

Somerset Council
Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee
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Adult Social Care: Workforce Planning

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Cabinet Member: Cllr Heather Shearer, Cabinet Member for Adults

Division and Local Member: All

1. Summary

1.1 This report and supporting presentation provides an update to Scrutiny Committee members on key developments in relation to workforce planning across adult social care, both nationally and locally. It highlights some of the current context and challenges and outlines the critical areas of activity the service is prioritising to ensure there are appropriate numbers of staff who have the skills and compassion to care for the people that they support.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

2.1 For Scrutiny Committee to note the key updates provided in relation to the Adult Social Care (ASC) workforce and our activity to support it, and to consider whether it wishes to make any recommendations arising from the report and wider discussion.

3. Background

3.1 In Somerset, we want people to live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities, with timely and easy access to high quality and efficient support when they need it. People tell us they want to live in the place that they call home, with the people and things they love, in communities that look out for each other, doing the things that matter to them. Achieving this vision is reliant on us having a supported, skilled, flexible *and* sustainable workforce.

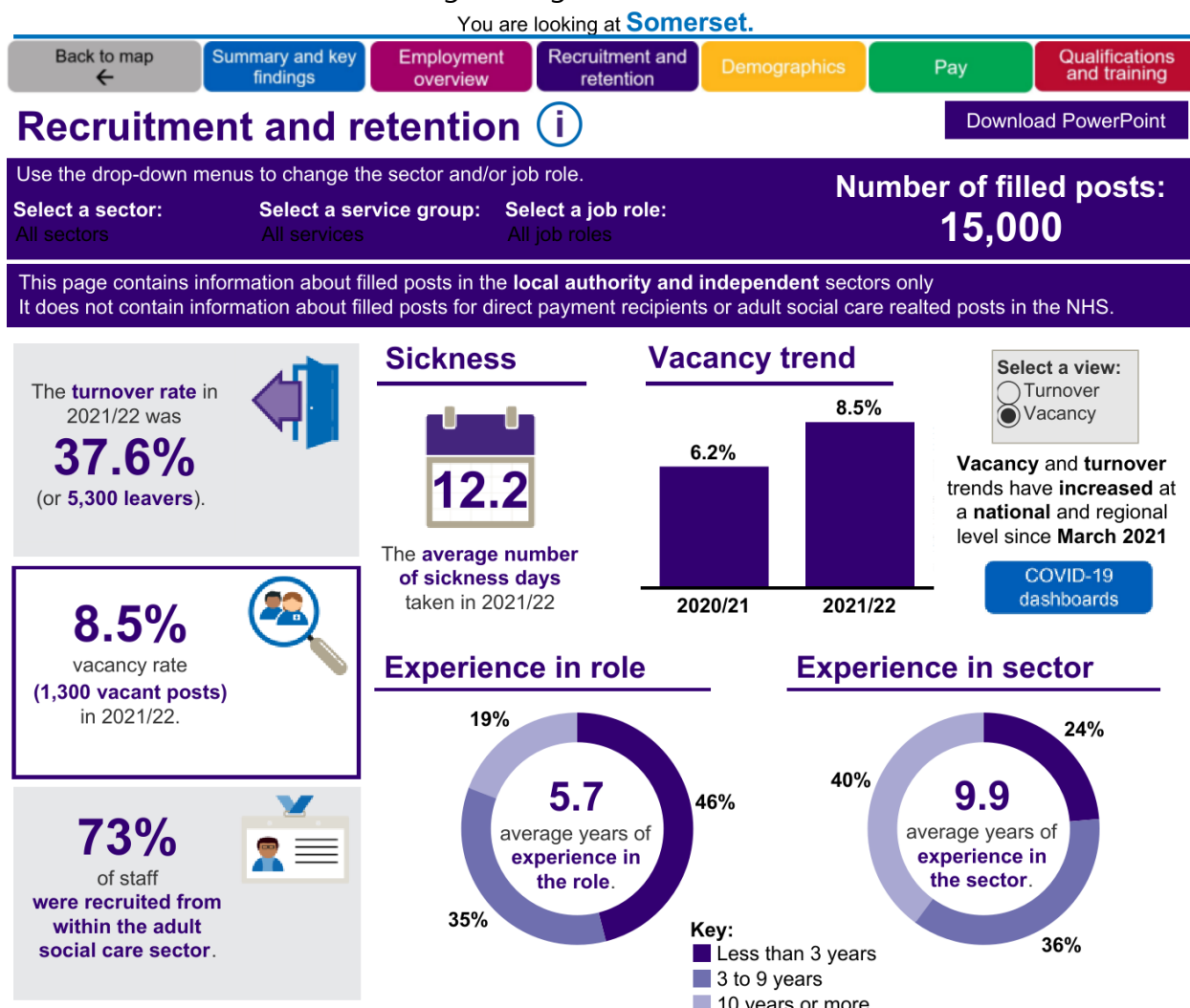
3.2 Nationally, the state of the adult social care workforce is a recognised challenge. As outlined in the Government's Policy Paper, 'People at the Heart of Care¹', with over 1.65m jobs, the adult social care workforce is larger than the NHS, construction, transport, or food and drink service industries, with the number of jobs in the sector forecast to grow by almost one-third by 2035. As the population grows, and the way care is delivered evolves and diversifies, the workforce will need to grow and develop with it. In October 2022, the independent regulator (the Care Quality Commission (CQC), published its annual assessment of the state of health care and adult social care², highlighting the depleted workforce as a key concern. Across all health and social care providers, providers were found to be struggling to recruit and retain staff with the right skills and in the right numbers to meet the increasing needs of people within their care and respond to demographic changes and growing demand post-

¹ [People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-papers/people-at-the-heart-of-care)

² [State of Care 2021/22 - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/state-of-care-2021-22)

pandemic. Despite best efforts, the CQC found that many providers of adult social care were losing the battle as staff were being drawn to industries with higher pay and less stressful conditions.

3.3 Latest available Skills for Care data (2021/22)³ relating to Somerset reveals some of the scale of the challenge facing the sector:



4 Somerset's Workforce Planning Response activity

Somerset Council's Adult Social Care Workforce:

- 4.1** We know that our staff are hugely driven to make a difference and have a positive impact on people's lives. Last year we launched our new 2022-24 ASC Workforce Strategy as a means of more formally setting out our ongoing activity commitments to support our internal workforce at a time of heightened demand and specific challenges relating primarily to the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers and occupational therapists.
- 4.2** Our Workforce Strategy set out clearly our ambitions for the workforce over that two-year period, acknowledging and seeking to address the identified risks and key pressures facing us as well as identifying how we intend to recruit, retain,

³ [My local area \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)

support, and develop our staff across both our operational and commissioning team functions.



4.3 Our Workforce Board convenes monthly and is attended by Service Directors, Strategic Managers and HR engagement partner colleagues. The Board not only routinely reviews progress against actions relating to each of the 10 themes/priorities within the Strategy (each one of which is owned by a senior lead), but also monitors workforce data, equality and diversity impacts, staff feedback and surveys, and practice quality audits. We have made some significant strides over the last 12 months, including progressing our international recruitment of social workers, assessing psychological safety across our functions, improving our supervision and appraisal offer, attracting more young people into our workforce via the Council's graduate scheme, and developing competency frameworks to support continuous professional development. Next month (June 2023), the Board will be undertaking an annual refresh of its Strategy, assessing its achievements to date, and ensuring priorities for the next 12 months remain accurate and impactful based on current context and social care landscape. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this annual review. The review work will be informed by recommendations arising from an independent audit of our Workforce Planning activity published in March 2023, which offered a 'reasonable' assurance rating and concluded that *"there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place"*.

4.4 One of the key pieces of work currently being overseen by the Board is a restructuring of our ASC operational teams. The restructure, founded on a detailed business case, is vital in helping us deliver our vision in partnership with local people and system partners, ensuring we deliver the right kind of strengths-based, person-centred care for our local communities, and the best possible outcomes within the resources available to us. □

- 4.5** We need to ensure our operational (frontline) workforce is fit for the future to respond to our current and future service demands, enabling us to safely deliver our statutory duties in a timely and effective way. We want our workforce to be able to champion strengths-based practice and the continue benefits of community-led, asset-based approaches so that people are supported to achieve the outcomes that matter to them. Our focus has been on implementing a structure that builds capacity in the right areas, ensures high standards of practice, and provides our staff with clearer opportunities for career progression and professional development. By doing this, we believe we will make Somerset Council an attractive place to work and develop a career in social care.
- 4.6** Phase 1 restructuring commenced in December 2022. Strategic Grade 5-7 recruitment is now largely complete, except for a Grade 6 Strategic Manager (Neighbourhoods West) which is currently out to advert. Grade 8 Service Manager posts are also being advertised with closing dates in May 2023. Boundary changes to commence restructuring transition will start from June 2023. Our recruitment activity is being promoted via the Council's own career site but is also being widely advertised through other mechanisms, including LinkedIn, Indeed, Glassdoor, Community Care, Facebook, and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists to support external recruitment opportunities. The restructuring will create some vacancy pressure points and impact on establishment control in short to medium term as the recruitment activity progresses and takes effect. Phase 2 of the restructuring is likely to be implemented from July 2023, but will be engagement only as there are no removal of posts/changes to job roles proposed within the business case.
- 4.7** Our new Adult Social Care Strategy (2023-26) places a clear emphasis on the need to prioritise and invest our efforts in enabling a supported, skilled and flexible workforce. In addition to delivering our Workforce Strategy and underpinning action plan, we are committed to creating the right environment and conditions for robust and effective practice, supporting effective performance management, and re-structuring our operational teams as part of our ongoing integrated working with health partners at neighbourhood levels.

The independent care provider workforce: □

- 4.8** The Local Authority equally recognises the tremendous importance and value of our independent care workforce, which the wider health and care sector relies heavily upon. We are proud of our care sector here in Somerset with high levels of good or outstanding CQC-rated provision but recognise the considerable and growing pressures they are facing in recruitment, retention and sustaining their businesses financially. Workforce for the care home sector is a challenge with most struggling with recruitment and in extreme cases this has led to homes having to close whole wings of their property. This reduces the amount of capacity available in Somerset to support hospital discharge flow and people who need to move into a permanent placement. Providers can lose long term employees to acute hospitals due to the NHS ability to give higher salary uplifts, or offer better terms and conditions. The end of freedom of movement within

the EU following Brexit has meant providers are now having to recruit internationally via Home Office sponsorships.

- 4.9** Our ICB People Board is committed to supporting the wider health and care workforce and is progressing plans for a Somerset Training Academy for Health and Social Care to help establish occupational parity of esteem. Additionally, our Proud to Care Somerset⁴ team works hard to support the wider workforce by raising the profile of the care sector and address recruitment challenges.
- 4.10** In January 2023, Somerset launched its bold new recruitment campaign, 'My Time to Care', which was shot entirely in the county and starred real local carers in six new, impactful videos⁵. The campaign emphasised how careers in care present an opportunity to 'break free from behind a desk' and embark in roles filled with meaningful human interaction and job satisfaction. Each video was specifically tailored to target different age groups that may be interested in a care career. As of early May 2023, 130 candidates had been matched to vacant roles in Somerset with more candidates waiting as part of the campaign.
- 4.11** Additionally this year, the Council has hosted a recruitment event (7th February) at Somerset Cricket Club, a jobs fair in Wells (13th April), promoted Proud to Care at the eat:Taunton festival (13th May), and arranged a free International Recruitment Masterclass (8th June) in partnership with the Registered Care Providers Association and funded by Skills for Care. We also report routinely on market sustainability and workforce pressures to the Government as part of wider national monitoring and response activity.
- 4.12** Adult Social Care Fees and Charges for 2023/24 were recently approved and published⁶, adjusted to take account of cost of living, market factors, national guidance and more. The fee settlement for care providers over the coming year represented a further significant investment into the sector by the Council, representing a permanent increase of between 8.8% and 12.8% for the financial year, and representing a total investment of £24.9m into the social care sector. We have seen levels of unmet homecare need improve in recent months, achieving their lowest levels since March 2021, and believe some of our financial investment, in addition to a focus on supporting international recruitment, has directly supported the resilience of this sector.
- 4.13** We hope this report demonstrates clearly our ongoing commitment to effective workforce planning and support. As our workforce evolves, so too will our collective support for it need to grow and adapt, including ensuring we have sufficient housing provision to meet changing needs and demographics. Social care is a keystone of communities, employing over 1.5 million people in England and contributing £51.5 billion to the economy in 2020/21⁷. Recognising, and investing in, our workforce as our most important asset remains vital. END

⁴ Home | Proud to Care Somerset

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbpaA5vdIqbUzDbelwkjNNeTtejzYIYi>

⁶ [Adult Social Care Fees and Charges](#)

⁷ [The value of adult social care in England \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)