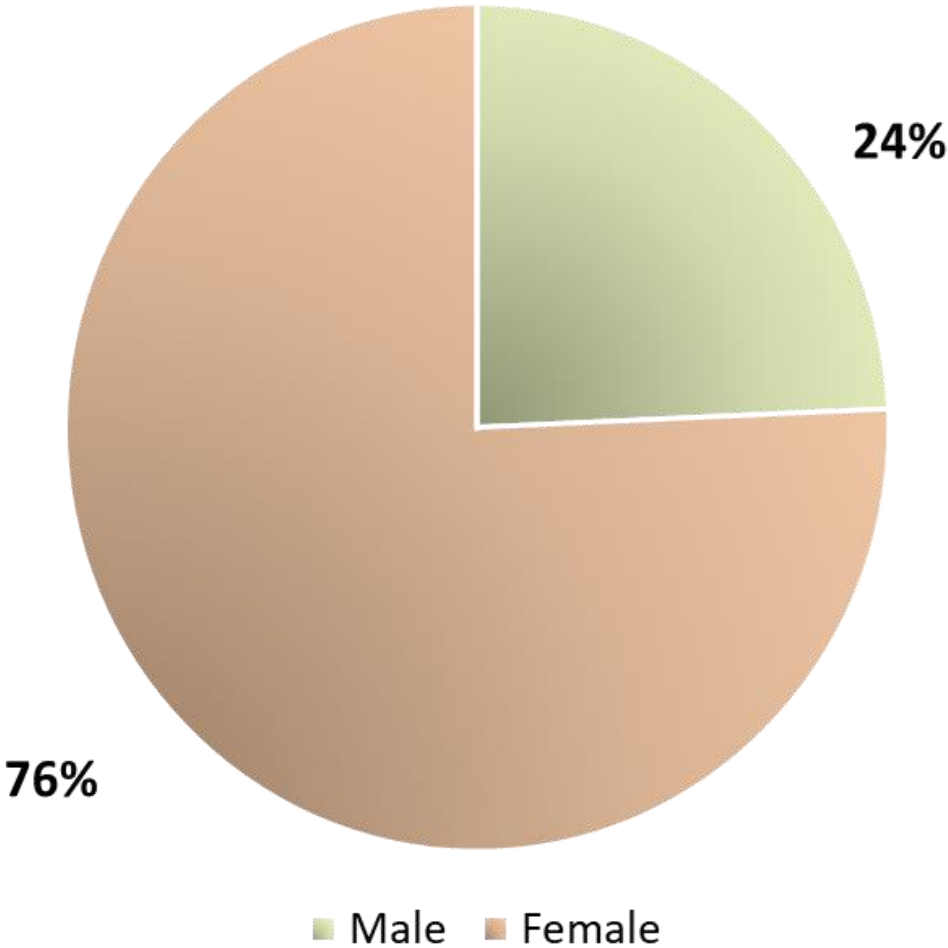
This section of the report explores the main demographic profile of the NHS mental health Social Worker workforce.

Ethnicity data was reported for 1,551 Social Workers working within NHS mental health services. Of these, 82% of the Social Worker workforce were from a White / White British background, which is broadly consistent with wider England and Wales population figures where 86% identify as White British.

The mental health Social Worker workforce has a higher proportion of Black / Black British workers than the wider England and Wales population (9% of the mental health Social Worker workforce compared to 3% of the England and Wales population). The over-representation of Black / Black British staff is consistent with the over-representation of the Black / Black British population in NHS mental health services, particularly in the inpatient cohort.



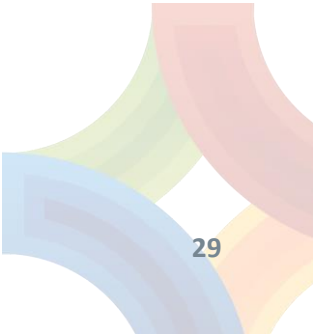
Gender of Social Workers



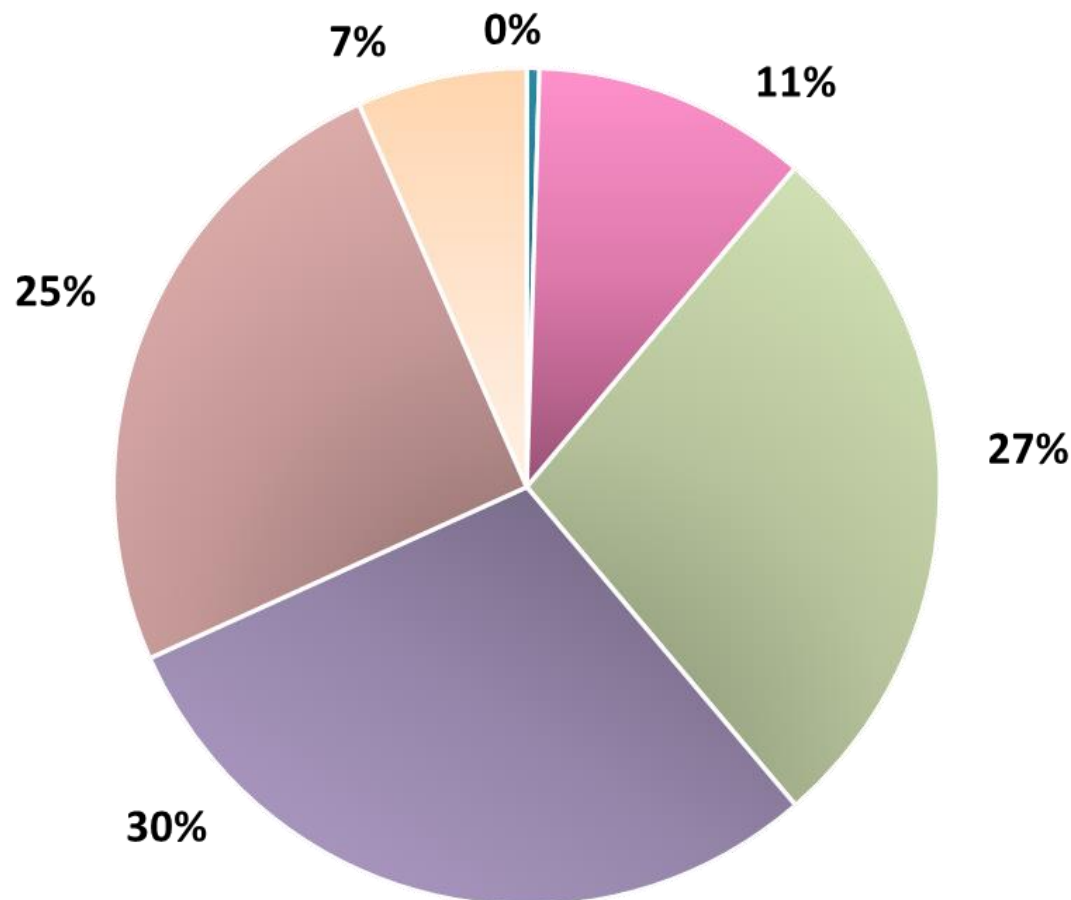
Gender was reported for 1,721 mental health Social Workers.

The workforce stocktake showed that over three quarters of Social Workers within NHS mental health services were female (1,311), with male Social Workers accounting for the remaining 24% (410).

This finding is broadly consistent with the findings from the previous NHS Benchmarking Network / ADASS study where 72% of mental health Social Workers in Local Authorities were reported as female, and 28% male. Both datasets therefore confirm a skew towards a female Social Worker workforce in mental health services.



Age of Social Workers

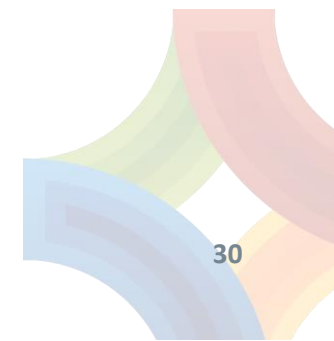


■ Age 19 or under ■ Age 20-29 ■ Age 30-39
■ Age 40-49 ■ Age 50-59 ■ Age 60 or over

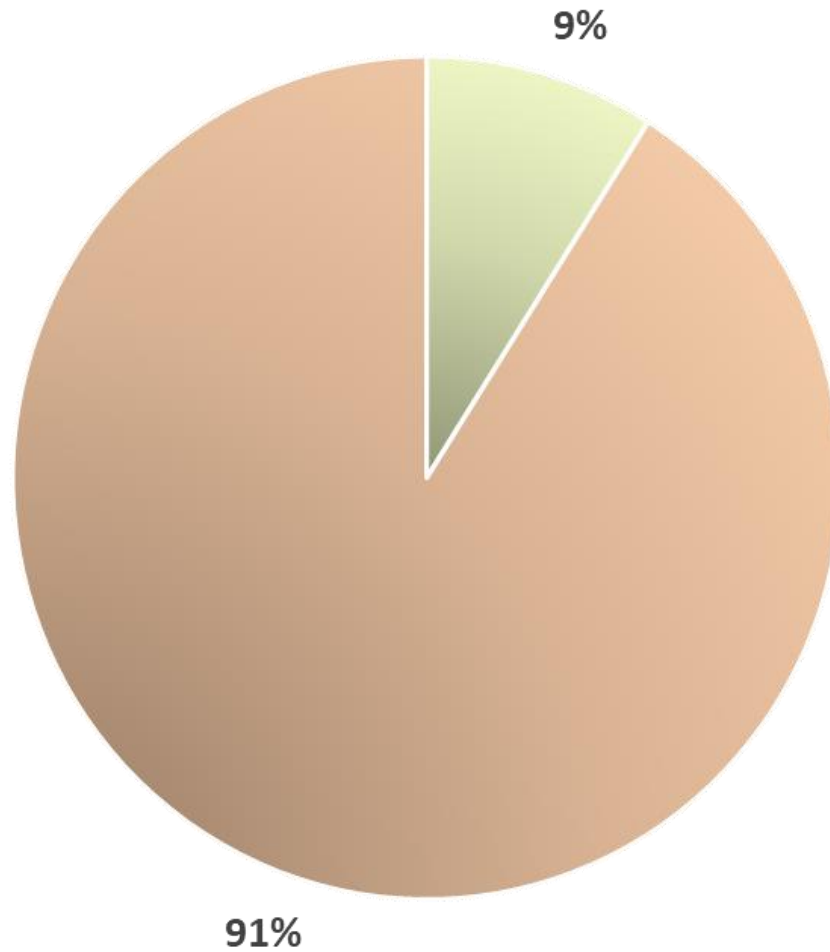
The mental health Social Worker workforce includes a wide age range of staff, with 32% reported to be aged 50 or above, and a further 30% aged 40-49.

In the 2018 NHS Benchmarking report in conjunction with ADASS*, 38% of Social Workers were in the 50+ age group. This may indicate that Social Workers within the NHS are likely to be younger than the wider cohort within Local Authorities.

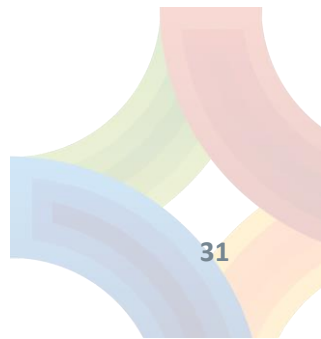
* <https://www.adass.org.uk/media/6428/nhsbn-and-adass-social-care-national-report.pdf>



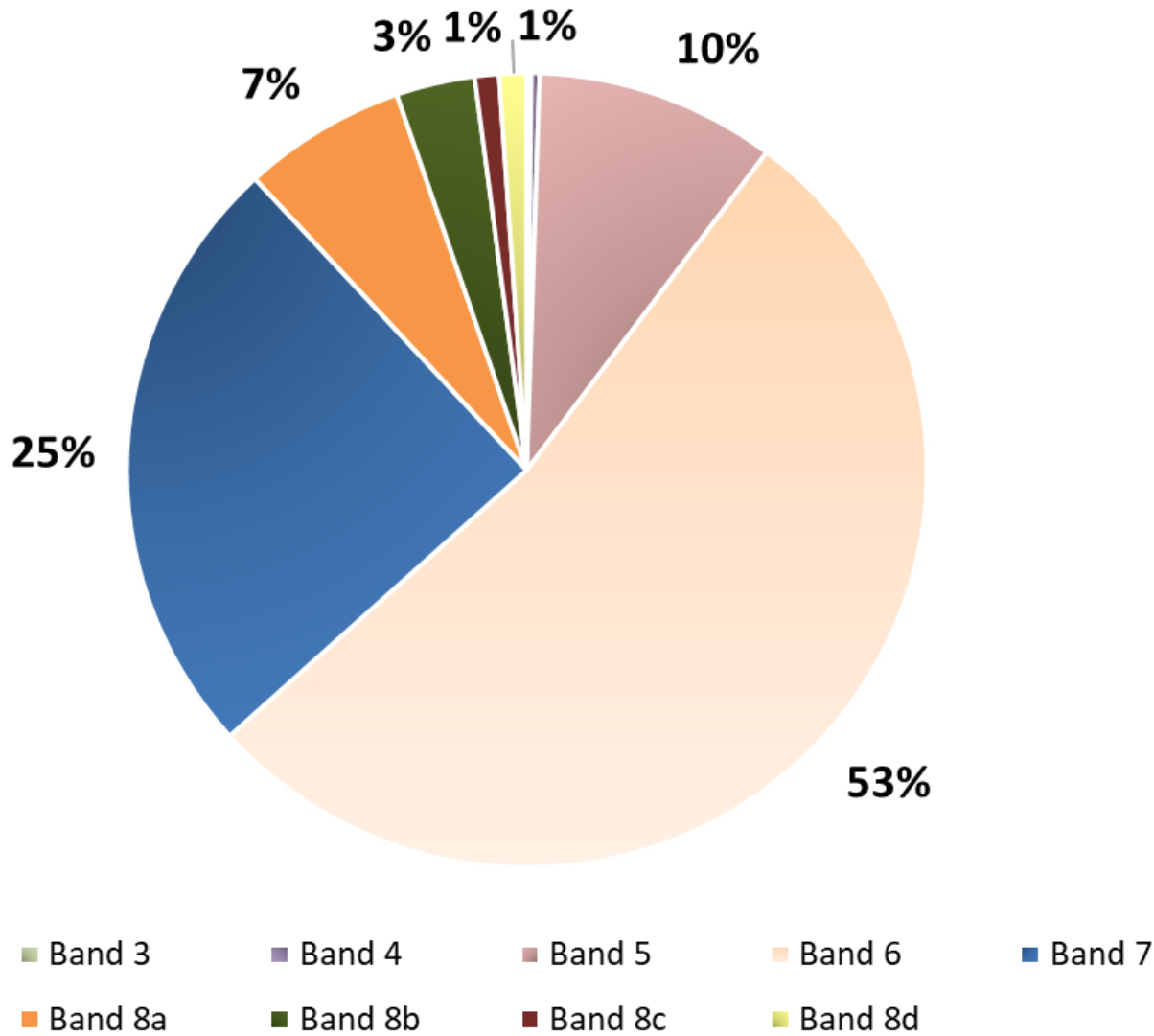
Disability status of Social Workers



The workforce demographic analysis confirmed 1,323 Social Workers with a disability status recorded. 9% (119) had a reported disability. This is marginally higher than figures in health services as a whole, but mirrors figures for other staff groups in mental health services.



Salary information – Agenda for Change

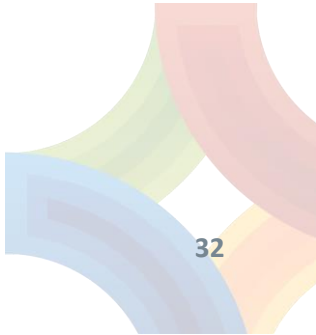


Analysis of Agenda for Change data for NHS employed mental health Social Workers revealed a structured skill-mix with most qualified Social Workers paid at Bands 6 and 7 (78% in total).

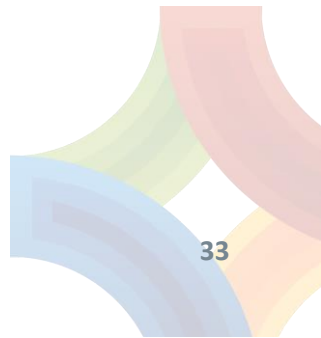
Participants reported that the majority of the workforce are within Band 6 (53%) or Band 7 (25%) of the Agenda for Change salary bandings.

It is worth noting that the workforce demographics are inclusive of Social Worker trainees (ASYE and Think Ahead Years 1 and 2) which may account for a proportion of Social Workers below Band 6.

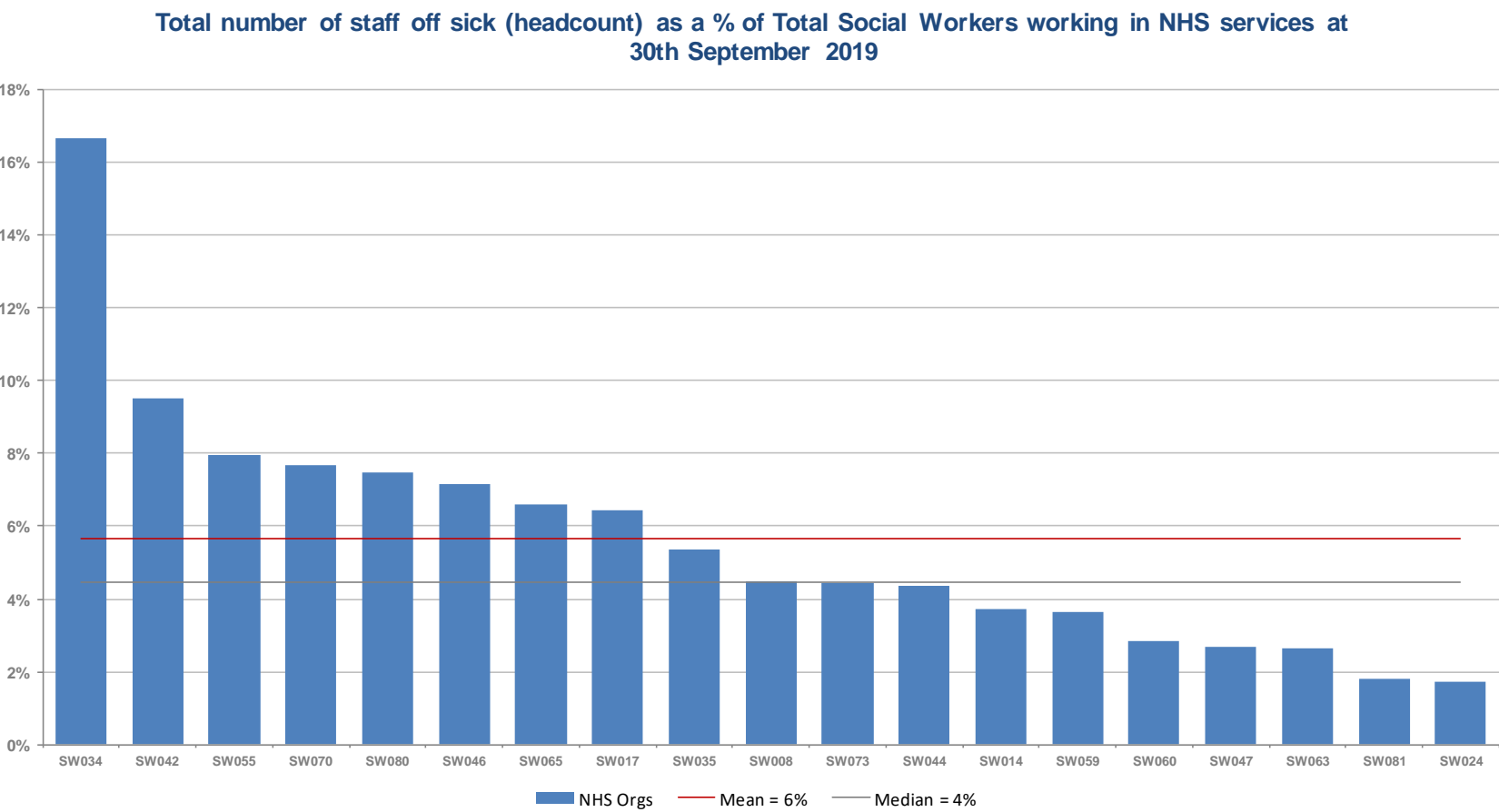
Service management and specialist roles are also evident in the 12% of staff banded between bands 8a and 8d.



Key performance indicators; sickness, vacancies and temporary staffing



Sickness



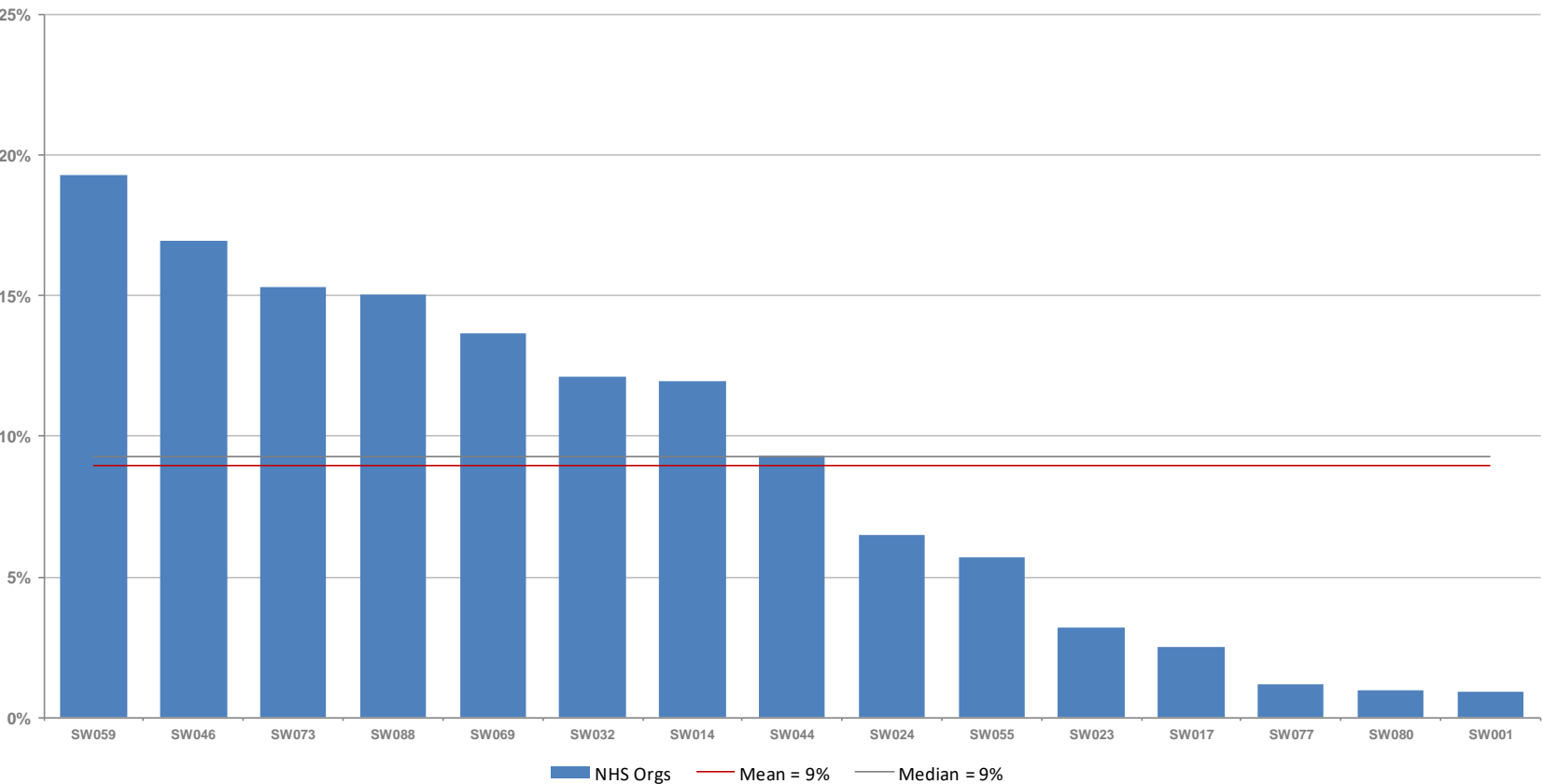
The project’s scope included a review of workforce key performance indicators including staff sickness, vacancies, and turnover rates. Not all NHS Trust participants were able to provide this data so the metrics shown on the following pages are based on a sample of the overall project cohort who were able to mobilise this data.

Sickness absence in the census was provided via a snapshot of the number of Social Workers absent from work due to sickness on 30th September 2019.

Participants reported 73 Social Workers absent from work on that date. This represents a national mean average position of 6%, which is slightly higher than the wider NHS-wide average sickness position of circa 4% However, the 6% sickness position is consistent with the wider NHS average sickness rate noted in the NHS Benchmarking Network’s mental health projects.

Vacancies

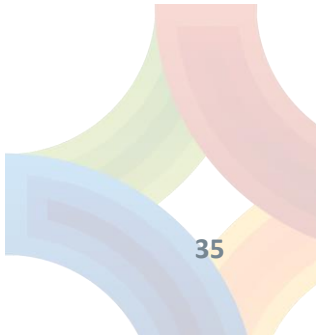
Total vacancies (WTE) as a % of Total Funded Establishment at 30th September 2019



Of the providers who were able to respond to questions on vacancy rates, Trusts reported 75 WTE Social Worker vacancies at 30th September 2019, equating to a national average vacancy rate of 9% across responding organisations.

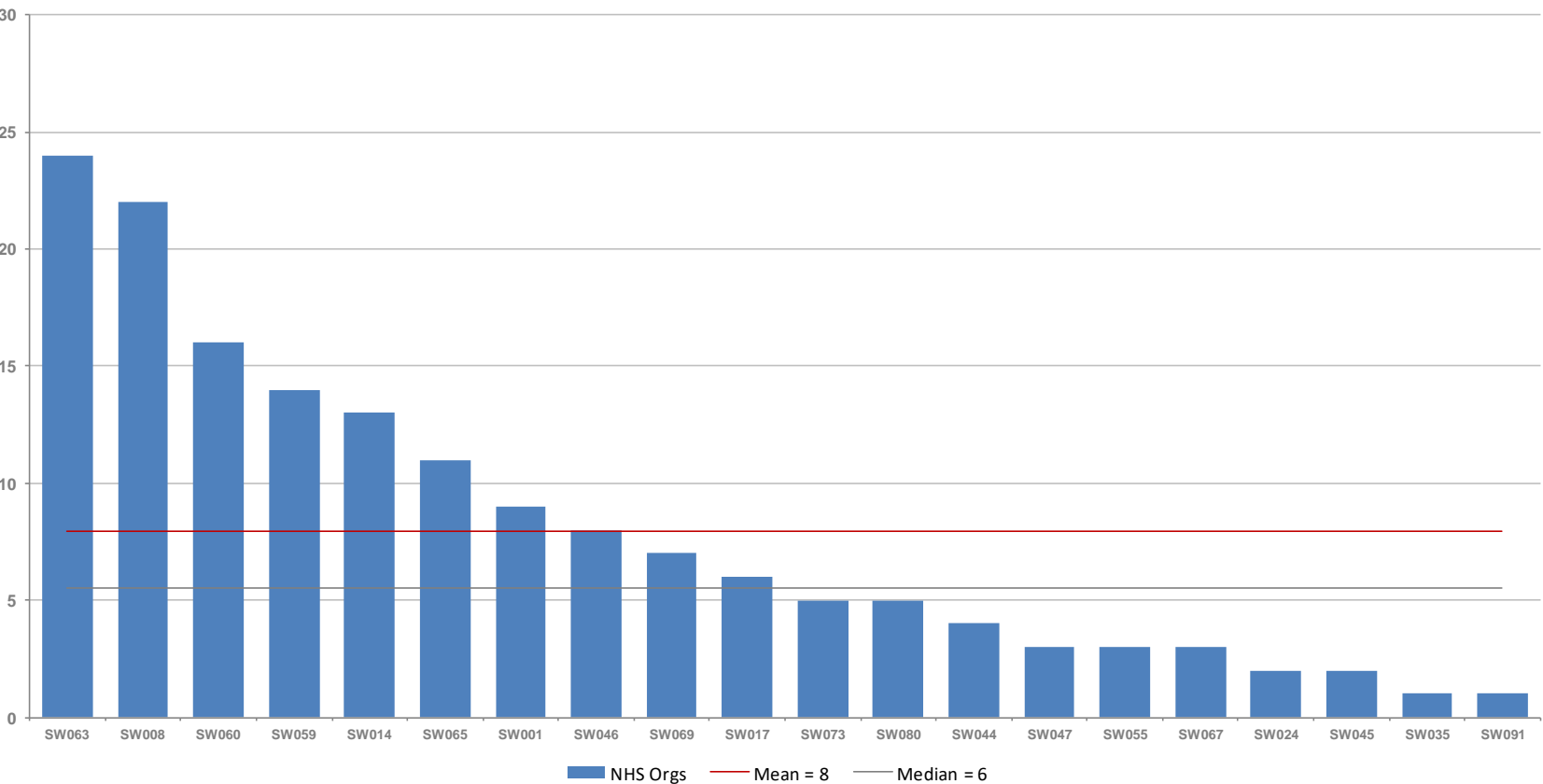
This vacancy rate is lower than the wider NHS rate of approximately 11%, indicating a slightly lower workforce and skills capacity gap for Social Workers within NHS mental health services.

It is, however, worth noting that this is reflective of vacancy numbers on single date and therefore these rates are likely to fluctuate over time. Additionally, a small number of services reported vacancy rates of 15% of higher.



Staff leaving services

Total number of staff who left NHS services (headcount) in the 12 months to 30th September 2019



Of the NHS Trust participants who were able to answer questions relating to staff turnover rates, in total, 159 Social Workers (headcount) left NHS mental health organisations in the 12 months to September 2019.

This includes staff leaving for a variety of reasons including:

- moving to another NHS organisation
- leaving the NHS for another social work role
- career breaks
- retirement

This is the un-benchmarked position, as this data does not take into account factors such as population or size of the team. The turnover rate from this sample is at 8% of total mental health Social Workers and suggests slightly lower than the NHS headline turnover rate of 11% across all staff groups.

Temporary staffing

Total Bank & Agency staffing as % of total staff in post

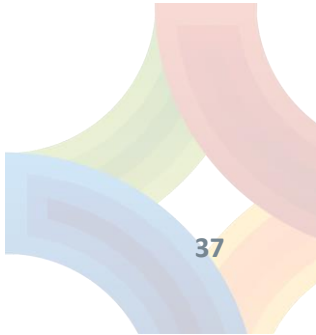


Temporary staffing represented a very small proportion of the Social Worker workforce within NHS mental health Trusts, with only 9 respondents reporting the use of bank / agency staffing on the census date of 30th September 2019. we acknowledge that this sample may be incomplete given that most NHS providers consistently use temporary staff in providing mental health services.

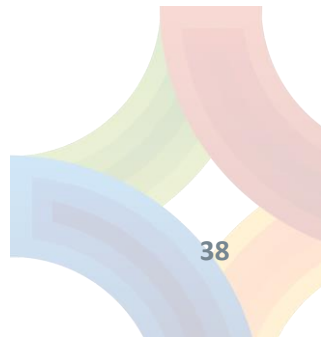
Of the 37 WTE bank / agency staff identified, there was a relatively even split with 18 bank staff compared to 19 agency staff in use.

Providers utilised temporary staffing to differing extents, ranging from 3% to 26% of their overall staffing numbers. It should be noted that only 9 mental health service providers supplied this data, i.e. fewer than 20% of all respondents.

The overall average position for temporary mental health Social Workers reported by Trusts who could quantify this metric was 8% bank and agency use. This compares favourably to the wider 23% bank and agency staff usage reported across all disciplines in the NHS Benchmarking Network’s most recent 2020 publication on Adult mental health services.



Conclusions



Conclusions

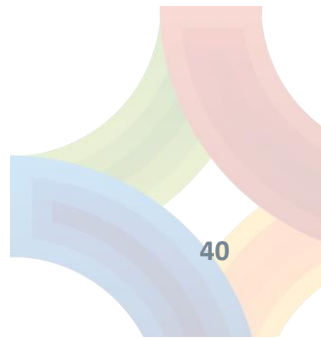
This project provides robust evidence of the workforce of mental health Social Workers employed by the NHS. Findings are based on data submissions made by all NHS mental health provider organisations who reported staffing positions at the national census date of 30th September 2019. These findings should be interpreted in the context of the wider data reported on mental health Social Workers by Local Authorities, the independent sector, and voluntary sector. This data will be reported when the national situation with Covid eases.

Key findings from the NHS Trust mental health Social Worker workforce stocktake include:

- Most NHS Mental Health Trusts directly employ Social Workers as part of their MDT. Only 7 of 55 organisations (13%) do not.
- 2,211 WTE mental health Social Workers, directly employed by the NHS, were reported.
- The arrangements for employing staff are often complex and reflect the history of local partnership arrangements between the NHS and Local Authority sector. There isn't a standard model evident across local services and NHS mental health Social Workers have arrived in their current roles through a combination of arrangements including; being directly employed, seconded from Local Authorities, and subject to TUPE transfer. Most mental health Social Workers (84%) were fully qualified, with additional data on training roles, including the ASYE year were also reported.
- Enhanced roles, including AMHPs and BIAs are found in only relatively small numbers within this cohort, suggesting these roles are delivered at higher quantities within the cohort of mental health Social Workers employed by Local Authorities.
- Demographic profiling is largely reassuring, with good representation from BAME groups within the workforce and a wider profile that is largely consistent with the overall composition of the England and Wales population.
- The workforce is predominantly female and younger than that previously reported in the Local Authority analysis conducted in 2017 by ADASS and the NHS Benchmarking Network. A total of 32% of NHS employed mental health Social workers are aged 50 or over.

The NHS Benchmarking Network would like to express our thanks to all those who supported this project through the design phase, and all participants who supplied data. Contact details for the team who undertook the project are provided at the end of the report. Please get in touch if you have any questions about the content of this work.

Appendix



Participants

Participating organisations for 2019 are as follows:

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust	Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust	Livewell Southwest
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust	Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust	North East London NHS Foundation Trust
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust	North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust	North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Nottinghamshire Healthcare
Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust	Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust	Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust
Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust
Devon Partnership NHS Trust	Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust
Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust	Solent NHS Trust
Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust	Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
East London NHS Foundation Trust	South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	South West London & St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust	South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust	Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust
Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Humber NHS Foundation Trust	Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Isle of Wight NHS Trust	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust	Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust	West London NHS Trust
Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust	

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