

nmds-sc briefing

Issue 5 - AGE & GENDER

The workforce in the Social Care sector has traditionally been thought to be both **ageing** and polarised by **gender**. In common with other areas of the economy, a shortfall in workers caused by the 'baby-boomer' cohort reaching retirement age has been feared. The sector has also been viewed as one with high levels of female participation and as one that fails to attract both younger workers and male workers.

NMDS-SC Briefing 5 looks at what the data collected so far is telling us about the age and gender of the Social Care workforce and challenges whether these traditionally held views represent a true reflection of the sector in 2007.

“ The UK labour force is ageing. Currently people aged 50+ represent 30% of those of working age, and 26% of those actually in work, and this will increase in the next 10-15yrs

(AgePositive.gov.uk, November 2007)

Options for Excellence 2006 (Dept of Health, DfES) also took this view:

The Social Care workforce itself will also be ageing, so we will need to capture the contribution of older workers, and attract and retain younger workers

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At the time of analysis (May 31st 2007) there was no date of birth information for just under a quarter of the ninety thousand worker records received, so their age cannot be calculated. As such the distribution of the percentages shown in the age distributions will be a little lower than reality. Despite this caveat, the NMDS-SC analysis suggests that there are grounds for optimism, particularly in light of the analysis showing that workers are very likely to arrive in the care sector later in their working lives.

Headlines

- The age profile shows that around one third of workers are aged 45 or over, with fifteen percent aged 55 or over.
- Around two thirds of workers do not start working in social care until they are aged 30 or over.
- The sector may be beginning to attract males, 19% of those who joined in 2005/6 were male.
- Women make up 83% of the workforce and are represented in this proportion at all grades including managerial. However at Senior Management level males make up 35% of the workforce

Analysis of workers by age band									
	Base	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 or over	Unrecorded
All Workers	87,744	1%	8%	15%	19%	18%	8%	7%	24%

Age Analysis

The age breakdown of all care sector workers and three selected job roles are shown in the table below. In general the largest age cohort is aged 35 – 44 (other than Registered Managers).

Age of Worker	All Workers	Registered Manager	Senior Care Worker	Care Worker
Under 18	1%	0%	0%	0%
18 - 24	8%	0%	6%	11%
25 - 34	15%	11%	21%	17%
35 - 44	19%	26%	24%	19%
45 - 54	18%	35%	23%	17%
55 - 59	8%	13%	8%	7%
60 or over	7%	6%	6%	6%
Unrecorded	25%	9%	12%	23%

Attracting younger staff

While acknowledging levels of unrecorded ages, less than 1% of the workers reported on are aged below 18 years old. This may be the impact of the restrictions on young workers performing personal care tasks. In addition, this could be resulting in a lower percentage in the next age group (aged 18 – 24) as young people may have already started in another occupation. This disadvantages the sector in accessing Apprenticeships funding for NVQ training. Removing the personal care restrictions could attract young people into the sector earlier.

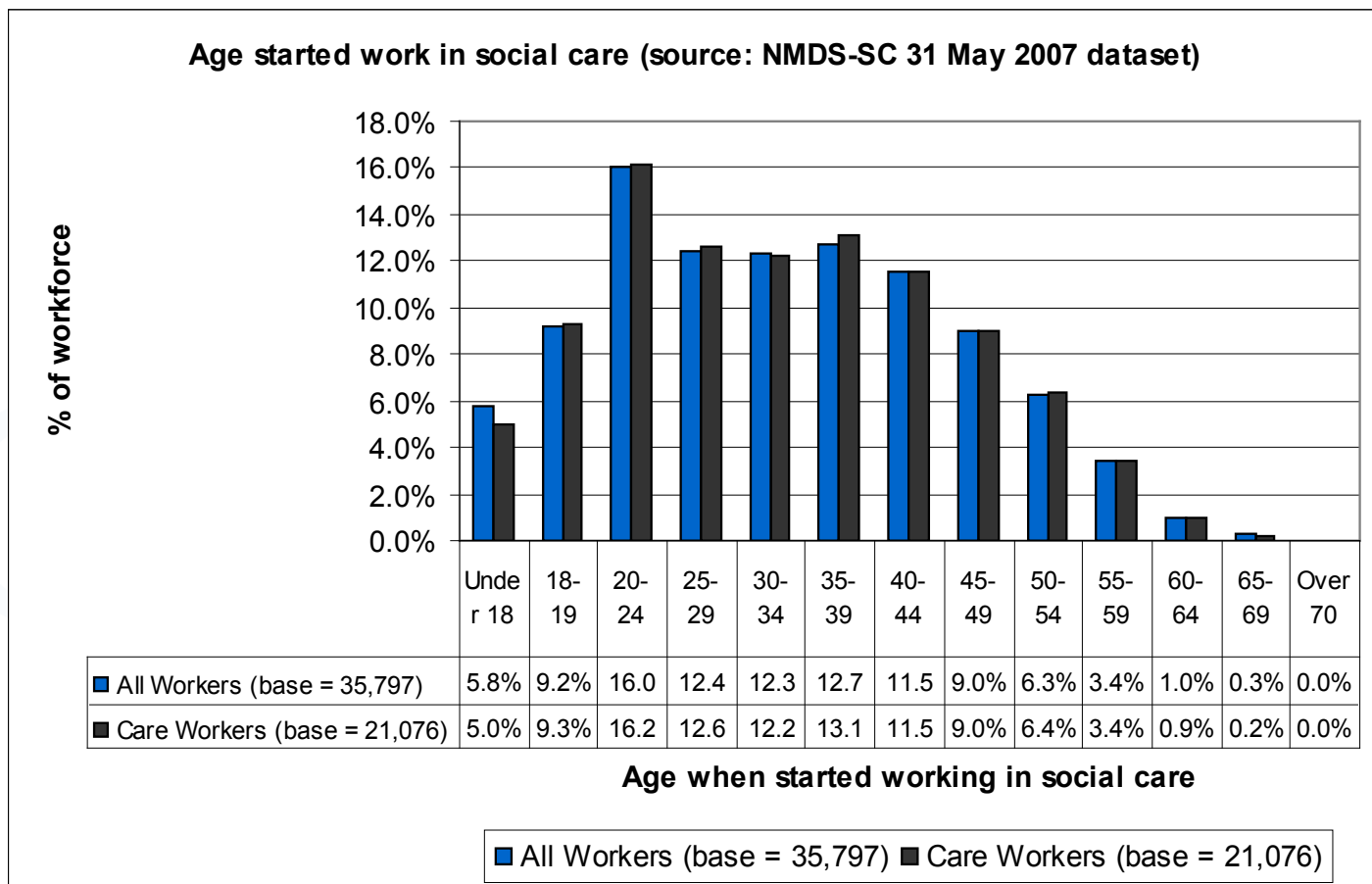
Levels of applications for professional social work training had reached a plateau under the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW). Since the introduction of the Social Work degree numbers of applications have begun to rise. Under the two year DipSW course learners could not qualify until they were aged 22 or over. Under the new degree such age restrictions have been removed and the three-year degree course can therefore be accessed straight from school or college. The removal of age restrictions and the creation of a degree course and a more natural route into higher education have therefore been created. A similar rise in the number of younger workers entering the sector directly from school would probably occur if age restrictions on the provision of personal care were removed.

The NMDS-SC data also shows that the 25-34 age group is smaller than the 45-54 age group, and the same size as the over 55-age group. This has traditionally been an area of concern, however new NMDS-SC analysis of recruitment patterns suggests that it may be less of an issue than previously thought.

Age on first entering the care sector

NMDS-SC analysis shown in the chart below shows that while a third of workers started working in social care at age 18-24, another third come in between 30 and 45 and a quarter between 25 and 34. Furthermore, the 18-24 group includes more who will not stay in social care than the other groups.

Research suggests that the reasons for social care being attractive to older workers include: flexibility of hours; job satisfaction; workers become more aware of care work as they get older; the nature of the work increases in interest as workers themselves get older (see the Skills for Care commissioned National Survey of Care Workers Report available at <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/view.asp?id=965>). An interpretation of this analysis could be that having an 'older' workforce is to be expected and that it is sustainable.



N.B – it should be noted that this chart is based on those worker records where both a date of birth and a year entered social care was provided. As such it is not directly comparable with other data tables in this Briefing.

We have seen in previous Briefings the high turnover rate, and the two age groups 55-59 and 60+ are not necessarily long standing staff. Only 3% and 4% of these two groups respectively have spent their whole working lives in this sector, most have joined in the last 8-12 years. It may well be that **age is a spur to join our sector, not a reason to leave it**. The sector can gain from the experience and engagement of older workers.

Gender Analysis

Women make up 83% of the workforce, and this figure is reflected in all grades apart from Senior Managers where 33% are male (see table).

Gender	All Workers	Senior Manager	Registered Manager	Senior Care Worker	Care Worker
Female	83%	65%	84%	87%	85%
Male	15%	33%	15%	12%	13%
Not known	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Unrecorded	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Perhaps unsurprisingly this pattern of female under-representation is repeated when looking at Directors of Adult Services. Of the 166 full members of the Association of Directors of Adult Services only 76 were women i.e. 46% (ADSS website, November 2007).

Increasing male participation

Analysis of the NMDS-SC data by gender highlights that part time work is less attractive to men, who make up 9% of part-time workers but 19% of the full-time workers. Men make up 23% of workers within micro employers (less than 10 employees), so a movement to personalized budgets and more micro employers could result in more male recruitment.



Part-time work is an important bridge between full-time work and retirement...Part-time work is much more common amongst women (44%), than men (11%)

(Dept of Work and Pensions –Opportunity Age, 2007)



Care setting also appears to make some difference - men make up 16% of care homes with nursing, 13% of care-only homes, and just 11% within domiciliary care. The lower percentage in domiciliary care again may be due to the part-time / variable nature of such work and a preference for female care workers in this role.

Green shoots of male participation?

The table below shows the gender breakdown of the workforce by year first worked in care sector – it would appear that more males have joined the social care workforce in recent years. It will be interesting to note whether these males stay and so begin to change the gender make-up of the sector overall.

Year started in Social Care										
Gender	2007-2008	2005-2006	2003-2004	2000-2002	1995-1999	1990-1994	1985-1989	1980-1984	1970-1979	Before 1970
Female	81%	80%	83%	84%	86%	87%	90%	89%	90%	88%
Male	18%	19%	16%	15%	13%	12%	9%	9%	10%	11%
Not known	*%	0%	0%	*%	0%	0%	0%	*%	*%	*%
Unrecorded	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%

The National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC) has been collecting data since early 2006. At the time of writing the NMDS-SC has received information from 16,000 establishments from across England. The figures quoted in this report are based on the analysis of just over 8,600 establishments and just under 90,000 worker records (analysis of data as at May 31st, 2007).

Further copies of this report and a variety of other information and detailed analysis concerning different aspects of the NMDS-SC are available at www.skillsforcare.org.uk, follow the links for NMDS-SC.

NMDS-SC has been available to update and complete Online since November 2007. A new report is now available from the NMDS-SC Online site – **the Local Authority Profile**. This profile is an analysis of the latest available NMDS-SC returns in a Local Authority’s geographical area. It covers returns from all types of social care organisations in all sectors (statutory, private and voluntary/third sector).

We welcome and invite comments and observations on NMDS-SC Briefings – please e-mail us at nmdsbriefing@skillsforcare.org.uk

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