

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 15 December 2022	Meeting Name: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission
Report title:		Health & Social Care Workforce Review	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Adriana Zakowicz, Strategic HR Business Partner	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Commission notes the contents of this report.
2. That the Commission considers any actions it wishes to recommend as a result of reviewing the content of the report.
3. That the Commission agrees to further examination of the profile of recently appointed workers in the social care sectors and in-depth analysis of available data once this information is available

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. In September 2021 the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission initiated its Health & Social Care Workforce Review. The Scrutiny Review was commissioned against the backdrop of Brexit and set out to understand its impact on Southwark's health & social care workforce retention and recruitment, and how *outward migration has impacted the workforce, along with an emphasis on how to encourage retention; increase recruitment and*

*train the local workforce.*¹

5. At the time the review was launched the Scrutiny Commission recognised the significant and rising workforce issue of the Covid-19 pandemic and expanded the remit of the review to include seeking to understand the impact of the pandemic on *the health and social care workforce in terms of employment numbers, but also the well-being of the existing workers and the strain felt during the pandemic.*²
6. In September 2021 the Director of Commissioning presented to the Scrutiny Commission initial information relating to the impact of Brexit on the health and social care workforce. The report identified *no material impact*³ of Brexit on the workforce in Southwark.
7. A further report received by the Scrutiny Commission from Health Service partners in November 2021 similarly identified no *immediate significant impact on hospitals (...)* however *[recognised] there could be an impact in 5-10 years as pipeline [issues arise]*. Health colleagues did emphasise concerns in relation to workforce wellbeing in light of the pandemic pressures and how there was a risk of increases in early retirement and career moves over in coming years.⁴
8. In March 2022 the Scrutiny Commission discussed the review to date and acknowledged the previous findings on the impact of Brexit, and the changed government policy on mandatory vaccinations for health service staff. The Commission resolved to receive a further update on the impact of the pandemic on the workforce, with particular attention paid to the issue of *burnout*, and an update in relation to any emerging medium term impacts of Brexit.
9. This report provides an update on the above to further support the Scrutiny Commission Review. In particular the report sets out to:

¹ [Southwark Health & Social Care Scrutiny Commission: Scrutiny review scoping proposal – September 2021](#)

² [Southwark Health & Social Care Scrutiny Commission: Scrutiny review scoping proposal \(as amended\) – November 2021](#)

³ [Health & Social Care Scrutiny Commission – Minutes – September 2021](#)

⁴ [Health & Social Care Scrutiny Commission – Minutes – November 2021](#)

- Present quantitative analysis of recruitment and retention in the health and social care workforce – specifically within the Council’s Children’s and Adults’ social care services
 - Present quantitative analysis of workforce sickness and absence trends
 - Provide available qualitative information on the impact of the pandemic on workforce wellbeing, and actions taken to mitigate
 - Update on any recognisable impact of Brexit on workforce adequacy
10. This report has focused on the workforce data currently available to the Local Authority. It is noted that the Local Authority’s workforce data is currently subject to a review and modernisation programme and as such more comprehensive information and analysis will be reportable subsequent to the delivery of that programme to further inform the Scrutiny Commission review.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

National Context

11. In June 2016 the majority of the British population voted to leave the European Union. The event sparked ongoing conversations and forecasts of Brexit’s impact on many sectors, including an already fragile Health and Social Care sector. The impact of Brexit on the UK workforce has been a noticeable theme in political and economic discourse. The EU policy of freedom of movement and mutual recognition of professional qualifications meant that many EU national health and social care professionals were able to secure jobs in the UK. This included 55,000 of the NHS’s 1.3 million workforce and 80,000 of the 1.3 million workers in the Adult Social Care sector.⁵
12. In 2014 the NHS reported a 5.9 per cent shortfall in recruitment to permanent roles⁶. Similarly, the social care sector estimated its vacancy

⁵ Health and Social Care Information Centre 2015; Skills for Care 2016

⁶ National Audit Office 2016

rate at 5.4 per cent combined with a high turnover rate of over 25 per cent.⁷

13. The UK's departure from the European Union resulted in greater immigration and employment restrictions on European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) nationals within the United Kingdom.
14. Demand for social care services are increasing with the consequent increasing need for workforce capacity. The sector has historically relied on a migrant workforce and as the need has increased so has the call on foreign workers. The challenge of funding in social care is equalled by the shortage of social care staff to meet the growing demands of the sector. The driver for this being an ageing population with increased care needs against a backdrop of funding challenges. Prior to Brexit, the UK had become increasingly reliant on EEA nationals within the Care Sector with a 68 per cent increase between 2011 and 2016⁸.
15. Skills for Care forecasting shows that if the number of Adult Social Care posts grow proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population between 2021 and 2035, an increase of 27% (480,000 extra posts) would be required by 2035⁹. These predictions paint a concerning picture of forthcoming challenges with recruiting and retaining workforce in the social care sector.
16. In 2021/22 around 84% of the Adult Social Care workforce identified as British, 7% (103,000 filled posts) identified as of an EU nationality and 9% (143,000 filled posts) of a non-EU nationality. On average, the Adult Social Care sector has a slightly greater reliance on non-EU workers than EU workers.¹⁰ Notwithstanding this, the adult care sector has a dedicated workforce of EU workers filling 104, 000 jobs out of 1.4million. Almost 1 in 4 workers in Adult Social Care were employed on zero-hours contracts¹¹.
17. In 2020 Brexit coincided with a world-wide emergency and the Covid-19 pandemic putting even more strain on the health and social care services.

⁷ Skills for Care 2015

⁸ The Care Workers' Charity, November 2022

⁹ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence>

¹⁰ Skills for Care 2022

¹¹ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data>

18. In February 2022 care workers were added to the shortage occupation list and the Health and Care worker visa route was established allowing medical professionals to come to or stay in the UK to do an eligible job with the NHS, an NHS supplier or in Adult Social Care. Early data submissions for 2022/23 show a rise in care workers arriving in the UK to take up Adult Social Care jobs. In 2022, between February and August, 11% of workers new to their role within the year had also arrived in the UK within the same year. This compared to around 5% pre-pandemic¹².
19. Recent trends indicate a divergence in workforce supply and demand with an increasing number of posts in Adult Social Care and fewer staff available to fill those posts. This decrease is owing to recruitment and retention challenges including competition for staff within and outside the sector and a reliance on temporary workforce.⁹
20. In August 2022 estimated number of vacancies in Adult Social Care was 11.1% rising from 10.7% in 2021/22 and 7.3% in 2019/2020. This was comparable to the vacancy rate in Adult Social Care in the London area which was reported as 11% in August 2021 across all Adult Social Care roles.
21. The Department for Education (DfE) publishes data annually on the national Children's Social Care workforce. Data collection for the 2022 return is currently underway, the most recently published data covers the year from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.
22. There were 6,500 FTE children and family social worker vacancies nationally at 30 September 2021, an increase of 7% from 6,100 at the same point in 2020 and the highest number in the last five years. The corresponding vacancy rate increased to 16.7%, from 16.1% in 2020 and was the highest rate since 2017.¹³ There were 5,000 FTE leavers in 2021, the highest figure across the last 5 years, and up by 16% compared to last year.

¹² <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/national-information/The-state-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-and-workforce-in-England>.

¹³ [Children's social work workforce – Reporting Year 2021 \(DfE\)](#)

23. In 2004, Elizabeth Harlow, Senior Social Work Researcher published her article: “Why don't women want to be social workers anymore? New managerialism, post feminism and the shortage of social workers in social services departments in England and Wales”¹⁴. The researcher noted that social workers were leaving their posts for alternative career opportunities contributing to a staffing shortage, which in some parts of London and the south-east of England, reported to reach crisis proportions. The difficulties in recruiting staff were already attributed, alongside other factors, to the low status being afforded to caring work. The Health and social care sector has a history of struggling to recruit and retain staff with an intersection of factors including discussions over pay, general perception of the sector being low-skilled, low-paid with no opportunities for career and status progression suggesting lack of public understanding and negative media.
24. COVID 19 has unfortunately exacerbated recruitment pressures. One example being information from Health Education England indicating an increase of 15% in London Health Occupational Therapist positions in the past 5 years¹⁵. This significant growth in the Health workforce has drawn from the available pool for Adult Social Care recruitments.

COVID-19 pandemic impact on workforce wellbeing

25. It is widely recognized that during the pandemic the health and social care sector has been challenged on a scale and with pressures not previously seen – marking the past two and half years as unprecedented times.
26. On 23rd March 2020, the UK Government imposed extensive emergency measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, including the closure of schools, universities, restaurants, pubs, leisure facilities and many other non-essential businesses, and instructing most people to “stay at home”.
27. The lockdown imposed immediate disruption on economic and social activity, both on the supply/demand side (as businesses are forced to close their doors) and on the social interactions side, limiting contacts with colleagues. During the pandemic 1 in 5 social workers were working from

¹⁴ European Journal of Social Work, Volume 7, 2004 - Issue 2, pp. 167-179

¹⁵ Health Education England, March 2022

home nationally. With Ofsted voicing significant concerns about the impact of ongoing remote working on the availability of peer support and the quality of practice.¹⁶

28. The Government as well as all agencies partnering with the Health and Social Care Sector recognised that the workforce have done a remarkable job, have worked long hours responding to the pressures in the system and have been solid in their care for patients and those in receipt of care.
29. According to Health Foundation, Social care workers faced among the highest mortality rates by occupation during the first phase of the pandemic and sickness absence rates more than doubled between February and October 2020¹⁷. Whereas Community Care in their publication reported the profession's quality of working life has fallen further than nurses', midwives', social care workers' and allied health professionals' during the pandemic, as found in the latest round of an ongoing study into Covid's impact on health and care staff¹⁸. Adding that social work being the only profession whose wellbeing score have fallen below that of midwives¹⁹.
30. The national sickness absence rate for children and family social workers increased to 3.1% from 2.9% a year earlier, however this is in line with pre-pandemic levels and is at the five year average.

Southwark Context

31. In 2019, Southwark Council undertook extensive work to ensure that the organisation was prepared for the forthcoming changes and potential challenges with employing EU citizens with a special focus on Social Care Services. The Council ran local communication alongside the national campaign on how to apply for Settled Status offering to reimburse application costs (prior to the announcement of free applications). Southwark engaged closely with the Home Office to ensure our staff and borough population were well supported in applying for settled status.

¹⁶ Community Care, July 2022

¹⁷ Health.org.uk, January 2021

¹⁸ hscworkforcestudy.co.uk

¹⁹ Community Care, October 2022

32. A Directors' Forum discussions took place with a focus on Brexit outcomes with the impact of the Settlement Scheme. A group of senior officers met to ensure the Council's joining up of the support to our residents and staff, for example, the Registration Service being one of two London pilot sites to test the Chip Checking Service and our libraries were involved in the Assisted Digital Support scheme. There was ongoing work with trade unions to promote the scheme to staff who are non-UK EU nationals and signpost to support the application process through drop-in sessions with a particular focus on staff with lower digital literacy and ESoL.
33. Southwark wanted to reassure its own employees as well as the community that support was available. As part of the Social Care pilot, support/information sessions for employees across the key areas were held, including communications to employees within Social Care. There was also information shared via the intranet, a Yammer group, posters and information packs.
34. The Council received positive feedback from the pilot from both the support aspect and the chip checking system and process.

Vacancy rate

35. Similarly to other Local Authorities, Southwark has been facing challenges with recruiting and retaining its social care workforce. The Council commissions various care services (including home care) through providers and therefore there are many care workers who are not directly employed, including home care and residential care workers. In January 2018 Adult Social Care (ASC) had 66 Social Worker vacancies, whereas Children Social Care had 68 vacancies. In November 2019 the rate of unfilled posts was 4%, with 18% of roles being filled by agency staff. However, 2021-22 data shows that there has been a decrease in the rate of posts filled by agency workers at 15% and a concurrent increase in the rate of unfilled posts, at 9% in October 2022.
36. Vacancy rates are currently particularly acute in certain roles and business units within Adult Social Care. Recruiting Occupational Therapists is particularly challenging with a high turnover of staff and a vacancy rate of

more than 30% recorded in August 2022. This included 33% of staff in post being filled by agency workers. This agency rate is lower than in some areas and recruiting agency Occupational Therapists has become increasingly challenging in a very competitive jobs market.

37. In September 2022 the qualified Children's Social Care workforce had a significantly higher rate of agency staff at 38% across frontline and first line management posts, with no unfilled posts, due in part to time limited supernumerary posts filled by fixed term and agency staff to manage increased demand for statutory services.
38. Currently, the overall vacancy rate in Children and Adult Social Care equates to 6.5% with 17.5% reliance on the agency workers (24% overall vacancy rate).
39. There is little identifiable medium-term impact of Brexit or the Pandemic on the Council's social care workforce vacancy rate, over and above the pre-existing market factors and national and regional shortages in these categories of staff, which remain the main driving causes for difficulty and competition in recruitment.

Starters and leavers

40. As described above the social worker and wider social care market remains highly competitive and recruitment challenges within the capital are acute, owing to the cost of living, accessibility of key worker housing, competition from neighbouring authorities and the attractiveness of agency markets.
41. The trend in new starters and those leaving the Southwark workforce within Children's Social Care specifically has been ongoing for a number of years pre-pandemic and Brexit. Both showing upwards trends. Whilst more staff are leaving than in previous years, concerted recruitment efforts are seeing a similar increase in new starters (Figure 1). Whilst maintaining the necessary pace of recruitment remains a challenge, and new avenues are routinely explored, such as the current drive to recruit new International Children's Social Workers, there is no immediate intelligence suggesting a specific impact from either Brexit or the Pandemic.

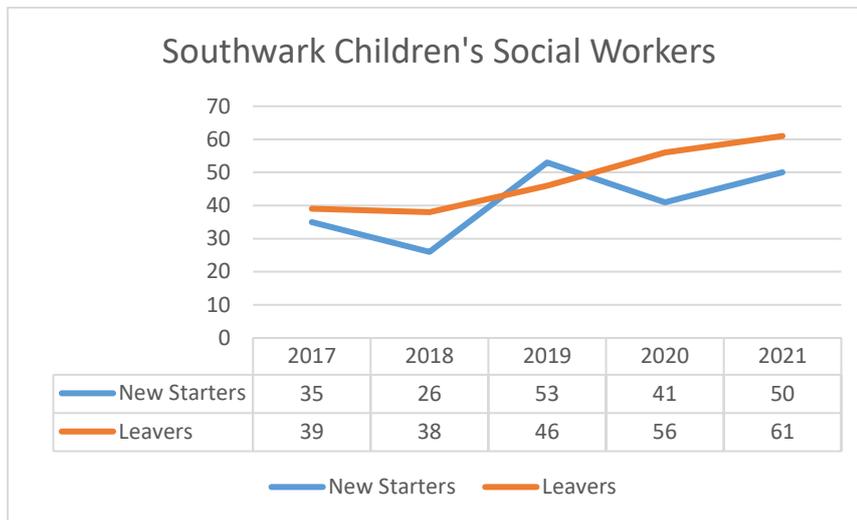


Figure 1: Starters & Leavers in Children’s Social Work Roles 2017-2021

42. The trend in new starters and leavers within the Adult Social Care in Southwark showed number starters and leavers being at similar level, leaving more backlog of posts being unfilled highlighting recruitment and retention challenges.
43. Adult social care has an experienced ‘core’ of workers. Workers in Southwark had on average 8.7 years of experience in the sector and 78% of the workforce had been working in the sector for at least three years.
44. Adult Social Care, similarly to Children’s Social Care, have been exploring a range of avenues for recruiting and retaining their workforce looking across the whole employee journey from attraction through a dedicated microsite, to developing apprentices and equipping staff with additional skills from Practice Supervisors, Accredited Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors up to all stages of management. Highlights include: in advertisement; including use of real staff photos, location shoots in the Borough, videos and stories/quotes in digital/media campaigns to demonstrate the vibrancy and diversity in Southwark or stream-lining the recruitment process and customer journey for prospective employees as well as offering appropriate training opportunities for current staff; including informal training such learn sessions and coaching and mentoring.

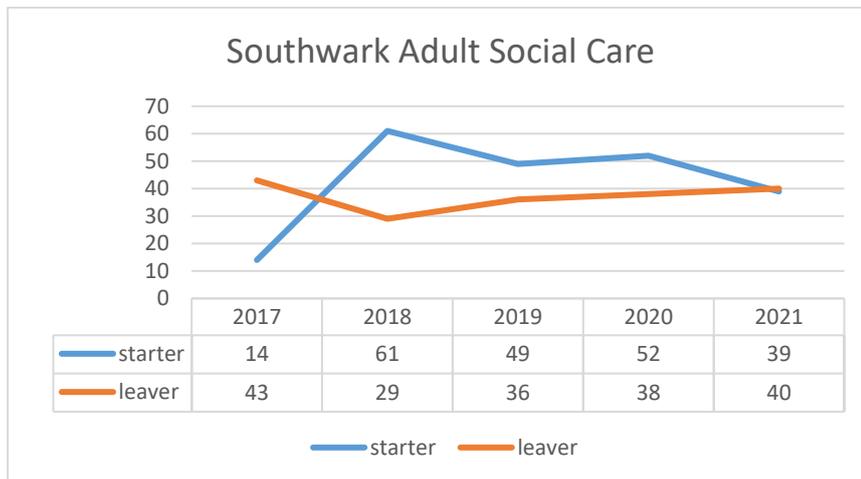


Figure 2. Starters & Leavers in Adult Social Care Roles 2017-2021

Staff wellbeing and morale in social care

45. Recorded absence figures for Southwark’s children’s social work workforce showed a marked drop in sickness absence during 2020 (Figure 3). This is likely attributable to multiply factors including sharp drop in flu cases attributed to higher uptake of flu vaccination and mask-wearing and distancing as well as possible the diligence of staff working through periods of isolation when they might otherwise have taken periods of absence from the workplace in normal times.

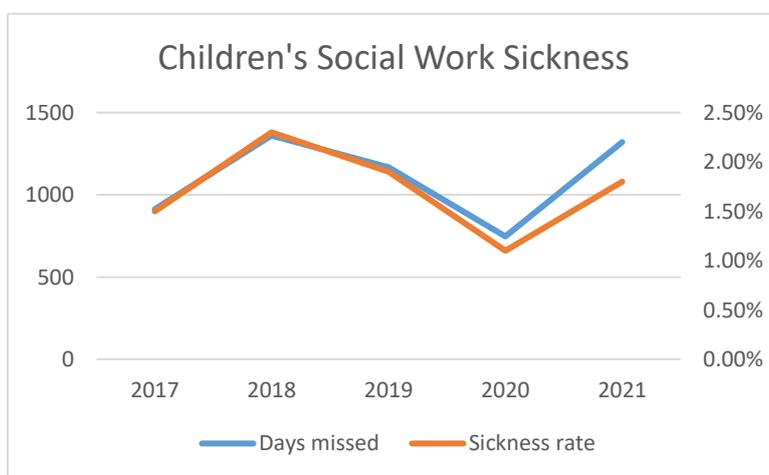


Figure 3: Children’s Social Worker Sickness and absence – 2017-2021

46. The impact on the wellbeing of Southwark’s children and adults’ workforce from the pandemic was significant, with a number of losses to life of

Southwark staff which had a profound impact on staff and services, and continues to do so.

47. The average number of sickness days taken in the last year in Adult Social Care in Southwark was 6.4, (7.5 in London and 8.3 across England). With an estimated directly employed workforce of 4,400, this means employers in Southwark lost approximately 28,000 days to sickness in 2021/22.
48. During the peak of the pandemic Ofsted undertook a Focussed Visit inspection of our Children & Families services and recognised significant action taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on staff and those associated with the children's care workforce.
49. The inspectorate reported that foster carers spoke very positively about the support and help that they are receiving for children's care and education during the pandemic with access made available to enhanced support to foster carers including additional payments and out-of-hours support from clinical psychologists.²⁰
50. The same report identified social workers, practitioners and managers as being very well supported by service managers and senior leaders throughout the pandemic. Practical support included the provision of laptops, PPE, free private transport and bespoke public health guidance and self-care sessions delivered routinely by health colleagues. Staff spoke of being emotionally 'held' while working remotely, through regular keeping-in-touch meetings with managers to discuss well-being and work/life balance as well as the Virtual Open Door Sessions regularly arranged by the Strategic Director and the Directors in Children and Adults Social Care with the departmental entire workforce. This supported frontline practitioners to sustain their energy and determination to protect and care for vulnerable children and adults, despite the risks from COVID-19.¹²
51. In May 2022 the Children's Social Care Workforce Health Check Survey was undertaken, which is routinely completed to inform national reporting on the wellbeing of the Children's Social Care workforce. Leaders within Children & Families opted to expand beyond the expected national survey

²⁰ Ofsted Focussed Visit – Southwark September 2020

set questions to seek further feedback from staff on the impact of the pandemic, and the continuing impact on their health and wellbeing.

52. Approximately 74% of respondents to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt *encouraged and empowered to make time for [their] own self-care and wellbeing* (figure 3).

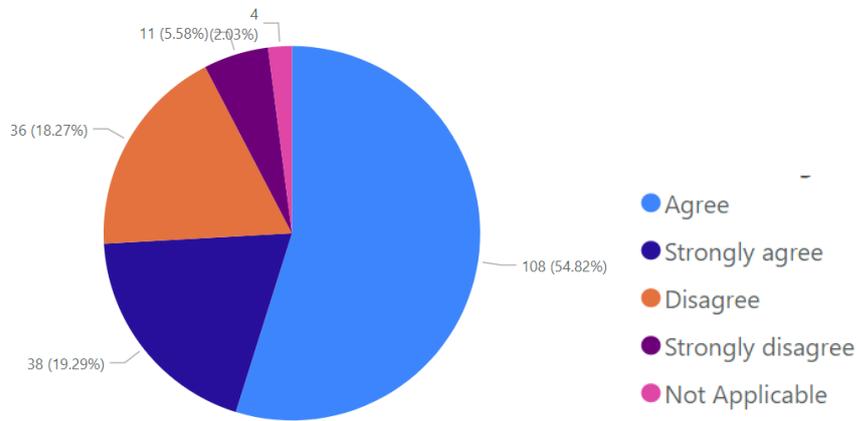


Figure 4: Healthcheck Survey Result – I feel encouraged and empowered to make time for my own self-care and wellbeing

53. As referenced earlier, data from the workforce health check survey points to a significant commitment from staff to work through the pandemic and instances of individual illness. With 44 individual staff members reporting needing to self-isolate due to Covid yet continuing to work from home during this period. 50% of staff survey respondents reported no incidence of Covid-19 infection in the 12 months to May 2022 (figure 5).

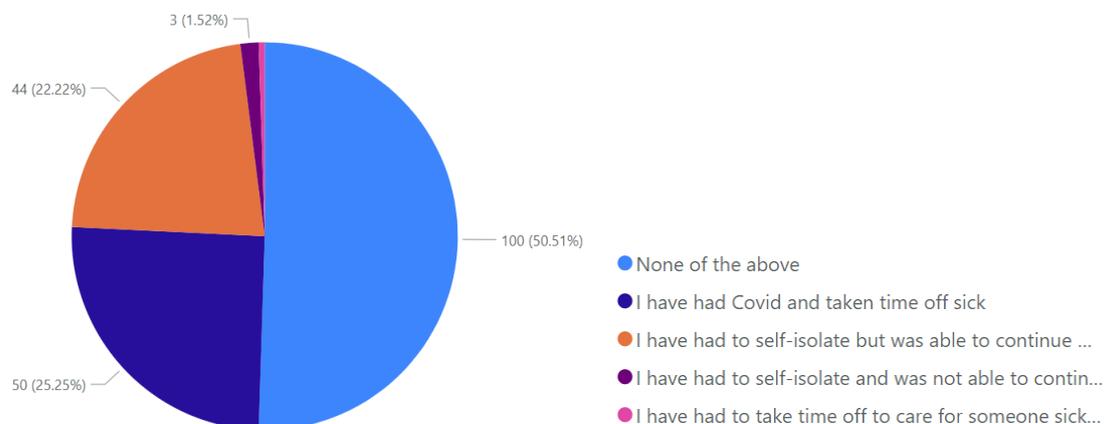


Figure 5: Health check survey result – in the last year have you had time off or away from work due to Covid-19

54. In further feedback from the children's health check survey, approximately 90.5% of staff reported feeling well supported in relation to the pandemic overall, and 91% reported that they were always or mostly able to access timely management advice and support.
55. Adults Social Care Health Check 2022 focused on listening and learning from the employees' feedback covering perceptions of the 8 Employer standards, the impact of Covid-19 and job/ organisational engagement.
56. Survey respondents were provided with an opportunity to share more insights into their reasons to work, reasons for being a social worker, as well as, positives and challenges of working for the current employer.

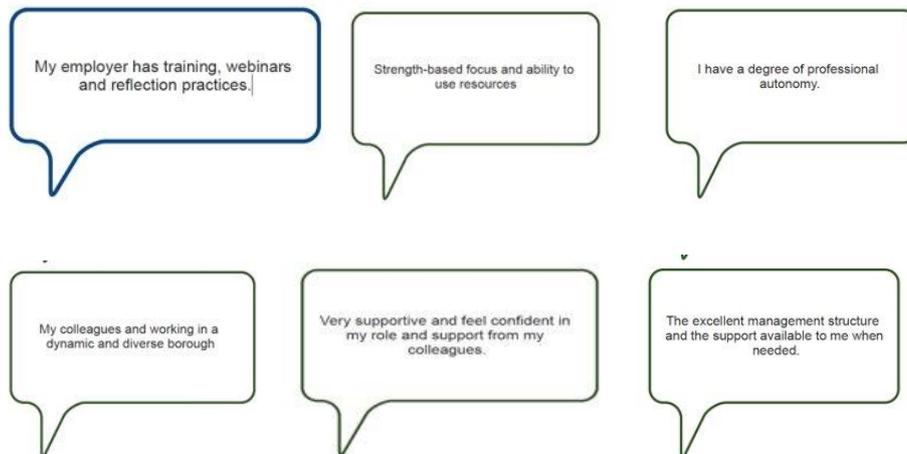


Figure 6. Positive feedback from listening and learning 2022

57. Feedback regarding challenges mainly illustrated the Social Care workers concerns regarding recruitment struggles, increased number of vacancies as well as the complexity of casework.



Figure 7. Negative feedback from listening and learning 2022

58. In 2022 Children Social Care reported so far over 2900 days of staff absence between January and October, with the highest number in October, possibly reflecting entering the winter seasons (Figure 8).

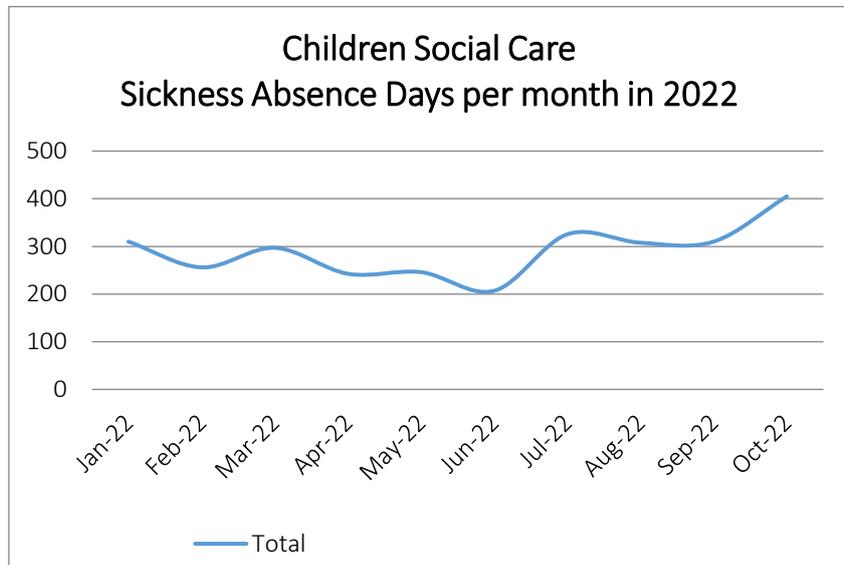


Figure 8. Children Social Care Sickness and Absence no. days per month in 2022

59. Adult Social Care reported just under 1800 days of sickness and absence with a similar trend in increase of absence in the post-summer months (Figure 9).

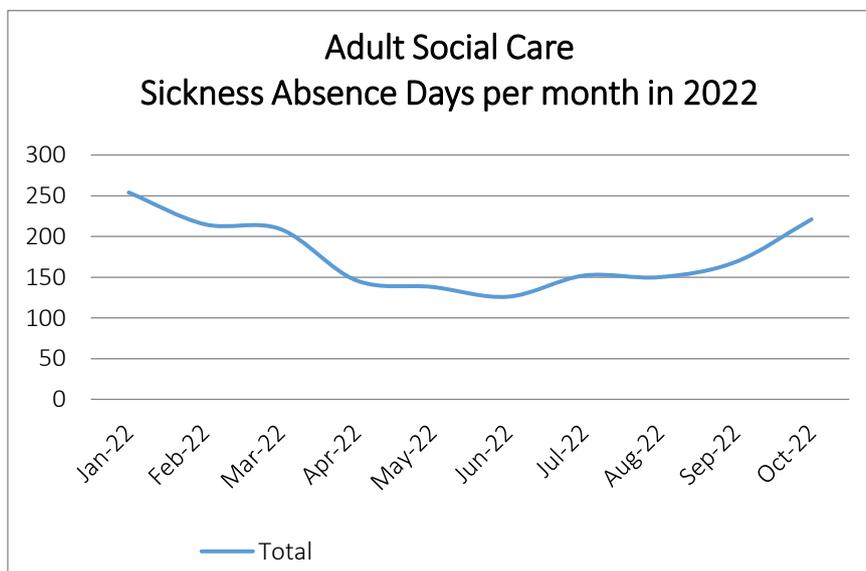


Figure 9. Adult Social Care Sickness and Absence no. days per month in 2022

60. However, more understanding and data will be needed about the NHS waiting times (A&E, GP appointments or access to treatment), long COVID-19 and the ageing workforce.
61. In the most recent Ofsted Inspection, the authority was rated “Good” in all categories of its social care and safeguarding of children in the borough²¹.
62. The Ofsted report highlighted leaders’ significant investment in the workforce and ensuring that working conditions are good for their staff. Caseloads are low and manageable. Specialist teams and practitioners are on hand to provide advice, support and consultation.
63. The report indicates that in Southwark, Children Social Care staff feel supported by their leaders, ensuring that their emotional well-being is a priority. It was reported that staff speak highly of managers and leaders across every area of the service, appreciating their availability and the support they provide²².
64. Staff appreciate this and can see the value this adds to their work and the positive impact for children and their families. The report indicates that staff enjoy working in Southwark. Their morale is high, and they appreciate the high level of support, the career progression opportunities, the learning and development offer and the ambition that the organisation has for them²³.
65. Whilst, the overarching thematic intelligence in relation to staff response to working through the experience of the pandemic is relatively positive, the cumulative and long-term impact on staff wellbeing in an already pressured and complex working environment cannot be underestimated and the continued vigilance of leaders and managers is required to ensure standards of support to staff remain.

²¹ <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50198438>

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

Southwark remedies - actions to recruit and retain the existing workforce and mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on workforce wellbeing.

66. Southwark Council continues to be committed to ensuring that there is a fairer future for all its residents, where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
67. To deliver on its commitment, Southwark as an employer needs to ensure it can attract, retain and develop the workforce it requires.
68. Local Authorities play a critical role in reducing inequalities within their communities therefore the workforce of the local authority itself must consistently be working towards better equality, diversity and inclusivity within the workplace and its services
69. Southwark was one of the first local authorities to sign up with the Mayor of London's Good Work Standards that sets the benchmark for the highest level of employment standards. It helps employers to improve their organisations and contribute to a fairer and more inclusive London economy.
70. Both, Children and Adult Social Care services worked on designing recruitment and retention activities to improve the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of staff. These activities are not only led by the employer but, by the workforce and are linked with the local, regional and national priorities addressing current workforce challenges.
71. Early in 2022, Children Social Care engaged in the international social worker recruitment campaign that led to about 24 Social Worker appointments from overseas. There are further plans to expand on this activity focusing on lessons learned and already developed in-house knowledge of Home Office requirements and processes around sponsorship.
72. Currently, more sophisticated recruitment strategies are being developed across children and adults services to apply efficiencies in the recruitment process and remain competitive on the jobs market as well as to ensure that the Council "grows our own" and engages with local communities.

73. Southwark leaders have enhanced their offer to attract social workers taking continuous steps to recruit, retain and develop staff. For example, there is a successful programme for newly qualified social workers (ASYE), and more recently the local authority has been supporting several staff to undertake their social work training. Despite workforce challenges, Southwark is in a strong position because of the worker stability and the longevity of its workforce. Ofsted acknowledged that many staff stay with Southwark for many years²⁴.
74. Other initiatives include ongoing salaries benchmarking and monitoring in an already competitive market. Adult Social Care are developing apprenticeships programmes for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists as well as pre-apprenticeships programme to support the pipeline of applicants.
75. More local initiatives include creating development opportunities for assistant psychologists in the Children Social Care Clinical Services utilising the Health Education England funding scheme for “Paid Opportunities for Aspiring Clinical Psychologists, Family and Systemic Psychotherapy, and Leadership/ coaching opportunities for BAME professionals”. In line with Southwark’s commitment to “grow our own” we highlighted this opportunity to Southwark care experienced aspiring psychologists and publicise the roles for eligible Southwark Care Leavers.
76. In 2017 Southwark established the Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy – 2018 – 2020 building on commitments made in the Fairer Future Workforce Strategy 2017 – 2020 and fitting it in with local public health priorities in relation to employee wellbeing. The Wheel of Wellbeing (developed by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust as a framework to outline the health and wellbeing aspirations, initiatives and activities)²⁵.
77. Since the Covid-19 pandemic started, wellbeing supporting initiatives for the Southwark workforce continued being developed in response to the changes in the wider and more local environments. The mental and

²⁴ <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50198438>

²⁵ [Wheel of Well-being \(wheelofwellbeing.org\)](https://www.wheelofwellbeing.org/)

physical wellbeing was at the centre of Southwark's response to the pandemic. Children Social Care head-started the development of the Covid-19 risk assessments that were later developed and incorporated by the council for the whole workforce. Regular communications and working during Covid-guidance for social care front line workers were established.

78. Furthermore, the whole Children and Adults Social Care workforce were in the priority group for vaccination as frontline workers.
79. In 2020 Southwark launched an anonymous wellbeing survey to assess how colleagues are coping with the impact of COVID-19. During the pandemic the Council maintained a clear focus on employee health and wellbeing through 3 Wellbeing / Winter Wellbeing plans and Toolkits, numerous online activities and webinars, and the development of the Wellbeing Microsite for staff who do not have access to the network.
80. Southwark continues to proactively support physical and mental wellbeing by promoting resources which can contribute to positive health. This includes offering to staff free flu vaccination, eye care scheme and cycle to work scheme.
81. Furthermore, mental health awareness became embodied in the council's wellbeing actions and goes beyond the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health offer. This year, to respond to the increases in the cost of living, a financial wellbeing programme has been developed to support staff during the financial crisis.

Conclusion

82. All national research and findings point to an able and stable social care workforce as being one of the most significant drivers in improving the consistency and quality of outcomes for the vulnerable communities we support. Developing efficient and effective talent attraction and fair recruitment, staff retention, career progression and development practices is critical to attracting the best candidates to Southwark and keeping them within our workforce.

83. The council will continue to develop its approach to attracting and retaining the best social care workers by continuing to listen to staff; understanding what is important to them, and developing our offer based on what works.
84. Additionally, within the wider social care system for earlier intervention and prevention support to children and families, we will work to develop and harness power within communities, supporting the voluntary and community sector to lead local support offers, and where possible developing pathways into our more targeted services
85. Attracting and retaining the right staff leads to better outcomes and greater wellbeing for the community we support. Developing efficient, effective and fair recruitment, staff retention and development practices is critical to attracting candidates with the appropriate skills and attitude for the work.
86. It is crucial that all levels of government work together to review career routes within social care. In particular, it would be advisable to investigate the potential for opening up routes from support and social care roles into nursing and allied health professionals and vice versa.