



Social Worker Workforce Planning 2018 - 19

A national report on the social worker workforce in Wales



Leading Social Services
in Wales
Yn arwain
Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
yng Nghymru



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**




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This report is also available in Welsh.

Social Worker – Key Infographics 2018-19

Social workers in Adults' Services, 2018-19

73%
work full time

27%
work part time

9%
posts are vacant

3%
filled by
agency workers

Starters

26%
newly qualified

16%
from a Welsh
local authority

6%
from the
independent sector

Leavers

27%
retired, ill health
or death

20%
to a Welsh
local authority

2%
to the
independent sector

217 starters

194 leavers

Turnover

13%
turnover rate*

Social workers in Children's Services, 2018-19

81%
work full time

19%
work part time

13%
posts are vacant

4%
filled by
agency workers

Starters

37%
newly qualified

18%
from a Welsh
local authority

6%
from the
independent sector

Leavers

9%
retired, ill health
or death

24%
to a Welsh
local authority

6%
to the
independent sector

282 starters

272 leavers

Turnover

16%
turnover rate*

*Staff turnover rates are calculated by dividing the total number of leavers in 2018-19 by the average number of employees in 2018-19.

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 2018-19 financial year and projected workforce needs for the next three years. The **key points** from the 2018-19 analysis are as follows:

All social workers

- The number of social workers employed in local authorities at the end of March 2019 has **increased by 0.1%**, to 3,901 workers, compared to 3,898 employed at the end of March 2018.
- The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) employed has **increased by 0.4%** since 2018, from 3,591 to 3,604.
- In 2019, **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 4.8%** since 2018.
- At 31 March 2019, vacancies in Adults' Services had **increased to 8.7%** of WTE social worker posts being vacant, compared to 5.6% in 2018.
- During the next three years to 2021-22, the number of WTE employed in Adults' Services is projected to **increase by 4.7%**.

Children's Services

- Since 2018, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has **increased by 0.5%**.
- At 31 March 2019, vacancies in Children's Services **increased to 13.4%** of WTE social worker posts being vacant, compared to 11.7% in 2018.
- During the next three years to 2021-22, the number of WTE employed in Children's Services is projected to **increase by 8%**.

Background

Social Care 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 2018-19 and to project staffing figures for the three years from 2019-20 to 2021-22¹. 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.

¹ 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 eleventh 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.²

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

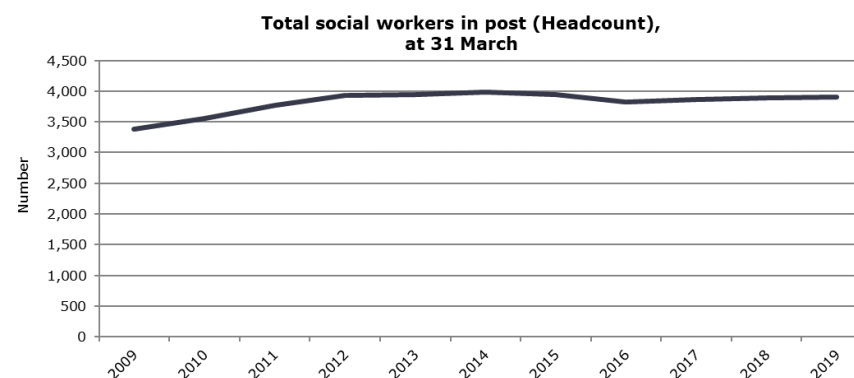
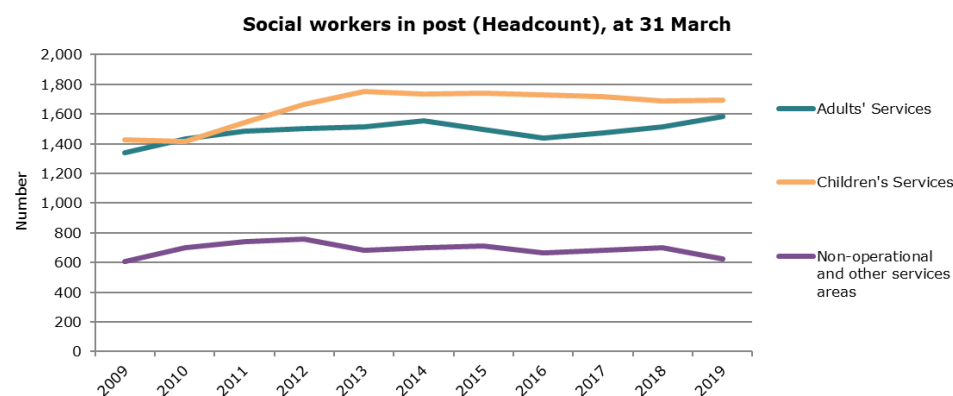
² It was agreed with Social Care Wales that data on starters and leavers in 'non-operational and other service areas' would not be collected and reported and reported from 2017-18.

Overall current social worker workforce profile

Over **3,900 social workers** were employed in local authorities at the end of March 2019. This represents a 0.1% increase compared to the number employed in 2018. The number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE)³ employed increased by 0.4% since 2018, with a total of around 3,600 WTEs at the end of March 2019. Overall, the WTE staff establishment⁴ has increased by 2.2% since March 2018.

The largest increase in the number of social workers employed in local authorities was in Adults' Services, where the number employed has increased by 4.8% since 2018. Over the same period the number employed in Children's Services has increased by 0.5%. The number employed in non-operational and other service area roles has decreased by 11% since 2018. The number of WTE employed has increased by 5.1% in Adults' Services and by 1.1% in Children's Services since March 2018.

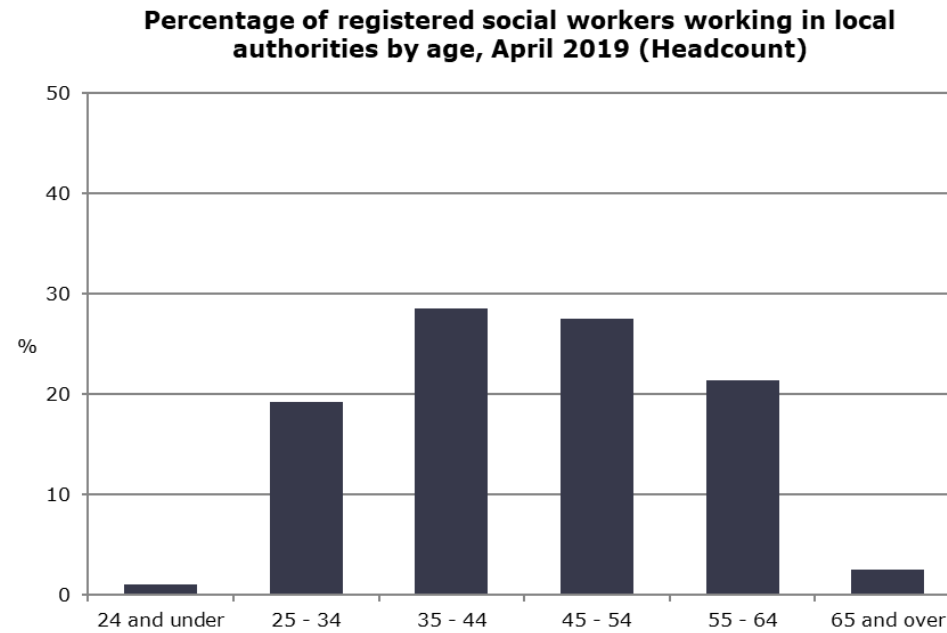
The only decrease in the staff establishment was in non-operational and other service area roles, where the number employed has decreased by 13.1% since 2018, which is in contrast to an increase of 4.5% between 2017 and 2018. Over the same period the staff establishment in Adults' Services has increased by 8%, while the staff establishment in Children's Services has increased by 2.1%. The WTE staff establishment has increased by 8.7% in Adults' Services and by 3% in Children's Services since March 2018.



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.

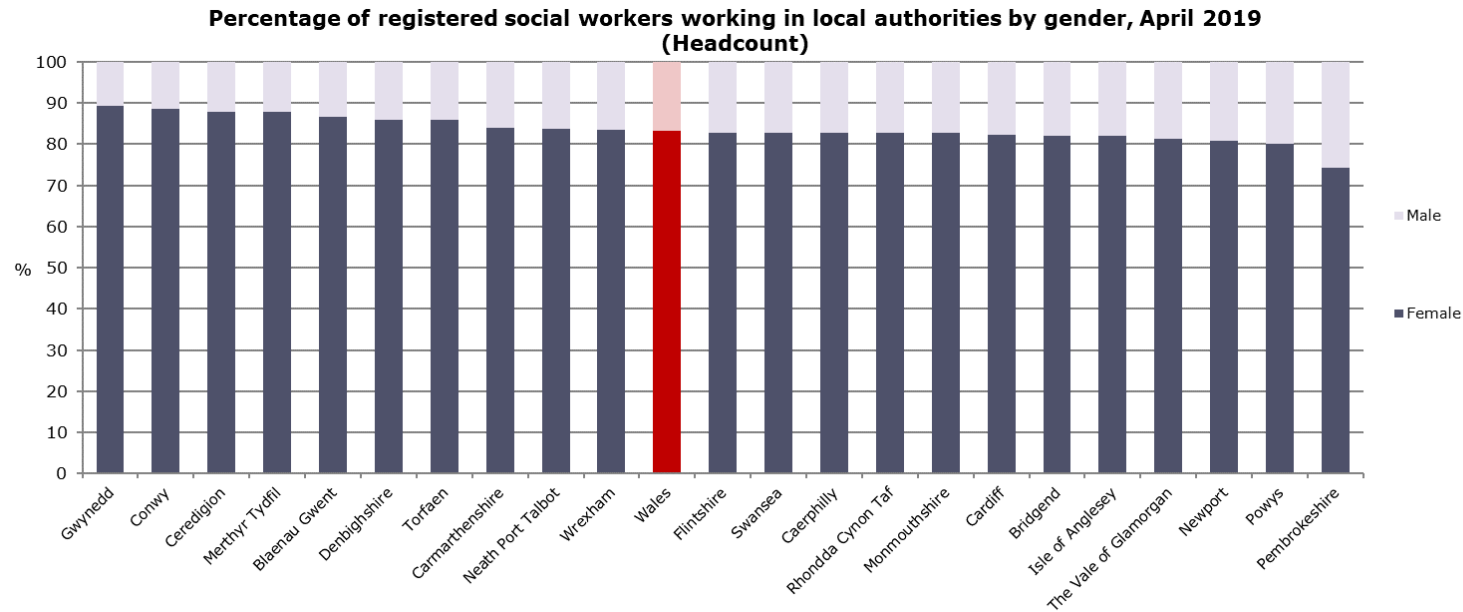
⁴ Staff establishment refers to the staffing capacity of an organisation which includes staff in post and vacancy numbers.

The Social Care Wales register of social workers shows that the majority (51%) are aged 45 or over and 24% are aged 55 or over. This is 2% higher than in 2018.



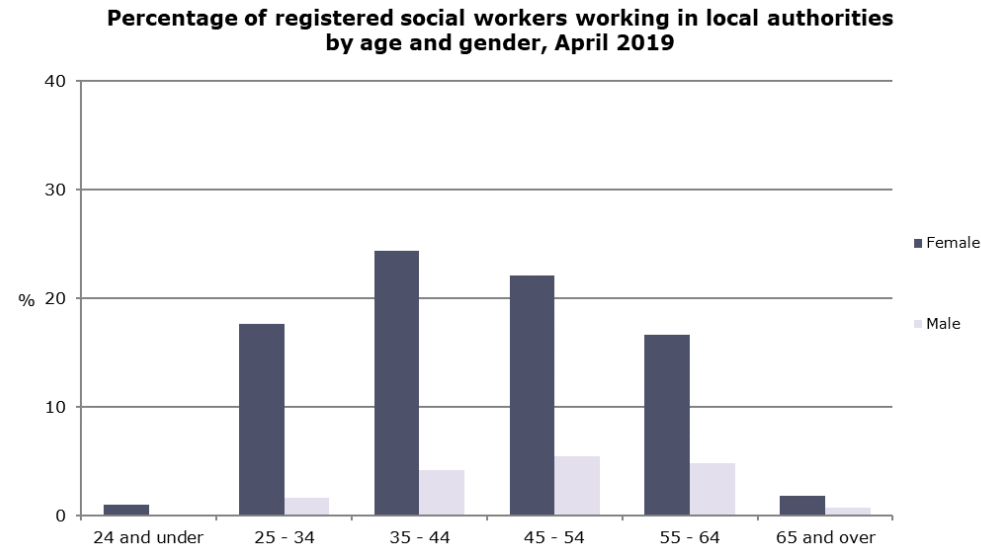
Source: Social Care Wales Register

In 2019, 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 89% in Conwy and Gwynedd.



Source: Social Care Wales Register

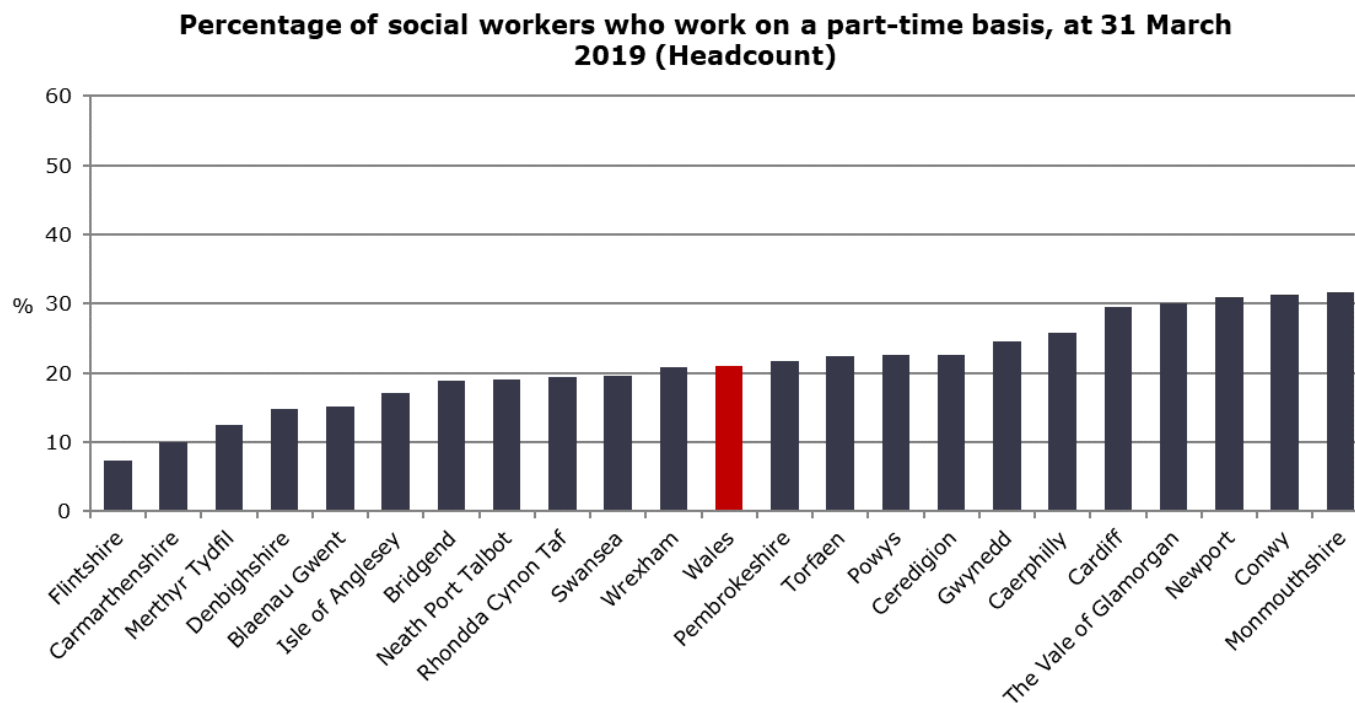
In April 2019, 65% of all male social workers employed in local authority social services were aged 45 or over, compared to 49% in the female social worker workforce, these figures have changed little since 2018. 33% of all male social workers were aged 55 or over, compared to 22% of all female social workers. Again, this age profile for male and female social workers has changed little in recent years.



Source: Social Care Wales Register

At 31 March 2019, 21% of all social workers were employed on a part-time basis⁵, the same as in 2018. In Mid & West Wales, 18% were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 20% in 2018. In North Wales, 20% were employed on a part-time basis compared to 18% in 2018. In South East Wales, the figure was 24%, the same as in 2018.

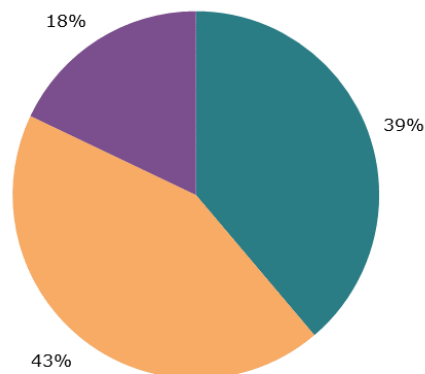
At a local authority level, the percentage of part-time social workers ranged from 7% in Flintshire to 32% in Monmouthshire. This has remained similar to the local authority range in 2018.



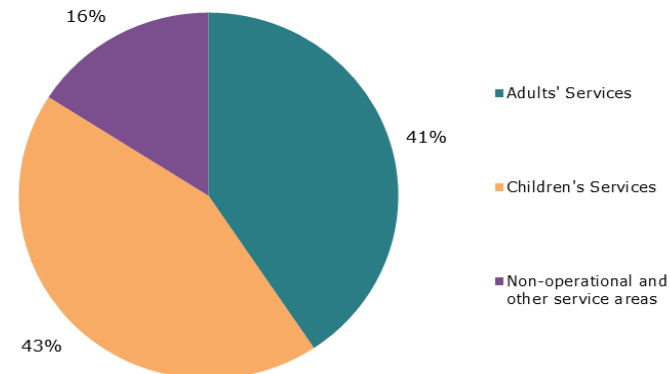
⁵ Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) is the proportion of the standard full-time working hours that an employee is contracted to work for. It is defined as contract WTE i.e. 37 contracted/standard hours.

At 31 March 2019, 43% of local authority social workers worked in Children’s Services, the same as in 2018. 41% worked in Adults’ Services, compared to 39% in 2018, and 16% worked in other roles where a social worker qualification is necessary, compared to 18% in 2018.

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



Social workers in post by service area, at 31 March 2019 (Headcount)



At 31 March 2019, North Wales had 48% of its social workers in Adults’ Services, compared to 44% in 2018. 34% were in Children’s Services, a decrease from 36% in 2018.

In Mid & West Wales, 36% of social workers were employed in Adults’ Services at 31 March 2019, compared to 34% in 2018. Children’s Services remained the same at 46%.

In South East Wales the proportion of social workers in Adults’ Services in 2019 was 40%, the same as in 2018. The proportion of social workers in Children’s Services increased slightly, from 45% to 46%.

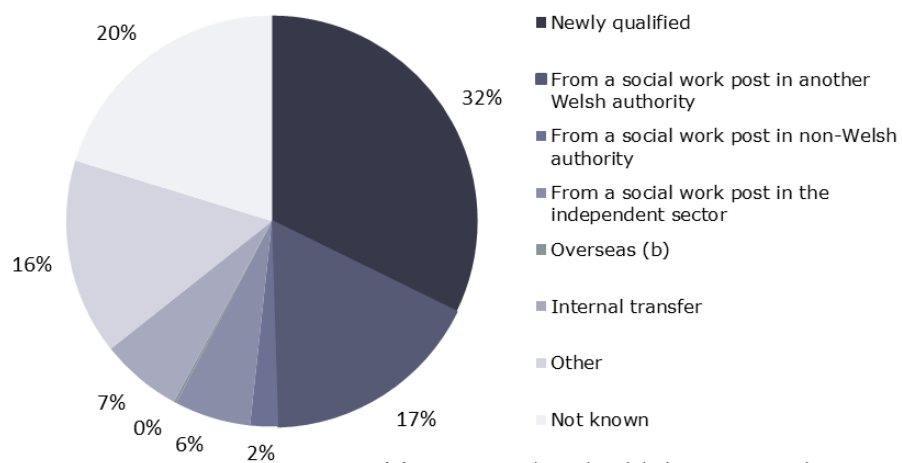
In both North and Mid & West Wales, the proportion of social workers employed in non-operational and other service areas decreased from 20% in 2018 to 18% in 2019, while in South East Wales the proportion decreased from 15% in 2018 to 14% in 2019.

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

	Adults' Services (%)						Children's Services (%)						Non-operational and other service areas (%)					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
North Wales	47	42	42	42	44	48	35	38	40	38	36	34	18	19	18	19	20	18
Mid & West Wales	34	33	33	34	34	36	50	48	48	46	46	46	16	19	19	19	20	18
South East Wales	38	39	39	39	40	40	43	44	45	46	45	46	18	17	16	16	15	14
Wales	39	38	38	38	39	41	43	44	45	44	43	43	18	18	17	18	18	16

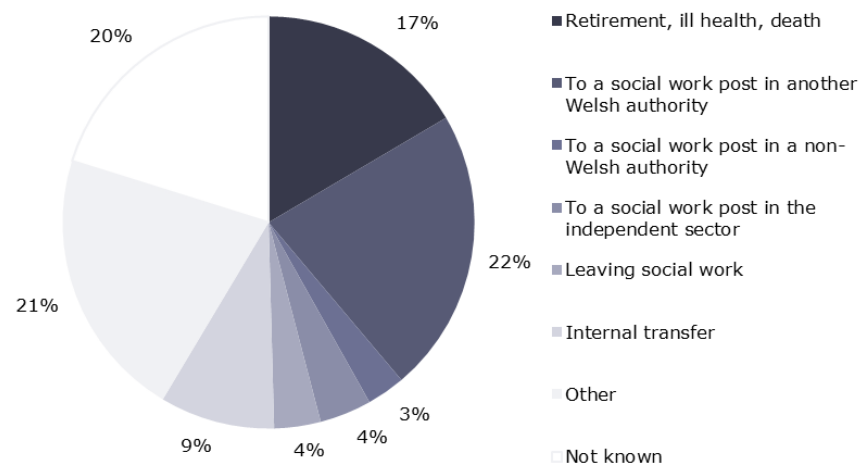
The number of newly qualified social workers joining Adults' and Children's Services was 161 people in 2018-19. During 2018-19, 104 (65%) of these joined Children's Services, with 57 (35%) joining Adults' Services. 17 people left social work during 2018-19, with 7 (40%) of these leaving roles in Adults' Services and 10 (59%) leaving Children's Services.

Starters to Adults' and Children's Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)^(a)



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

Leavers from Adults' and Children's Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)



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

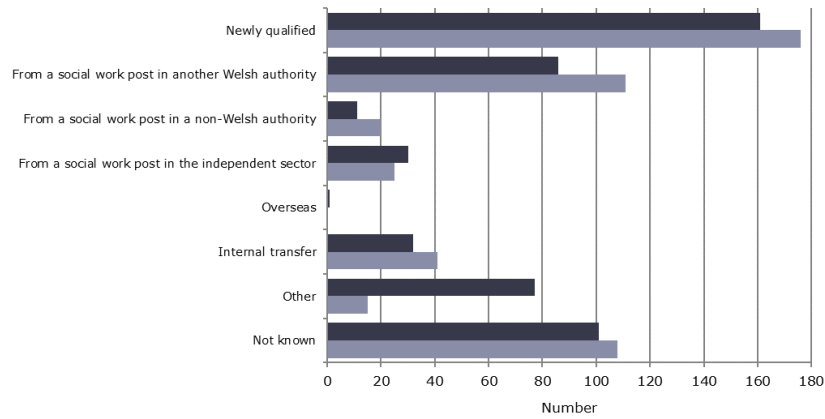
	Adults' Services						Children's Services					
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
North Wales	6	7	7	15	12	16	23	14	10	22	26	17
Mid & West Wales	12	14	21	16	22	16	43	44	18	27	36	38
South East Wales	21	12	20	28	29	25	79	65	70	57	51	49
Wales	39	33	48	59	63	57	145	123	98	106	113	104

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

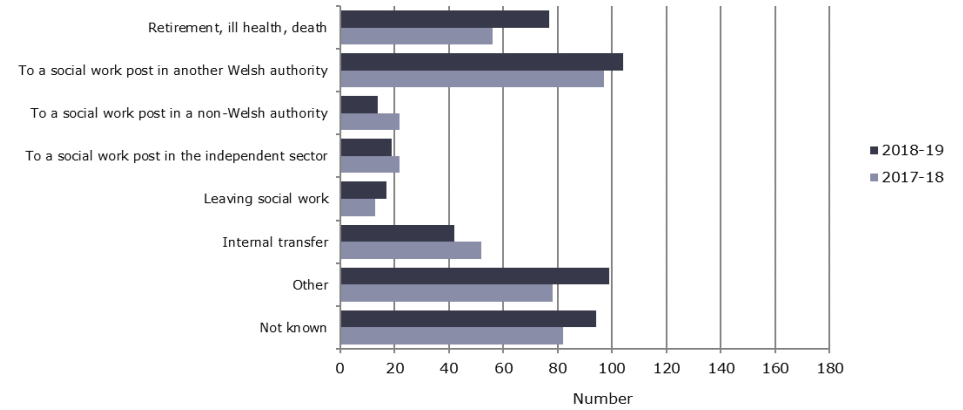
	Adults' Services						Children's Services					
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
North Wales	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	3	4	1	1
Mid & West Wales	0	1	8	2	2	2	5	2	0	5	5	3
South East Wales	1	1	6	3	1	4	7	2	6	4	2	6
Wales	3	4	17	8	5	7	13	5	9	13	8	10

The number of starters to Adults' and Children's Services from another Welsh local authority in 2018-19 was 86 and 11 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 77.

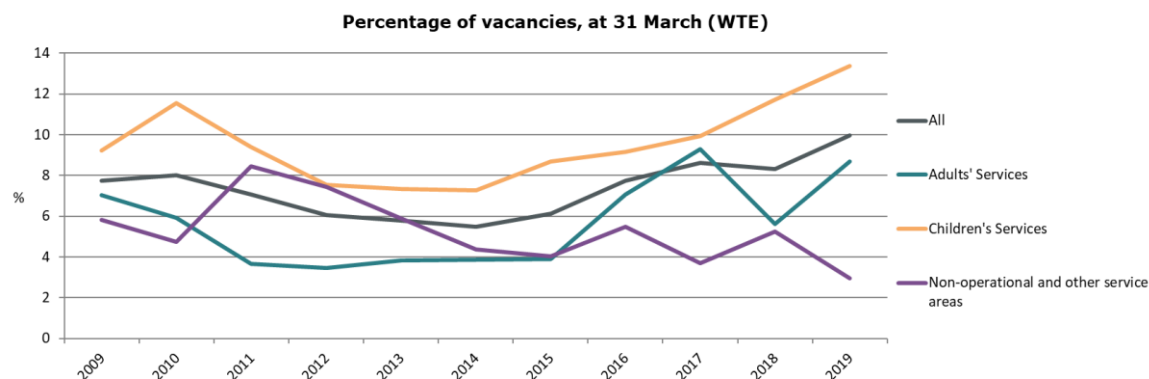
Starters to Adults' and Children's Services (Headcount)



Leavers from Adults' and Children's Services (Headcount)

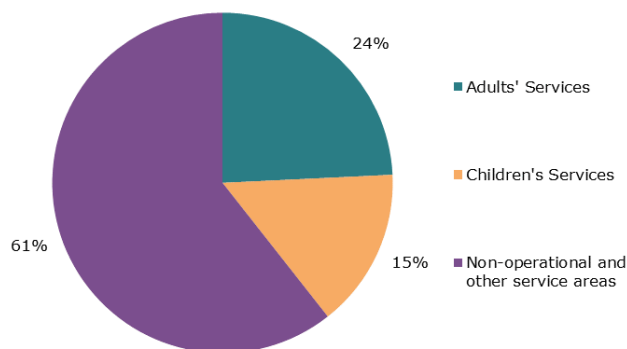


10% (398) of WTE social worker posts were vacant at 31 March 2019, compared to 8% (326) in 2018. 2019 has also seen the number of vacancies in Children's Services increase from 11.7% in 2018, to 13.4%. Vacancies in Adults' Services have also increased from 5.6% to 8.7%. For 2019, while vacancies in non-operational and other service areas decreased from 5.3% in 2018, to 2.9%.

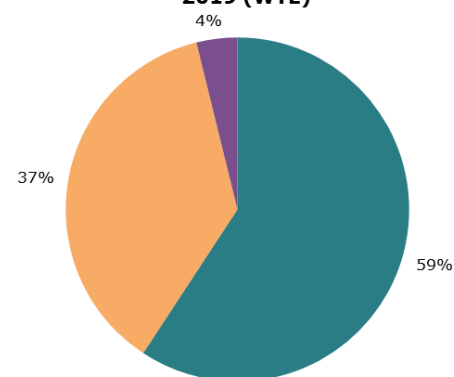


7% (26) of the total WTE vacancies were being 'held open'⁶ at the end of March 2019, compared to 2% (7) in 2018. The number of WTE vacancies held open in Children's Services increased from 1 to 10 between 2018 and 2019, with 37% of all vacancies 'held open' at end of March 2019. 59% were in Adults' Services and 4% in other roles. This compares to 24% in Adults' Services, 15% in Children's Services and 61% in other roles at the end of March 2018.

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

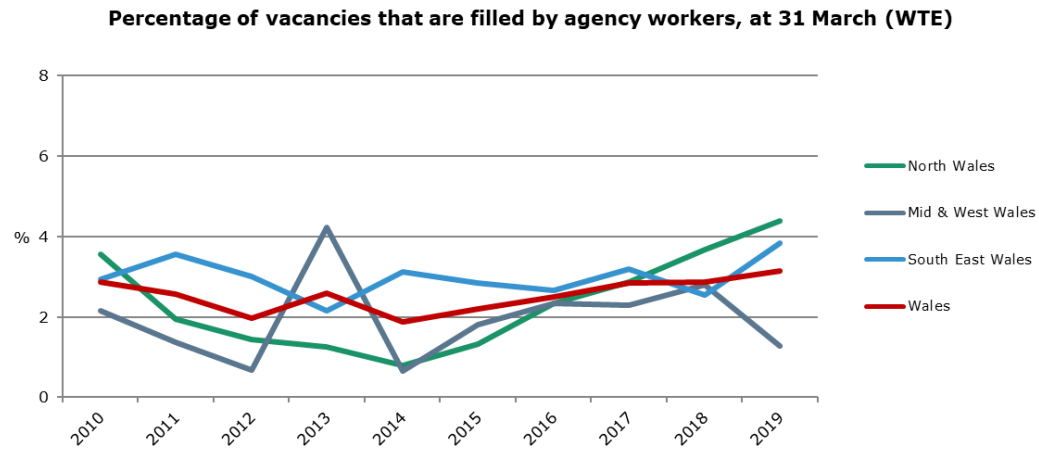


Proportion of 'held open' vacancies, at 31 March 2019 (WTE)

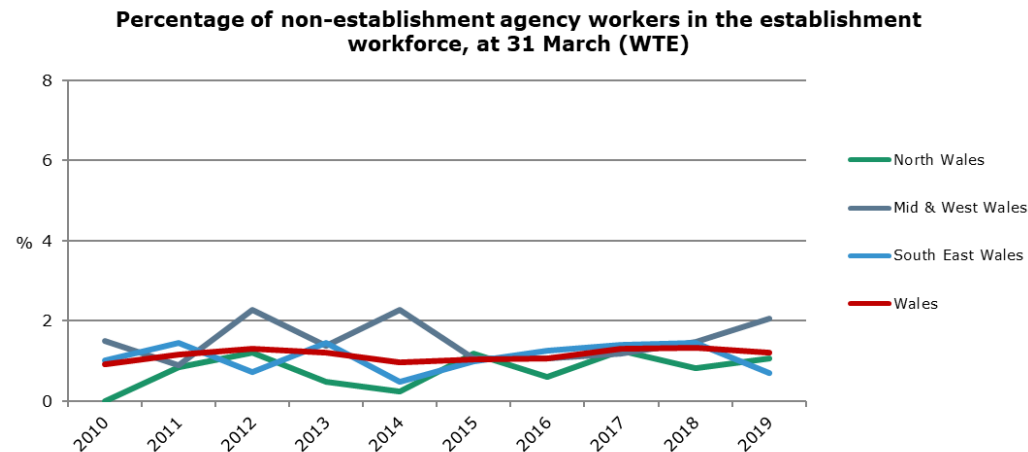


⁶ Vacancies held open are vacancies at 31 March which are not being actively recruited for.

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 decreased to 1.3%, compared to 2.8% in 2018. In North Wales, the use of agency workers increased from 3.7% to 4.4% and in South East Wales it increased from 2.5% to 3.8%. The overall effect was that the Wales figure increased from 2.9% to 3.1% between 2018 and 2019.



In local authorities, other agency workers that are not part of the funded establishment are used to supplement the social worker workforce. In 2019, Mid & West Wales used agency staff to provide the equivalent of a further 2.1% of their overall WTE establishment, compared to 1.5% in 2018, in South East Wales it was 0.7% compared to 1.5% in 2018, and in North Wales it was 1.1% compared to 0.8% in 2018.

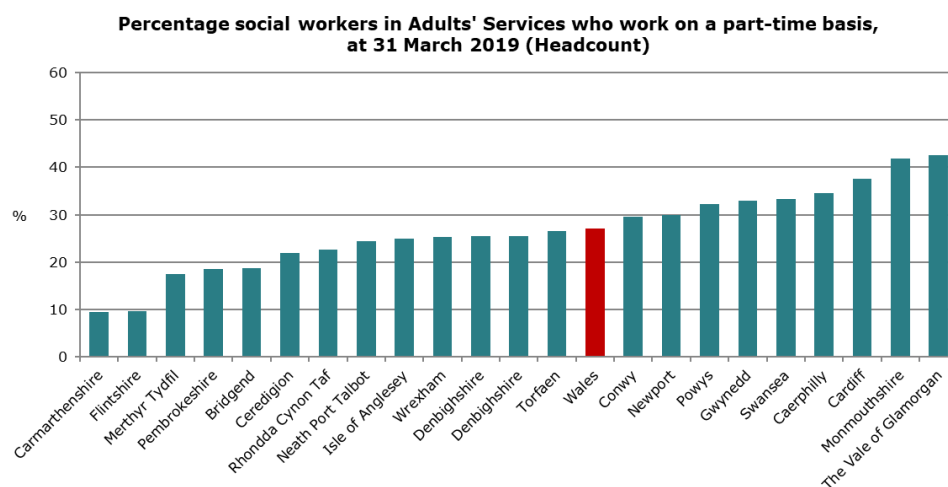


Adult's Services

Adults' Services employed 1,585 social workers at the end of March 2019. This was 41% of the total number of social workers employed by local authorities.

Since 2018, the number of social workers employed in Adults' Services increased by 4.8% (72 people).

27% of the social workers employed in Adults' Services were employed on a part-time basis in 2019 compared to 28% in 2018.



Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Adults' Services varied, with 23% in Mid & West Wales, no change from 2018, 31% in South East Wales compared to 32% in 2018 and 25% in North Wales compared to 26% in 2018.

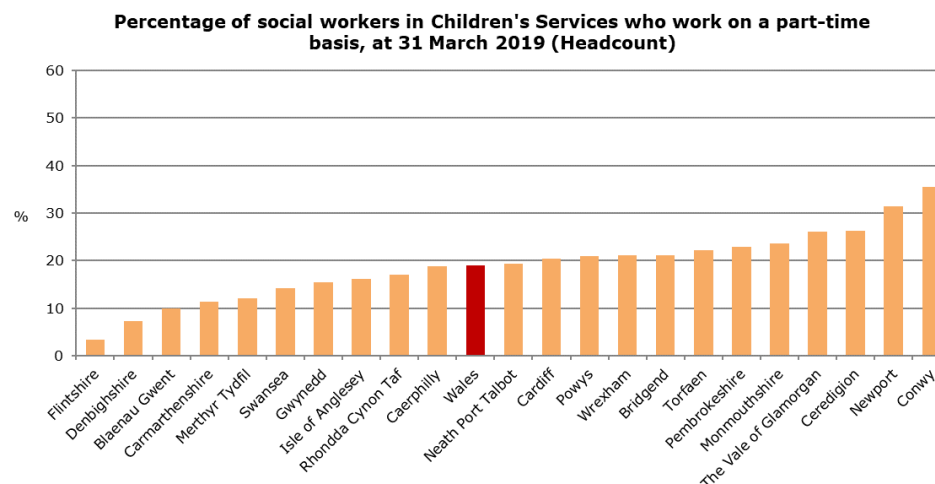
In 2019, Adults' Services filled 2.7% of their established funded WTE with agency workers compared to 2.3% in 2018. South East Wales saw an increase in their use of agency workers in Adults' Services, rising from 1.7% to 4% between 2018 and 2019. Between 2018 and 2019, both North Wales and Mid & West Wales saw a decrease in their use of agency workers, with North Wales dropping from 2% in 2018 to 0.5% in 2019 and Mid & West Wales dropping from 3.6% in 2018 to 2.3% in 2019.

Children's Services

Children's Services employed 1,694 social workers at the end of March 2019. This was 43% of the total number of social workers employed by the local authorities, no change from 2018.

Since 2018, the number of social workers employed in Children's Services has increased by 0.5% (8 people), the first increase in this figure since 2015.

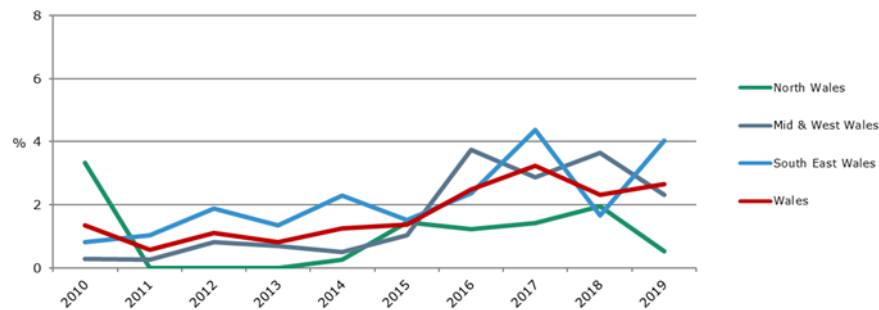
19% of the social workers employed in Children's Services were employed on a part-time basis, the same as the previous year.



Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in Children's Services varied, with 17% in North Wales, an increase from 13% in 2018, 17% in Mid & West Wales, a decrease from 21% in 2018, and 21% in South East Wales, an increase from 20% in 2018.

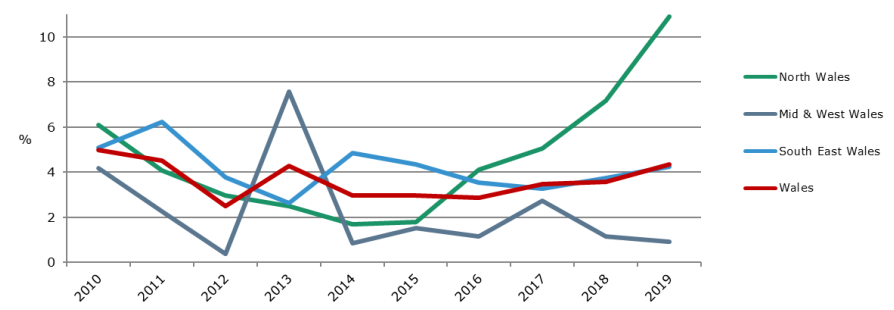
In 2019, Children's Services filled 4.3% of their established funded WTE with agency workers, an increase compared to 3.6% in 2018. Between 2018 and 2019, both North Wales and South East Wales increased their use of agency workers by 3.7 and 0.5 percentage points respectively. In Mid & West Wales there was a decrease of 0.2 percentage points to 0.9%.

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



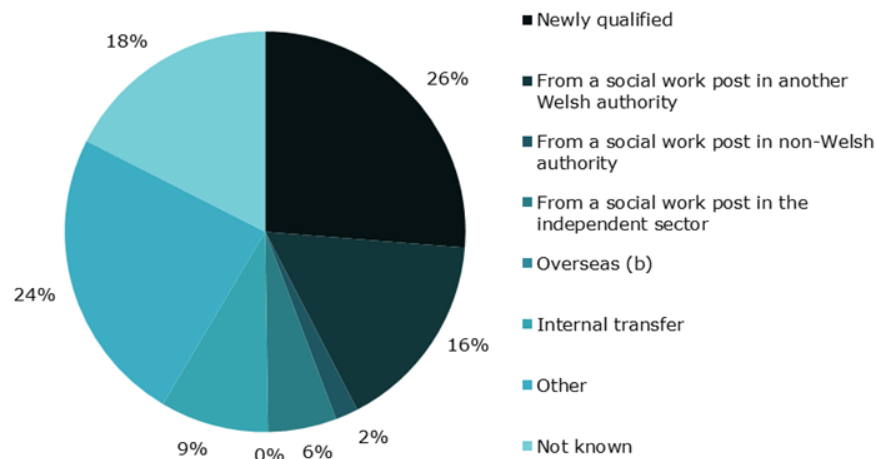
217 social workers 'joined' Adults' Services in 2018-19, compared to 210 in 2017-18. For 2018-19, 32% of these joined from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, a decrease of 8 percentage points compared to 2017-18. 26% of those joining were newly qualified compared to 30% in 2017-18. 24% joined Adults' Services for 'other' reasons and 18% of starters to Adults' Services joined for unknown reasons.

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



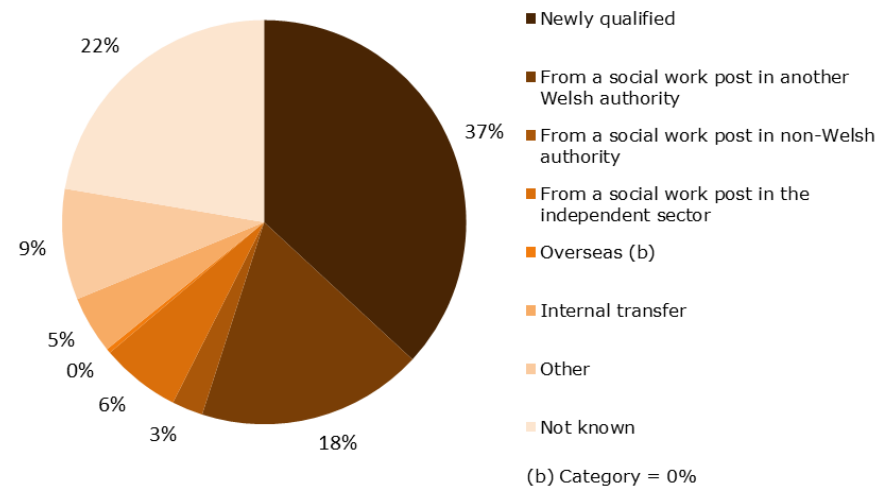
282 social workers 'joined' Children's Services in 2018-19, compared to 286 in 2017-18. 37% of these were newly qualified, compared to 40% in 2017-18, with 32% joining from other local authorities, the independent sector or from internal transfers, compared to 40% in 2017-18. The origin of 22% of starters was not recorded by authorities and 9% joined Children's Services for 'other' reasons.

Starters to Adults' Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)^(a)



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

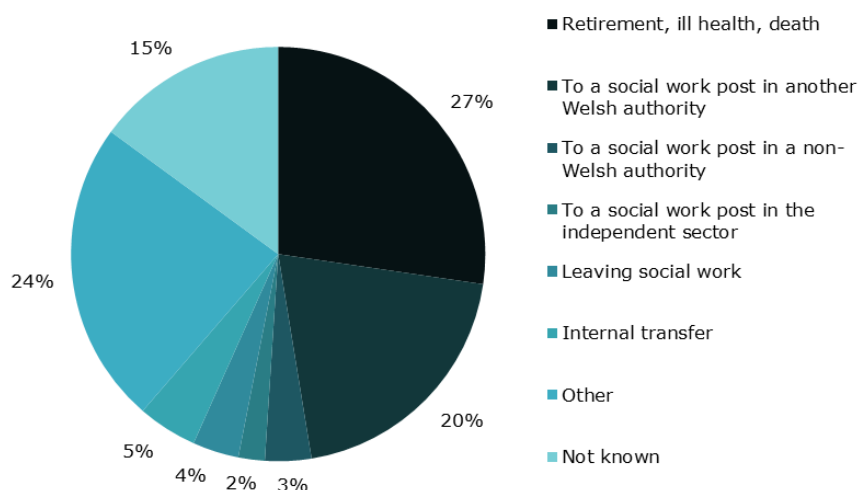
Starters to Children's Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)



272 social workers left Children's Services in 2018-19, compared to 255 in 2017-

194 social workers left Adults' Services in 2018-19, compared to 167 in 2017-18. For 2018-19, 4% of these left the social work profession, compared to 3% in 2017-18. 27% retired and a further 26% moved to another local authority or the independent sector. 24% left Adults' Services for 'other' reasons, while 15% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. 'Other' reasons included end of fixed term contract (3), resignation (3), health reasons (3), mutual agreement/settlement (2), leaving to join an agency (1) and dismissal (1).

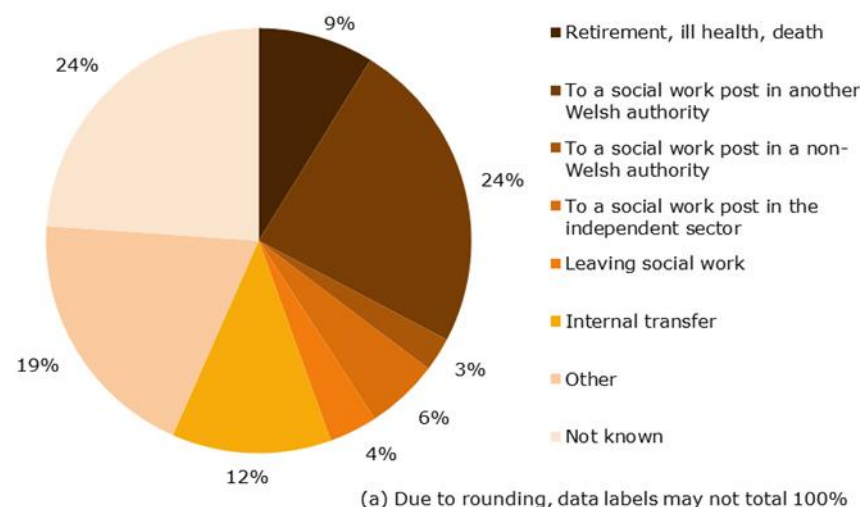
Leavers from Adults' Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)



The number of newly qualified starters to Adult's Services has decreased by 6 people from 2017-18 to 2018-19, and those from another Welsh authority decreased by 11 people. The number of starters for 'other' reasons increased by 46, while the number of starters whose reasons were unknown increased by 19.

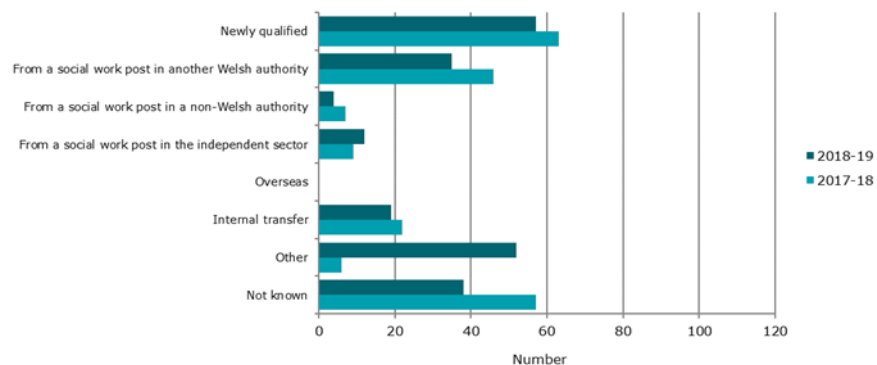
18. For 2018-19, 4% of these left the social work profession compared to 3% in 2017-18. 32% moved to another local authority or the independent sector compared to 35% in 2017-18, and 9% retired compared to 13% in 2017-18. 19% left Children's Services for 'other' reasons, while 24% of leavers' reasons were unknown to the authority. Other reasons included resignation (13), leaving to join an agency (7), dismissal (6), leaving to take a career break (5), end of fixed term contract (2) and redundancy (1).

Leavers from Children's Services, 2018-19 (Headcount)^(a)

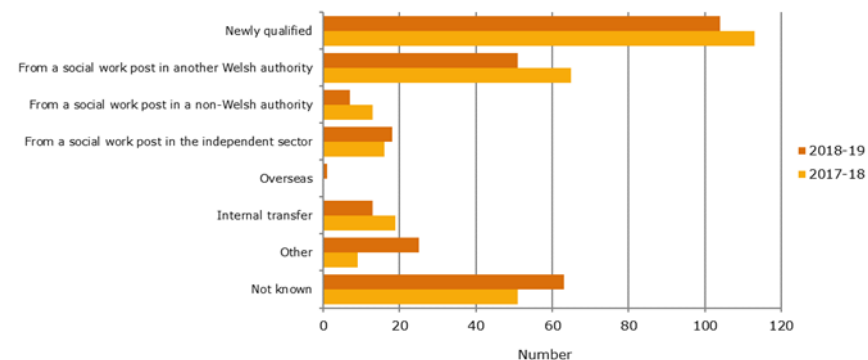


The number of newly qualified starters to Children's Services has decreased by 9 people from 2017-18 to 2018-19. Starters from another Welsh local authority decreased from 65 to 51 since 2017-18. Internal transfers have decreased by 6 people between 2017-18 and 2018-19. Starters who joined for unknown reasons have increased by 12 people.

Starters to Adults' Services (Headcount)



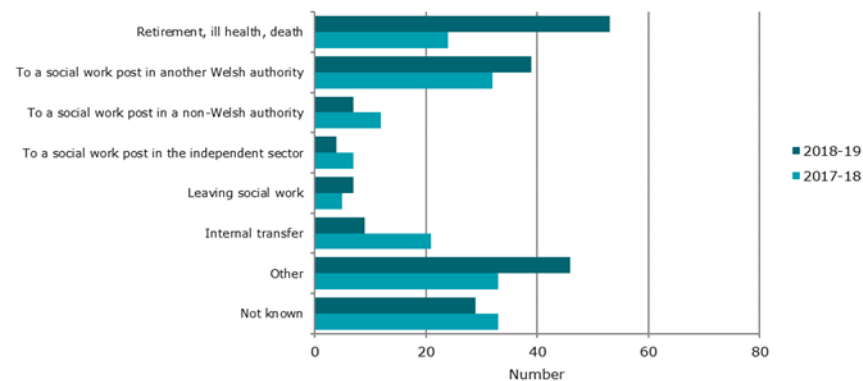
Starters to Children's Services (Headcount)



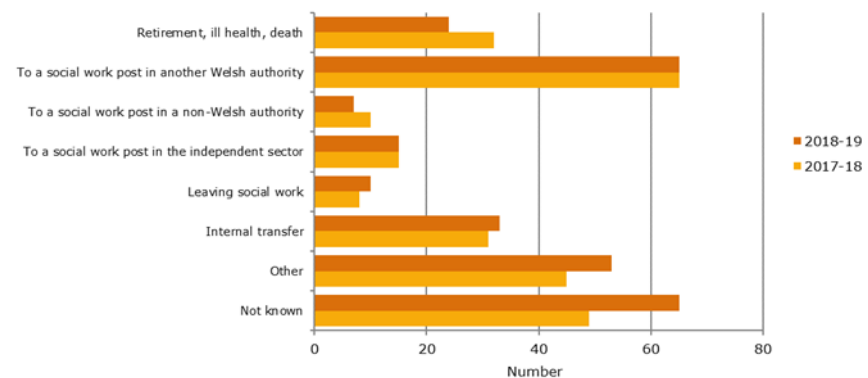
The number of social workers who left Adults' Services to another Welsh local authority increased by 22% from 32 to 39 between 2017-18 and 2018-19. The number of social workers who left on an internal decreased from 21 in 2017-18 to 9 in 2018-19. The number of social workers leaving for 'other' reasons has increased by 13 people compared to 2017-18, with leavers due to unknown reasons decreasing by 4 people.

The number of social workers who left Children's Services has increased by 7% from 255 to 272 since 2017-18. Social workers leaving to another Welsh local authority has remained the same at 31 between 2017-18 and 2018-19. 'Other' reasons for leaving increased by 8 people with leavers due to unknown reasons increasing by 16 people since 2017-18.

Leavers from Adults' Services (Headcount)



Leavers from Children's Services (Headcount)

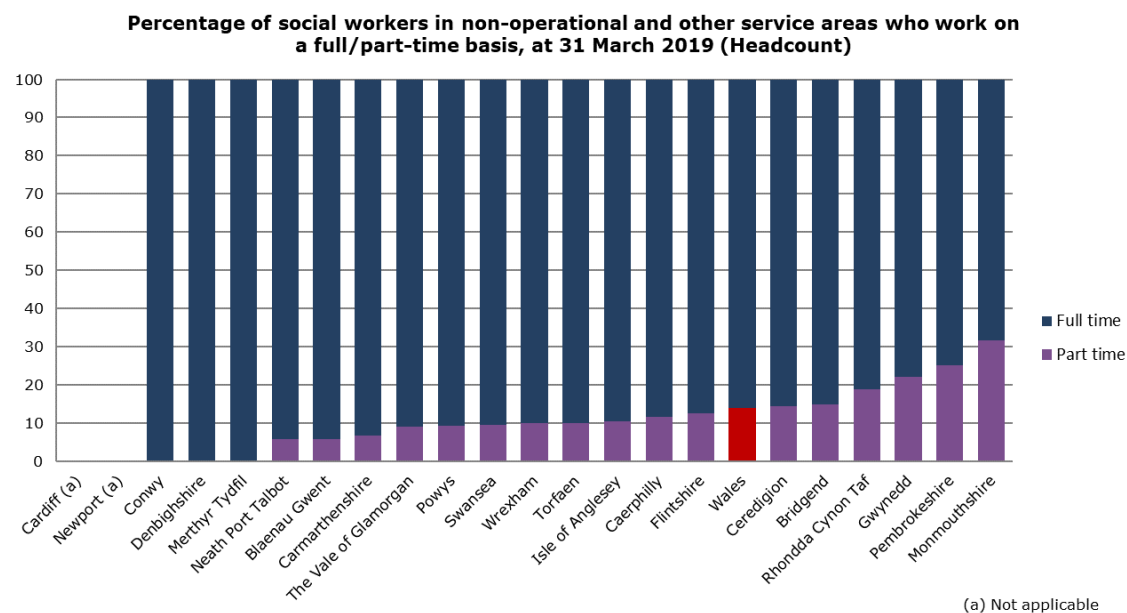


Social workers in non-operational roles and other service areas⁷

Across Wales, 622 people were employed in other roles where a social work qualification was deemed to be essential at the end of March 2019, compared to 699 in 2018. This represents a decrease of 11% (77 people) compared to 2018. 16% of social workers across local authorities were in these roles at the end of March 2019, compared to 18% in 2018. 14% of these were employed on a part-time basis, compared to 13% in 2018.

Regionally, the use of part-time social workers in other roles varied with 13% in North Wales in 2019, compared to 9% in 2018; 11% in Mid & West Wales in 2019, compared to 13% in 2018; and 16% in South East Wales, compared to 15% in 2018.

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

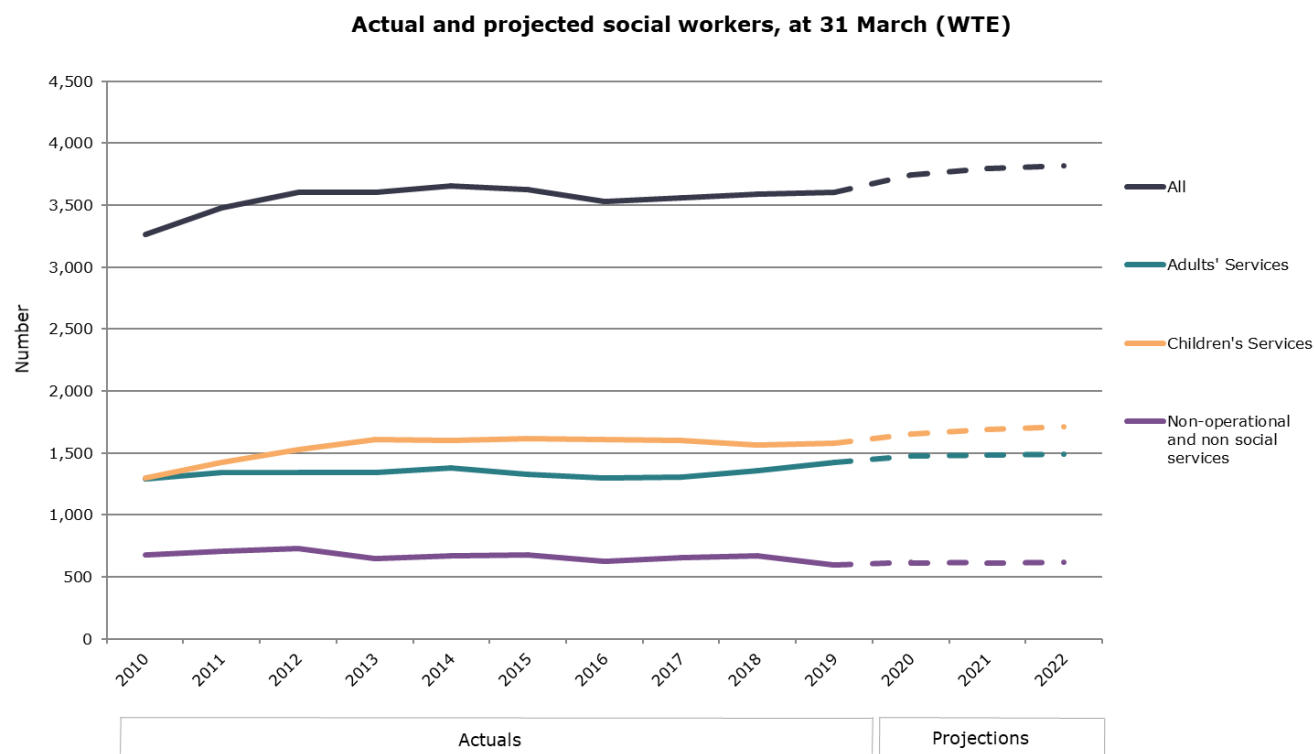


⁷ Non-operational roles and other service areas are posts within the local authority where a social work qualification is deemed mandatory by the local authority.

Projected social worker workforce requirements⁸

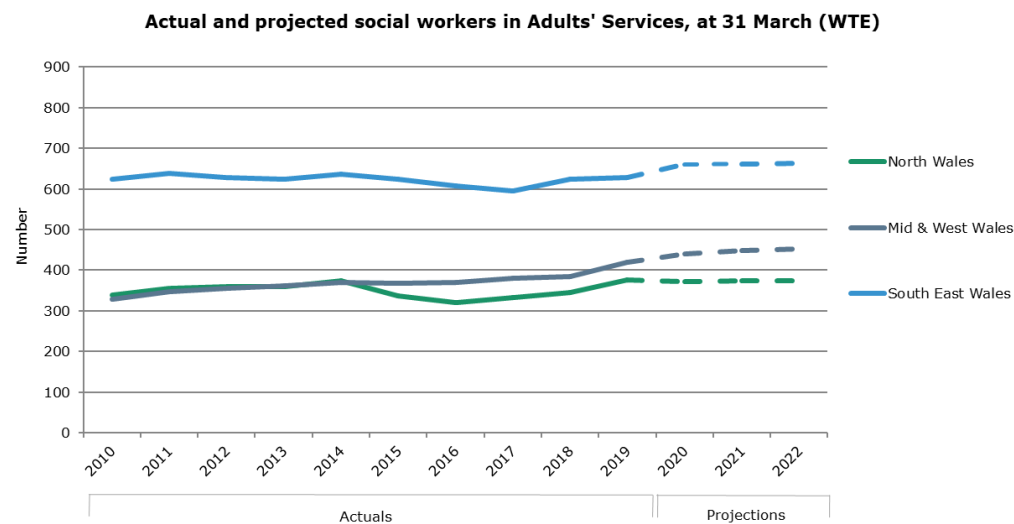
In 2017-18, local authorities projected an overall 4% increase to 3,745 WTE social workers by the end of 2020-21. Again, in 2018-19, the total number (WTE) of local authority social workers is projected to increase, this time by a higher rate of 6%, to a projected 3,822 WTE by the end of 2021-22.

Over the same three-year period, the numbers employed in Adults' and Children's Services are projected to increase by 5% and 8% respectively, whilst the number employed in non-operational or other roles is projected to increase by 4%.

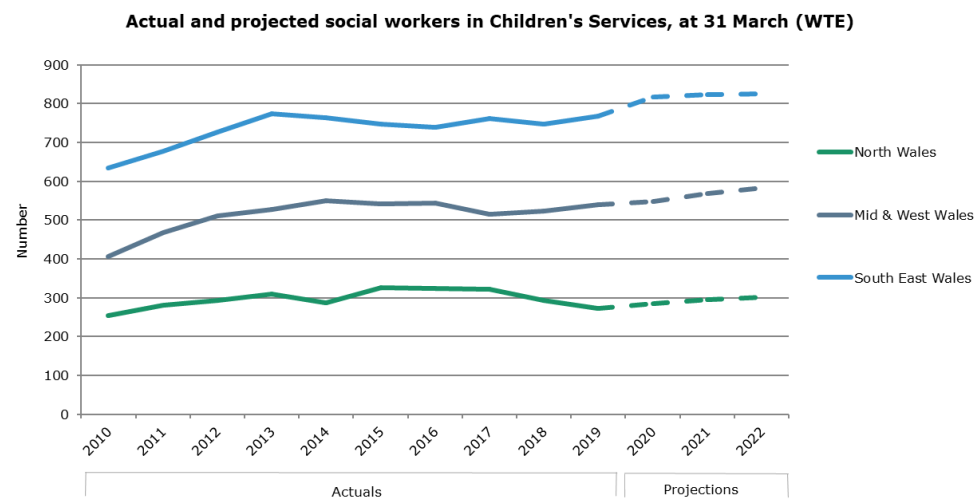


⁸ All figures in this section have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

In Adults' Services, North Wales anticipate no change in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2021-22, Mid & West Wales anticipate an increase of 8% and South East Wales anticipate an increase of 5% in the number (WTE) of social workers.

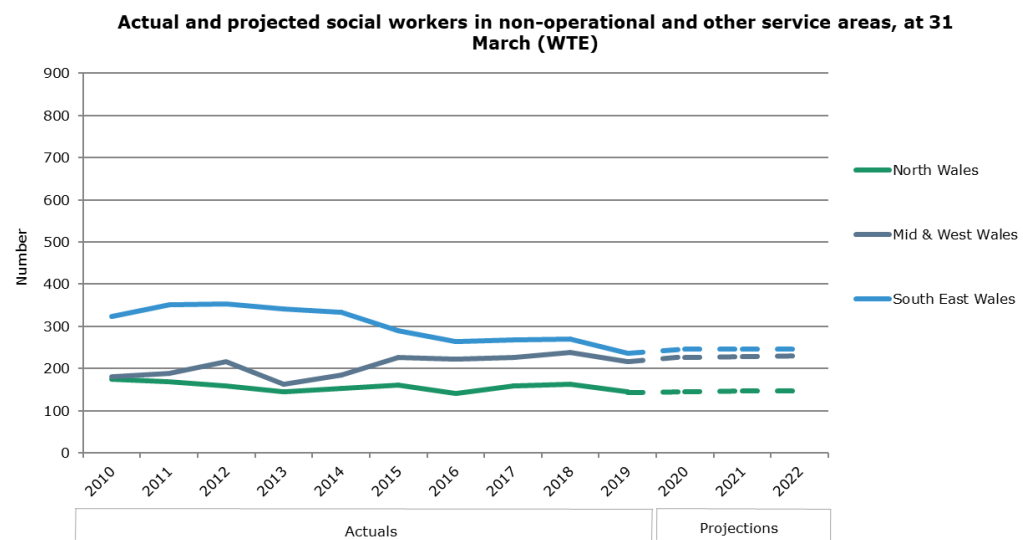


In Children's Services, North Wales anticipate a 10% increase in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2021-22. Over the same three-year period, Mid & West Wales anticipate an 8% increase and South East Wales anticipate an increase of 7% in the number (WTE) of their social worker workforce.



Projected social worker workforce

In non-operational and other service areas, Mid & West Wales anticipate a 6% increase in the number (WTE) of social workers by the end of 2021-22. South East Wales anticipate an increase of 4% in this period and North Wales anticipate an increase of 2%.



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