



Social Worker Workforce Planning 2016 - 17

A national report on the social worker workforce in Wales



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This report is also available in Welsh.

Social Worker – Key Infographics 2016-17

Social workers in all service areas, 2016-17

 **78%**
work full time

22% 
work part time

 **9%**
posts are vacant

 **3%**
filled by
agency workers

Starters
 **33%**
newly qualified

 **20%**
from a Welsh
local authority

 **4%**
from the
independent sector

Leavers
 **14%**
retired, ill health
or death

 **21%**
to a Welsh
local authority

 **9%**
to the
independent sector

Social workers in Adults' Services, 2016-17

 **71%**
work full time

29% 
work part time

 **9%**
posts are vacant

 **3%**
filled by
agency workers

Starters

 **32%**
newly qualified

 **22%**
from a Welsh
local authority

 **4%**
from the
independent sector

Leavers

 **17%**
retired, ill health
or death

 **24%**
to a Welsh
local authority

 **6%**
to the
independent sector

Social workers in Children's Services, 2016-17

 **81%**
work full time

19% 
work part time

 **10%**
posts are vacant

 **3%**
filled by
agency workers

Starters

 **43%**
newly qualified

 **18%**
from a Welsh
local authority

 **5%**
from the
independent sector

Leavers

 **10%**
retired, ill health
or death

 **22%**
to a Welsh
local authority

 **12%**
to the
independent sector

Social workers in non-operational roles and other service areas, 2016-17

 **86%**
work full time

14% 
work part time

 **4%**
posts are vacant

 **0%**
filled by
agency workers

Starters

 **0%**
newly qualified

 **23%**
from a Welsh
local authority

 **3%**
from the
independent sector

Leavers

 **21%**
retired, ill health
or death

 **13%**
to a Welsh
local authority

 **4%**
to the
independent sector

Executive summary

The Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales (Data Cymru) was commissioned by Social Care Wales to undertake an analysis of social worker workforce in Wales for the 2016-17 financial year and projected workforce needs for the next three years. The **key points** from the 2016-17 analysis are as follows:

All social workers

- Nearly **3,900** social workers were employed in local authorities at the end of March 2017. This represents a **1% increase** compared to the number employed at the end of March 2016.
- The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) employed has **increased by 1%** since 2016, from 3,530 to 3,562.
- In 2017, **82%** of social workers working in social services departments were female. This has remained similar since the data collection began in 2009.
- Newly qualified social workers joining the service **increased by 11%** with 165 people joining during 2016-17 compared to 149 in 2015-16.
- Social workers who started a role in 2016-17 from a local authority outside of Wales **increased by 27% (6 people)**, with 28 compared to 22 in 2015-16

Adults' Services

- The number of social workers employed in Adults' Services **increased by 2.4%** since 2016 – the first increase in Adults' Services since 2013-14.
- At 31 March 2017, vacancies in Adults' Services had **increased** from the previous year - to 9.3% of WTE social worker posts being vacant compared to 7.1% in 2016.
- During the next three years to 2019-20, the number of WTE employed in Adults' Services is projected to **increase by 9%**.

Children's Services

- Since 2016, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has **decreased by 0.5%**.
- Social workers leaving to a local authority outside Wales increased by 6 people (60%), while leavers to the independent sector increased from 24 in 2016 to 32 in 2017.
- At 31 March 2017, vacancies in Children's Services **increased to 9.9%** of WTE social worker posts being vacant, compared to 9.2% in 2016.
- During the next three years to 2019-20, the number of WTE employed in Children's Services is projected to **increase by 6%**.

Non-operational roles and other service areas

- **680** social workers were employed in non-operational and other roles where a social work qualification was deemed to be essential at the end of March 2017, compared to 663 in 2016.
- Since 2016, the number of social workers employed in non-operational roles and other service areas has **increased by 3%**.
- At 31 March 2017, vacancies in non-operational roles and other service areas had **decreased to 3.7%** compared to 5.5% in 2016.
- During the next three years to 2019-20, the number of WTE social workers employed in non-operational roles and other service areas is projected to increase by **1%**.

Background

Social Care Wales (formally known as Care Council for Wales), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Welsh Government, the Association of Directors for Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and the Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales (Data Cymru) work in partnership to collect, analyse and report on social worker workforce planning (SWWP) data from local authorities in Wales. The aim of this work is to underpin planning for future workforce needs and to inform the commissioning of social worker training in Wales.

Data used in this report is drawn from submissions from each of the 22 local authorities in Wales. Each was asked for data relating to their social worker complement for 2016-17 and to project staffing figures for the three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20¹. Information on staff numbers was post-populated from validated data collected by the Welsh Government via the annual staffing collection on local authority social services staff. Social worker registration data from Social Care Wales is used to compliment this report to show the age and gender profile of the social worker workforce.

At certain points in this report, the Welsh local authorities are grouped into regions, as follows:

North Wales – Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham

Mid & West Wales – Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot

South East Wales – Bridgend, The Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Newport

¹ It was agreed with the Care Council (now Social Care Wales) and participating local authorities to reduce the period of projection from five years to three years at the outset of the 2014-15 data collection.

Introduction

This is the ninth annual report on the local authority social worker workforce in Wales. It looks at overall workforce numbers and how these have varied over time. Sections of the report look specifically at the variation in workforce numbers in three distinct areas:

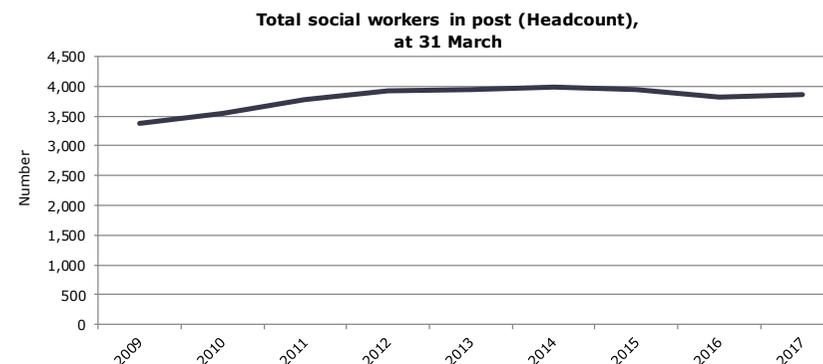
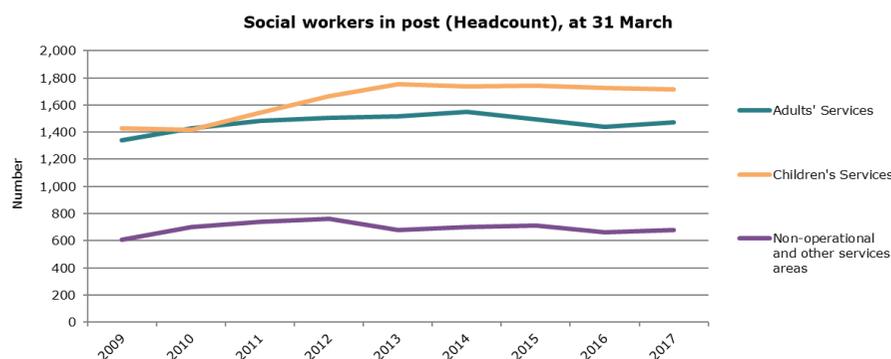
- Adults' Services;
- Children's Services; and
- Other local authority roles where a social worker qualification is deemed to be necessary.

The report also considers the projected demand for social workers over the next three years, based on estimates provided by the 22 local authorities.

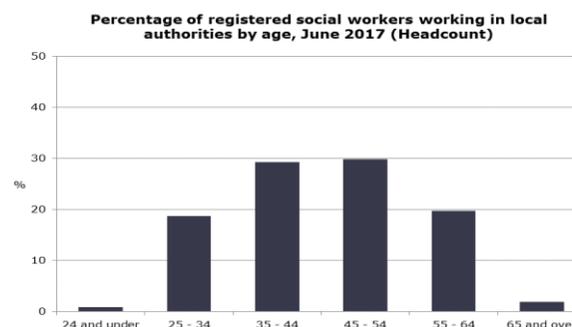
Overall current social worker workforce profile

Nearly **3,900 social workers** were employed in local authorities at the end of March 2017. This represents a 1% increase compared to the number employed in 2016. The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE)² employed also increased by 1% since 2016, with a total of around 3,560 WTEs at the end of March 2017. Overall, the WTE staff establishment has increased by 2% since March 2016.

The largest increase was in Adults' Services, where the number employed has increased by 5.0% since 2016, this increase is in contrast to the previous years. Over the same period the number employed in Children's Services has increased by 0.3%. The number employed in non-operational and other service areas roles has increased by 0.4% since 2016. The WTE staff establishment has increased by 3.4% in Adults' Services and by 0.4% in Children's Services since March 2016.



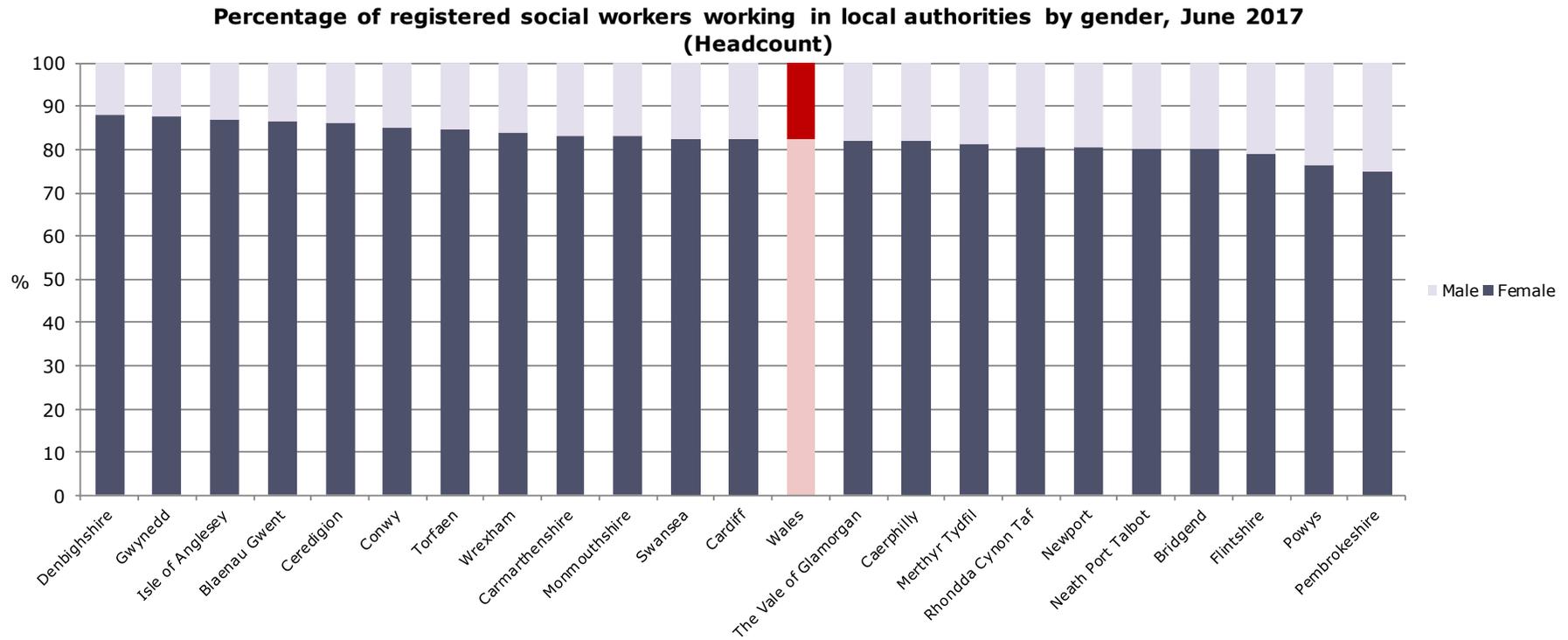
The Social Care Wales register of social workers shows that the majority (51%) are aged 45 or over and 22% are aged 55 or over. This is the same compared to 2016.



Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

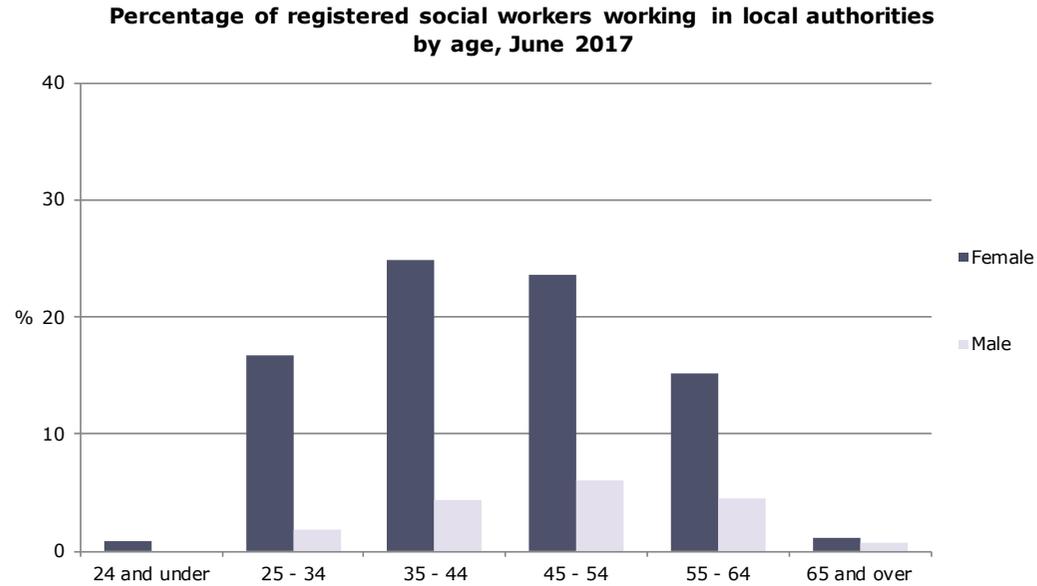
² Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) is the proportion of the standard full time working hours that an employee is contracted to work for. It is defined as contract WTE i.e. 37 contracted/standard hours.

In 2017, the majority of social workers working in social services departments were female (82%). This has been the case since the collection began in 2009. Across Wales this ranged from 75% in Pembrokeshire, to 88% in Denbighshire.



Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

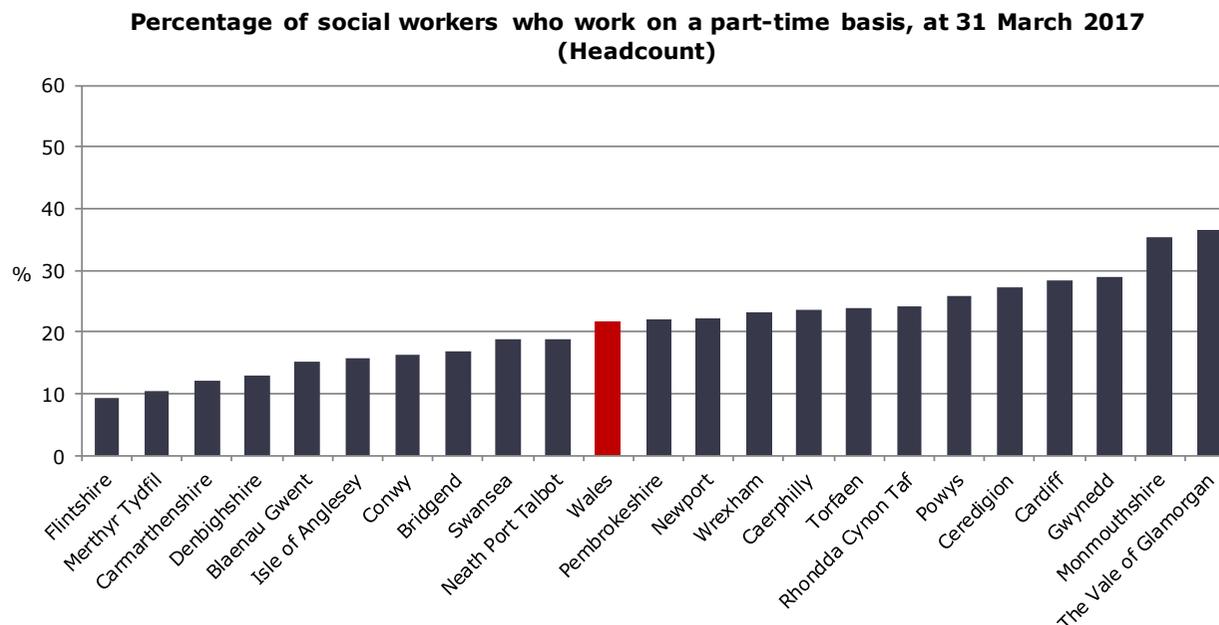
In June 2017, 65% of male social workers employed in local authority social services were aged 45 or over, compared to 48% in the female social worker workforce, the same as in 2016. 30% of male social workers were aged 55 or over, compared to 20% of female social workers, this age profile for male and female social workers in 2016 was 31% and 19%, respectively.



Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

At 31 March 2017, 22% of all social workers were employed on a part-time basis³, an increase compared to 2016. In Mid & West Wales, 19% were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 20% in 2016. In North Wales, 19% were employed on a part-time basis compared to 20% in 2016. In South East Wales, the figure was 24% compared to 23% in 2016.

At a local authority level, the percentage of part-time social workers ranged from 9% in Flintshire to 37% in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has remained similar to the range in 2016.

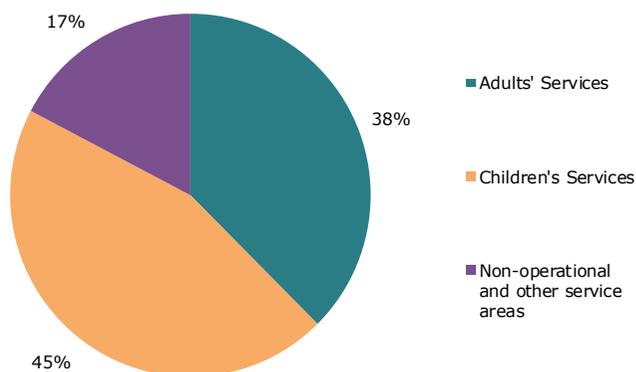


³ Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) is the proportion of the standard full time working hours that an employee is contracted to work for. It is defined as contract WTE i.e. 37 contracted/standard hours.

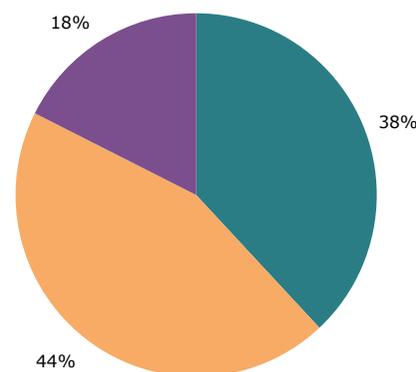
Overall current social worker workforce profile

At 31 March 2017, 44% of local authority social workers work in Children's Services, compared to 45% in 2016. 38% worked in Adults' Services, the same as in 2016, and 18% in other roles where a social worker qualification is necessary, compared to 17% in 2016.

Social workers in post by service area, at 31 March 2016 (Headcount)



Social workers in post by service area, at 31 March 2017 (Headcount)



At 31 March 2017, North Wales had 42% of its social workers in Adults' Services, the same as in 2016. 38% were in Children's Services, a decrease from 40% in 2016. In Mid & West Wales, 34% of Social Workers were employed in Adults' Services at 31 March 2017 compared to 33% in 2016. Children's Services decreased from 48% in 2016 to 46% at 31 March 2017. In South East Wales the proportion remained the same at 39% in Adults' Services and increased from 45% to 46% in Children's Services. Mid & West Wales had the same proportion of social workers employed in non-operational and other service areas as in 2016 (19%). North Wales increased by 1 percentage point to 19% and South East remained the same at 16%.

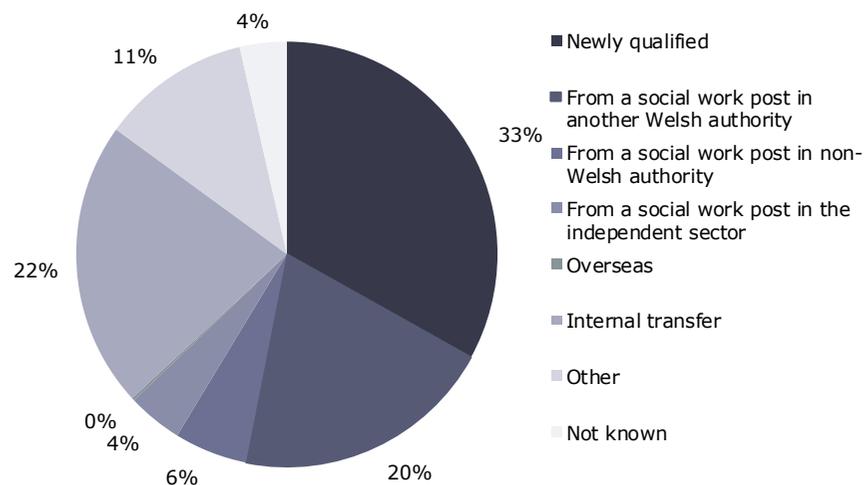
Percentage of social workers by service area and region, at 31 March (Headcount)

	Adults' Services (%)						Children's Services (%)						Non-operational and other service areas (%)					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Wales	45	45	47	42	42	42	35	38	35	38	40	38	19	17	18	19	18	19
Mid & West Wales	34	35	34	33	33	34	47	50	50	48	48	46	19	15	16	19	19	19
South East Wales	38	37	38	39	39	39	43	44	43	44	45	46	20	18	18	17	16	16
Wales	38	38	39	38	38	38	42	44	43	44	45	44	19	17	18	18	17	18

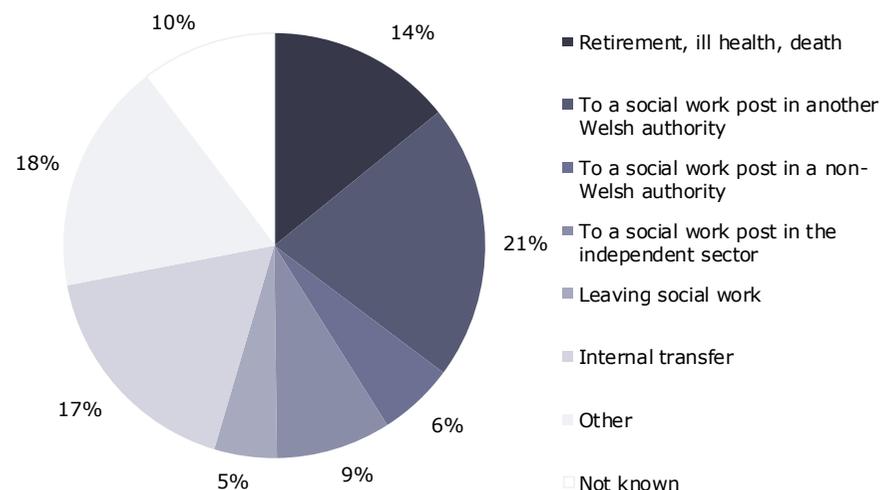
Overall current social worker workforce profile

The number of newly qualified social workers joining the service increased by 11% with 165 people joining in 2016-17 compared to 149 in 2015-16. During 2016-17, 106 (64%) of these joined Children's Services, with 59 (36%) joining Adults' Services and none joining into other roles. 24 people left social work during 2016-17, compared to 29 in 2015-16. 8 (33%) of these left roles in Adults' Services, 13 (54%) left Children's Services and 3 (13%) left from other roles where a social worker qualification is necessary.

All starters, 2016-17 (Headcount)^(a)



All leavers, 2016-17 (Headcount)^(a)

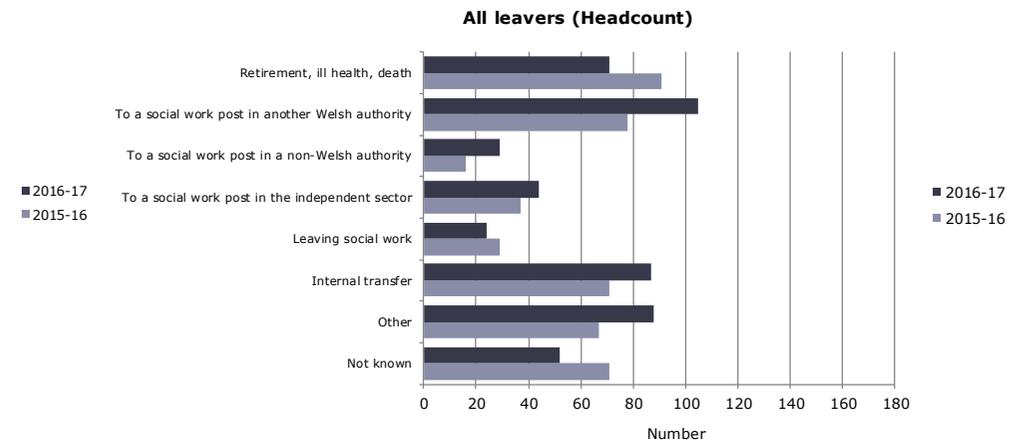
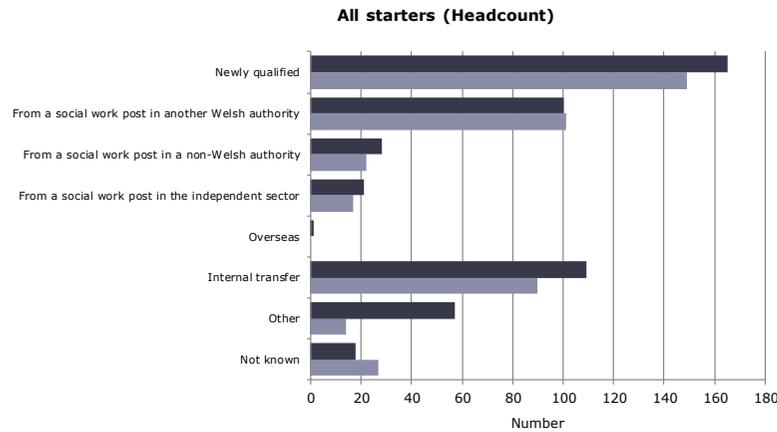


Newly qualified starters by service area and region, during the year (Headcount)

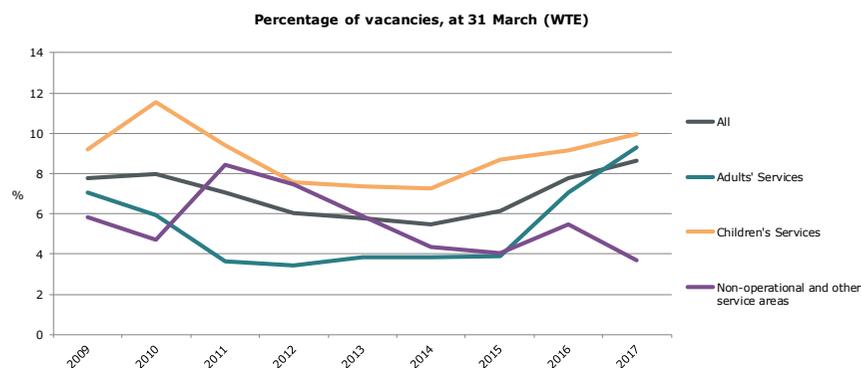
	Adults' Services						Children's Services						Non-operational and other service areas					
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
North Wales	6	9	6	7	7	15	17	22	23	14	10	22	5	3	1	0	1	0
Mid & West Wales	5	12	12	14	21	16	48	25	43	44	18	27	1	0	0	0	0	0
South East Wales	22	12	21	12	20	28	76	77	79	65	70	57	1	0	0	0	2	0
Wales	33	33	39	33	48	59	141	124	145	123	98	106	7	3	1	0	3	0

Overall current social worker workforce profile

Starters from another Welsh local authority decreased by 1% with 100 social workers compared to 101 in 2015-16. Social workers who started from a non-Welsh authority increased by 27%, with 28 compared to 22 in 2015-16. Leavers who left a social work post due to retirement, ill health or death decreased by 22% with 71 leavers compared to 91 in 2015-16. The number of both starters and leavers due to unknown reasons decreased between 2015-16 and 2016-17. Both starters and leavers due to other reasons increased.

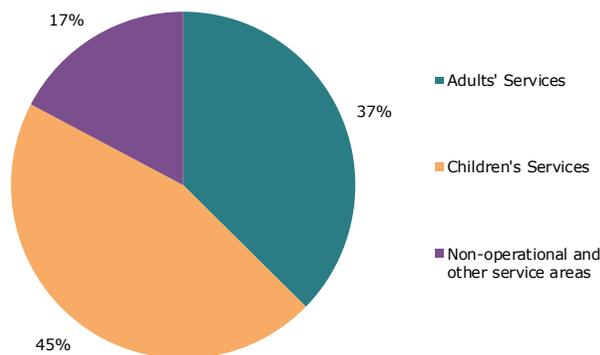


9% (336) of WTE social worker posts were vacant at 31 March 2017, compared to 8% (297) in 2016. This follows the trend seen since 2015. 2017 has also seen the number of vacancies in Children's Services increase from 9.2% to 9.9% since 2016. Vacancies in Adults' Services have increased from 7.1% to 9.3%. For 2017, vacancies in non-operational and other service areas decreased from 5.5% to 3.7% compared to 2016.

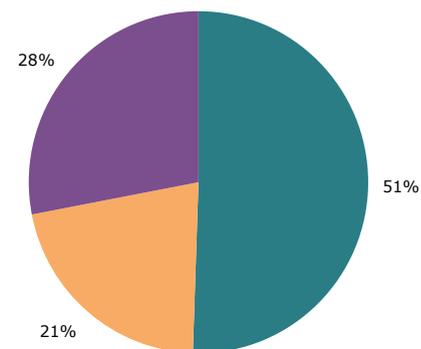


5% (17) of the total WTE vacancies were being 'held open'⁴ at the end of March 2017, compared to 12% (35) in 2016. The number of WTE vacancies held open in Children's Services decreased from 16 to 4 between 2016 and 2017, with 21% of all vacancies 'held open' at end of March 2017. 51% were in Adults' Services and 28% in other roles. This compares to 37% in Adults' Services, 45% in Children's Services and 17% in other roles at the end of March 2016.

Proportion of 'held open' vacancies, at 31 March 2016 (WTE)^(a)



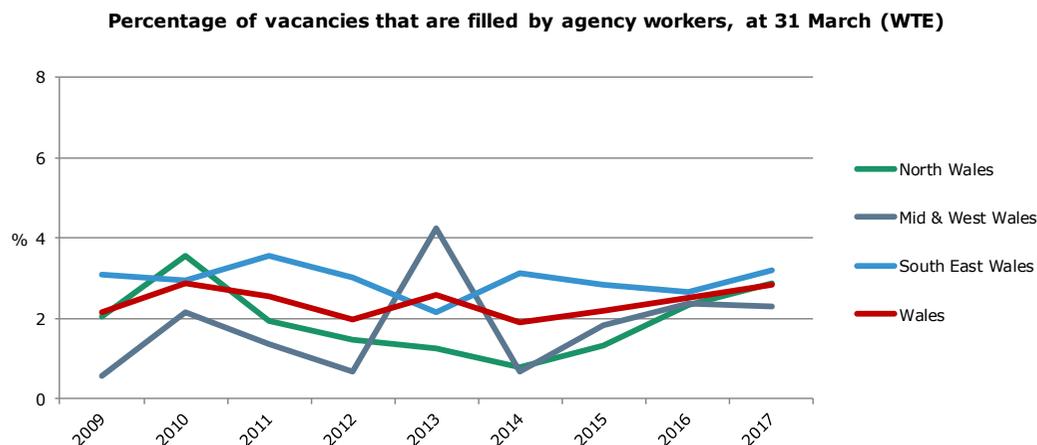
Proportion of 'held open' vacancies, at 31 March 2017 (WTE)^(a)



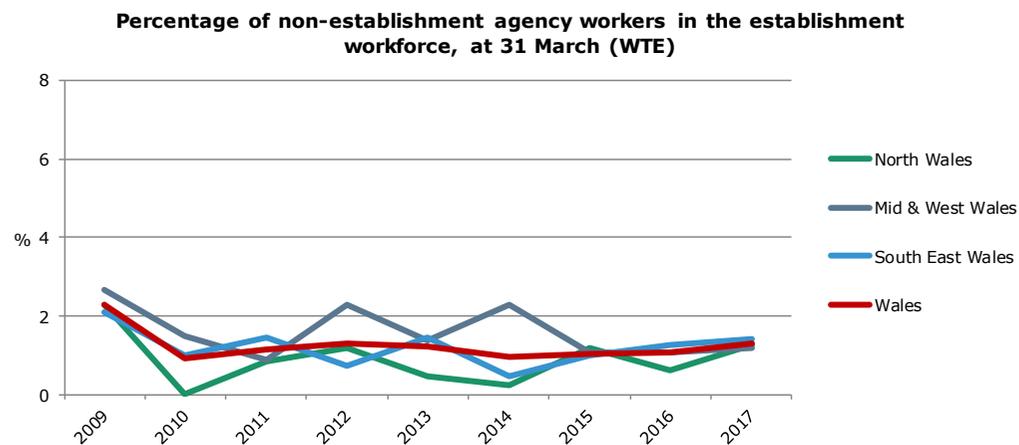
(a) Due to rounding, data labels may not total 100%

⁴ Vacancies held open are vacancies at 31 March which are not being actively recruited for.

The use of agency workers to fill vacant posts continues across social services in Wales. In Mid & West Wales the use of agency workers has remained the same as 2016 at 2.3%. In North Wales, the use of agency workers increased, from 2.3% to 2.9%, in South East Wales it also increased from 2.7% to 3.2%. The overall effect was that the Wales figure increased from 2.5% to 2.8% between 2016 and 2017.



In local authorities, other agency workers that are not part of the funded establishment are used to supplement the social worker workforce. In 2017, All regions in Wales saw an increase in the use of agency workers. Mid & West Wales used agency staff to provide the equivalent of a further 1.2% of their overall WTE establishment an increase compared to 1.1% in 2016, in North Wales it was 1.3% compared to 0.6% in 2016, and in South East Wales it was 1.4% compared to 1.3% in 2016.

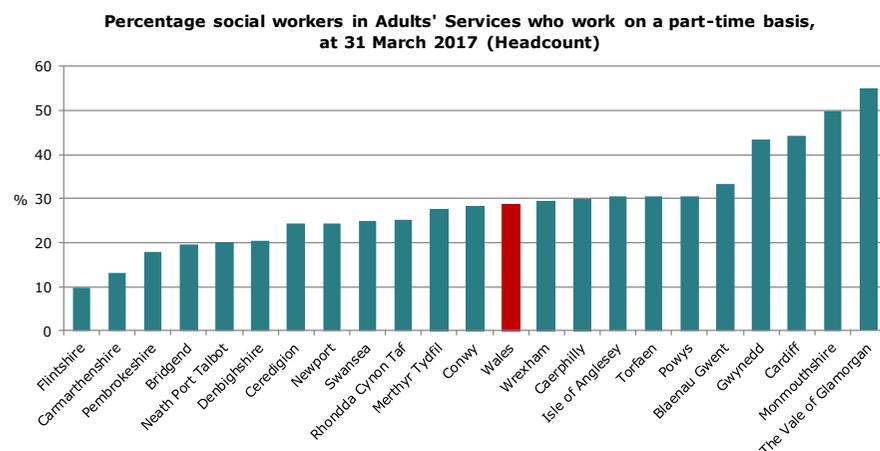


Adults' Services

Adults' Services employed 1,472 social workers at the end of March 2017. This was 38% of the total number of social workers employed by the local authorities, the same as in 2016.

Since 2016, the number of social workers employed in Adults' Services increased by 2.4% (34 people).

29% of the social workers employed in Adults' Services were employed on a part-time basis in 2017 compared to 27% in 2016. This is the first change in the figure since 2013.



Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Adults' Services varied, with 21% in Mid & West Wales the same as in 2016, 34% in South East Wales compared to 29% in 2016 and 27% in North Wales compared to 28% in 2016.

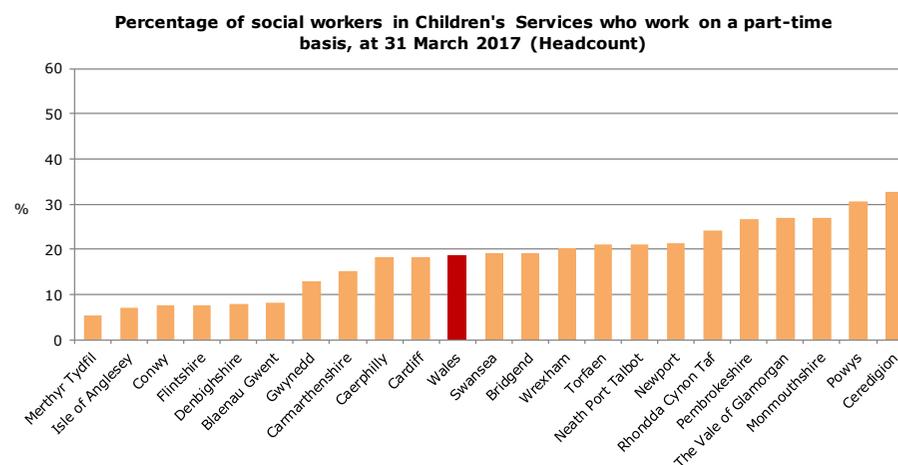
In 2017, Adults' Services filled 3.2% of their established funded WTE with agency workers compared to 2.5% in 2016. The use of agency workers in Adults' Services increased for the fourth consecutive year, by 0.7 percentage points in 2017. South East Wales had the largest from 2.4% to 4.4% between 2016 and 2017.

Children's Services

Children's Services employed 1,717 social workers at the end of March 2017. This was 44% of the total number of social workers employed by the local authorities, compared to 45% in 2016.

Since 2016, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has decreased by 0.7% (12 people). This follows a decrease of 0.7% between 2015 and 2016.

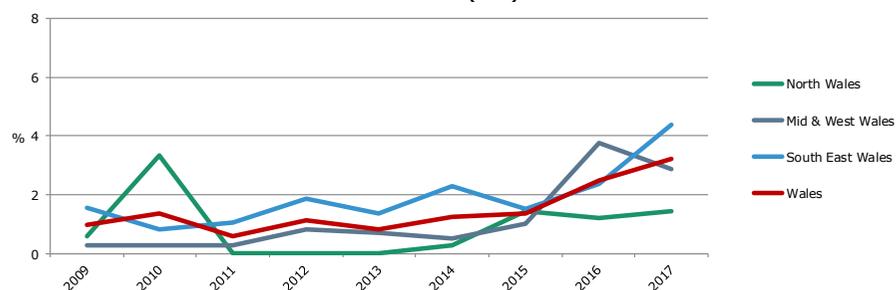
19% of the social workers employed in Children's Services were employed on a part-time basis, a decrease from 20% the previous year.



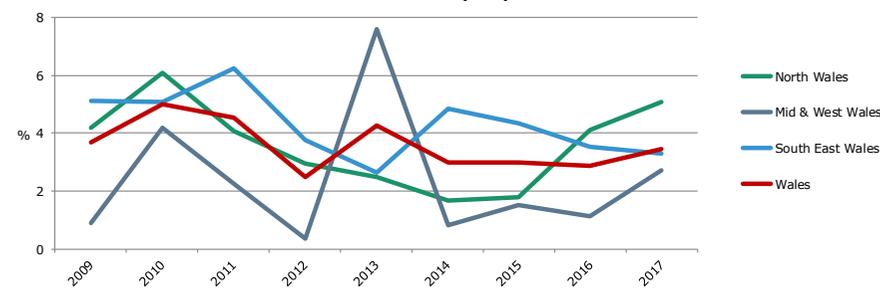
Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Children's Services varied, with 11% in North Wales, a decrease from 14% in 2016, 21% in Mid & West Wales compared to 23% in 2016, and 20% in South East Wales, the same as in 2016.

In 2017, Children's Services filled 3.5% of their established funded WTE with agency workers; an increase compared to 2.9% in 2016. Between 2016 and 2017, both North Wales and Mid & West Wales increased their use of agency workers by 1.0 and 1.6 percentage points respectively. In South East Wales there was a decrease of 0.2 percentage points to 3.3%.

Percentage of Adults' Services vacancies that are filled by agency workers, at 31 March (WTE)



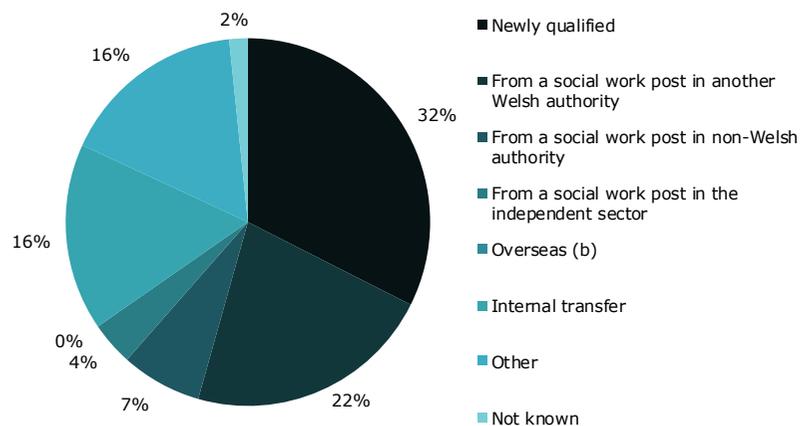
Percentage of Children's Services vacancies that are filled by agency workers, at 31 March (WTE)



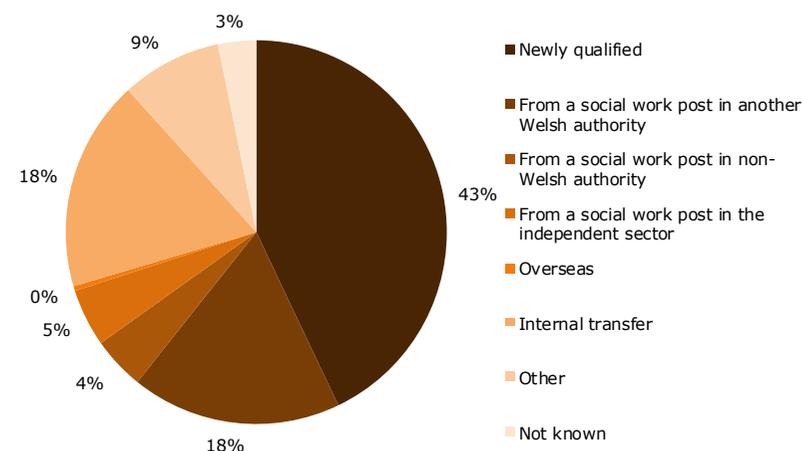
182 social workers 'joined' Adults' Services in 2016-17 compared to 144 in 2015-16. For 2016-17, 49% of these joined from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, a decrease compared to 2015-16. 32% of those joining were newly qualified compared to 33% in 2015-16. 16% joined Adults' Services for other reasons, compared to 2.8% in the previous year. 1.6% of starters to Adults' Services joined for unknown reasons, compared to 10% in 2015-16.

247 social workers 'joined' Children's Services in 2016-17 compared to 216 in 2015-16. For 2016-17, 43% of these were newly qualified, compared to 45% in 2015-16, with 45% joining from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, compared to 46% in 2015-16. The origin of 3.2% of starters was not recorded by authorities, compared to 4.2% in 2015-16. 8.5% joined Children's Services for other reasons, compared to 4.2% in 2015-16.

Starters to Adults' Services, 2016-17 (Headcount)^(a)



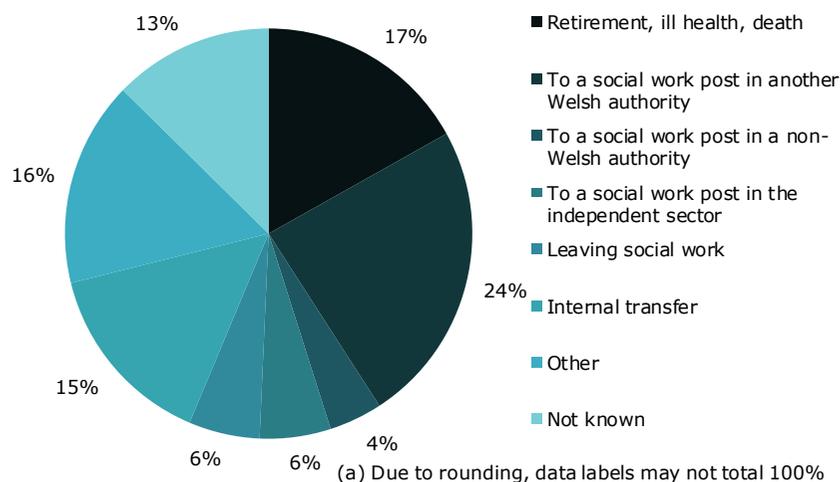
Starters to Children's Services, 2016-17 (Headcount)



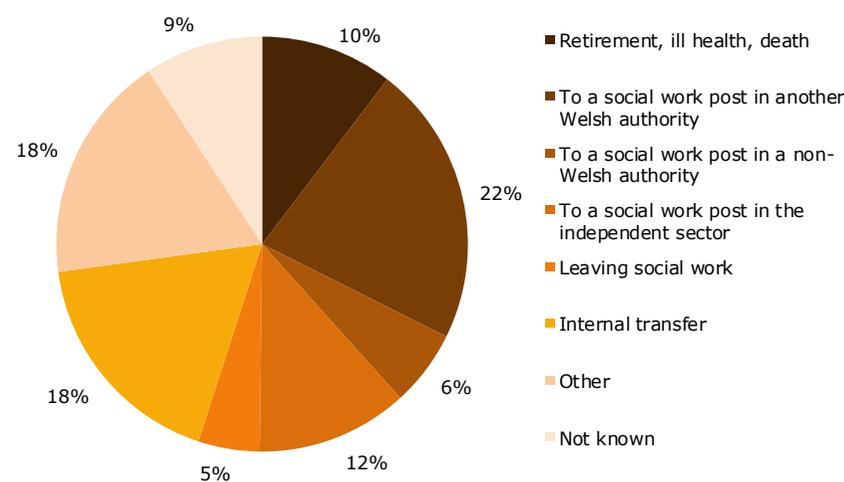
142 social workers left Adults' Services in 2016-17 compared to 164 in 2015-16. For 2016-17, 5.6% of these left the social work profession, compared to 10% in 2015-16. 17% retired and a further 34% moved to another local authority or the independent sector. 16% left Adults' Services for other reasons, while 13% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. Other reasons included resignation (1), early retirement (1), dismissal (1), end of fixed term contract (2), redundancy (3), mutual agreement/settlement (3), and leaving to employment in the public sector (6).

269 social workers left Children's Services in 2016-17 compared to 205 in 2015-16. For 2016-17, 4.8% of these left the social work profession compared to 4.4% in 2015-16. 40% moved to another local authority or the independent sector compared to 39% in 2015-16, and a further 10% retired compared to 12% in 2015-16. 18% left Children's Services for other reasons, while 9.3% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. Other reasons included early retirement (1), end of fixed term contract (2), mutual agreement/settlement (2), leaving to the public sector (2), redundancy (3), leaving to join an agency (3), leaving to join Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) (3), and dismissal (4).

Leavers from Adults' Services, 2016-17 (Headcount)^(a)



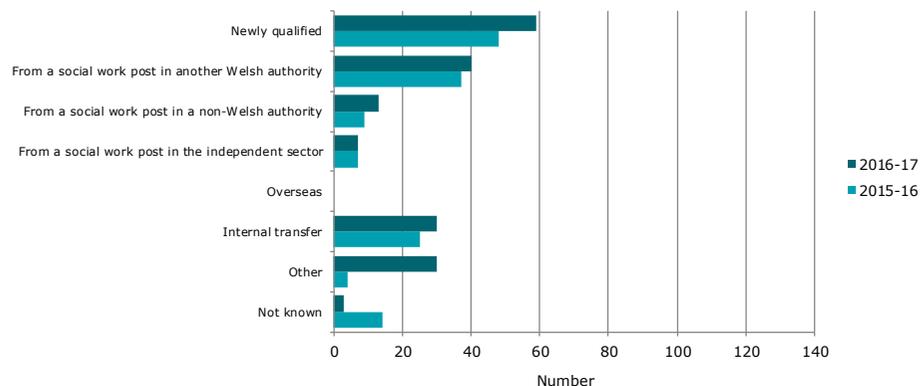
Leavers from Children's Services, 2016-17 (Headcount)^(a)



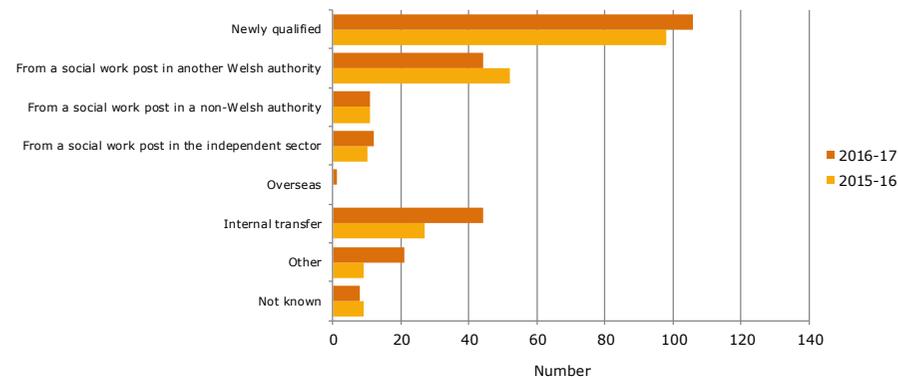
The number of newly qualified starters to Adult's Services has increased by 11 people from 2015-16 to 2016-17, and those from another Welsh authority increased by 3 people. The number of starters for 'other' reasons increased by 26. There was little change in the numbers in each of the other categories.

The number of newly qualified starters to Children's Services has increased by 8 people to 106 compared to 98 in 2015-16. Starters from another Welsh local authority decreased from 52 to 44 since 2015-16. Internal transfers have increased by 17 people between 2015-16 and 2016-17. Starters who joined for unknown reasons have decreased by 1 person.

Starters to Adults' Services (Headcount)



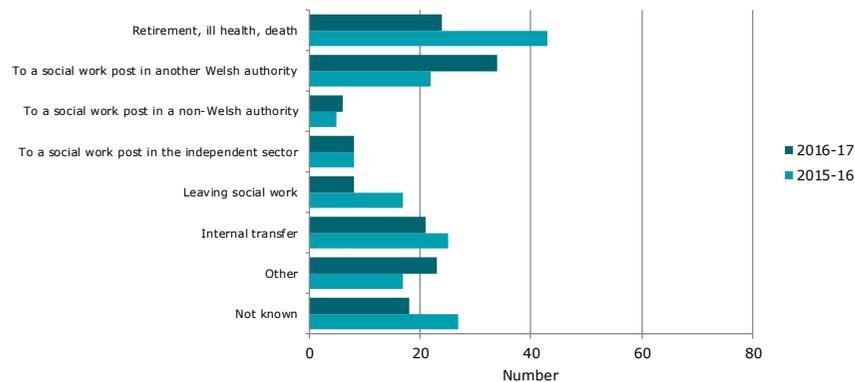
Starters to Children's Services (Headcount)



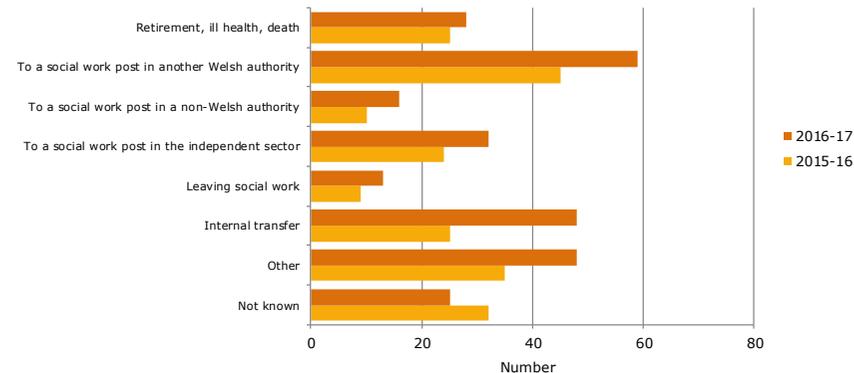
The number of social workers who left Adults' Services to another Welsh local authority has increased by 55% from 22 to 34 between 2015-16 and 2016-17. The number of social workers who left on an internal transfer has decreased from 25 to 21 people between 2015-16 and 2016-17. The number of social workers leaving for other reasons has increased by 6 people compared to 2015-16.

The number of social workers who left Children's Services has increased by 31% from 205 to 269 since 2015-16. Social workers leaving to another Welsh local authority has increased by 14 people and leavers on internal transfers have increased from 25 to 48 between 2015-16 and 2016-17. Other reasons for leaving increased by 13 (from 35 to 48), with leavers due to unknown reasons decreasing by 7 people since 2015-16.

Leavers from Adults' Services (Headcount)



Leavers from Children's Services (Headcount)

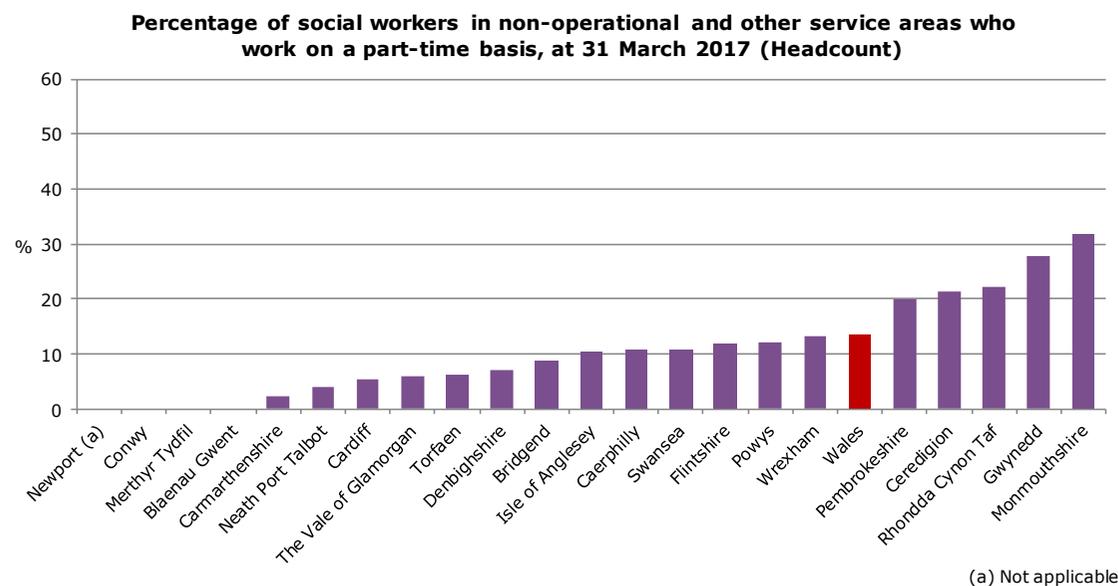


Social workers in non-operational roles and other service areas⁵

Across Wales, 680 people were employed in other roles where a social work qualification was deemed to be essential at the end of March 2017, compared to around 660 in 2016. This represents an increase of 3% (17 people) compared to 2016. 18% of social workers across local authorities were in these roles at the end of March 2017, compared to 17% in 2016. 14% of these were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 13% in 2016.

Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in other roles varied with 11% in Mid & West Wales in 2017, compared to 12% in 2016; 14% in South East Wales in 2017, the same as 2016; and 18% in North Wales, compared to 13% in 2016.

Across the 22 local authorities, the use of part-time social workers ranged from 0% in Conwy, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent to 32% (13 people) in Monmouthshire. There are no social worker posts in non-operational sections of Newport Social Services or other service areas, this has been the case since 2012-13.



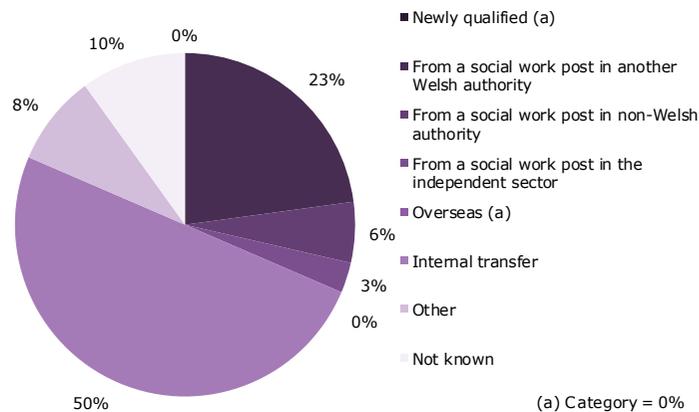
⁵ Non-operational roles and other service areas are posts within the local authority where a social work qualification is deemed mandatory by the local authority.

Non - operational roles and other service areas

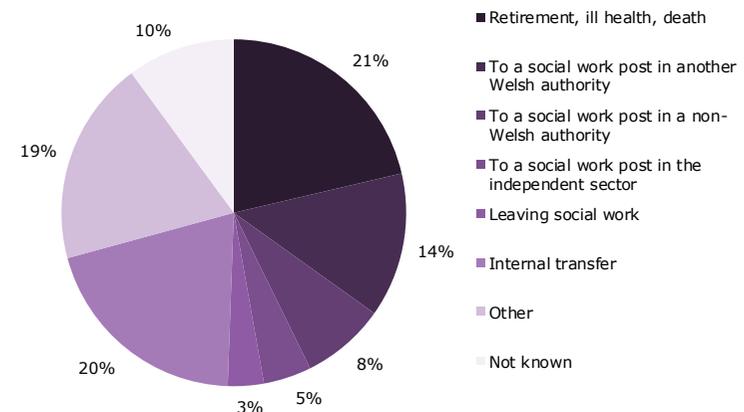
70 people (14%) 'joined' local authorities in non-operational or other service areas during 2016-17, compared to 60 in 2015-16. 35 (50%) of these were as a result of internal transfers, compared to 38 (63%) in 2015-16. There were no newly qualified starters in 2016-17. 22 (31%) coming from other local authorities or the independent sector, compared to 14 (23%) in 2015-16. 6 (9%) joined for other reasons compared to 1 (2%) in 2015-16. 7 people (10%) started in non-operational or other service areas for reasons not recorded by the local authority, compared to 4 (7%) in 2015-16.

89 people left non-operational roles or roles in other service areas during 2016-17, compared to 91 in 2015-16. 22 (24%) of these retired or left social work, compared to 26 (29%) in 2015-16. 19 (21%) moved on to roles within other local authorities compared to 12 (13%) in 2015-16, and 18 (20%) were transferred internally within the authority. 17 (19%) left these roles for other reasons compared to 15 (16%) in 2015-16. 9 people (10%) left for reasons that were not recorded by the local authority, compared to 12 (13%) in 2015-16. Other reasons for leaving included mutual agreement/settlement (1), end of fixed term contract (1), dismissal (1), voluntary early retirement (1), and leaving to employment in the health sector (including 2 who went to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)).

Starters to non-operational and other service areas, 2016-17 (Headcount)



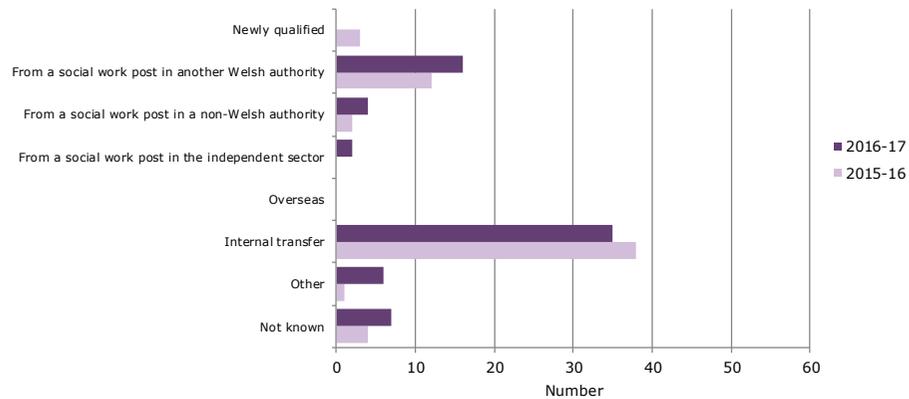
Leavers from non-operational and other service areas, 2016-17 (Headcount)



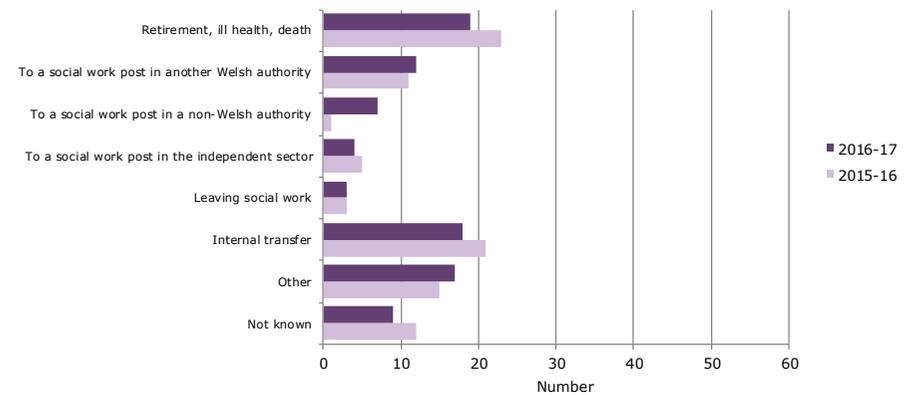
Non - operational roles and other service areas

During 2016-17, 35 people started roles in non-operational and other service areas as internal transfers, compared to 38 in 2015-16. 4 left these roles to go to the independent sector compared to 5 in 2015-16.

Starters to non-operational and other service areas (Headcount)



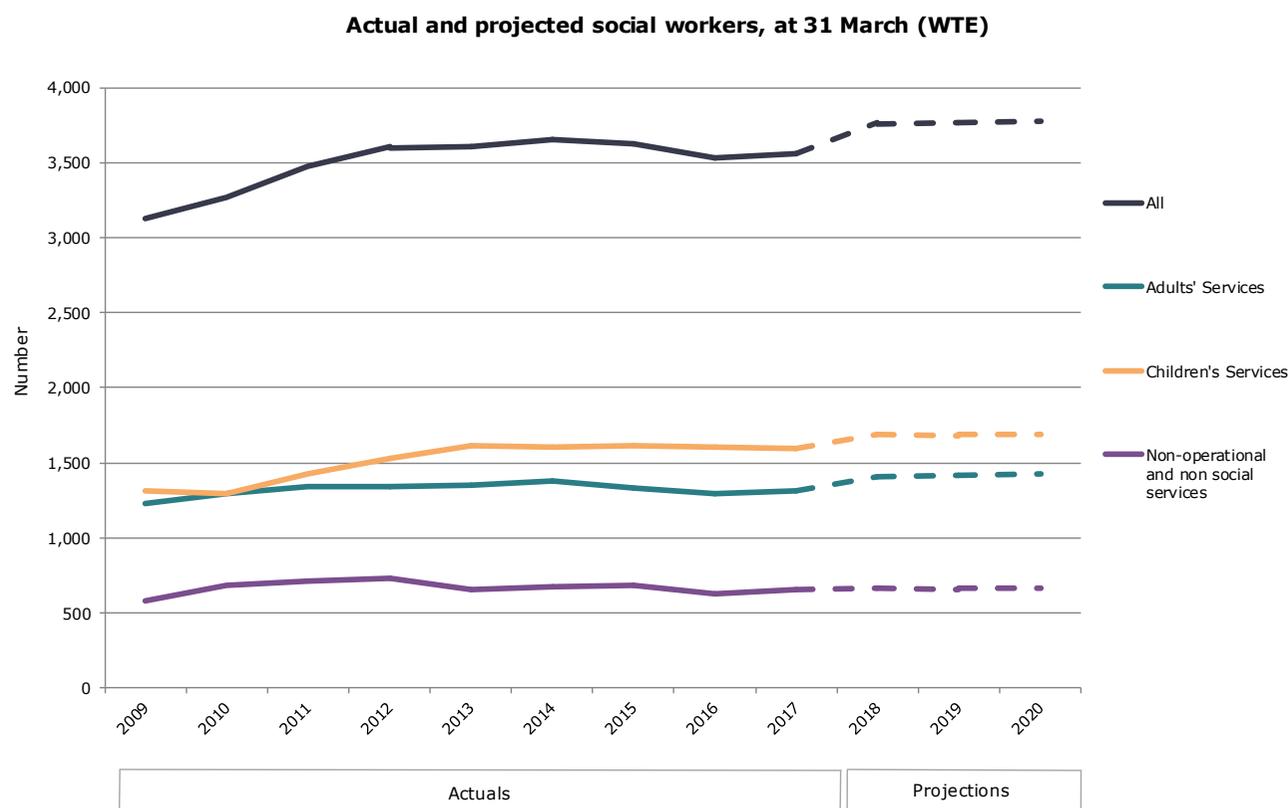
Leavers from non-operational and other service areas (Headcount)



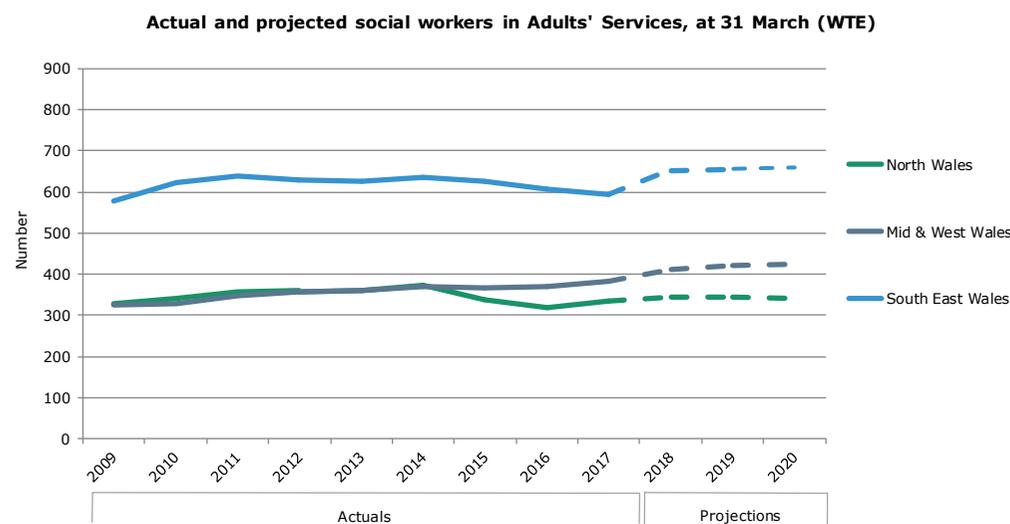
Projected social worker workforce requirements

In 2015-16, local authorities projected an overall 3% increase to 3,644 WTE social workers by the end of 2018-19. Again in 2016-17, the total number (WTE) of local authority social workers is projected to increase, this time by 6% to a projected 3,777 WTE by the end of 2019-20.

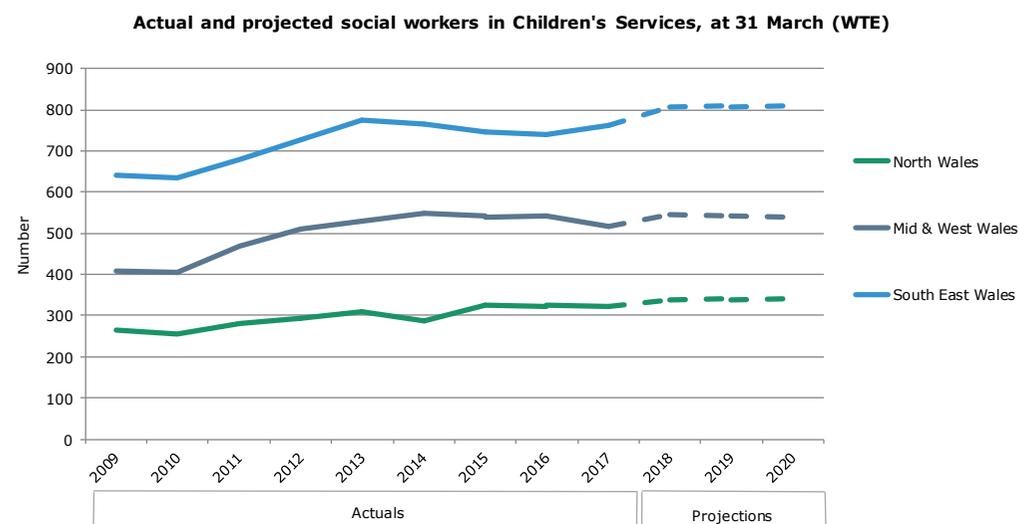
Over the same three year period, the numbers employed in Adults' and Children's Services are projected to increase by 9% and 6% respectively, whilst the number employed in non-operational or other roles is projected to increase by 1%.



In Adults' Services, North Wales anticipate an increase of 3% in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2019-20, both Mid and West Wales and South East Wales anticipate an increase of 11% in the WTE.

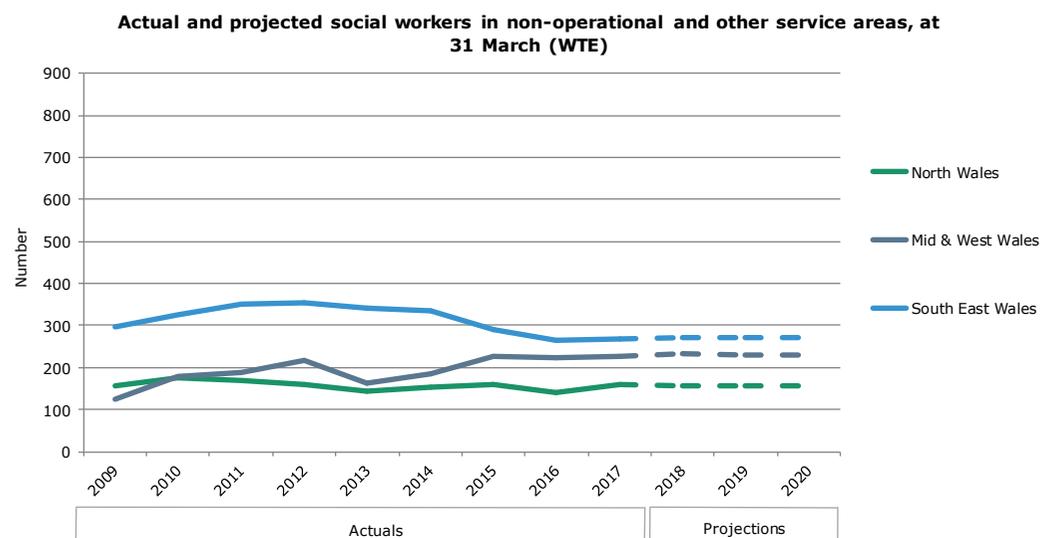


In Children's Services, North Wales anticipate a 6% increase in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2019-20. Over the same three year period, Mid and West Wales anticipate an increase of 4% while South East Wales anticipate a 6% increase in the number (WTE) of their social worker workforce.



Projected social worker workforce

In non-operational and other service areas, North Wales anticipate a 1% decrease in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2019-20. Over the same three year period, Mid and West Wales anticipate an 2% increase and South East Wales anticipate the number of WTE in these roles will increase by 1%.



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