



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

27 November 2023

Sent via email

Dear Jayne Bryant MS,

Cc Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services

Re: The use of agency staff in children's services

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your letter on 10 October 2023 asked Social Care Wales to clarify a number of points. I apologise for the delay in sending these to you, but I asked the team to provide data from September 2023 so you have the most recent picture from the register of social care professionals.

Our response is laid out in the attached briefing as we note in the response we are also preparing a fuller report on the profile of Social Workers in Wales if this would be of interest, we would happily share a version when available.

Best wishes

Sue Evans
Chief Executive Officer

Cadeirydd/Chair: Mick Giannasi CBE
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive: Sue Evans

0300 30 33 444
gofalcymdeithasol.cymru
socialcare.wales



Children, Young People and Education Committee - Briefing Note - The use of agency staff in children's services – November 2023

1. Is this figure of 49 from April 2023 a percentage figure or is it the number of individual staff?

The figure of 49 represents staff members. It is not a percentage. The figure was taken from the following document (Page 6, paragraph one):

<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s134519/Social%20Care%20Wales.pdf>

and was based on the data provided by the employers across the sector in the 2022 workforce data collection process. The confirmation of this figure as a percentage in the subsequent email was an error by Social Care Wales.

2. As of September 2023, what is the total number of children's social care staff in the workforce in Wales? (along with the vacancy rate and the percentage of agency staff)

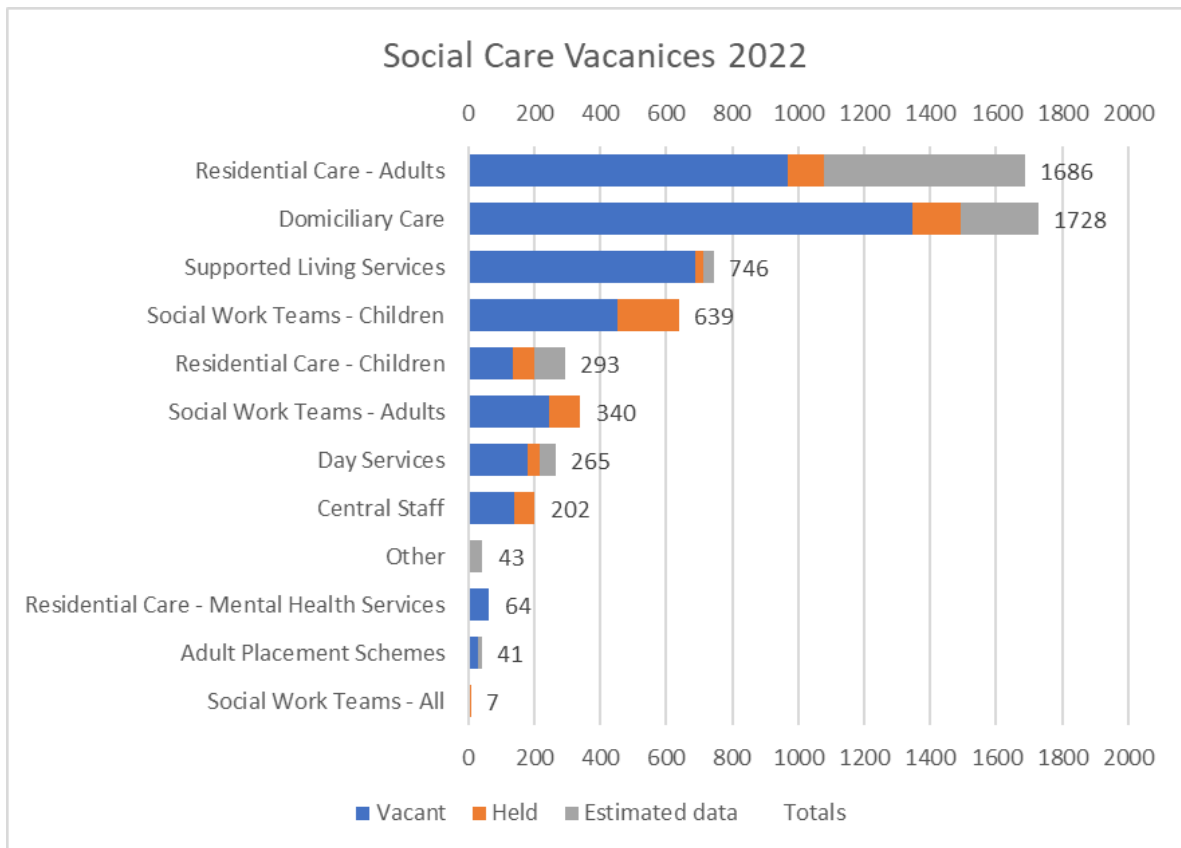
As of September 2023, the register shows the total number of Children's Residential Care workers is: 2,879. Of these 3.3% (95) identify their main employer as an agency. Social Worker numbers are covered in the response to question 3. There will be other registered social care staff who work with children e.g., domiciliary care workers and support staff.

This information, as with all information from the register, is entered and maintained by the individual when they register or in subsequent renewals. Registered individuals are encouraged to update their registration at the point of change occurring, but often this does not take place until the next registration renewal point. This does mean that there can be a lag in the data due to the time taken to update personal information by the Registered person.

Please be aware that individuals can hold multiple registrations and multiple places of employment, if they have more than one job. There will also be children's social care staff who are not required to register e.g., support staff.

Vacancy data is collected in our annual workforce data collection (no real time data is available for September 2023), this data collection goes to all providers across Wales and provides a snapshot of the social care workforce at a point in time. The full report¹ in 2022 reported the following.

¹ [Data and information on the social care workforce... | Social Care Wales](#)



3. As of September 2023, the total number of qualified social worker roles within the children’s social care workforce in Wales? (along with the vacancy rate and the percentage of agency staff)

We are able to provide figures as declared by the registered person. We have three categories in relation to social workers – those working in children’s services, those in adults’ services and those in all age teams².

As of September 2023, the register shows the total number of registered Social Workers in all categories in Wales was **6,736**. Of these, there were **775** social workers registered with an employment agency as their primary employer. This means that **11.5%** of all registered social workers in Wales identified an employment agency as their primary employer. It is important to note that not all social workers will be case holding and working directly with children. Our annual report 2022 suggested that there were 4,181 ‘front-line’ case holding social workers.

As of September 2023, the register shows the total number of Childrens Services Social Workers was **2,456**. Of these, **429 (17.5%)** declared their primary employer as an agency.

² An all age service is one where the registered worker works in a role that provides services to all ages, not just children or adults. While the combined group will include many case holding social workers, many of the workers registered in this category will not be case-holding social workers but employed in roles such as trainers, planners, commissioners etc

Total number of all age team Social Workers was **2,537** of these **142 (5.6%)** declare their primary employer as an agency.

This information, as with all information from the register, is entered and maintained by the individual when they register or in subsequent renewals. Registered individuals are encouraged to update their registration at the point of change occurring, but often this does not take place until the next registration renewal point. This does mean that there can be a lag in the data due to the time taken to update information. Individuals can hold multiple registrations and multiple places of employment.

The work that ADSS Cymru is currently undertaking through the Memorandum of Cooperation will hopefully provide more near-real-time data on vacancies and agency workers within Local Authority Children Services over the next few months.

4. Whose responsibility is it to collect and publish data on vacancy rates and use of agency staff in children's social care?

Understanding the social care workforce in Wales is a collective effort. [Since 2020, Social Care Wales has had the responsibility](#) to collect and [publish data](#) on the entirety of the social care workforce in Wales as part of Welsh Government's Performance and Improvement Framework for social services (PIF). The collection of a single data collection on the social care workforce in Wales was seen as a step forward from the multitude of disparate collections that existed prior to the introduction of the PIF. Social Care Wales is currently working on their third report in this framework.

The annual workforce data collection provides a benchmark of data in a national context. It was developed as a census tool to establish a single mechanism that could provide the necessary insight into the entirety of the social care workforce in Wales, not just registered professionals. It collects data from over 1,200 providers and tens of thousands of individuals who work in social care in Wales with the resulting report available to everyone.

The annual workforce data collection collects information about agency work but was designed as a system for producing annual statistics. The collection was never designed as a system that would be able to actively monitor the social care workforce in Wales in real time. The highly dispersed nature of delivery of social care by many organisations means that no single system exists to collect information on human resources outside of that used in the business themselves. This means that collecting the data is currently a very complex and time intensive task with real-time or near real-time data therefore relatively difficult to produce.

More frequent monitoring of vacancies, agency rates and workforce characteristics relies on employer data and local intelligence, or collective agreement through organisations such as ADSSC to produce data that is frequent and sharable, e.g., the memorandum of cooperation on agency social workers in children services.

Social Care Wales has also been considering how to publish data more actively on registered care workers. We hold information on registered individual's employer and can therefore monitor the number of those registered with an employment agency as their primary employer. This data is reliant on registered people keeping their record up to date and can only report information about their employer, and the role they are registered as. It is, however, another set of data that is being made available for use on the Social Care Wales data portal³. The data portal is a project to bring together data and intelligence on social care in Wales and is currently in the process of redevelopment by Social Care Wales.

In addition, we are in the process of summarising the workforce profile for the social work profession, using current registration data which we would happily share with you when available. While this will not be real time data, it will be a more recent capture of data from the register that can provide an overall profile of the profession. It will also lend itself to more effective workforce planning, by providing some projections of supply and demand of qualified social workers based on turnover, vacancy rates and data emerging from the qualifying pathways of newly qualified social workers from Welsh universities.

Directors of Social Services have a statutory role in each Local Authority to plan their workforce requirements to meet population needs and this is increasingly planned with the NHS and other partners via Regional Workforce Partnership boards, in the planning of more integrated services. Approaches to workforce planning in health and social care are improving but, as always, reliant on accurate, robust workforce data.

The ambition of the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy remains clear in this respect of continually improving workforce data to aid effective workforce planning. There are specific actions in the draft delivery plan for social care that will support further improvement in this area during phase two of the strategy's implementation.

5. The frequency with which this data is collected.

Workforce data from all 1,200 social care services in Wales is currently collected on an annual basis by Social Care Wales and published as a summary report.

Registration data is updated continuously, but there are periods where updates are more frequent (at the end of a registration and renewal period for example) and as mentioned previously is reliant on the registered person updating their record on a regular basis.

Welsh Government collects some local authority workforce data on a more frequent basis (covering workforce capacity and absence). All other social care collections are ad-hoc and are gathered at the frequency agreed by the involved parties or as a one-off.

³ National social care data portal for Wales - <https://www.socialcaredata.wales/>

6. Your views as to the merits of publishing annual data as in England and which agency would be responsible for taking that forward:

As part of the Welsh Government's Performance and Improvement Framework for social services (PIF) Social Care Wales is already required to collect workforce data on an annual basis and a summary report is published accordingly.

This allows trends to be established based on reliable data and to a certain extent can be validated using comparative data from the register, which is the approach currently taken prior to publication. This revised process has been in place for three years and improvements in the approach have been made year on year. The aim is to have a public facing dashboard on the data portal described in question 4. This will enable data to be used by services and settings to aid improvements to approaches to workforce planning. We work closely with other UK nations in informing our approach to workforce data collections, as well as the Office for National Statistics.

There is a range of social care data available on our data portal, which you may find useful – the National social care data portal for Wales
<https://www.socialcaredata.wales/>