

ADULT HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SECTOR REPORT

Hampshire and Solent LSIP Refresh 2026



Hampshire's Health and Social Care sector faces ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, rising skill demands, and system-wide reform, requiring coordinated action to strengthen training access, leadership capability, digital and clinical skills, and clearer pathways into and through the sector.

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2026 Update Report – Health & Social Care (Hampshire)

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Executive Summary

This report provides an updated analysis of workforce and skills needs across Hampshire's Health and Social Care sector, drawing on desk research, survey findings, focus groups, interviews, and intelligence from Skills for Care and local system partners. The sector continues to face significant and persistent challenges around recruitment, retention, and workforce development, now compounded by major national reforms and rising demographic demand.

National policy direction—particularly the shift towards delegated healthcare responsibilities and the move from treatment to prevention, analogue to digital, and hospital-based to community-based care—is reshaping roles and increasing the need for enhanced clinical capability, digital competence, and strong leadership and management. These requirements are emerging at a time when the workforce profile shows an ageing demographic, limited representation of younger workers, and ongoing gender imbalance.

Employers and local authorities consistently highlight the need to strengthen foundational care skills, improve management capability, address negative public perceptions, and provide clearer, better-communicated career pathways. Young entrants remain under-represented, with employability and soft-skill gaps acting as further barriers to recruitment. Training compliance is improving but remains uneven, particularly around Level 2 qualifications and statutory training, including the now-mandatory Oliver McGowan requirements. Providers continue to call for more equitable access to training, stronger system coordination, and a clearer employer voice in local skills planning.

Priority skills needs identified include leadership and management, digital literacy, delegated healthcare competencies, clinical skills, communication, and person-centred approaches. Addressing these gaps is essential for building a sustainable, resilient workforce capable of adapting to new models of delivery.

The report identifies several opportunities to strengthen the system, including expanding training capacity, improving access to statutory and specialist provision, enhancing partnerships between employers and education providers, increasing work-placement opportunities, and developing flexible, accessible training pathways. Proposed solutions such as a digital learning academy, improved career information, and sector-wide perception-change activity would further support recruitment and retention.

Meeting future workforce needs will require coordinated action across employers, training providers, local authorities, and wider system partners. Targeted investment in digital capability, leadership development, clinical upskilling, and clearer progression routes will be critical to ensuring that Hampshire's Health and Social Care workforce is equipped for the future and able to deliver high-quality care within an evolving service landscape.

Methodology

This report is based on a triangulated evidence approach. Desk research included analysis of national and regional workforce intelligence, particularly data from Skills for Care, DFE workforce intelligence, and policy documentation*. A structured survey captured quantitative insights from local employers. Qualitative insights were gathered through Hampshire Care Association conference delegates, Skills for Care Registered Manager Meeting delegates, SHCG Social Care Employer Advisory Board, focus groups and one-to-one interviews with sector leaders, including Hampshire Care Association managers and regional & National Managers from Skills for Care [Senior Regional Transformation Lead (London & Southeast) and London and Southeast Locality Manager Skills for Care]. Findings were cross-referenced with outputs from Hampshire Care Association events and local authority intelligence to ensure validity and reliability.

* Skills for Care: (Oct 25) National and regional data from: A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in Hampshire 2024/25 and Skills for Care roundtables Nov–Dec 2025

Report:

Hampshire's Sector Overview

In line with the rest of the country, the Health and Social Care sector remains in vulnerable state.

Skills for Care's (SfC) latest social care workforce data confirms vacancy rates at 7% (SfC 15 Oct 2025), a return to pre-Covid levels, while international recruitment declined significantly, contributing to workforce pressures—mirroring local employer concerns about recruitment and retention challenges. While 7% vacancy rate does not look too alarming, we know that there is a 37% drop out rate within the first year).

Key drivers of change include:

- Digital transformation, prevention-focused models, and community-based care
- Policy reform, system reorganisation
- The emergence of new national skills bodies are creating uncertainty and complexity for employers and training providers
- Public perception remains a barrier to recruitment
- Career pathways are often poorly communicated.

Other shifts providing challenge:

- New 'Skills England' body is now responsible for Adult Social Skills
- CS/ICB reorganisation and change in priorities hard to keep up with and disseminate
- Enhanced autonomy over skills budgets to Mayoral Authorities – on their way, not known entities yet

Community Care Transformation

National policy is driving a transition from hospital-based care to community and home-based services. This requires a more flexible and skilled workforce capable of delivering complex care in non-clinical settings. The introduction of delegated healthcare and enhanced care worker roles is increasing the demand for higher-level clinical skills, multidisciplinary working, and stronger clinical governance in social care environments. Managers need support to lead this transformation, including workforce planning, supervision, and partnership working. Future workforce models will need to integrate health and social care skills more effectively, supported by aligned training pathways.

Sector Overview:

The sector is struggling with recruitment and retention:

Due to government reform for the sector, the long existing public perception: accepting it is a values-led industry – a career not just a job; clarity of career pathway; communication levels & manager skills to retain workforce. The workforce profile highlights an average age of 43, with only a small proportion under 25. The workforce remains predominantly female, raising additional considerations around workforce diversity and service user choice.

Trends having a negative impact on the sector's ability to thrive:

- Difficulties retention and new roles required by Delegated Health Care initiative: enhanced care worker roles; managers managing new higher skilled staff and training;
- DWP not leading people into care due to their (wrong) perception of the sector;
- Retention on workforce (HCC H&SC team findings show that retention in LA care settings is 10% lower than an already low % in other regions)

Skills for Care Registered Managers' roundtables identified digital skills, delegated healthcare competencies, leadership, and documentation as core emerging requirements across the Solent area.

Local Authority workforce strategies (Hampshire, Portsmouth) emphasise retention, immigration impacts, and the need for operational leadership development.

Digital transformation and the shift from hospital-based to community-based models are central to the national 10-Year Health Plan, reinforcing sector reports of rising demand for neighbourhood-based care teams.

Local training offers (clinical skills, safeguarding, subsidised e-learning models, Flourish modules) indicate uneven access between PVI (private, voluntary or Independent) and statutory providers.

HCC LA Care provision statistics:

67% of Hampshire Care staff hold a Care Certificate Qualification

HCC training links with funding – [get links for this, discuss](#)

Average age = 43,

9% of workforce under 25,

79% female workforce – what about the males that would prefer a male carer?

Findings: Evidence from desk research and quantitative highlights: from conferences, meetings and survey results)

Challenges identified in LSIP 1 around filling the employment gaps in the sector, **remain relevant:**

- Public perception of industry/reputation and knowledge of breadth of roles in sector
- Career pathway clarity
- Staff retention
- Skills curriculum alignment with industry need
- Work Placement/experience opportunities to develop talent pipeline

However, the Health and Social Care sector in Hampshire also continues to experience recruitment and retention challenges. The introduction of delegated healthcare responsibilities is transforming job roles, requiring enhanced care workers and new leadership capabilities.

Survey and focus group insights [*] highlight the need for better access to training, clearer funding pathways, and stronger collaboration across the system. Employers emphasised the importance of including provider voice in skills planning. Interview insights reinforced the importance of values-led recruitment, improved management capability, and stronger progression routes.

Evidence indicates ongoing demand for Level 2 qualifications, enhanced clinical skills, autism and disability training, and leadership development. Compliance with the Care Certificate is improving but still variable. Statutory training requirements, such as Oliver McGowan training, are generating significant workforce development demand. Delegated healthcare guidance highlights the growing expectation for care workers to undertake clinical tasks safely under structured governance, aligning with local employer feedback.

[*] Focus group insights (qualitative themes from Hampshire Care Association spring conference, 85 providers in attendance, Skills for Care registered Managers meetings/communications (120 attendees across the meetings, 330 in communication), 1-to-1 interview perspectives (RS interviews with Skills for Care regional partnership manager and Senior Partnership Manager)]

Key Priorities & Skills Needs Analysis

Emerging needs of the sector:

The sector is experiencing significant workforce pressures, with shortages of care staff, enhanced care workers, and experienced managers. There are too few young people entering the field, and many are simply unaware of the career opportunities available. Gaps in soft skills and general employability also make it harder to bring younger workers into the workforce. On top of this, recent immigration rule changes are creating another layer of difficulty. Across the board, there's a growing need to upskill managers to help improve

retention, strengthen capability, and develop more specialised clinical and health-related skills within care roles. All of this is made more challenging by limited funding and difficulties accessing the training needed to keep pace with these new demands.

Current and emerging skills gaps identified:

- Communication skills within workforce
- leadership/management
- digital literacy
- delegated healthcare skills
- clinical competencies
- risk and medication management
- critical shortages include care staff, enhanced care workers, and skilled managers.

[Local Hampshire Data for job vacancies added in Appendix 1 – Skills for Care ASC sector and LSIP DFE Local Skills Dashboard data]

‘Skills for Care’ reports a regional decline in Level 2 qualification rates among care workers (to around 38%), reinforcing employer concerns about foundational skills.

There is a lack of young entrants and limited awareness of career opportunities. Soft skills and employability gaps create barriers to recruitment of younger workers.

Skills in demand include digital capability, leadership and management, clinical and delegated care skills, and person-centred approaches. Future needs will increasingly focus on prevention, technology-enabled care, and multidisciplinary working.

Cross-cutting priorities include sustainability, digital transformation, and inclusive workforce development.

Research from Local Authority (HCC) Skills for Care and Hampshire Care Association [conferencing their linked service providers and association members] have found that the skills **gaps currently hindering the sector’s ability to thrive include:**

- Leadership & management development (local authorities + SFC insight).
- Medication management, infection control, and risk management training (identified by Registered Managers meetings).
- Digital skills uplift across the PVI sector; delegated healthcare competencies; business/administration capability within small and micro-providers.
- The Care Workforce Pathway defines clear role categories and competencies, reinforcing the need for structured progression and consistent skill expectations across the sector.
- Workforce projections indicate the sector will require around 470,000 additional posts by 2040, signalling sustained demand for care staff and strong management structures.
- Public perception of the industry

The LA data highlights an urgent need to improve retention (Hampshire); workforce supply concerns linked to immigration policy (Portsmouth); limited PVI access to statutory training

(Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton). To address this: Isle of Wight College developing digital and clinical learning modules.

Key Skills Gaps – Sources

- Care Workforce Pathway (DHSC).
- Skills for Care long-term workforce projections.
- Skills for Care qualification data 2024/25.
- Delegated Healthcare Activity principles (DHSC/SfC).
- HCA Spring Conference Delegate Response to Survey

Key recommendations include: (Practical actions for employers, training providers & policymakers to match LSIP general priorities and groups (education leavers/NEETS/Unemployed/Graduate training programmes for those not in work etc.):

- ‘Is Care for You?’ Roadshow: myth busting, perception changing, concrete opportunities/offered: train job coaches and anyone advising the job seeking.
- Work placements needed; combine with communicating this sector provides ideal first job opportunities; the skill development that takes place within entry level roles is huge and sets up for any other career or to stay in the sector and progress. Evidence shows that there is 37% fall out rate in year 1, but after that retention increases dramatically.
- Develop a Hampshire digital learning platform and training repository to support the skill development, leading to greater retention.
- Strengthen partnership working and reduce silo approaches across training providers, employer bodies and individual service providers.
- Expand statutory and specialist training capacity [to include Level 2 Social Care training/qualification made more readily accessible and uptake to increase and progression of clinical skills required by the Delegated Health Care policy changes].
- Improve career pathways and communication.
- Deliver perception change campaigns and employer engagement: Social Care IS a Career, not dead-end job perception change: comms piece to be continued and extended to JCPs / workforce charities.
- Establish employer-led work placements and youth pathways.
- Upskill current managers to fulfil demands resulting from Delegation of Care in leadership, retention, and workforce planning.
- Improve engagement with employment and careers advisory services to ensure that unemployed customers understand and consider careers in social care.
- Support the development of digitally adept workforce who have the confidence to innovate directly with clients; develop how their organisations capitalise on digital opportunities.
- Develop online information (annually updated) for education (schools/FE/HE) and info sessions to enable FE/HE to better understand their local Adult Social Care environment (skills sought, roles available, values-based recruitment).

Overarching needs to achieve the above:

- Include Local Authorities in co-designing leadership development pathways (Hampshire strategy).
- Ensure training access equality between statutory and PVI providers (noting uneven LA offer). Assuring discussions around skills gaps and skills integration include the provider voice – otherwise developments are often inaccessible or missing the mark.
- Embed delegated healthcare competency development into regional planning (as LAs and SFC are developing working groups).
- Strengthen digital learning routes via FE collaboration (examples can be found in IoW College distance learning resources).

Conclusion

The evidence gathered through employer engagement, sector intelligence, and local workforce data confirms that Adult Health and Social Care in Hampshire continues to face entrenched recruitment and retention challenges, now intensified by policy changes and evolving models of care. The shift towards community-based provision, alongside the introduction of delegated healthcare responsibilities, is raising the level of skill required across the workforce and placing greater emphasis on strong leadership, digital capability, and consistent clinical competence. At the same time, public perception issues, limited awareness of career pathways, and variable access to training continue to restrict the talent pipeline, particularly for younger entrants.

Despite these pressures, the sector has clear opportunities to strengthen workforce resilience through better-aligned training, stronger system collaboration, and an approach that places employer voice at the centre of skills planning. Addressing the priority gaps identified - leadership and management, digital skills, foundational care competencies, and delegated healthcare training - will be essential for ensuring providers can meet growing and increasingly complex demand. The recommendations outlined in this report set out practical steps to improve access to skills, enhance progression routes, and build a more confident and sustainable workforce. Delivering these changes will require coordinated action across local authorities, providers, training organisations, and wider partners, but they represent a necessary and achievable route to securing a workforce that is fit for the future.

Annexe 1

List of reports and information sources used and other links that might be useful

(still awaiting results from Hampshire Care Association Survey and the questions)

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68fa3b4fe200d653d8b63735/care-quality-commission-state-of-health-care-and-adult-social-care-England-2024-2025.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care>

<https://socialcare.blog.gov.uk/2023/05/24/delegated-healthcare-activities-the-principles-of-great-care/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/news-and-events/news/latest-social-care-sector-and-workforce-data-published>

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data.aspx>

<https://www.gcaregroup.co.uk/latest-news/the-social-care-workforce-crisis-in-2025-challenges-failures-and-a-path-forward>

https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/?inputs=&splashGeoType=%22LSIP%22&navbar=%22local_skills_data%22&geoChoiceOver=%22Hampshire%20and%20the%20Solent%20LSIP%22&geoChoice=%22Hampshire%20and%20the%20Solent%20LSIP%22&splashMetric=%22vacancies%22&nav_click=%22local_skills_data%22

Hampshire County Council– Recently published their ASC workforce strategy and ambitions. They recognise the urgent need to address retention in the sector as turnover is much higher than other local areas. (SfcCdata Oct 2025) They plan to work with Skills for Care and Hampshire Care Association to develop an operational plan for 2026/7. Likely skills focus for operational plan to upskill managers across all areas of leadership and management

Portsmouth City Council – Concerned about the impact of changes to immigration rules on the local workforce. Discussing forecasting of workforce trends with Sfc and developing an action plan to address recruitment



Delegated Healthcare Activities (DHA) – Creating resources (including SfC guiding principles) on DHA for local Adult Social Care sector. Setting up a working group to include a plan for skills needed in the sector to support DHA.