

# ADASS Policy Statement: Workforce

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## Our Position

ADASS advocates for a vibrant, diverse, and skilled social care workforce that enables people to live independently in their communities. That we have enough people with the right skills, the right values in the right place to give people choice and control over their lives, both now and in the future. This aligns with the Government ambitions for neighbourhood health and care and the NHS 10-year plan three strategic shifts – hospital to community, treatment to prevention and analogue to digital.

## Valuing the social care workforce

The adult social care workforce is a large, diverse and essential part of the health and care system. It supports adults with care needs to live independently, safely and with dignity.

- **Care workers are skilled professionals** and must be recognised as such. They deserve parity with other public sector roles, including the NHS—not only in pay, but in terms and conditions, investment, and opportunities for progression. The sector must be attractive to those at the start of their career and supportive in retaining our older workforce.
- **Regulated professionals—such as social workers and occupational therapists—are critical to delivering national care and health ambitions.** So too are colleagues in ancillary, support, commissioning, assurance and improvement roles. All should be recognised as key contributors to a complex sector and supported to develop, progress and become future leaders.
- **Pay and progression remain significantly poorer than in the NHS.** Many staff move into NHS roles or leave for other sectors with better pay and conditions, turning social care into a stepping stone rather than a long-term career. This churn undermines recruitment, retention and service stability.
- **Access to high-quality training is declining just as people’s needs are becoming more complex.** Reduced participation threatens care quality, staff confidence and progression opportunities—especially for workers in small providers, rural areas, or those with variable hours who face the greatest barriers. Without a well-supported, skilled workforce, the sector cannot meet current or future demand.

Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion must underpin the entire workforce. This means:

- Removing barriers to entry and progression for under-represented groups, ensuring fair access to training and leadership opportunities.
- Standardising pay structures and career pathways so roles are valued consistently across the sector.
- Recruiting and retaining a workforce that reflects the communities served, including diversity of ethnicity, gender, age and background.
- Creating a respectful, supportive culture where every worker can contribute fully.

ADASS fully supports the Skills for Care Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standards ([SC-WRES](#)) as an essential tool for continuous improvement. It helps organisations address inequality, build anti-racist workplaces, and better understand local workforce experiences.

### Fully Funded Workforce Plan

We continue to support the Skills for Care-led workforce strategy and recognise the sector's determination to drive change despite limited capacity. However, a long-term, Government-backed plan is essential to secure a sustainable social care workforce.

- **The plan must reflect the growing complexity of care.** The workforce requires highly skilled staff with strong professional values, working in an evolving landscape that is holistic, integrated, person-centred and increasingly shaped by technology and AI.
- **International recruitment has helped in the short term but cannot replace a valued domestic workforce.** The end of the Health and Care Visa and wider policy changes have sharply reduced international recruitment. Recent progress in tackling modern slavery and exploitation among internationally recruited workers should inform protections and good practice for the domestic workforce too.
- **Lack of clear training and career pathways remains a major barrier to recruitment and retention.** This requires investment, strong leadership and cultures within provider organisations that prioritise development and protect time for learning. While Learning and Development Support Services (LDSS) funding is available, it is often seen as inadequate, complex and inconsistent. Similarly, the apprenticeship levy for social workers has been criticised for lacking flexibility and limiting councils' ability to use it effectively.

### ADASS Recommendations:

- **Recognise care roles as equal in value to other public service sectors.** Support a national shift in rhetoric so the public understands the value, opportunities and economic contribution of social care. This could help tackle unemployment, widen access to meaningful careers, and build a motivated, ambitious domestic workforce.
- **Provide national funding for sustainable pay and improved terms and conditions.** Councils and providers face severe financial pressures and cannot deliver this alone. While the Fair Pay Agreement consultation is welcome, it may bring unintended consequences, requires central funding, and will take years to implement—immediate support is needed.
- **Implement the Care Workforce Pathway.** A clear, structured progression route will help make social care a career of choice, strengthen retention, grow the domestic workforce and build a future pipeline of leaders.
- **Ensure every worker can access flexible, relevant and affordable training.** Employers should protect time for learning, training providers must adapt delivery models to frontline realities, and

national/local partners should invest in consistent pathways and infrastructure. Improving access to training is essential to safe, person-centred care and a confident, resilient workforce.

- **Develop a fully funded, long-term workforce plan.** This should be co-produced with people who draw on care and support, and developed with health, housing, children's services and other partners. It must prioritise empowerment, diversity, integrated care, reduce inefficiencies, align funding and harness technology and innovation.
- **Utilise adult social care skills and expertise to support the three shifts.** The sector's deep community insight and capabilities are vital to helping people stay at home and to the success of neighbourhood, place-based multidisciplinary teams. Staff must be supported to work in integrated, autonomous roles and recognised as equal partners.

In addition to this overarching policy position statement, we also have policy position statements available for:

- Fair Pay Agreement
- International Recruitment

