



## Statistical First Release

### Children's Social Work Workforce during year ending 30 September 2014

#### These are Experimental Statistics

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**26,810** The number of children's social workers reported to be employed in English local authorities at 30 September 2014. This is equivalent to 24,620 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

**16** The number of children in need per FTE children's social worker.

**4,320** The number of FTE vacancies reported at 30 September 2014. Local authorities estimate they need 4,570 social workers to fill these posts. The FTE vacancy rate reported at 30 September 2014 was 15%.

**4,430** The number of agency social workers employed by local authorities at 30 September 2014. This is equivalent to 4,310 FTEs.

**4,630** The number of children's social workers that were reported to have commenced employment during the year ending 30 September 2014. This is equivalent to 4,420 FTEs.

**4,400** The number of children's social workers that were reported to have left their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2014. This is equivalent to 4,060 FTEs. The FTE turnover rate reported during the year ending 30 September 2014 was 17%.

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## 1. Background and Context

This experimental Statistical First Release (SFR) provides national and local level information on the Children’s Social Work Workforce in English local authorities in the year ending 30 September 2014. This is the second SFR published using the Children’s Social Work Workforce data collection. In recognition that this is a new data collection we are publishing these as “experimental statistics”. This year, comparisons have not been made in this release to figures covering the year ending 30 September 2013 as differences are likely to be associated with improvements in data quality – we will review the time series as part of next year’s publication (for further information see the [“data quality”](#) section).

A “social worker” is defined as:

*A social worker that is registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), and either working in a local authority in a children’s services department or (if working in an authority where the services are joined up) a social worker that works exclusively on children and families work.*

This includes social workers regardless of managerial responsibilities or caseloads.

Information was collected on headcounts and full-time equivalents (FTEs).

The numbers of children in need (CiN) per social worker are calculated using the number of children in need at 31 March 2014 from the Children in Need Census. Note that the number of social workers is as at 30 September. These estimates are provided for comparative purposes only and are not a robust estimation of caseload. A link to the CiN release is included in the [“Want more?”](#) section.

## 2. Findings (Tables 1 and Figure 1)

Table 1 and figure 1 below show how the findings on page one compare across the country.

Table 1: Findings vary across the country

Number of children in need (CiN) per children’s social worker, vacancy, agency worker, turnover and absence rates (FTEs)

	Number of CiN per social worker	Vacancy rate (%)	Agency worker rate (%)	Turnover rate (%)	Absence <sup>1</sup> rate (%)
<b>England</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
North East	15	6	8	12	5
North West	16	11	12	15	5
Yorkshire And The Humber	13	8	8	14	4
East Midlands	20	15	13	15	4
West Midlands	18	17	18	16	5
East Of England	17	18	17	16	3
London	16	22	22	21	3
Inner London	14	16	18	21	3
Outer London	17	27	26	22	2
South East	16	18	16	19	3
South West	16	11	12	15	4

<sup>1</sup> Absence rate includes long-term sickness

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The Midlands have the highest reported number of children in need per social worker whilst the Northern regions have the lowest rates

East Midlands and West Midlands reported the highest number of children in need per social worker at 30 September 2014. The East of England also reported a ratio higher than the national average. West Midlands also reported vacancy and agency worker rates above the national average.

North East and Yorkshire and the Humber reported the lowest number of children in need per social worker, and also the lowest vacancy, turnover and agency worker rates.

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There are large differences between Inner and Outer London.

London reported high vacancy, turnover and agency worker rates, driven mostly by Outer London.

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### 3. Voluntary variables

New voluntary variables were included in the 2013-14 collection covering:

- The number of children’s social workers with direct case management or oversight
- Age bands of children’s social workers
- Time in service at local authority for children’s social workers
- Origin of starters
- Time in service at local authority for leavers
- Destination of leavers
- The number of agency workers covering vacancies

#### Warning about response rates

The following section provides analysis of these new voluntary variables. Response rates varied across each section. The figures should be considered in conjunction with their response rates (given alongside each analysis and table). Particular care should be taken when looking at the origin of starters and destination of leavers which had very low response rates and as such are presented separately from the rest of the analysis with further caveats. The figures in this section have not been disseminated below national level in recognition of the response rates and that these are new variables.

Table 2 shows the response rates for the voluntary variables. For further information see the [“Response rates”](#) section.

Table 2: Response rates for voluntary variables

	Response rate (% of local authorities)	% of social workers included (based on headcount)
Direct case management or oversight	21	23
Age (all social workers)	55	57
Time in service (all social workers)	47	50
Origin of starters	16	15
Time in service (leavers)	38	37
Destination of leavers	24	26
Agency workers covering vacancies	30	31

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Based on returns from 32 out of 152 local authorities, 4 out of 5 social workers were reported to have direct case management or oversight

At 30 September 2014, 82% of social workers were reported to have direct case management or oversight.

**[32 out of 152 authorities responded to this question and 6,140 (23%) of social workers are included in the analysis.]**

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Based on returns from 83 out of 152 local authorities, over half of social workers were between 30 and 49 years old [table 3]

Over half of social workers were reported to be between 30 and 49 years old at 30 September 2014, and 15% of children's social workers were between 20 and 29 years old.

**[83 out of 152 authorities responded to this question and 15,160 (57%) of social workers are included in the analysis.]**

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Based on returns from 72 out of 152 local authorities, half of children's social workers had been in their post for up to five years [table 4]

28% (the largest group) of children's social workers were reported to have been in service at their local authority for 0 to 2 years at 30 September 2014, followed by 22% of children's social workers that had been in service between 2 and 5 years.

**[72 out of 152 authorities responded to this question and 13,480 (50%) of social workers are included in this analysis.]**

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Based on returns from 57 out of 152 local authorities, over half of children's social workers had only been working as a social worker at their local authority for up to 5 years when they left [table 5]

56% of children's social workers were reported to have left their local authority after up to five years in service. A further 37% of children's social workers left their local authority after five to twenty years in service.

**[57 out of 152 authorities responded to this question and 1,640 (37%) of leavers are included in this analysis.]**

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Based on returns from 46 out of 152 local authorities, almost three quarters of agency workers were reported to be covering vacancies

At 30 September 2014, 71% of agency workers were reported to be covering vacancies.

**[46 out of 152 authorities responded to this question and 1,390 (31%) of agency workers are included in the analysis.]**

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### **Warning about origin of starters and destination of leavers**

The origin of starters and destination of leavers questions had a very low response rate (24 and 37 out of 152 local authorities, covering 690 and 1,140 starters and leavers respectively). Further, the form included a “not known” option in both these sections. Local authorities which have returned all origins or all destinations as unknown have been considered as a non-response. The data here is presented as indicative only and care should be taken when making any interpretation of the figures.

Particular care should be taken when looking at these figures, which have not been disseminated below national level in recognition of the response rates and that these are new variables.

Of the 690 children’s social workers included in the analysis that commenced employment at their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2014, 18% had an unknown origin. Of those with a known origin, 52% of starters were reported as being newly qualified social workers. In addition to this, 16% previously had a social worker role in a different local authority in England, and 13% had another social care role. The remaining 19% of starters were reported as coming from outside of English social care (either a non-social care role, any role outside England, were not employed, were on a career break, had a change in working pattern, or were categorised as ‘other’).

Of the 1,140 children’s social workers included in the analysis that left their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2014, 40% had an unknown destination. Of those with a known destination, 19% were reported to have moved to a social worker role in a different local authority in England, and 18% took another social care role. A high proportion of leavers (64%) in the year ending 30 September 2014 were reported to have moved out of English social care (either to a non-social care role, no employment, a career break, any role outside England, deceased, changed their working pattern, or were categorised as ‘other’).

Table 3: Over half of social workers were between 30 and 49 years old

*15,160 (57%) of social workers are included in the analysis. 83 out of 152 authorities responded to this question.*

Number of children's social workers by age at 30 September 2014

	% of social workers (Headcount)	% of social workers (FTE)
20 to 29 years old	15	16
30 to 39 years old	28	28
40 to 49 years old	27	27
50 to 59 years old	24	24
60 years old and over	5	5

Table 4: Over half of children's social workers had been in their post for up to five years

*13,480 (50%) of social workers are included in this analysis. 72 out of 152 authorities responded to this question.*

Number of children's social workers by time in service at 30 September 2014

	% of social workers (Headcount)	% of social workers (FTE)
0 to 2 years	28	29
2 to 5 years	22	23
5 to 10 years	21	21
10 to 20 years	21	20
20 to 30 years	7	6
30 years or more	2	2

Table 5: Over half of children's social workers leaving their local authority had been in service up to 5 years

*1,640 (37%) of leavers are included in this analysis. 57 out of 152 authorities responded to this question.*

Number of children's social workers leaving their local authority by time in service at 30 September 2014

	% of leavers (Headcount)	% of leavers (FTE)
0 to 2 years	27	28
2 to 5 years	29	30
5 to 10 years	21	21
10 to 20 years	16	15
20 to 30 years	5	5
30 years or more	2	2

## 4. List of tables

The following tables are available in excel format on the department's statistics website [here](#).

- 1 Table LA1 (FTEs): Number of children's social workers, vacancies, agency workers and turnover by local authority, based on full-time equivalents – Year ending 30 September 2013 and 30 September 2014
- 2 Table LA2 (Headcounts): Number of children's social workers, vacancies, agency workers and turnover by local authority, based on headcount – Year ending 30 September 2013 and 30 September 2014
- 3 Table LA3: Number of days of work missed due to sickness absence by local authority – Year ending 30 September 2014

## 5. Technical Notes

### Definitions

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**Social workers** Included in this SFR are social workers who have registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), and who either work in a local authority in a children's services department or (if working in an authority where the services are joined up) work exclusively on children and families work.

This includes social workers regardless of managerial responsibilities or caseloads.

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**Full time equivalents (FTEs)** FTE estimates are calculated by aggregating the total number of hours that staff are contracted to work and dividing by the standard hours for their grade. In this way, the number of part-time staff is converted into an equivalent number of 'full-time' staff.

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**CiN per children's social worker** The numbers of children in need (CiN) per social worker are calculated using the number of children in need at 31 March 2014 from the Children in Need Census. Note that the number of social workers is as at 30 September 2014. A link to the CiN release is in the "[Want More?](#)" section.

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**Vacancy rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \frac{\text{Number of vacancies}}{\text{Number of social workers} + \text{Number of vacancies}}$$
and relate to a snapshot at 30 September.

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**Turnover rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \frac{\text{Number of leavers during the year}}{\text{Number of social workers at 30 September}}$$

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**Agency worker rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \frac{\text{Number of agency social workers}}{\text{Number of social workers} + \text{Number of agency workers}}$$
and relate to a snapshot at 30 September.

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**Absence rates** Calculated using:  
$$= \frac{\text{Number of days missed due to sickness absence during year}}{\text{Number of FTE at 30 September} \times 253}$$
where 253 is the number of working days in a year taking account of bank holidays.  
Note: This includes all absences including long term sickness.

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## Data source

The figures are derived from the Children’s Social Work Workforce 2013-14 data collection. The Department first collected this information on a statutory basis from 2012-13. Voluntary variables were included in the 2013-14 collection. The table local authorities were asked to populate and its guidance can be found [here](#).

The primary source for information on the Children’s Social Care Workforce has previously been the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). This is a voluntary return and the last report published by the Department covering the workforce at December 2012 used data returned by 68 out of the 152 local authorities. The response rate for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 data collections has been 100%.

## Experimental Statistics

In recognition that this is a new data collection we are publishing these as “experimental statistics” and we will seek to improve data quality in future collections.

## Data quality

Various quality assurance checks have been carried out on the data at each stage of the collection and production of this release. Anomalous data were highlighted and verified by contacting the local authority and late returns pursued to ensure overall response was as complete and accurate as possible.

In the majority of cases local authorities will derive the data they send from their management information systems and will require managerial sign off before sending the data. However, information on the specific data checks carried out by local authorities was not collected.

Some known data quality issues are listed below:

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Comparisons between years	In recognition that this is a new data collection, we are publishing these as “experimental” statistics. Since the first collection covering the year ending 30 September 2013, we have worked with local authorities to improve and clarify their interpretations of the guidance. Data suppliers themselves will be becoming more familiar with the return and their systems better placed to provide the data. Therefore, as the reported changes may be down to improved data quality, comparisons have not been made between the two years’ data.
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Interpretation of days missed due to absence	Last year we did not publish any breakdown of absence below national level due to data quality concerns. Having clarified what data is required in the guidance and collection form, we are more confident with the figures provided this year and have published local authority level information. However some local authorities do not have systems in place to provide an exact figure. For example, some know the FTE of an employee but not specific working patterns. e.g. if an employee works a 0.5 FTE week but usually works a full day on a day that they were absent, they would be recorded as 0.5 days missed instead of 1 day. Also, some local authority systems count weekends towards the number of days missed.
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FTE and headcount estimates	<p>Some local authorities were unable to provide both an FTE and a headcount estimate for some of the variables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumbria provided an estimate of the number of FTE vacancies. Enfield, Lancashire, Norfolk, Portsmouth, South Tyneside and Wiltshire provided estimates for their vacancy headcount.</li> <li>• Hounslow provided an estimate for headcount number of starters.</li> <li>• Derby provided an estimate of their FTE agency worker figure. Middlesbrough and West Sussex provided estimates of their headcount agency worker figure.</li> <li>• Lambeth provided an estimate for their sickness absence.</li> </ul> <p>These estimates have contributed to the regional and national totals but have been suppressed at local authority level in the supplementary tables.</p>
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## Response rates

64% of local authorities provided data for one or more of the new voluntary sections. See page 6 for further information on response rates of these variables. The figures should be considered in conjunction with their response rates. Particular care should be taken when looking at the origin of starters and destination of leavers which had very low response rates.

## Rounding conventions and confidentiality

The following rounding conventions have been used:

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In this document	<p>The counts given in this main text have been rounded to the nearest 10.</p> <p>Rates and percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent.</p>
In the supplementary tables and underlying data	<p>National and regional figures for both headcounts and FTEs have been rounded to the nearest 10. Local authority figures relating to headcounts have been kept as unrounded integers whilst local authority figures for FTEs have been rounded to 1 decimal place.</p> <p>National, regional and local authority figures in the absences table have been rounded to the nearest 10.</p> <p>Rates and percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent.</p>

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The National Statistics Code of Practice requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. The following conventions have been used:

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x We have suppressed all counts where figures are 2 or fewer and replaced by a cross (x).

Percentages and rates where the numerator or denominator is based on a value of 2 or fewer have also been replaced by a cross.

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0 Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero.

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. Not applicable

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.. Not available

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- Negligible – used to represent a percentage below 0.5%

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These conventions are consistent with the Department’s Statistical Policy Statement on Confidentiality found [here](#).

## Revisions

There are no scheduled revisions planned for this release. However, where a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation or dissemination process the statistical release and accompanying tables will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.

The Department’s Statistical Policy Statement on Revisions can be found [here](#).

## 6. Want more?

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Previous releases	<p>The Children's Social Work Workforce Return 2012 to 2013 can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Previous releases on local authority children's social care services workforce based on the NMDS-SC can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Rest of the UK	<p>Information on the children's social work workforce of devolved administrations can be found at the following links:</p> <p><a href="#">Scotland</a></p> <p><a href="#">Wales</a></p> <p><a href="#">Northern Ireland</a></p>
Children in Need	<p>Statistical First Releases published by the Department for Education relating to Children in Need in England can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Children Looked After	<p>Statistical First Releases published relating to Children Looked After in England can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Children's Homes Workforce Census	<p>The Children's homes workforce census published by the Department for Education can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Training and developing staff in children's homes	<p>Research carried out by the Department for Education to understand the qualifications, skills and training required to meet the needs of young people in children's homes can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

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## 7. Got a query? Like to give feedback?

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If from the media                      Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. 020 7783 8300

If non-media                              Children's Social Care Statistics Team, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.  
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