



## Foreword

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Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) are amongst the most experienced and well-trained members of staff within the health and social care workforce. All are required to be registered professionals and to undertake these duties on behalf of the local authority. Their vital role will routinely involve situations which present crisis, uncertainty, distress and often, trauma. AMHPs will mostly be required to intervene in the circumstances of people who find themselves at their lowest ebb and not in control of many important life-changing decisions and choices. The AMHP role is one which can therefore be described as enormously challenging yet rewarding in equal measure. The level of energy, resilience and determination required to be an AMHP is not to be underestimated and certainly also, the sense of professional pride which our AMHP colleagues take in their work is a measure of their commitment.

## Introduction

Skills for Care, as the leading source of adult social care workforce intelligence, helps to create a skilled, valued and better-led adult social care workforce. We provide the practical tools and support to help adult social care organisations in England recruit, retain, develop and lead their workforce. We work with employers and related services to ensure dignity and respect are at the heart of service delivery.

This report presents data collected via a dedicated Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) leads survey, as at May 2023. Skills for Care conducts this survey on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care and the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network. This report also includes data on social workers from local authorities collected via the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) as at September 2022.

We have carried out this survey since 2017, and it has provided important information for the Department of Health and Social Care and the AMHP Leads Network to better understand this key role. The survey provides data on the overall number of AMHPs and intelligence about their role and working patterns. The findings from this survey have been used along with data collected by the ASC-WDS on the characteristics of individual social workers.

An AMHP is a registered professional (social worker, nurse, occupational therapist or psychologist) who has undertaken additional training, approved by the Secretary of State and regulated by Social Work England (formerly by The Health and Care Professions Council - HCPC), to carry out specific duties under the Mental Health Act 1983. In addition, the AMHP will have been approved by a local social services authority to act on its behalf in carrying out these duties.

AMHPs are (amongst other duties) responsible for setting up and co-ordinating assessments under the Mental Health Act and, if necessary, making applications to detain

This year the survey was completed by 85% of local authorities in England (126 out of 148). The results of this survey, and data from the ASC-WDS, enables Skills for Care, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Approved Mental Health Professionals Leads Network and other stakeholders to have clear, robust workforce intelligence and to better understand this key role. This information is vital to help improve the

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## Key findings

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The latest survey of AMHPs in the social care workforce received responses from 126 local authorities in England. The findings from this survey, and those from previous years, are presented in this report as well as data from the Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset (ASC-WDS) covering social workers who are AMHP qualified employed by local authority adult social care services departments within local authorities.

Over the previous five years, the estimated number of AMHPs has remained stable at around 3,800.

The survey found that to fully staff their service to provide a 24-hour response then an increase of 30% in the number of full-time equivalent AMHPs is required. Despite this requirement, the vacancy rate was 11.2%, and therefore the number of posts being advertised is less than the overall requirement for a 24-hour AMHP service.

AMHP leads anticipate an additional 44.9% AMHPs starting over the coming 5 years, of which the majority will be newly qualified/first time in the role, and 25.7% will leave the role over this same period.

Data from the ASC-WDS showed that around a third of the AMHP workforce (29%) were aged 55 and above, and could retire over the coming 10 years. The survey found that 2.5% of AMHPs had retired in the previous 12 months, therefore succession planning is key to ensuring a stable workforce. The survey also found that 8.2% of the AMHP

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## Findings from the AMHP Survey

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### **Overview of findings from the AMHP survey, 2023**

The survey found that 94% of AMHPs were Social Workers.

The majority of AMHPs were employed in the local authority sector (77%), 16% were employed in the NHS and 6% agency and freelance.

Around two thirds (60%) of AMHPs combine their role with another role while around one in four AMHPs solely perform the role of an AMHP (26%). The remaining 15% were not primarily working as an AMHP or regularly as an AMHP.

The survey showed that 16% of AMHPs only work out-of-hours, for example in emergency duty teams.

The map below shows the number of AMHPs per 10,000 people aged 15 and above in each local authority area. The South East region had the lowest number of AMHPs per person at around 0.56 whereas the North West had the highest at 1.06, as shown in Chart 2. Please note there are multiple factors which influence the demand for AMHPs, and this is not a suggestion of an optimal number, but this presents the variation across England.

**Map 1.**

## 1.2 AMHP headcount comparison 2022 to 2023

The chart below shows the change in the estimated number of AMHPs between 2022 and 2023. The overall number of AMHPs was almost the same in each year. The North East showed the largest decrease at 11% (around 25 fewer AMHPs), whereas the South East showed the largest increase at 5% (around

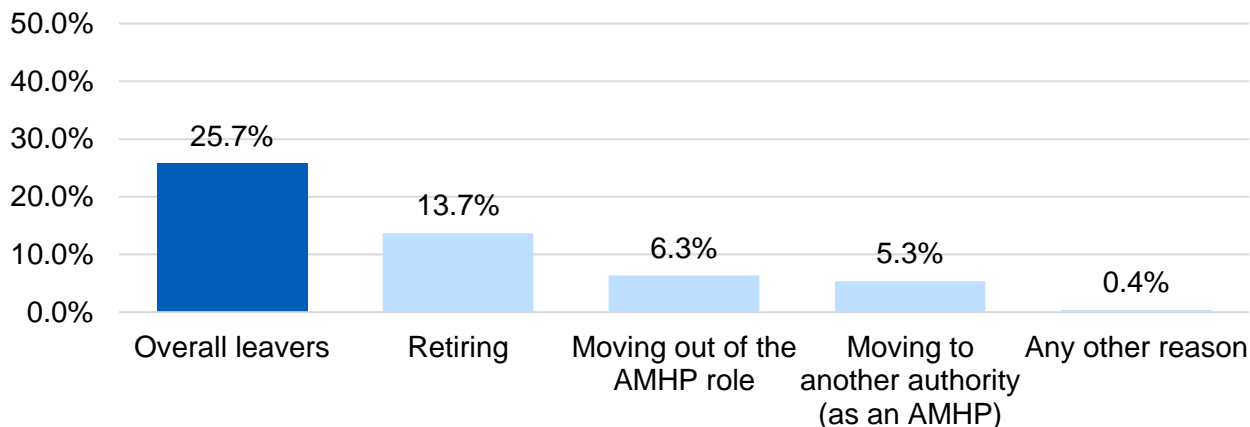
**Chart 5**



The survey also asked AMHP leads to anticipate how many AMHPs will leave their authority over the coming 5 years. The survey found an expected 25.7% AMHPs would leave the workforce over the coming 5 years, and the majority of these leavers would be people retiring (13.7% of AMHPs).

**Chart 8. Anticipated AMHP leavers in the coming 5 years by category**

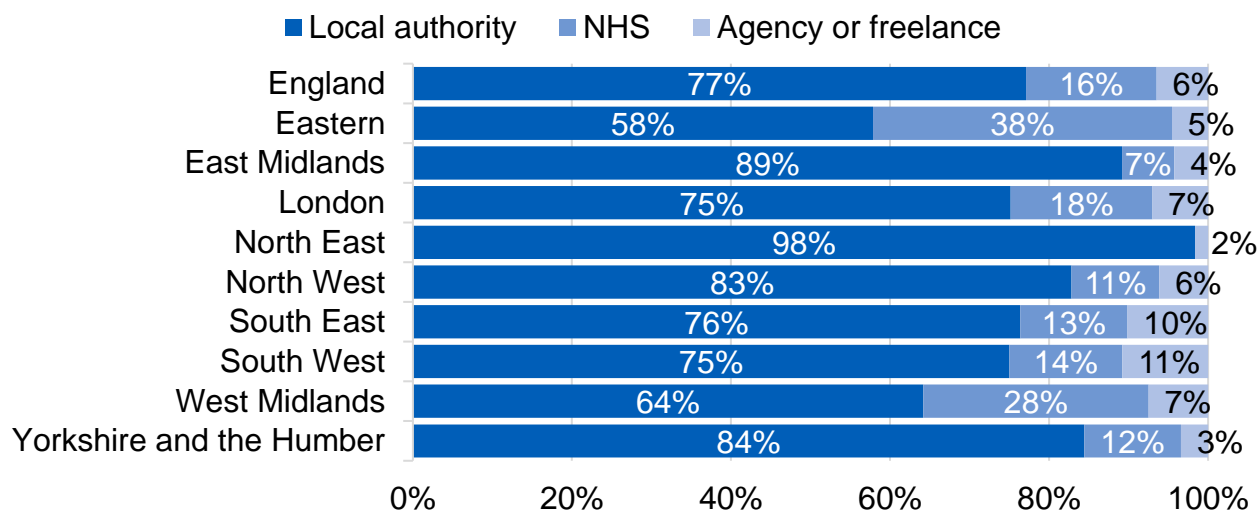
Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey showed that the majority of AMHPs were employed by the local authority (77%), compared to 16% who were employed by the NHS and 6% who were agency or freelance workers. This pattern was reflected in each region, however there was some variance, for example the Eastern region had much higher proportion employed by the NHS (38%) where the North East had 0% employed by the NHS.

**Chart 9. Proportion of AMHPs by employer**

Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The chart below shows the proportion of agency AMHPs increased from 4% in 2022 to 6% in 2023. The increased use of agency staff could indicate difficulty recruiting into full-time positions and have financial implications for local authorities.

**Chart 10. Proportion of AMHPs by employer between 2018 and 2023**  
*Source. AMHP survey May 2023*

The survey found that 94% of AMHPs were social workers, with 5% registered nurses along with less than 1% occupational therapists and very few psychologists. In half of local authority areas that were surveyed, all AMHPs were social workers, which means no AMHPs from these local authorities were from nursing, occupational therapy or psychology professions. The Eastern region had the highest proportion of



**Chart 13. Comparing status of role over time**  
*State of WIHS Survey May 2023*



**Chart 15. Proportion of local authorities that share AMHP services**

Source. AMHP survey May 2023

The survey asked for the headcount of AMHPs that worked in specific services such as forensics, safeguarding, deprivation of liberty and others shown in the chart below. The responses showed that many did not fit into these services and instead provided a free text response. These responses and

**Chart 16. Proportion of AMHPs by service type**

Source. AMHP survey May 2023



The survey asked respondents if their local authority ran a single AMHP duty system covering 24-hours 7 days of the week. Over a third of respondents said yes (40%) but this proportion varied regionally with the East Midlands having the highest proportion of 24/7 services (71%) and Eastern having the lowest (0%).

**Chart 18. Proportion of local authorities in each region with a 24/7 AMHP services**

*Source. AMHP survey May 2023*





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## Findings from the ASC-WDS

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### **Overview of social workers and qualified AMHPs from ASC-WDS data**

The information below covers social workers employed by local authorities in England only.

Skills for Care estimate that, of those qualified as an AMHP, 29% were aged 55 and over compared to 24% of social workers.

Around a quarter of AMHPs (23%) were of Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

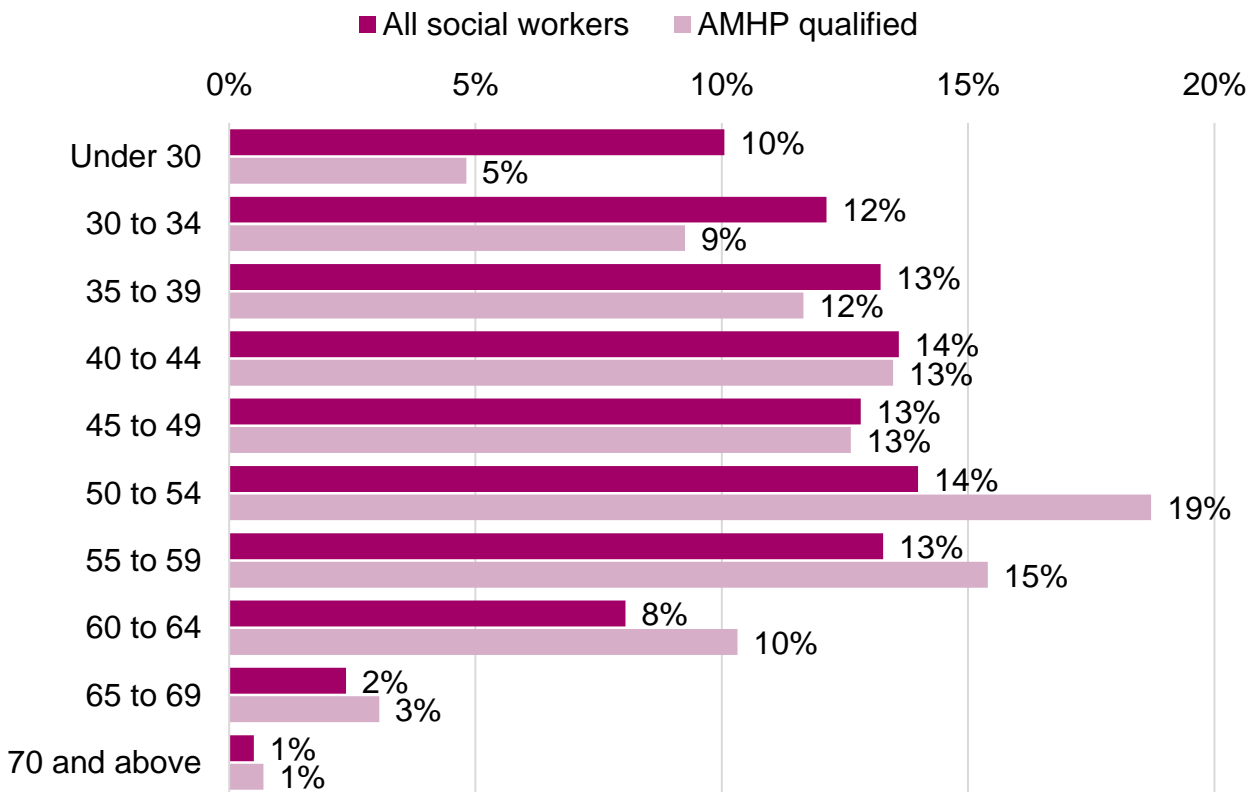
## 2.2 AMHP Demographics

### 2.2.1 Age

The ASC-WDS showed that around 24% of social workers were aged 55 and above, and this proportion is higher for those qualified as an AMHP (29%). From a workforce planning perspective this group may retire within the next ten years. The ASC-WDS also showed there were notably fewer qualified AMHPs under 30 compared to social workers.

**Chart 19. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by age group**

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022

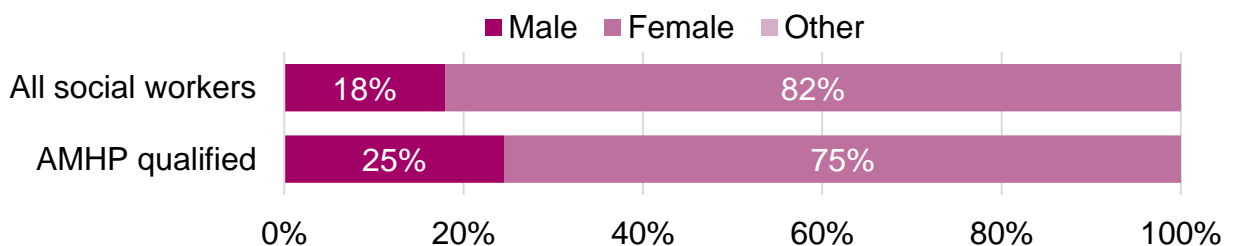


### 2.2.2 Gender

Across England, the AMHP role had a higher proportion of people identifying as male (25%) compared to social workers overall (18%). This difference was greatest in the Eastern (17% male social workers / 29% male AMHPs) and Yorkshire and Humber regions (15% male social workers / 27% male AMHPs), and lowest in the East Midlands (14% male social workers / 15% male AMHPs).

**Chart 20. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by gender**

Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



### 2.2.3 Ethnicity

The ASC-WDS showed that 72% of social workers identified as being of white ethnicity and 28% identified as of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity. Social workers qualified to perform as an AMHP were less ethnically diverse (23% Black, Asian and minority ethnicity) than social workers overall.

London showed the highest ethnic diversity with 62% of social workers and 52% of AMHPs from Black, Asian and minority ethnicity backgrounds. Whereas in the North East, diversity was lower with 7% of social workers and AMHPs from Black, Asian and minority ethnicity backgrounds. These proportions generally reflect the population of these regions.

#### **Chart 21. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by ethnicity**

*Source. ASC-WDS September 2022*

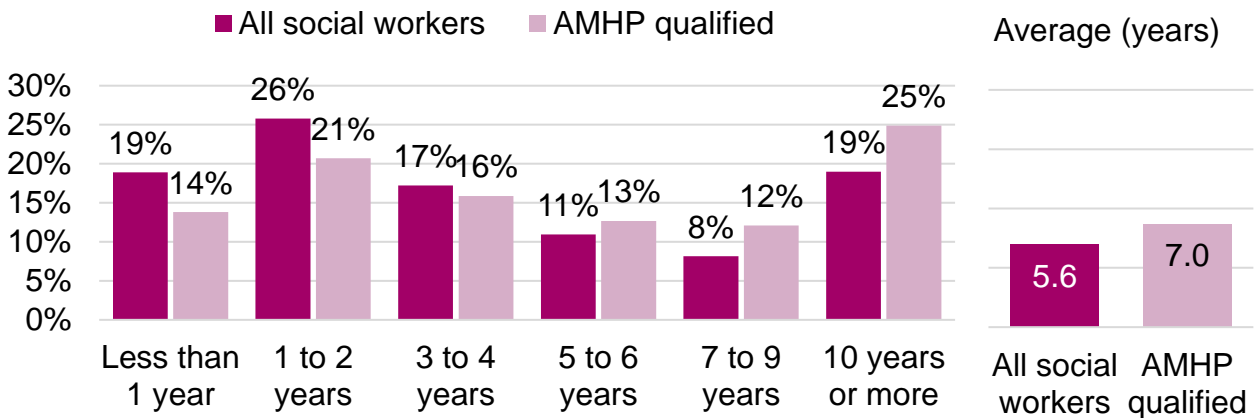
### 2.2.3 Nationality

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### 2.3 Experience in current role

ASC-WDS data also allows us to look at how long social workers have been performing their current role. The data shows that those who hold an AMHP qualification had generally been in post for a longer time. The average experience in current role for an AMHP was 7.0 years compared to 5.6 years for all social workers. Of those with an AMHP qualification, 25% had ten years or more experience, compared to 19% of those without the AMHP qualification. The main reason for this trend is that only social workers with at least two years post-qualification experience can embark on AMHP training.

**Chart 23. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in role\***  
 Source. ASC-WDS September 2022

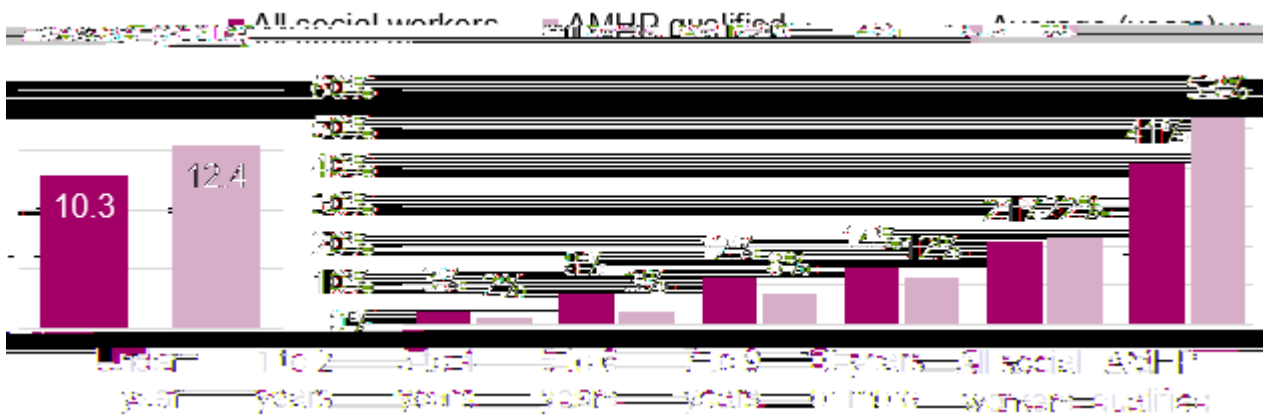


\*Those with less than two years in their current role in may have been trained as an AMHP in a previous role.

### 2.4 Experience in sector

Chart 23 shows that social workers with an AMHP qualification had more experience in the adult social care sector than social workers in general. The average experience in sector for an AMHP is 12.4 years compared to 10.3 years for all social workers. The largest difference was in the 10 or more years experience group where 53% of AMHPs have this level of experience compared to 41% of social workers. Again, this suggests that social workers can progress to becoming AMHPs later in their career.

**Chart 24. Proportion of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector**  
 Source. ASC-WDS September 2022



## 2.5 Pay

The chart below compares the average salary of a social worker to those identified as an AMHP. As AMHPs tend to have a greater amount of experience in the sector (shown above), only those with five years or more experience in adult social care are included in both groups. It is also acknowledged that many local authorities pay a premium for practicing AMHPs as either a fixed payment or an incremental increase, but this is inconsistent across the sector<sup>1</sup>.

Across England, the median pay for an AMHP was £41,300, which was 9% higher than the £37,900 for all social workers. As shown in Chart 26 below, this uplift is still substantial for social workers with the most experience in the sector, at 5% for those with 20 years or more experience.

### **Chart 25. Median FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs**

*Source. ASC-WDS September 2022.*

Note. Only those with five years or more experience in the sector were included.

### **Chart 26. Median FTE salary of social workers and qualified AMHPs by experience in sector**

*Source. ASC-WDS September 2022*

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<sup>1</sup> Who wants to be an Approved Mental Health Professional? . Kā \* 9 C[ ||^\*^ L[ } ā[ } . 2018

