

## Undervalued, underpaid and leaving in droves: The crisis in Scotland's adult social care workforce

Scotland's adult social care workforce makes up approximately 8% of all Scottish employment or one in 13 jobs. Yet this low-paid, predominantly female workforce is increasingly undervalued. This report shows that, in recent years, pay has fallen, staff turnover has increased, and the workforce has shrunk. Additionally, Councils have recently announced cuts to services.

- Between 2020 and 2021, the social care workforce fell 0.6% to 208,630 people.<sup>1</sup> This is despite increased demand and the need for 56,000 more workers by 2035.<sup>2</sup>
- In the last decade, pay for care workers has fallen relatively to other low-paid sectors. In 2012, adult social care workers earned 16 pence more an hour than sales and retail assistants. In 2021, they earned 21 pence less.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2020 and 2021, the social care stability index fell from 80.7% to 75.5%. This means that while four-fifths of the workforce remained in the same post between 2019 and 2020, only three-quarters of the workforce remained in the same post between 2020 and 2021.<sup>4</sup>
- In March 2023, Glasgow City Integration Joint Board, a partnership between the council and NHS which runs the health and social care partnership, announced over £20 million of cuts to social care in Glasgow. Almost 200 jobs are set to be lost due to the savings, while a budget for care home beds is being slashed, charges increased and £17m taken from reserves to deal with the shortfall.<sup>5</sup>
- At the same time, more than £10 million of cuts have been made to social care in Edinburgh with further savings being considered by Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board.<sup>6</sup>

These cuts to services, to the workforce and to pay, come in top of other forms of precarity for the workforce. The STUC estimates that as many as 18,000 care workers in Scotland are on zero-hour contracts.<sup>7</sup>

These issues with Scotland's social care workforce are driven by a lack of public investment and by a sector dominated by big financial interests. STUC research published in June 2022<sup>8</sup> found that:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/2021-workforce-data-report>

<sup>2</sup> UK research suggests that if the adult social care workforce grows proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population then the number of adult social care jobs will increase by 27%. Applying this percentage to the Scottish workforce is 56,000.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2022/08/how-social-care-struggles-compete-supermarkets-pay>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/2021-workforce-data-report> and <https://data.sssc.uk.com/data-publications/22-workforce-data-report/263-scottish-social-service-sector-report-on-2020-workforce-data>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/glasgow-news/glasgow-social-care-cuts-over-26534473>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/edinburgh-social-care-facing-huge-26536067>

<sup>7</sup> Based on ONS zero hours contracts data:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/emp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts>

<sup>8</sup> <https://stuc.org.uk/files/Reports/Profiting-from-Care-Report.pdf>

- Nearly 25% of care homes run by big providers had at least one complaint upheld against them in 2019/20, compared to 16% in the rest of the private sector and 6% in homes not run for profit.
- In older people's care homes, staffing resources are 20% worse in the private sector compared to the not-for-profit sector.
- Over the last six years, the public sector has paid on average £1.60 more per hour to care workers.
- Between 2017 and 2020, the most profitable for-profit firms spent £28 of every £100 received in fees on profits, rent, payments to the directors, and interest payments on loans. For the ten largest not-for-profit care home operators, the figure is around £3.43.

As the Scottish Government consider the future of the National Care Service Bill over the summer, the STUC is calling for:

- A National Care Service based on a not-for-profit public service, delivered through local authorities with an ongoing role for the voluntary sector.
- Trade unions must be recognised for sectoral collective bargaining, backed up by increased funding. This, alongside a concerted effort to improve union density in the care sector, should be the key mechanism for driving up pay, terms and conditions.
- The Scottish care home estate should be transferred out of private ownership gradually over time - for instance, through a multi-year plan backed up by Scottish National Investment Bank loans, 'care bonds' or capital borrowing. For the most extractive providers, this could pay for itself within a matter of years.

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