

# The State of the Children's Social Care Workforce 2008 summary report

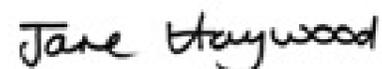
A profile of the children's social care workforce in England

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## Foreword

This State of the Children's Social Care Workforce is the first of its kind for CWDC. This report complements a similar publication from Skills for Care which focuses on the adult social care workforce (Skills for Care, 2008). Used together, these reports create a picture of the social care workforce in England.

The report draws together the main statistical information available for the children's social care workforce, including key data on the different occupational groups, the numbers employed and their characteristics. We hope that it will be a useful aid to workforce planning across England. The report brings together what workforce information is already known and available; it also identifies the gaps. We believe that this report will provide an important start to understanding the social care workforce, their skills and the strategies that can help them to become the best they can be.



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## 1. Introduction

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) has reviewed all the available information and data on the children's social care workforce in England. For this report we have taken this workforce to include children and family social workers, residential carers, foster carers, education welfare staff, family court advisers, support workers and volunteers.

This workforce is employed by a range of organisations including local authorities, who are major employers and commissioners of services, as well as private and voluntary organisations. The information in this report covers social care staff who work in all these settings.

This summary includes data on the number of staff employed and their characteristics. It also includes information on each occupation, recruitment and retention issues, training and qualifications, and pay and rewards.

A review of key workforce issues and policy initiatives underpins the analysis in this report and provides an understanding of the background to the changes in children's services. An underlying theme of the report is the need to improve the availability and use of workforce data to better support workforce planning in children's social care, nationally, regionally and locally.

This report is designed as an accessible 'quick read' of the main findings. The main report<sup>1</sup> provides details of the full research and data.

<sup>1</sup> The State of the Children's Social Care Workforce 2008 (main report)

## 2. Key workforce issues and major policy initiatives

Since 2004, implementing Every Child Matters<sup>2</sup> and developing integrated services have been key drivers for change in the way that services for children, young people and families are delivered. Changing work patterns and higher expectations of the existing and future workforce are also significant drivers for change.

Progress has been made in improving service delivery in recent years, though the latest annual OFSTED<sup>3</sup> report states that there is still considerable room for improvement (OFSTED, 2007). The sector relies on a diverse range of organisations to deliver its services which increases the complexity of people management. It also means that there may be significant variation in organisational culture and working environments. The workforce is varied and this has an impact on the ability to attract, recruit and retain a suitably skilled workforce in some occupational groups. Recruitment and retention issues also vary by occupation and region. The workforce is predominantly female (although the proportion

of men is higher at management level) and has a higher than average proportion of part-time workers.

During the last three years there have been a number of key workforce development initiatives relevant to the children's social care workforce. The full report provides a detailed outline of the developments arising from Options for Excellence (DfES/DH<sup>4</sup>, 2006), the Children's Workforce Strategy (DfES, 2005), Care Matters: Time for Change (DfES, 2007), the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), Building Brighter Futures: Next Steps for the Children's Workforce (DCSF, 2008) and related initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education and Skills /Department of Health

### 3. Methodology and data sources

The report is primarily based on desk research of existing data sources, complemented by primary research where feasible. There are disparities in the availability of data. This ranges from the local authority sector which is relatively well served, to the private and voluntary sectors which, up to now, have provided less information.

The main source of data for the local authority sector is the official annual staffing return, compiled by the Information Centre for Health and Social Care (IC, 2007). This is dovetailed with other official or employer sources e.g. data from the Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group (LAWIG, 2007). These sources are now being overtaken by developments such as the reform of children's services, setting up of children's services in local authorities, and changes in the workforce to reflect service needs.

In the private and voluntary sectors, a longstanding lack of workforce data is now being addressed by the development of the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC), which has been launched by Skills for Care and CWDC to capture data from the whole of social care. To date there have been fewer responses from the children's

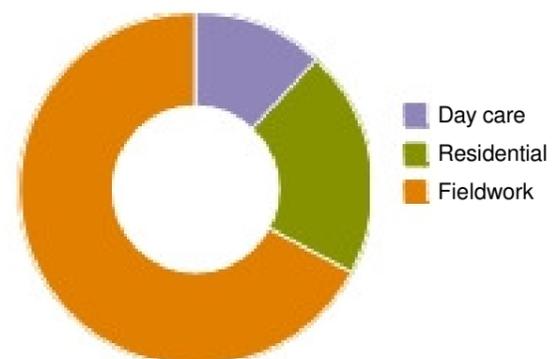
sector, although there are useful data for residential care. The NMDS-SC will be an invaluable tool to aid understanding of the nature and development of services in the private, voluntary and statutory sectors as it becomes embedded across the whole of social care.

There remain many gaps in the data: areas of the workforce so far not covered at all (including significant parts of the voluntary and private sectors); areas of partial coverage with 'grey areas' (e.g. a large part of the local authority workforce); gaps in occupational coverage (particularly in new and emerging occupations); and various inconsistencies in data classifications, the timing of collections, and variation in methodologies e.g. the methodology used for making estimates from sample responses.

## 4. The children's social care workforce

**4.1 The statutory sector.** In 2006 the local authority social care workforce specifically working with children totalled around 55,000 headcount staff, equating to 46,700 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. Around 67% were in fieldwork employment, 12% were in day care and 21% in residential care and special needs establishments (Figure 1).

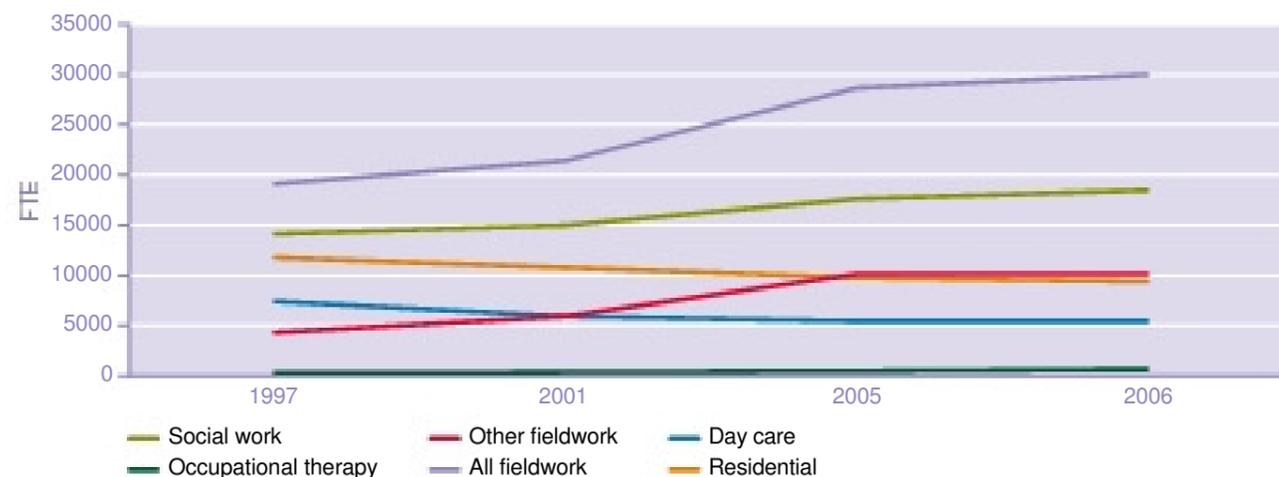
**Figure 1: the local authority workforce (Sept 2006)**



Source: Local authority staffing return SSDS001 (2006)

Local authority employment grew by 15% from 1997-2006, mainly due to a 58% rise in fieldwork, whilst day care and residential employment fell by 29% and 19% respectively (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 : Local authority employment (1997-2006)**



Source: Information Centre for Health and Social Care, 2007

A further 5,500 agency staff (FTE) were engaged in the children's social care workforce in 2006, equating to around 13% of the total workforce, at an estimated cost of £110 million.

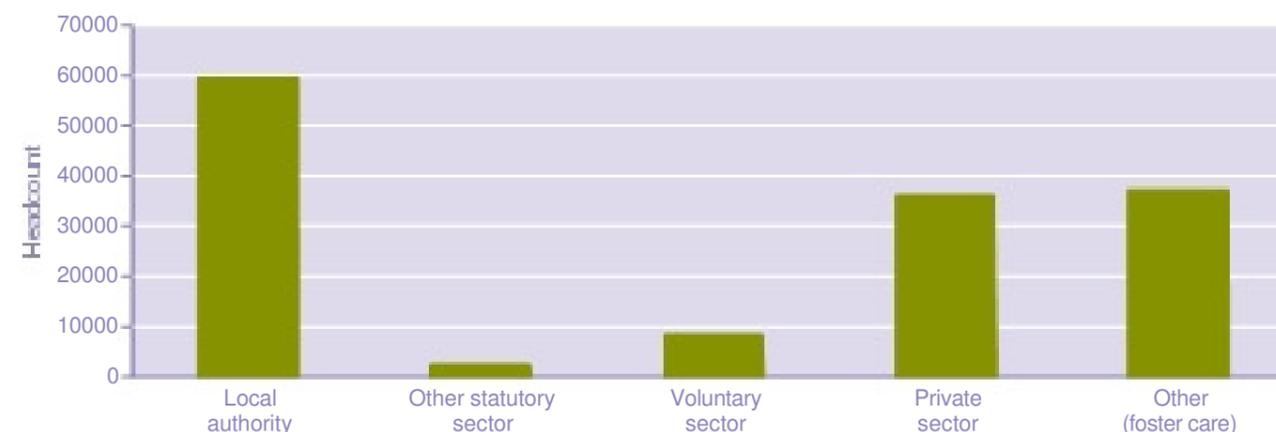
In 2006, 92% of local authorities reported using agency staff (either long-term or short term) most commonly to cover absence (89%), cover vacancies (79%) or for short-term assignments (55%).

Over two thirds (68%) of the workforce are full time, 80% are female, 11% are of minority ethnic origin, and around 70% are aged between 25 and 49 years.

There are a further 96,400 staff working in local authority social care who may be involved in working with children, including home care workers (48,000), strategic and central staff (23,000), social workers in generic, health and specialist settings (23,000) and 2,800 senior managers in operational divisions.

Finally, over 5,000 education welfare officers are employed by local authorities and there are estimated to be around 2,950 staff working in children's social care elsewhere in the statutory children's social care sector, including 1,850 workers in Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS), and 1,050 lead inspectors at OFSTED.

**Figure 3 : Distribution of employment across children's social care**



Main sources: local authority - IC, 2007; other statutory sources - unpublished employer sources; voluntary and private sectors - Skills for Care 2005; other (foster care) - Fostering Network, 2006

### 4.2 The private and voluntary sectors.

Estimates for this report, based on the NMDS-SC, show that 25,340 staff work in just over 1,300 voluntary and private children's residential homes and that 7,180 staff work in fostering and adoption agencies (excluding foster and adoption carers). These estimates exclude significant community based services for which the data are not yet adequate.

Considering the workforce in residential homes, the vast majority (75%) work in direct care/support roles, with the remainder in managerial roles (18%), 1% in professional roles, and 5% in other roles. 88% of the

workforce were full-time, 63% were female, and 16% were of minority ethnic origin, and the average age of all staff was 38.5 years. Length of service of staff with their present employers reflects relatively high turnover (see paragraph 6.2), with 47% of staff starting between 2005 and 2007, and 41% between 2000 and 2004.

**4.3 Foster care.** In 2006 there were estimated to be 37,000 foster families in England, a rise from an estimated 21,000 families in England in 1995.

**4.4 Volunteers.** National research on volunteering (National Centre for Social Research & Institute of Volunteering Research, 2007) suggests that there may be around 2 million people engaged in formal volunteering across the children and young people's sector each month (other than in schools or education settings). It is not known how much of this is in social care.

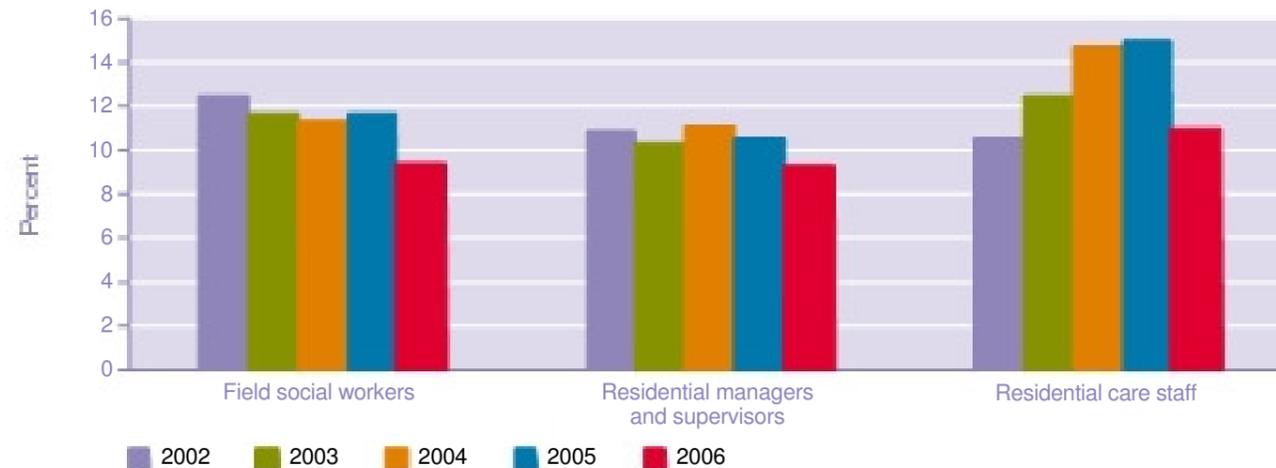
**4.5 Overview of employment across all sectors.** On current information the total workforce in social care occupations covered by CWDC totals 168,340 staff (including paid staff and foster carers, but not volunteers). This is almost certainly an underestimate, as information for the private and voluntary sector is not comprehensive, and there is undercounting of staff in local authorities. Some occupational data are imprecise due to lack of fit between the role descriptions and the data sources.

## 5. Recruitment and retention

Effective recruitment and retention of staff are key objectives for employers to ensure that people are in the right place at the right time to deliver high quality services. Local authorities are taking a number of different actions to tackle recruitment and retention including establishing career pathways, workforce planning and succession planning.

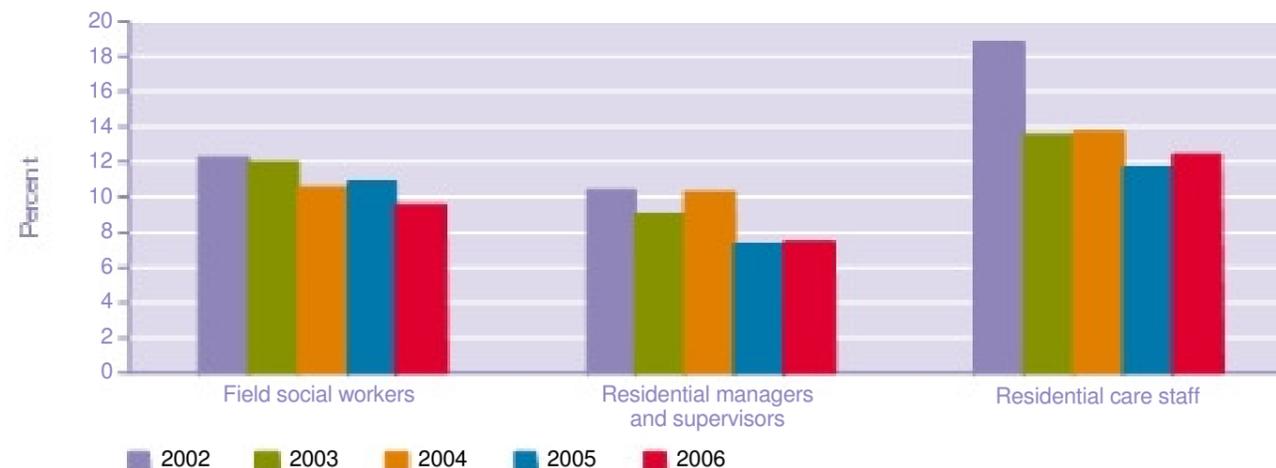
**5.1 Local authorities.** The overall annual turnover rate was 9.9% in 2006, and the average vacancy rate was 9.8%, and rates generally fell between 2005 and 2006. For example, for field social workers, vacancies fell from 11.8% to 9.5%; turnover fell from 11.0% to 9.6% (Figures 4a and 4b).

**Figure 4a : Local authority vacancy rates ( 2002-2006 )**



Source: Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group ( 2007 )

**Figure 4b: Local authority turnover rates ( 2002-2006 )**



Source: Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group ( 2007 )

Reports of recruitment difficulties showed little change in 2005-2006, with two thirds of councils reporting recruitment difficulties for social workers. Retention difficulties were lower varying between 47% of authorities for field social workers and 7% for residential managers, also showing little change over 2005 to 2006.

Expenditure on recruitment advertising fell by 32% in 2006, reflecting lower levels of turnover and use of a wider variety of recruitment methods, including internet recruitment.

### Case Study: Leeds City Council

The trainee social work scheme is a key part of the recruitment and retention strategy to address the national shortage of qualified social workers, and was established in 2004 in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University. It provides recruits with an opportunity to obtain a professional social work qualification whilst in salaried employment within the local authority social work services, and enables trainees to gain valuable work experience within the Council before undertaking the social work degree full-time. They then return to work as qualified social workers for a minimum of three years.

### Case Study: Norfolk County Council

The aim of the 'Fostering Norfolk's Future' campaign was to use media and marketing to raise the profile of fostering, recruit new carers and to free up the fostering teams, allowing them more time to develop relationships with carers. The campaign cost just £1,700 but generated £78,000 of media coverage and contributed to the recruitment of 40 new carers.

The campaign was focused in four phases over six months and was launched by a 20 year old foster carer who had been in care herself and fitted the exact profile of new carers needed. Norfolk has received excellent comments from other local authorities. The campaign has been commended by other councils and the Fostering Network, and was awarded the campaign top prize in the 'PR on a shoestring' category at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations annual local government conference.

**5.2 Private and voluntary sectors.** Vacancy rates averaged 8.1% in voluntary homes and 5.6% in private homes, and were highest for care workers, for whom they were 16.1% and 7.9% respectively. Turnover tended to be higher than in councils for all staff, averaging 22.6% in the private sector and 13.0% in voluntary sector homes; whilst turnover of care workers averaged 28.2% in the private sector and 18.7% in the voluntary sector. The main reasons for leaving jobs were personal or career development reasons, the main destinations of leavers and origins of recruits were other jobs in the children's sector.

## 6. Training, qualifications and skills issues

**6.1 Local Authorities.** Local authorities were supporting almost 3,000 people through their initial social work training in 2005/6, equivalent to 7% of the social worker workforce. 1,000 qualified in that year, equivalent to 5% of the workforce.

There was also a high level of training of registered managers, with 83% holding qualifications and 32% studying for qualifications.

Between 2000/1 and 2006/7, the number of staff achieving post-qualifying awards in child care (CCA) each year rose from 49 in 2000/1 to 691 in 2006/7 (note: these awards are mainly but not exclusively held by local authority staff).

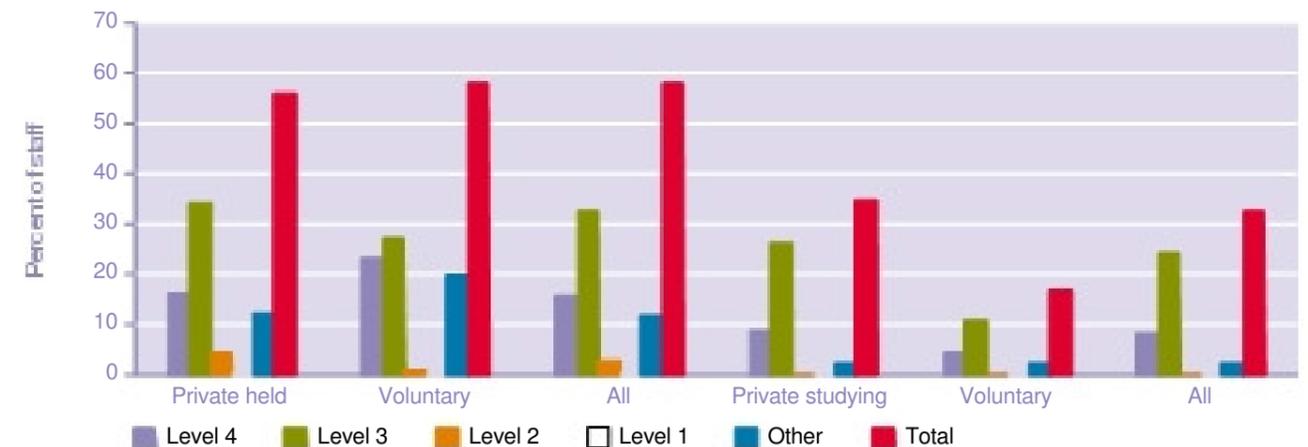
Local authorities report using a wide range of training initiatives to tackle shortages of social workers and other staff groups, including: improved training, developing career pathways, reviewing their skills mix and undertaking workforce planning; which were having a beneficial effect on shortages. In 2006, in 83% of authorities the whole of the children's social care workforce was covered by Investors in People (IiP), in a further 7% of authorities the whole workforce was committed, and 9% were either not yet involved or had considered and rejected IiP.

**6.2 Private and voluntary sector.** Of all staff in children's homes, 58% held one or more qualification, of which 33% were at Level 3, 16% at Level 4, and 3% at Level 2. (Figure 5). The main ones were Caring for Children and Young People NVQ Level 3 (24%) and Care/Health and Social Care NVQs (22%).

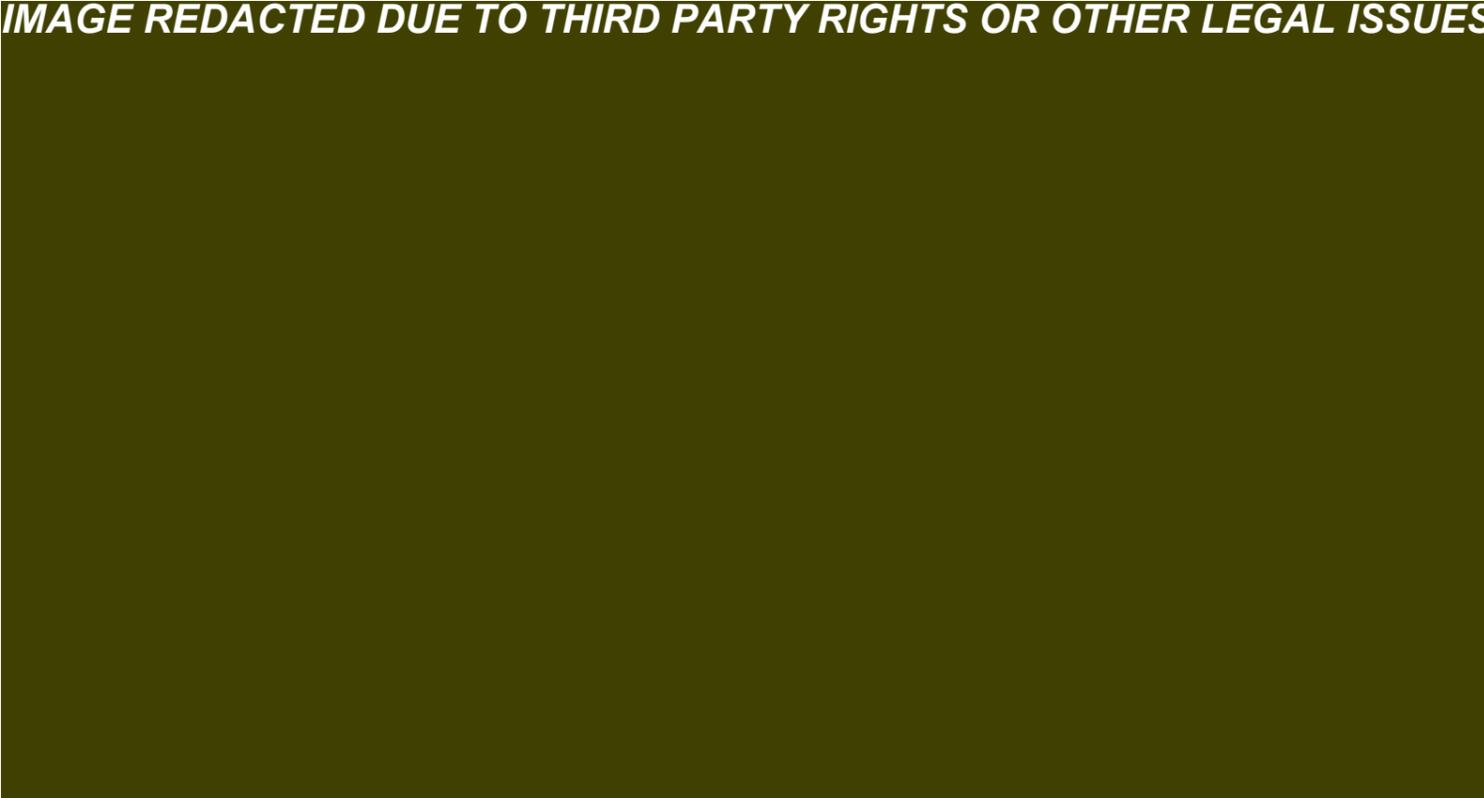
A third (33%) of all staff in children's homes were working towards qualifications, with almost a quarter of all staff (24%) working towards a Level 3 qualification, and 8% a Level 4 (Figure 5). The main ones were Care/Health and Social Care NVQs (15%), and Caring for Children and Young People NVQ Level 3 (11%).

Almost half of all staff (45%) worked in homes where IiP is recognised, 10% in homes which are committed, and 26% in homes which neither recognise nor are committed to IiP (20% not recorded).

**Figure 5 : Qualifications held and being studied for by staff of voluntary and private sector children's homes ( 2007)**



Source: National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (December 2007)



## 7. Rewards

**7.1 Local authorities.** In 2006 average salaries were highest for social work team leaders and registered managers (£37,300 and £35,200 respectively), followed by social workers and occupational therapists (£31,000 and £30,800 respectively). For social workers, salaries were highest in London (around 14% higher than the national average), and were lowest in the Eastern and the North West regions (6% lower than the national average) and West Midlands (5% below the national average).

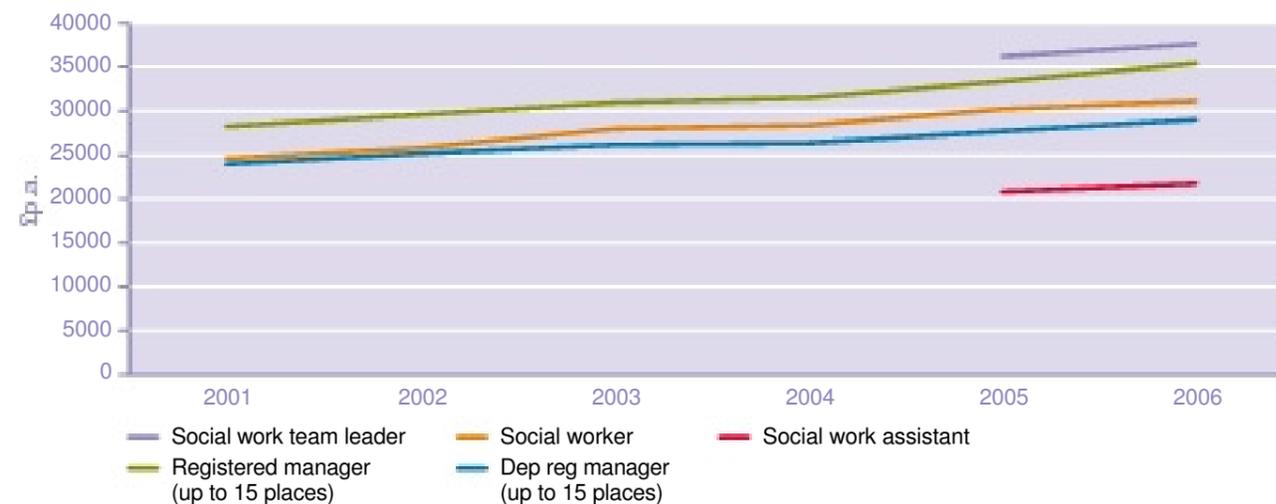
Just over a fifth of social work and occupational therapy posts were regraded in the previous year, reflecting the effects both of local pay reviews and of labour market pressures, whilst 15-16% of posts received market supplements.

Over the 2001 to 2006 period the highest average pay rises were for residential care staff (+34%) compared with social workers and residential managers (+26% and 27% respectively) (Figure 6).

The availability of non-pay benefits varied widely, the most common being essential car user allowances (availability ranging between 69% of occupational therapy posts and 0% of care staff posts), flexitime (between 40% and 19% of posts), career break opportunities (46%-33%) and the payment of professional fees (34%-7%).

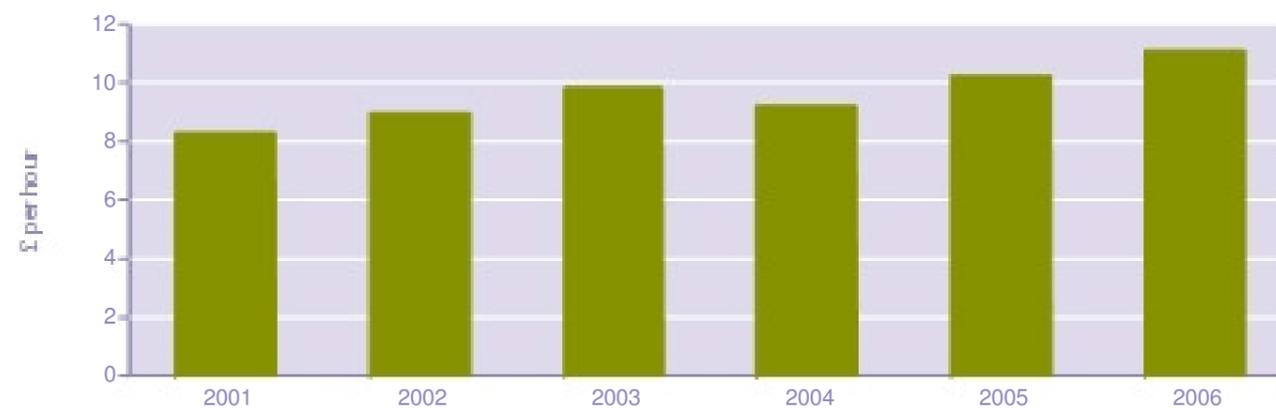
**7.2 Private and voluntary sectors.** There is some evidence that salaries for care staff in the private sector are between 12% and 7% higher than in the voluntary sector.

Figure 6 : Changes in average (mean) local authority salaries ( 2001-2006 )



Source: Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group ( 2007 )

Figure 7: Changes in average (mean) local authority hourly pay rates for residential care staff ( 2001-2006 )



Source: Local Authority Workforce Intelligence Group ( 2007 )

## 8. Developing and remodelling the workforce

The Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper (DfES, 2007) described workforce remodelling as:

“Building a modern workforce where education, social care, health and youth justice deliver integrated and multi-agency support to improve outcomes for children and young people. It will help shift the focus towards preventive work, achieve efficiency savings and build a workforce capable of adapting and innovating to meet future needs. In considering future need we will look at new methods, roles, technology, changing demand and service user expectations. (p.126)”

Recent and current work to develop the children’s social care workforce includes:

- the establishment and extension of the Social Care Register for people who have been trained and assessed as fit to be in the workforce;
- developing the role of the Lead Professional, who coordinates provision and act as a single point of contact for a child and their family when a range of services are involved;
- enabling social workers to spend more time on core work with children and families by modernising their working tools including further investment in ICT to enable social workers to work flexibly and make more efficient use of their time.

Remodelling pilots,<sup>5</sup> based on social work teams, are building on the remodelling work already being carried out in local areas by developing practical tools to support dissemination of good practice as well as learning from remodelling that has taken place in schools and the health service.

CWDC’s New Types of Worker programme is encouraging workforce development initiatives in social care that are firmly located in the integrated services agenda.

Other work includes:

- incorporating the Training, Support and Development Standards for foster care into the planned revision of the National Minimum Standards and further developing Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care;
- learning from international examples of practice on social pedagogy (which addresses all aspects of children’s well-being including their social, emotional, health and educational development) and approaches to social care in children’s services plus establishing and evaluating pilots in residential care;
- the development of independent social work practices for looked after children;
- the general pay reviews in local authorities and proposed reform of the national reward framework are providing opportunities to develop the pay and conditions of social care staff in the local authority sector.

The full report considers the implications of these initiatives for the children’s social care workforce with particular reference to five occupational groups: children’s social workers; residential child care staff and managers; foster carers; family support workers; and domiciliary care workers working with children and young people.

<sup>5</sup> This work is being led by CWDC

## 9. Conclusions

At all levels (national, regional and local) relevant and fit for purpose data are needed to inform developments in services and the workforce, to underpin workforce planning. There is no one single model of workforce planning, nor is it a mechanistic or static process. Essentially it is about analysing the current workforce, and extending the analysis to identify the future skills and competences needed to deliver new and improved services. Such an analysis can highlight shortages, surpluses and competency gaps and the reasons for these.

The local authority sector is well served by data sources which provide 'baseline' data on workforce numbers, characteristics and current issues such as recruitment and retention. However, the reorganisation of services and the emergence of new ways of working (involving changes in the occupational map of the workforce) mean that the sources now do not fully map and describe the children's social care workforce. These changes, along with continuing workforce and labour market demands, including recruitment and retention, and the need to source new and emerging occupational categories, underline the need for workforce data which are fit for current purposes.

In the voluntary and private sectors longstanding gaps in data on services and the workforce are now being filled by the NMDS-SC, and this study has used data from this source for provisional workforce analysis of children's homes. Steps have been taken to enable local authorities to participate fully in the NMDS-SC, and this will be a way of tackling the workforce information gaps in the sector.

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**The Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC's) vision is to build a world-class workforce for children, young people and families.**

CWDC exists to improve the lives of children, young people, their families and carers by ensuring that all people working with them have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice. It also helps children and young people's organisations and services to work together better so that the child is at the centre of all services.

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