



Social Worker Workforce Planning 2017 - 18

A national report on the social worker workforce in Wales



Contents

Executive summary	1
Background	2
Introduction.....	3
Overall current social worker workforce profile	4
Adults' Services.....	15
Children's Services	15
Social workers in non-operational roles and other service areas	19
Projected social worker workforce requirements	20

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This report is also available in Welsh.

Social Worker – Key Infographics 2017-18

Social workers in Adults' Services, 2017-18



Social workers in Children's Services, 2017-18



*Staff turnover rates are calculated by dividing the total number of leavers in 2017-18 by the average number of employees in 2017-18.

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 2017-18 financial year and projected workforce needs for the next three years. The **key points** from the 2017-18 analysis are as follows:

All social workers

- The number of social workers employed in local authorities at the end of March 2018 has **increased by 1%**, to nearly 3,900 workers, compared to the number employed at the end of March 2017.
- The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) employed has **increased by 1%** since 2017, from 3,562 to 3,591.
- In 2018, **83%** of social workers working in social services departments were female. This has remained similar since the data collection began in 2009.

Adults' Services

- The number of social workers employed in Adults' Services **increased by 2.8%** since 2017.
- At 31 March 2018, vacancies in Adults' Services had **decreased** from the previous year - to 5.6% of WTE social worker posts being vacant compared to 9.3% in 2017.
- During the next three years to 2020-21, the number of WTE employed in Adults' Services is projected to **increase by 4.2%**.

Children's Services

- Since 2017, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has **decreased by 1.8%** - this number is at its lowest since 2011-12¹.
- Social workers leaving to a local authority outside Wales decreased by 6 people (38%), while leavers to the independent sector decreased from 32 in 2017 to 15 in 2018.
- At 31 March 2018, vacancies in Children's Services **increased to 11.7%** of WTE social worker posts being vacant, compared to 9.9% in 2017.
- During the next three years to 2020-21, the number of WTE employed in Children's Services is projected to **increase by 5.4%**.

¹ Although data submitted shows that more social workers started working in Children's Services than left during 2017-18, the data also shows a decrease in the number of social workers employed in Children's Services. This discrepancy is due to some inconsistencies in the data submitted by some local authorities.

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 2017-18 and to project staffing figures for the three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21². Information on staff numbers was pre-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

² It was agreed with 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 tenth 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.³

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

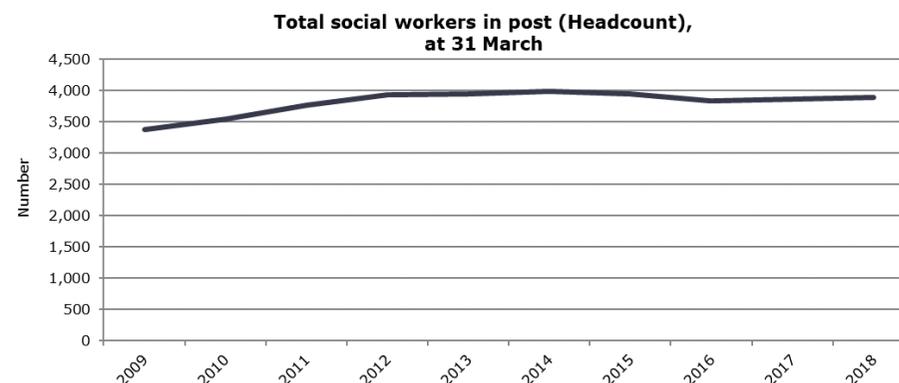
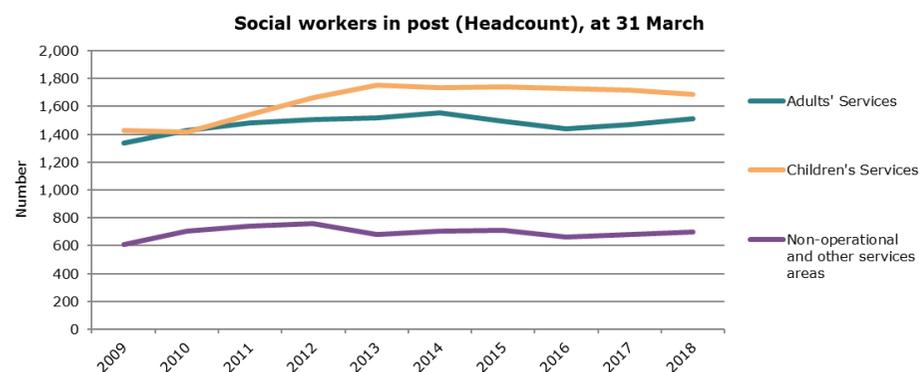
³ It was agreed with Social Care Wales that data on starters and leavers in 'non-operational and other service areas' was not collected and reported and reported in 2017-18.

Overall current social worker workforce profile

Nearly **3,900 social workers** were employed in local authorities at the end of March 2018. This represents a 1% increase compared to the number employed in 2017. The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE)⁴ employed also increased by 1% since 2017, with a total of around 3,590 WTEs at the end of March 2018. Overall, the WTE staff establishment⁵ has increased by 0.5% since March 2017.

The largest increase in the number of social workers employed in local authorities was in Adults' Services, where the number employed has increased by 2.8% since 2017. Over the same period the number employed in Children's Services has decreased by 1.8%, the largest annual decrease in Children's Services since this reporting began. The number employed in non-operational and other service area roles has increased by 2.8% since 2017. The number of WTE employed has increased by 3.4% in Adults' Services and decreased by 2.1% in Children's Services since March 2017.

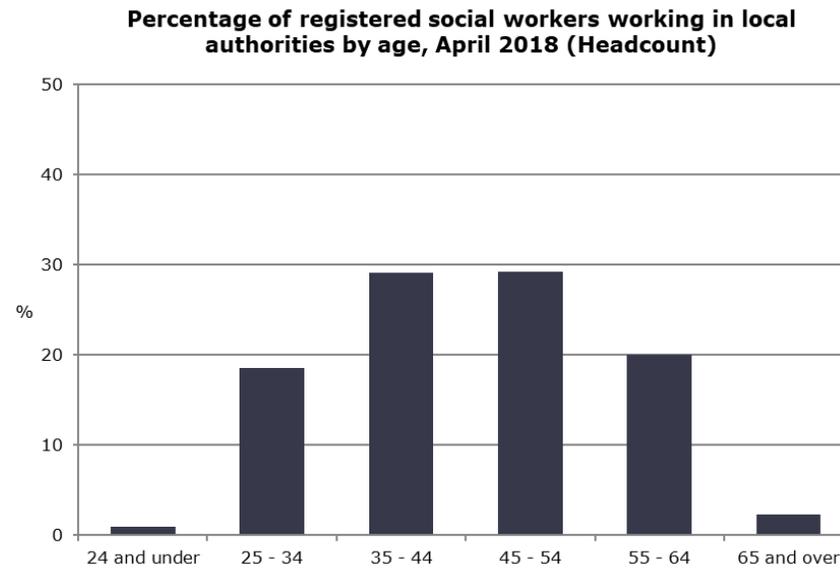
The only decrease in the staff establishment was in Adults' Services, where the number employed has decreased by 1.3% since 2017, which is in contrast to an increase of 5% between 2016 and 2017. Over the same period the staff establishment in Children's Services has increased by 0.5%. The staff establishment in non-operational and other service area roles has increased by 4.5% since 2017. The WTE staff establishment has decreased by 0.6% in Adults' Services and by 0.1% in Children's Services since March 2017.



⁴ 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.

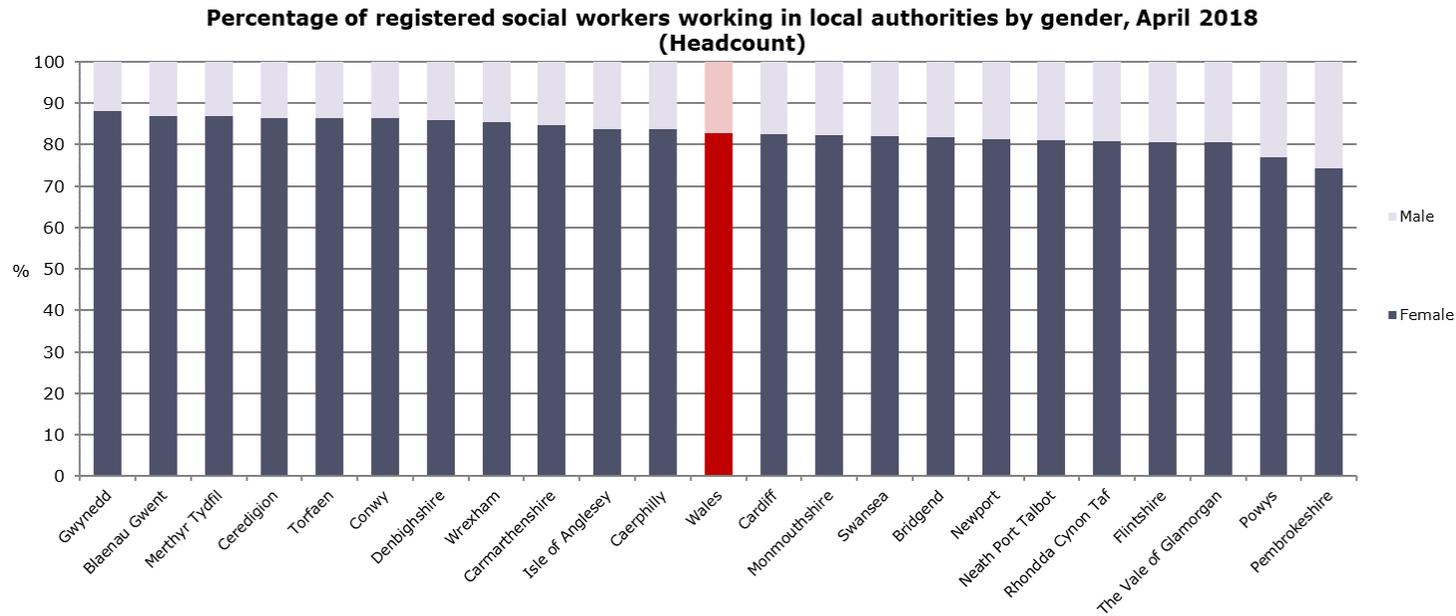
⁵ Staff establishment refers to the staffing capacity of an organisation which includes staff in post and vacancy numbers.

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 2017.



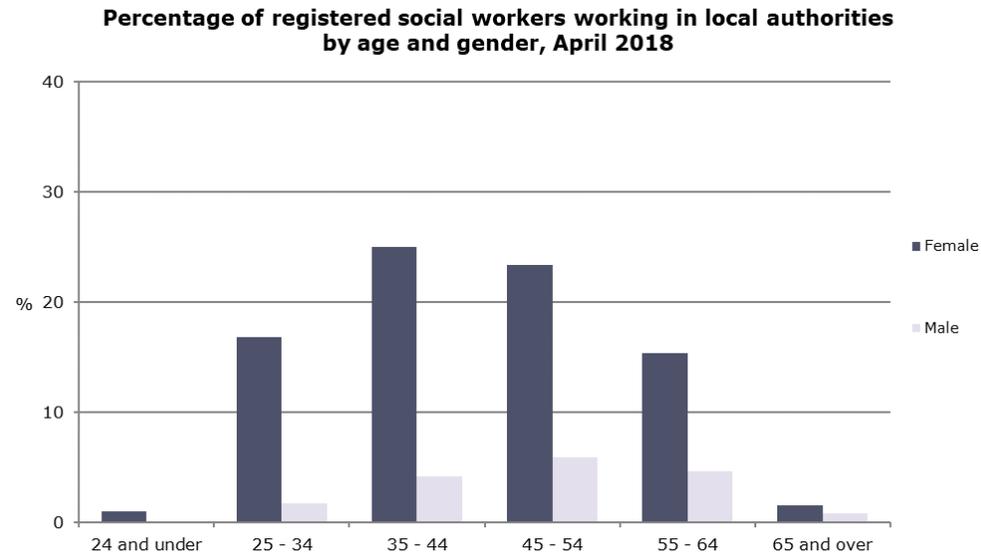
Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

In 2018, the majority of social workers working in social services departments were female (83%). This has been the case since the collection began in 2009. Across Wales this ranged from 74% in Pembrokeshire, to 88% in Gwynedd.



Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

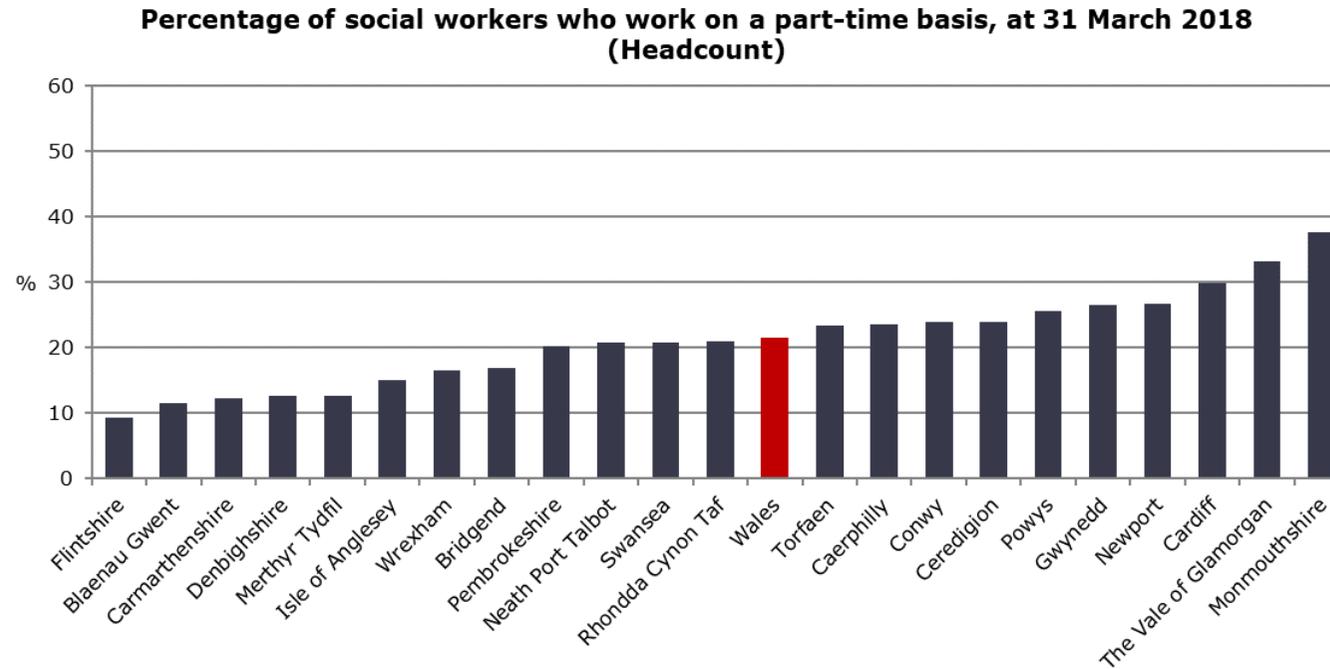
In April 2018, 66% of all male social workers employed in local authority social services were aged 45 or over, compared to 48% in the female social worker workforce, the same as in 2017. 31% of all male social workers were aged 55 or over, compared to 20% of all female social workers. Again, this age profile for male and female social workers has changed little in recent years.



Source: Social Care Wales Registration Database

At 31 March 2018, 21% of all social workers were employed on a part-time basis⁶, a small decrease compared to 2017. In Mid & West Wales, 20% were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 19% in 2017. In North Wales, 18% were employed on a part-time basis compared to 19% in 2017. In South East Wales, the figure was 24%, the same as in 2017.

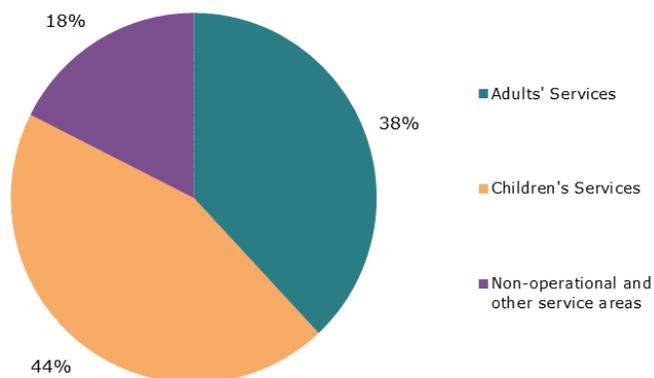
At a local authority level, the percentage of part-time social workers ranged from 9% in Flintshire to 38% in Monmouthshire. This has remained similar to the local authority range in 2017.



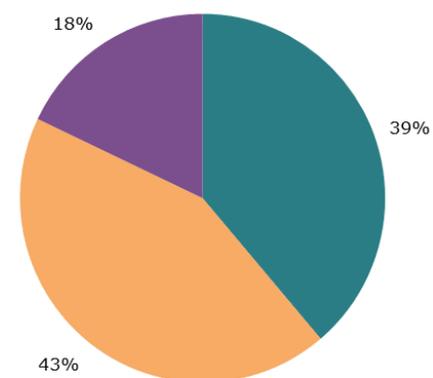
⁶ Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) is the proportion of the standard full-time working hours that an employee is contracted to work for. It is defined as contract WTE i.e. 37 contracted/standard hours.

At 31 March 2018, 43% of local authority social workers worked in Children’s Services, compared to 44% in 2017. 39% worked in Adults’ Services, compared to 38% in 2017, and 18% worked in other roles where a social worker qualification is necessary, the same as in 2017.

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



Social workers in post by service area, at 31 March 2018 (Headcount)



At 31 March 2018, North Wales had 44% of its social workers in Adults’ Services, compared to 42% in 2017. 36% were in Children’s Services, a decrease from 38% in 2017.

In Mid & West Wales, 34% of social workers were employed in Adults’ Services at 31 March 2018, the same as in 2017. Children’s Services also remained the same at 46%.

In South East Wales the proportion of social workers in Adults’ Services increased slightly in 2018, to 40%, compared to 39% in 2017, while Children’s Services decreased slightly, from 46% to 45%.

In both North and Mid & West Wales, the proportion of social workers employed in non-operational and other service areas increased from 19% in 2017 to 20% in 2018, while in South East Wales the proportion decreased from 16% in 2017 to 15% in 2018.

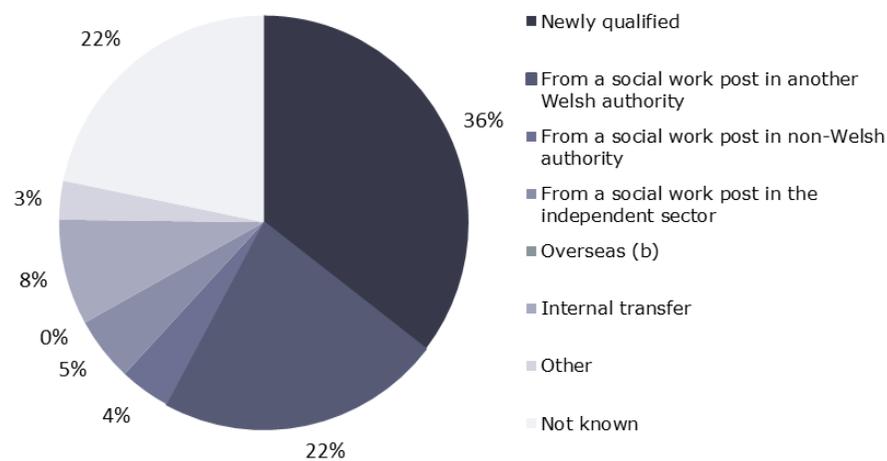
Overall current social worker workforce profile

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	2018	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
North Wales	45	45	47	42	42	42	44	35	38	35	38	40	38	36	19	17	18	19	18	19	20
Mid & West Wales	34	35	34	33	33	34	34	47	50	50	48	48	46	46	19	15	16	19	19	19	20
South East Wales	38	37	38	39	39	39	40	43	44	43	44	45	46	45	20	18	18	17	16	16	15
Wales	38	38	39	38	38	38	39	42	44	43	44	45	44	43	19	17	18	18	17	18	18

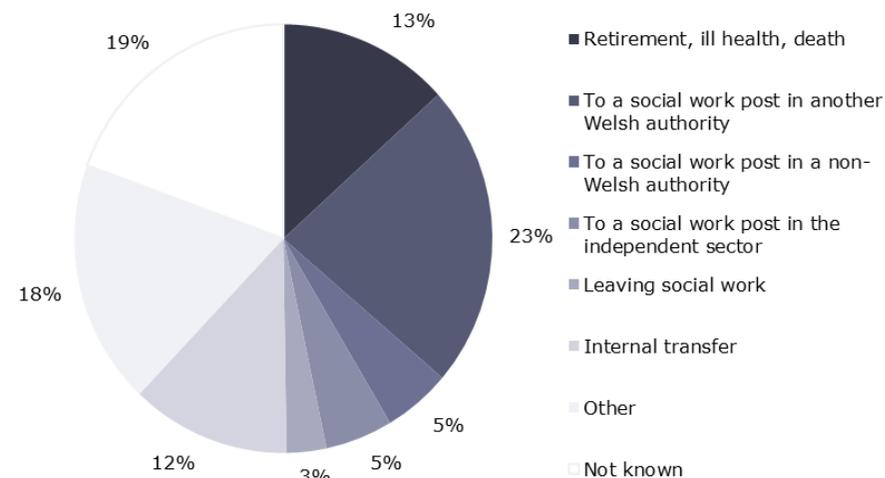
The number of newly qualified social workers joining Adults' or Children's Services was 176 people in 2017-18. During 2017-18, 113 (64%) of these joined Children's Services, with 63 (36%) joining Adults' Services. 13 people left social work during 2017-18, with 5 (38%) of these leaving roles in Adults' Services and 8 (62%) leaving Children's Services.

Starters to Adults' and Children's Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)



(a) Due to rounding, data labels may not total 100%
 (b) Category = 0%

Leavers from Adults' and Children's Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)



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

Overall current social worker workforce profile

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	2017-18	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 ^(a)
North Wales	6	9	6	7	7	15	12	17	22	23	14	10	22	26	5	3	1	0	1	0	-
Mid & West Wales	5	12	12	14	21	16	22	48	25	43	44	18	27	36	1	0	0	0	0	0	-
South East Wales	22	12	21	12	20	28	29	76	77	79	65	70	57	51	1	0	0	0	2	0	-
Wales	33	33	39	33	48	59	63	141	124	145	123	98	106	113	7	3	1	0	3	0	-

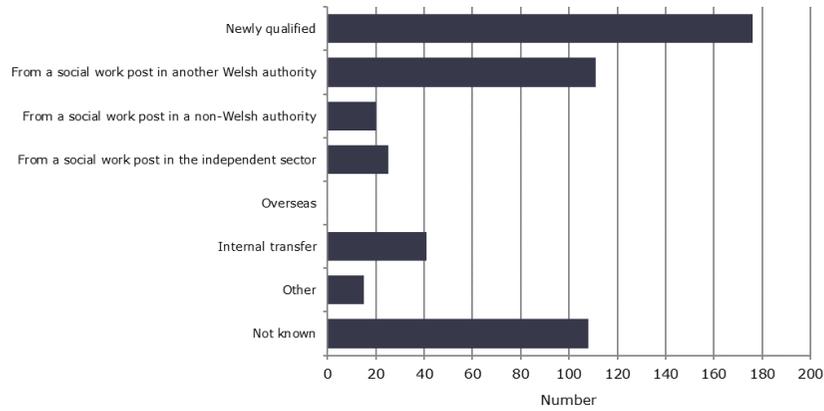
Leavers who left social work by service area and region, during the year (Headcount)

	Adults' Services							Children's Services							Non-operational and other service areas						
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 ^(a)
North Wales	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	0	3	1	1	3	4	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	-
Mid & West Wales	1	2	0	1	8	2	2	1	4	5	2	0	5	5	1	0	0	0	1	2	-
South East Wales	15	3	1	1	6	3	1	3	4	7	2	6	4	2	7	1	5	0	1	0	-
Wales	17	7	3	4	17	8	5	4	11	13	5	9	13	8	10	3	5	1	3	3	-

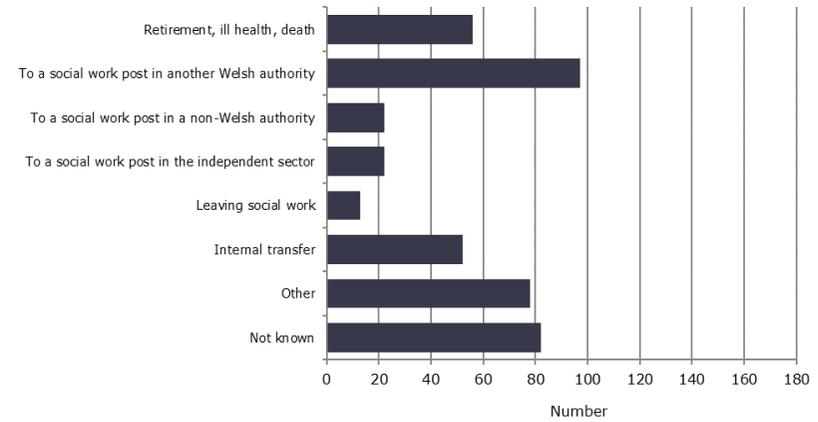
(a) Data not available

The number of starters to Adults' or Children's Services from another Welsh local authority in 2017-18 was 111 and 20 social workers started from a non-Welsh authority. The number of leavers who left a social work post due to retirement, ill health or death was 56.

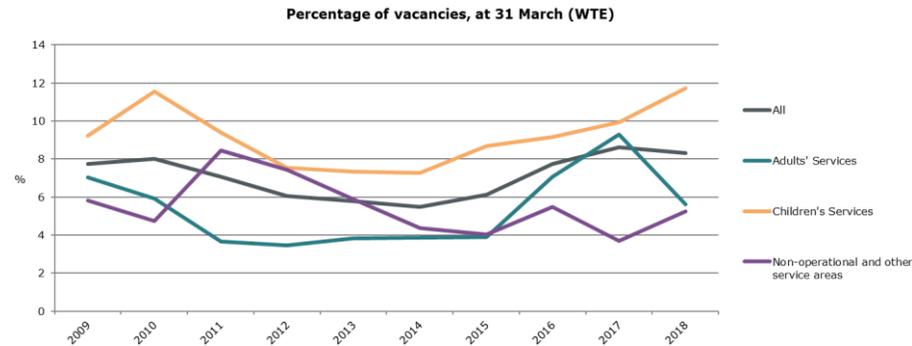
Starters to Adults' and Children's Services (Headcount), 2017-18



Leavers from Adults' and Children's Services (Headcount), 2017-18

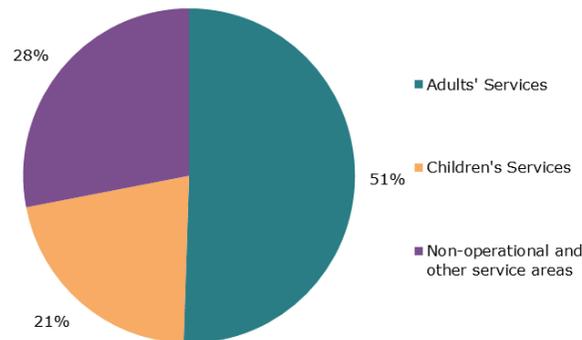


8% (326) of WTE social worker posts were vacant at 31 March 2018, compared to 9% (336) in 2017. This is the first decrease in vacancy rates seen since 2014. 2018 has also seen the number of vacancies in Children’s Services increase from 9.9% in 2017, to 11.7%. Vacancies in Adults’ Services have decreased from 9.3% to 5.6%. For 2018, vacancies in non-operational and other service areas increased from 3.7% to 5.3% compared to 2017.

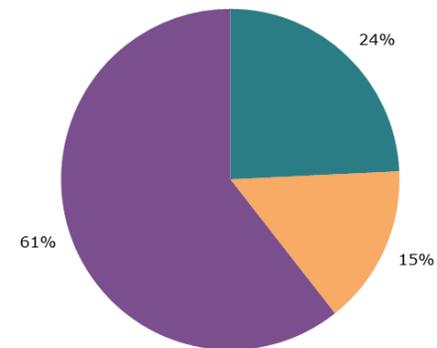


2% (7) of the total WTE vacancies were being 'held open'⁷ at the end of March 2018, compared to 5% (17) in 2017. The number of WTE vacancies held open in Children’s Services decreased from 4 to 1 between 2017 and 2018, with 15% of all vacancies 'held open' at end of March 2018. 24% were in Adults’ Services and 61% in other roles. This compares to 51% in Adults’ Services, 21% in Children’s Services and 28% in other roles at the end of March 2017.

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

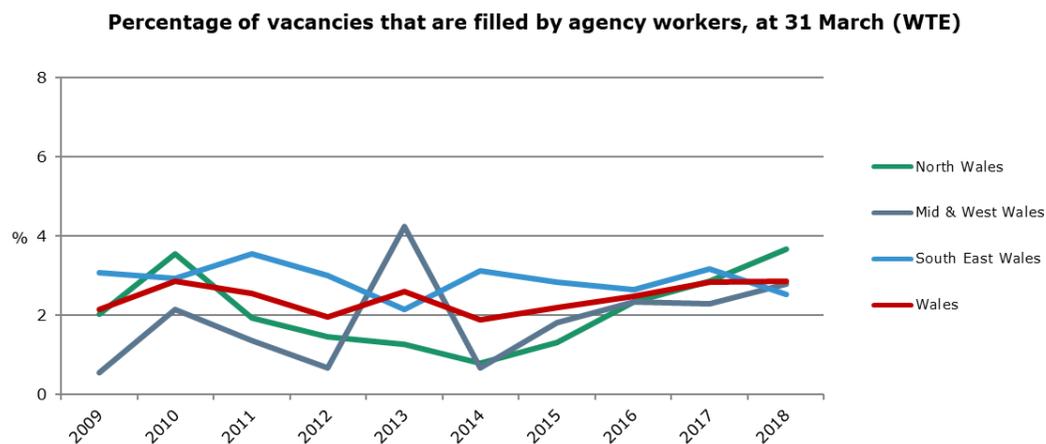


Proportion of 'held open' vacancies, at 31 March 2018 (WTE)

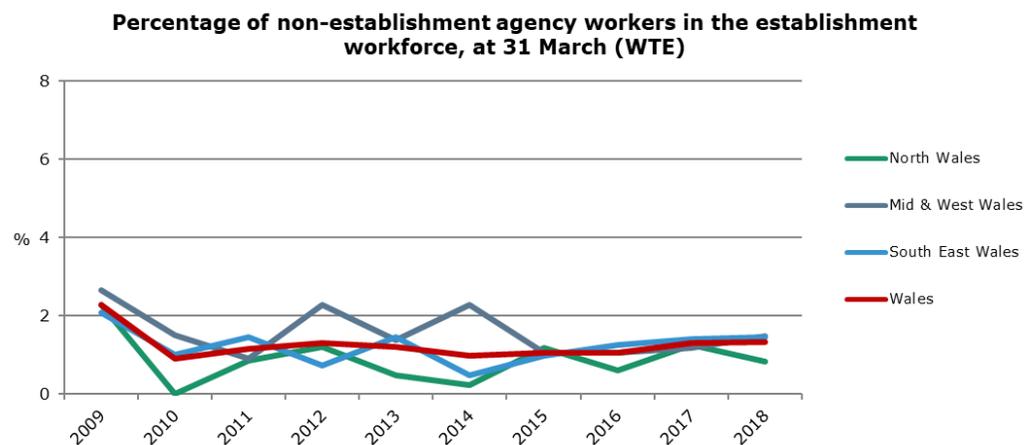


⁷ Vacancies held open are vacancies at 31 March which are not being actively recruited for.

The use of agency workers to fill vacant posts continues across social services in Wales. In Mid & West Wales the use of agency workers (WTE) has increased to 2.8%, compared to 2.3% in 2017. In North Wales, the use of agency workers increased from 2.9% to 3.7% and in South East Wales it decreased from 3.2% to 2.5%. The overall effect was that the Wales figure increased slightly from 2.8% to 2.9% between 2017 and 2018.



In local authorities, other agency workers that are not part of the funded establishment are used to supplement the social worker workforce. In 2018, Mid & West Wales used agency staff to provide the equivalent of a further 1.5% of their overall WTE establishment, compared to 1.2% in 2017, in South East Wales it was 1.5% compared to 1.4% in 2017, but in North Wales the usage of agency staff decreased from 1.3% in 2017 to 0.8%.

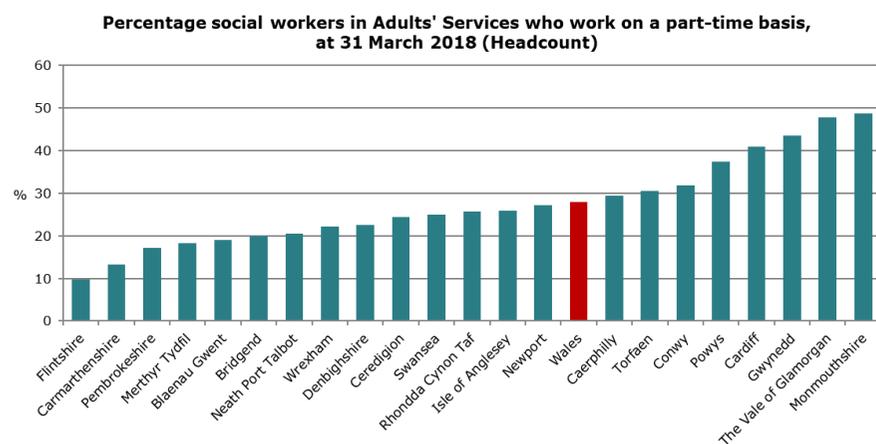


Adults' Services

Adults' Services employed 1,513 social workers at the end of March 2018. This was 39% of the total number of social workers employed by local authorities.

Since 2017, the number of social workers employed in Adults' Services increased by 2.8% (41 people).

28% of the social workers employed in Adults' Services were employed on a part-time basis in 2018 compared to 29% in 2017.



Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Adults' Services varied, with 23% in Mid & West Wales compared to 21% in 2017, 32% in South East Wales compared to 34% in 2017 and 26% in North Wales compared to 27% in 2017.

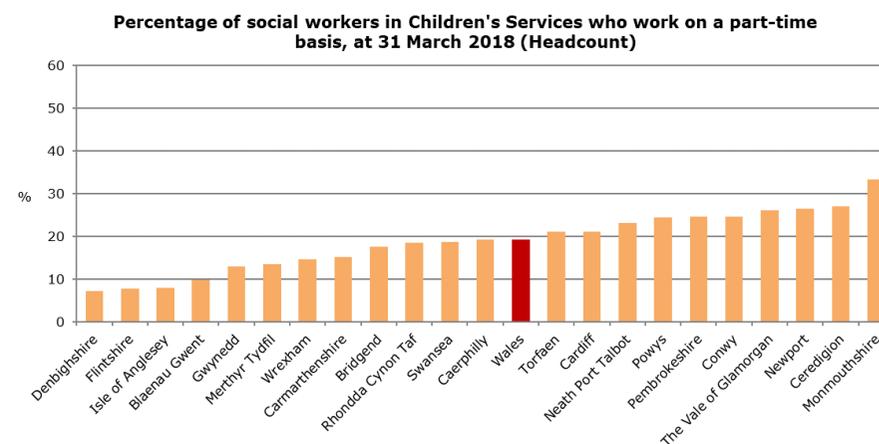
In 2018, Adults' Services filled 2.3% of their established funded WTE with agency workers compared to 3.2% in 2017. The use of agency workers in Adults' Services decreased, for the first time since 2013, by 0.9% in 2018. South East Wales saw the largest decrease, from 4.4% to 1.7% between 2017 and 2018.

Children's Services

Children's Services employed 1,686 social workers at the end of March 2018. This was 43% of the total number of social workers employed by the local authorities, compared to 44% in 2017.

Since 2017, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has decreased by 1.8% (31 people). This follows a decrease of 1.4% between 2015 and 2017.

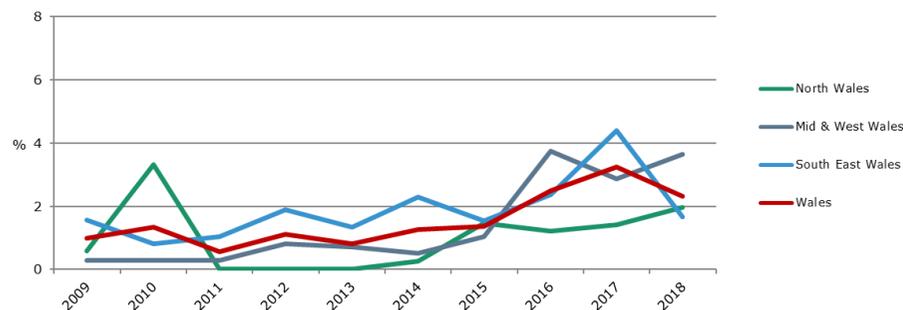
19% of the social workers employed in Children's Services were employed on a part-time basis, the same as the previous year.



Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Children's Services varied, with 13% in North Wales, an increase from 11% in 2017, while Mid & West Wales and South East Wales recorded the same use of part-time social workers as in 2017, with 21% and 20% respectively.

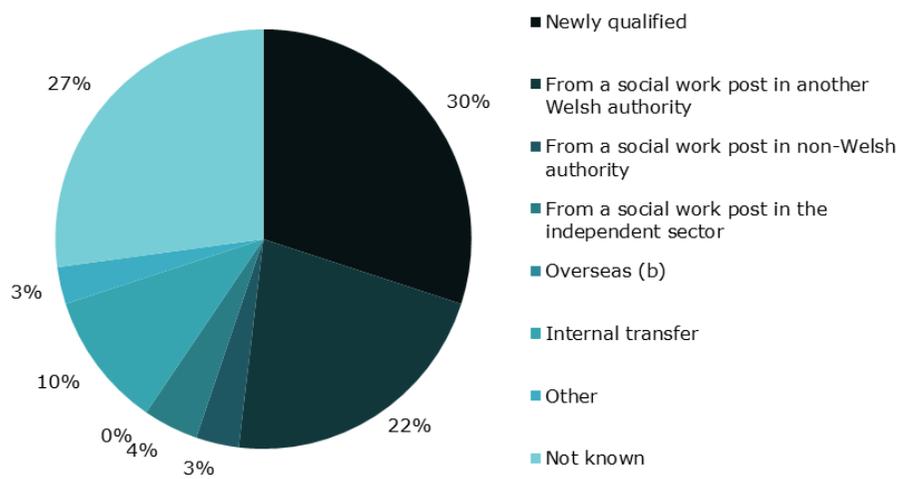
In 2018, Children's Services filled 3.6% of their established funded WTE with agency workers; a slight increase compared to 3.5% in 2017. Between 2017 and 2018, both North Wales and South East Wales increased their use of agency workers by 2.1 and 0.5 percentage points respectively. In Mid & West Wales there was a decrease of 1.6 percentage points to 1.1%.

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



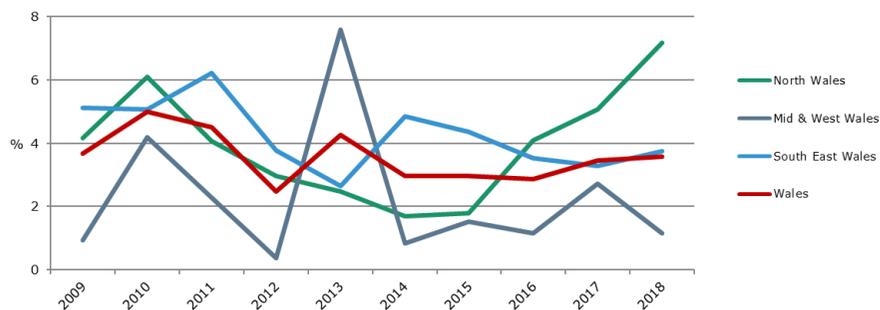
210 social workers 'joined' Adults' Services in 2017-18, compared to 182 in 2016-17. For 2017-18, 40% of these joined from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, a decrease of 9 percentage points compared to 2016-17. 30% of those joining were newly qualified compared to 32% in 2016-17. 3% joined Adults' Services for other reasons and 27% of starters to Adults' Services joined for unknown reasons.

Starters to Adults' Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)



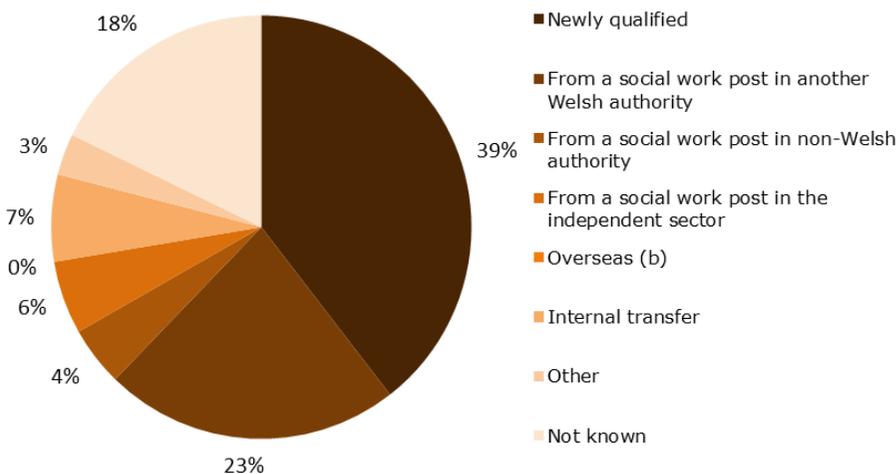
(a) Due to rounding, data labels may not total 100%
 (b) Category = 0%

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



286 social workers 'joined' Children's Services in 2017-18, compared to 247 in 2016-17. 40% of these were newly qualified, compared to 43% in 2016-17, with 40% joining from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, compared to 45% in 2016-17. The origin of 18% of starters was not recorded by authorities and 3% joined Children's Services for other reasons.

Starters to Children's Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)

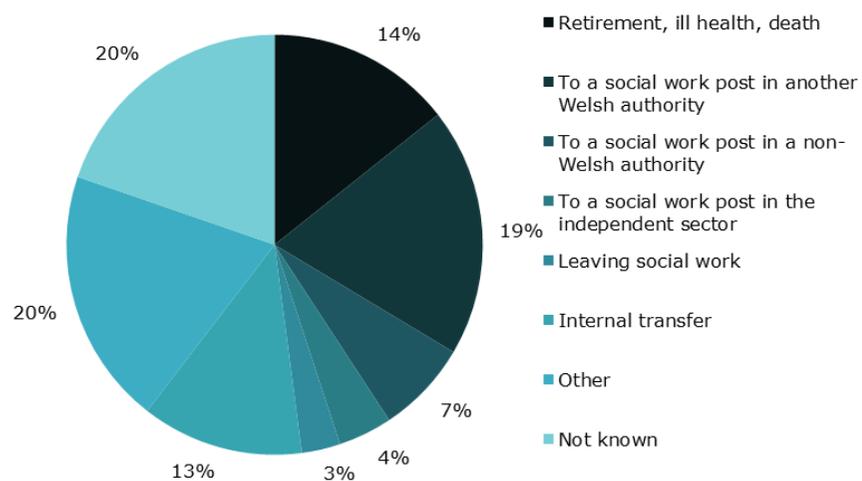


(a) Due to rounding, data labels may not total 100%
 (b) Category = 0%

167 social workers left Adults' Services in 2017-18, compared to 142 in 2016-17. For 2017-18, 3% of these left the social work profession, compared to 6% in 2016-17. 14% retired and a further 31% moved to another local authority or the independent sector. 20% left Adults' Services for other reasons, while 20% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. Other reasons included end of fixed term contract (2), resignation (3), agency (3), mutual agreement/settlement (3), and leaving to employment in the health service (5). One local authority reported a mixture of reasons for 11 staff, these included leaving due to personal reasons, voluntary severance and end of temporary contract.

255 social workers left Children's Services in 2017-18, compared to 269 in 2016-17. For 2017-18, 3% of these left the social work profession compared to 5% in 2016-17. 35% moved to another local authority or the independent sector compared to 40% in 2016-17, and 13% retired compared to 10% in 2016-17. 18% left Children's Services for other reasons, while 19% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. Other reasons included leaving to employment in the health sector (1), leaving to join a post in Welsh Government (1), leaving to take a career break (2), dismissal (3), leaving to join an agency (4) and resignation (7). One local authority reported a mixture of reasons for 17 staff, these included leaving due to personal reasons, alternative employment, and dismissal.

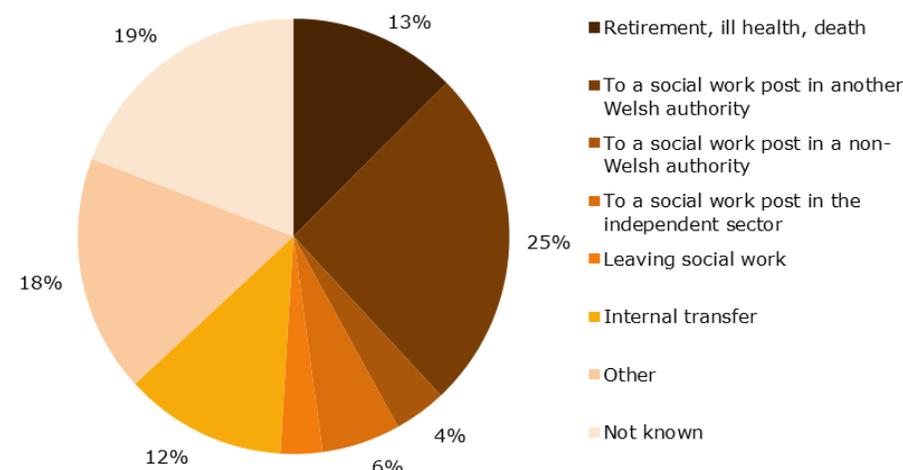
Leavers from Adults' Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)



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

The number of newly qualified starters to Adult's Services has increased by 4 people from 2016-17 to 2017-18, and those from another Welsh authority increased by 6 people. The number of starters for 'other' reasons decreased by 24, while the number of starters whose reasons were unknown increased by 54.

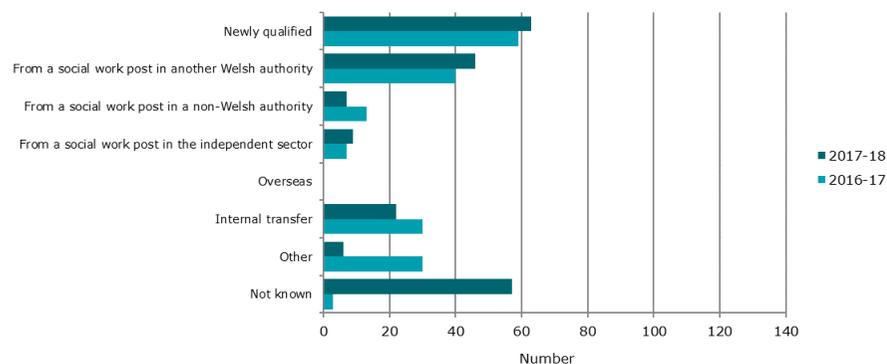
Leavers from Children's Services, 2017-18 (Headcount)^(a)



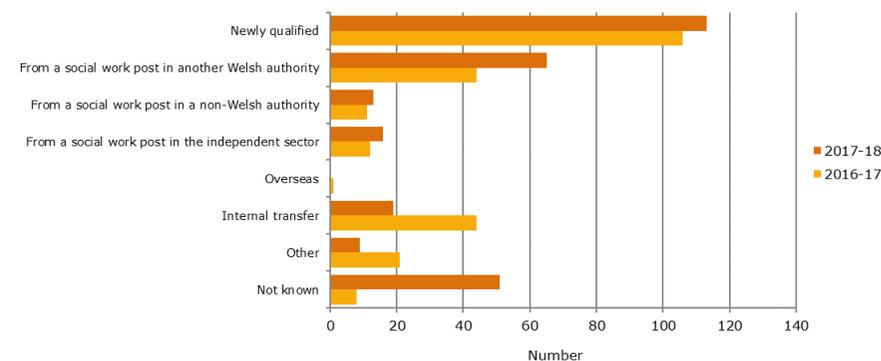
(a) Due to rounding, data labels may not total 100%

The number of newly qualified starters to Children's Services has increased by 7 people from 2016-17 to 2017-18. Starters from another Welsh local authority increased from 44 to 65 since 2016-17. Internal transfers have decreased by 25 people between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Starters who joined for unknown reasons have increased by 43 people.

Starters to Adults' Services (Headcount)



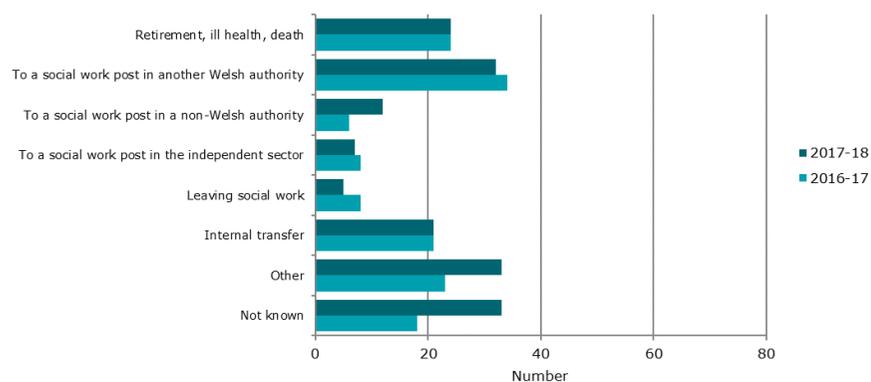
Starters to Children's Services (Headcount)



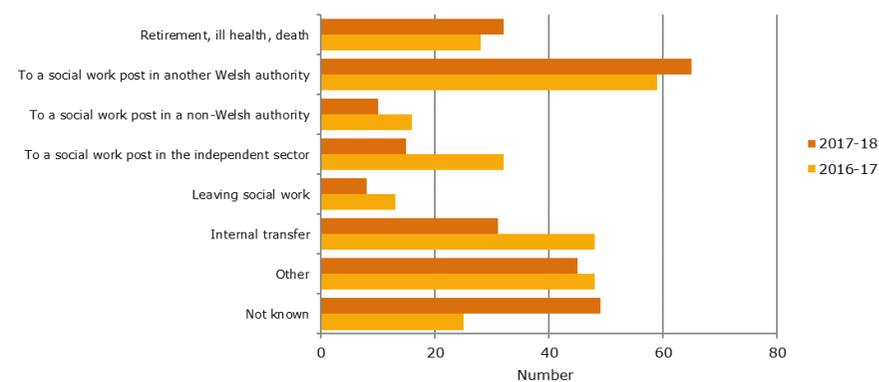
The number of social workers who left Adults' Services to another Welsh local authority decreased by 6% from 34 to 32 between 2016-17 and 2017-18. The number of social workers who left on an internal transfer has remained the same between 2016-17 and 2017-18. The number of social workers leaving for other reasons has increased by 10 people compared to 2016-17, with leavers due to unknown reasons increasing by 15 people.

The number of social workers who left Children's Services has decreased by 5% from 269 to 255 since 2016-17. Social workers leaving to another Welsh local authority has increased by 6 people and leavers on internal transfers have decreased from 48 to 31 between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Other reasons for leaving decreased by 3 people with leavers due to unknown reasons increasing by 24 people since 2016-17.

Leavers from Adults' Services (Headcount)



Leavers from Children's Services (Headcount)

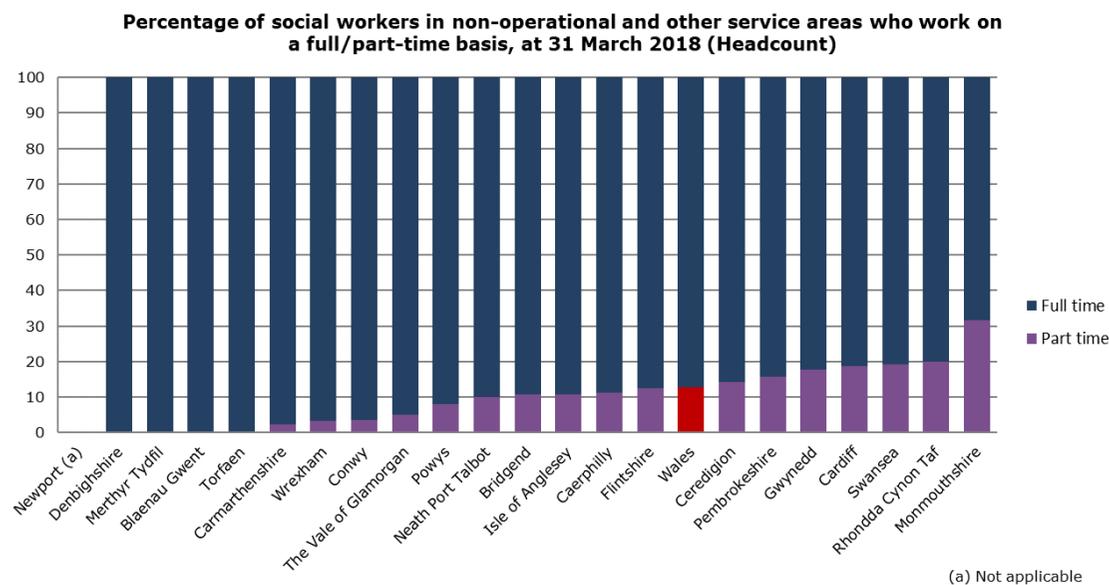


Social workers in non-operational roles and other service areas⁸

Across Wales, 699 people were employed in other roles where a social work qualification was deemed to be essential at the end of March 2018, compared to 680 in 2017. This represents an increase of 3% (19 people) compared to 2017. 18% of social workers across local authorities were in these roles at the end of March 2018, the same as in 2017. 13% of these were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 14% in 2017.

Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in other roles varied with 9% in North Wales in 2018, compared to 18% in 2017; 13% in Mid & West Wales in 2018, compared to 11% in 2017; and 15% in South East Wales, compared to 14% in 2017.

Across the 22 local authorities, the use of part-time social workers ranged from 0% in Denbighshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Torfaen 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.

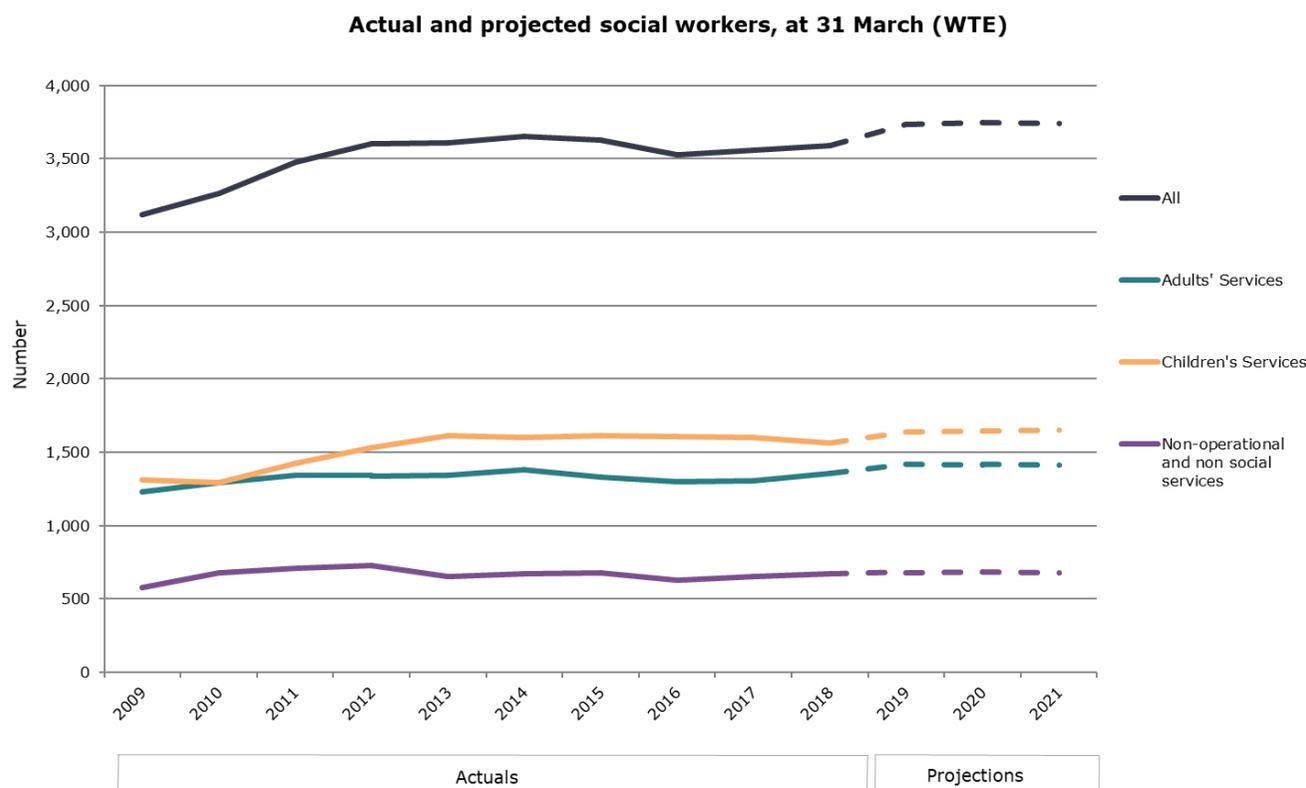


⁸ Non-operational roles and other service areas are posts within the local authority where a social work qualification is deemed mandatory by the local authority.

Projected social worker workforce requirements⁹

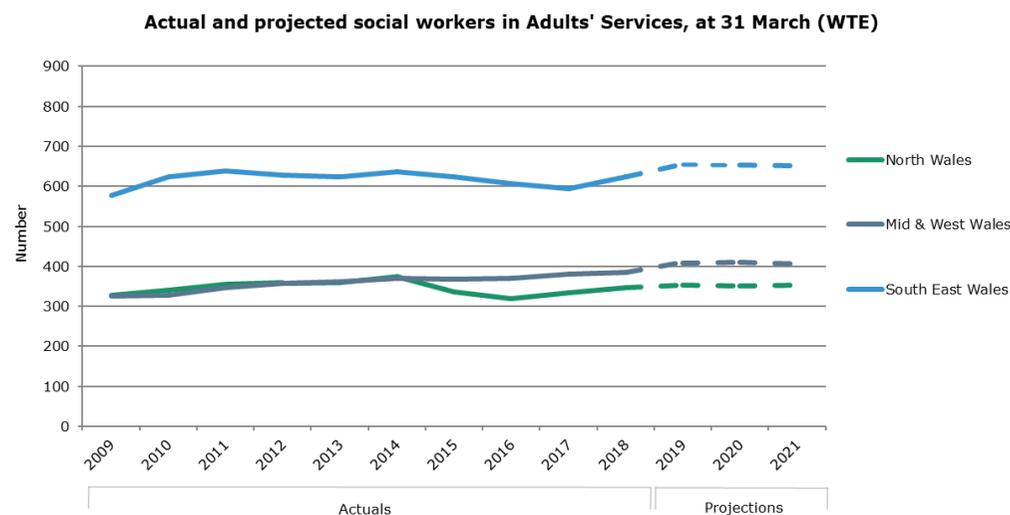
In 2016-17, local authorities projected an overall 6% increase to 3,777 WTE social workers by the end of 2019-20. Again, in 2017-18, the total number (WTE) of local authority social workers is projected to increase, this time by a lower rate of 4%, to a projected 3,745 WTE by the end of 2020-21.

Over the same three-year period, the numbers employed in Adults' and Children's Services are projected to increase by 4% and 5% respectively, whilst the number employed in non-operational or other roles is projected to increase by 2%.

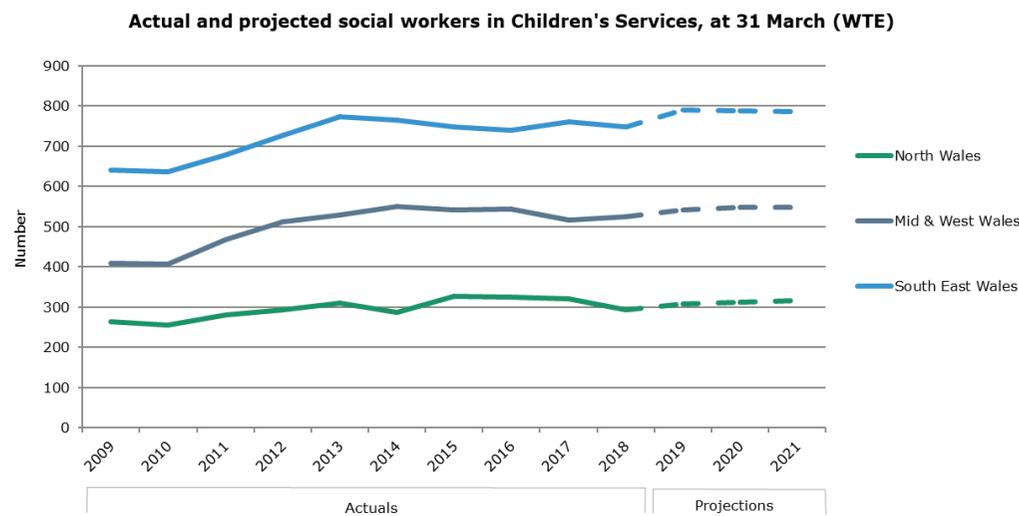


⁹ All figures in this section have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

In Adults' Services, North Wales anticipate an increase of 2% in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2020-21, both Mid & West Wales and South East Wales anticipate an increase of 5% in the WTE.

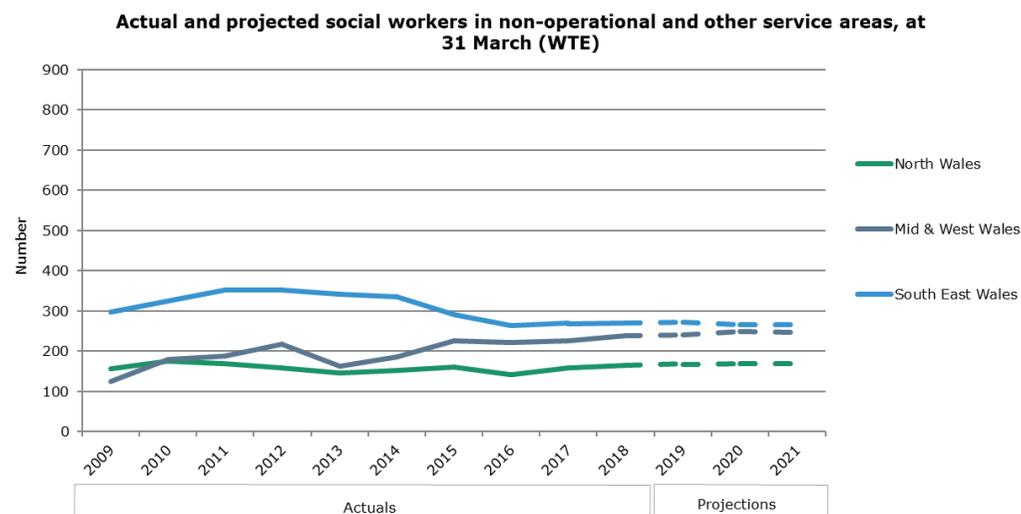


In Children's Services, North Wales anticipate an 8% increase in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2020-21. Over the same three-year period, Mid & West Wales and South East Wales both anticipate a 5% increase in the number (WTE) of their social worker workforce.



Projected social worker workforce

In non-operational and other service areas, South East Wales anticipate a 1% decrease in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2020-21. Over the same three-year period, Mid & West Wales and North Wales both anticipate a 4% increase in the number of WTE in these roles.



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