

Social Work Services Strategic Forum 10 December 2019 - Paper 5

Labour Market Study

1. Introduction

1.1 Part 2 of the National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan sets out the need to develop our understanding of the local and national labour market for social care. The reports are due for publication in early 2020.

1.2 This paper sets out a summary of the key findings from the main report on adult and children's social care (excluding early learning and childcare).

1.3 The full reports will be provided once published for further discussion at a subsequent Forum meeting.

The Social Work Services Strategic Forum are invited to consider this paper and to provide their views on the next steps.

2. Background

2.1 Recommendation 2 in the 'National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan: Part 2: A framework for improving workforce planning for social care in Scotland'¹ is as follows.

'To develop our understanding and provide evidence of the interactions between the national and local labour market pressures, the interactions between different parts of the sector and the specific challenges presented by the configuration and location of the current social care workforce.

2.2 The study's scope was extended as Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) colleagues had identified the need for a similar study. The remit of the study includes all social service workers² with the exception of social work.³

2.3 The study's remit was devised in consultation with a Research Advisory Group (RAG). The RAG were invited to comment on the draft specification, survey and the first draft of the report. Ekosgen were commissioned to undertake the study on behalf of Scottish Government and COSLA. The fieldwork took place during summer 2019⁴. The report's findings are primarily based on a survey of over 8,000 social service

¹ [Scottish Government and COSLA \(2017\) National Health and Social Care Workforce Plan: Part 2](#)

² As defined by the Scottish Social Services Council in their annual [Social Service Workforce Data reports](#).

³ Social work was excluded from this study as there is significant activity underway to address challenges in this sector, such as a pilot testing approaches to a supported and assessed year for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS.) The pressures on social workers are also expected to vary considerably from those faced by the wider workforce. For example, social workers attain relevant qualifications before undertaking their role.

⁴ The employee survey was open to anyone. The Care Inspectorate circulated the employer survey to all registered services.

workers and 1,500 employers.⁵ This is likely to be one of the largest surveys of its type in the social service sector to date.

2.4 Ekosgen have developed four products examining:

- key issues for adult and children's social care⁶; the main report
- key challenges for the ELC workforce
- challenges within four local authorities⁷
- the key data sources which workforce planners can use to respond to recruitment and retention challenges.

3. Findings

3.1 This summary focuses on the main report on adult and children's social care, which excludes early learning and childcare/day care for children services. The ELC findings will be reported separately to the ELC Workforce Project Board. The Executive Summary will briefly cover the findings across all four papers. Key findings from the main report include the following areas⁸. For some findings, a separate analysis is reported for adult or children's social care but the majority are combined and referred to as 'social care'.

Perceptions of working in social care

- The majority of adult social care employee respondents indicated that 'wanting to work in a job that makes a difference to people's lives' is the main factor influencing their decision to choose a career in this sector.
- Other influencing factors cited by significant proportions of adult social care employee respondents included a passion for the job, previous experience of the sector, career progression, local job availability and advice from others.
- Social care staff in rural areas are more likely to be influenced by the availability of jobs in their area than staff in urban areas.
- There are some differences between the reasons that employers and employees cite as the motivations for joining the social care sector. A high proportion of both groups cite pride and job satisfaction as motivators, however more than twice as many employers perceive training opportunities, flexible working hours, part-time working and the practical nature of the job as motivating factors compared to employee respondents.
- The motives for staying in social care are similar to those for joining it; the most common factors for employee respondents in adults and children's services were the desire to make a difference, and pride and job satisfaction. Some variation was seen for different employer types, with public sector staff more

⁵ The survey is generally representative of the social service workforce by gender, age and geography. The survey is overrepresented in terms of ELC services.

⁶ The report contains a definition based on the sub-sectors used by the SSSC. For example, children's social care consists of adoption, fostering, residential childcare and fieldwork services for children.

⁷ The four areas are 1) Aberdeen 2) Argyll and Bute 3) Dumfries and Galloway and 4) South Lanarkshire. This report aimed to explore some of the rural and urban dimensions. The reports are mainly based on the SSSC's workforce data and the survey findings.

⁸ Most survey questions included a list of possible responses. Respondents could select more than one.

likely to cite job security (12% of respondents) than staff in the third and independent sectors (5% and 5% respectively).

Retention and reasons for leaving the sector

Intentions regarding staying in the sector were explored with employees, while perceptions of the main reasons for staff to leave the sector were explored with employees, employers and a group of staff who stated that they intended to leave the sector.

- 79% of all social care employees who responded to the survey indicated that they wished to continue working in the sector. This figure consists of 41% who wished to stay in the same job, 27% who would like to gain promotion to a higher level and 11% wishing to move to a different area of social care. Approximately 11% of respondents to this question indicated that they would like to leave the sector.
- Employee ambitions varied somewhat across Scotland. For example, the numbers of people who wish to stay in the same role in islands and remote areas (47%) was higher than the figure for larger cities (36%). The percentage of respondents who wished to leave the sector was relatively similar across all areas (9-12%.)
- Approximately 64% of respondents indicated that local employment opportunities in social care are 'quite good' or very good', with little variation in this proportion across different types of urban/rural area in Scotland. Respondents from island and remote areas were more likely to report that employment opportunities are 'quite poor' or 'very poor' than those in larger cities (21% and 12% respectively.) 43% of all respondents considered opportunities for career progression to be 'quite good' or 'very good'.
- Employees' perceptions were that the five most common reasons for leaving the social care sector were 1) higher salary / rate of pay (more common responses from the third and independent sectors) 2) to start a family or related responsibilities 3) hours are too long (more common response for the independent sector), 4) for career progression and 5) for retirement.
- Approximately 400 staff who indicated that they planned to leave the sector were asked for reasons why they wished to leave. The most commonly selected reasons were 'the work is too stressful/ too much pressure/ unmanageable workload (52%) and for more of a work-life balance (42%). Approximately 36% of respondents to this question cited the terms and conditions.

Recruitment and labour supply

- Approximately 51% of all employers indicated that they anticipated challenges in recruiting staff over the next 12 months. These issues were more prominent for the third and independent sectors (57% and 53%) than they were for the public sector (40%).
- Approximately 75% of social care employer respondents in island and remote areas anticipated recruitment challenges over the next 12 months, compared to 52% in larger cities and 46% in urban with substantial rural areas.
- Social care employers were asked about the extent to which the supply of people meets their needs. Approximately 49% of respondents in larger cities

indicated that supply meets their needs 'very well' or 'fairly well.' The equivalent figure for islands and remote areas was 15% (all 15% selected the 'fairly well' option.)

Social care workforce movement and competition

- This study also aimed to improve understanding of workforce movements within the sector. Half of respondents to the survey indicated that they had previously worked in the sector, 47% came from a job outwith the social care sector, while this was the first job for 5% of respondents.
- A different pattern was seen for personal assistants, with a higher proportion (60%) coming from jobs outwith the social care sector, and only 3% having previously worked as a personal assistant.
- Responses from employees on previous movement between jobs in ELC, children's and adults services showed that people moving within these services, tended to stay in the same sub-sector. 91% of people with a previous job in social care who were now working in adult services, had come from another job in adult social care. There was a higher proportion of people with a previous job in social care who were now working in children's services, who had come from adult's services (29%). 8% of those now working in ELC had come from a previous job in adult services. There was no time limit on the reporting of previous job, so the implications of this finding in relation to ELC expansion is not clear.
- Employers were asked to indicate their perceptions of the top three types of work that their service competes with for staff. 73% indicated that the health sector was one of the top three competitors, followed by education (with either 'classroom assistants' or 'other' chosen by 35%) and retail (chosen by 22% of respondents.)
- The extent to which specific sectors were perceived as key competitors varied in different parts of the country. For example, 34% of 'mainly rural area' employers indicated that hotels and hospitality were one of the top three competitor sectors compared to 11% of responding employers in mainly urban areas.
- Interestingly, employees who expressed an intention to leave the social care sector identified different preferred destinations for their careers. Approximately 117 social care staff gave their preferred destination. The most common response was 'business services' (approximately 21% of all responses). 14% gave education (classroom assistant or other) and 13% gave health. Only 3% indicated that they would prefer to move to retail.

4. Impact of study and next steps

4.1 There have been a number of studies examining key workforce challenges for parts of the sector such as the third or independent sector. The labour market reports aim to move our understanding on by including the wider social service workforce and widening the analysis to consider interactions with other sectors. The findings provide a useful evidence base which can inform workforce planning. They add to the wealth of data we get from a range of sources including the SSSC, Care Inspectorate,

Scottish Care and CCPS. They provide a mix of positive and challenging messages, for example:

- Nearly 80% of employee respondents would like to stay in the sector (nearly 4,000 people responded to this question).
- Employee (1,637 responses) and employer (565 responses) perceptions were that the main motivations for leaving the social care sector are for a higher salary/rate of pay, while for a group of 418 respondents who planned to leave the sector, the main reported reason was work being too stressful/too much pressure/unmanageable workloads.

4.2 The labour market reports findings will inform the:

- forthcoming marketing campaign for adult social care in early 2020
- next phases of the ELC expansion implementation and recruitment campaign
- SSSC's current activities around identifying barriers to career progression
- work of the Fair Work Implementation Group
- next iteration of the National Health and Social Care Integrated Workforce Plan

4.3 While this study has explored many of the issues of interest to employers and workforce planners, some questions of interest to specific parts of the sector have not yet been fully explored. These include movements between different employer types and the implications of commissioning practices for workforce planning and workforce movements. Approaches to commissioning are being considered under the adult social care reform programme, while the SSSC are continuing their analysis of movements between different parts of the registered workforce. Subsequent reports from the SSSC's analysis will:

- provide a more comprehensive picture as they will include a greater proportion of the workforce
- inform our understanding of key perceptions and challenges such as the extent to which staff move from the third and independent sector into the public sector.

5. Summary

5.1 The labour market study provides a range of perspectives on national and local labour market pressures. It adds to the wealth of information provided by others including the SSSC, Care Inspectorate, Scottish Care and CCPS. The study explores some common perceptions and provides a useful evidence base for informing the marketing campaign in adult social care, work in progress to address barriers to career progression, improve workforce planning and address fair work issues in social care.

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December 2019**