

Staff Shortages in Health & Social Care – Northamptonshire

Adult Social Care Workforce Shortages in Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire (2024/25 data – Skills for Care)

- The area had **around 11,000 total posts**, with **10,500 filled** and **650 vacant posts**. [\[skillsforcare.org.uk\]](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)
- Staff turnover was **23.4%**, similar to the East Midlands average (24.7%) and England overall (23.7%). [\[skillsforcare.org.uk\]](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)
- 55% of all new starters came from within the sector, meaning employers are often replacing staff who have simply moved between providers. [\[skillsforcare.org.uk\]](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)

Wider Northamptonshire (2023/24 data – Skills for Care)

- Northamptonshire as a whole recorded **25,000 total posts**, of which **23,500 were filled** and **1,900 posts were vacant**.
 - This represents a **vacancy level of 7.6%** across the local sector.
 - Vacancies **fell by 29.9%** compared with 2022/23. [\[skillsforcare.org.uk\]](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)
- There are **563 CQC-registered locations**, showing a large and diverse provider landscape that makes workforce coordination challenging. [\[skillsforcare.org.uk\]](https://skillsforcare.org.uk)

Key Local Issues Identified

- **Recruitment difficulties**, especially in domiciliary (home care) roles, where pay competition from retail/logistics is strong.
- **Retention pressure** due to low pay, demanding conditions, and limited career pathways – consistent with national findings. [\[gov.uk\]](https://gov.uk)

NHS Health Sector Staffing Context

Although NHS workforce data is not always published at county level, Northamptonshire sits within the **East Midlands** region, where several trends are applicable:

- The NHS vacancy rate in England stood at **8.4%** (121,000 FTE) in September 2023. [\[kingsfund.org.uk\]](https://kingsfund.org.uk)
- The East Midlands region saw a modest reduction in NHS vacancy rates between 2018 and 2023. [\[kingsfund.org.uk\]](https://kingsfund.org.uk)
- **Mental health** continues to have the **highest NHS vacancy** rate nationally (11.7%), which affects Northamptonshire because its integrated care system relies heavily on mental health provision. [\[kingsfund.org.uk\]](https://kingsfund.org.uk)

National Drivers Impacting Northamptonshire's Local Workforce

Several national trends strongly influence local staffing conditions:

Visa restrictions and workforce shortages

- Home Office data shows an **84% drop in care-worker visas** issued in Q1 2024 compared to the previous quarter. This has significantly reduced the labour pool available to Northamptonshire providers. [\[gov.uk\]](https://gov.uk)

High vacancy rates in adult social care nationally

- The sector recorded a **9.9% vacancy rate in 2022/23** (152,000 roles), much higher than most other industries. [\[kingsfund.org.uk\]](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk)

Low pay remains a major driver

- Nationally, **27.8% of care providers** say pay outside the sector is the main recruitment barrier; **35.2% cite pay as the main retention issue**. These issues mirror those of Northamptonshire providers. [\[gov.uk\]](https://www.gov.uk)

Summary of Staff Shortages in Northamptonshire

Indicator	Northamptonshire	Source
Total adult social care posts (2023/24)	25,000	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
Filled posts	23,500	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
Vacant posts	1,500	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
Vacancy rate	~7.6%	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
North Northamptonshire vacancies (2024/25)	650	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
Turnover (North Northamptonshire)	23.4%	[skillsforcare.org.uk]
National NHS vacancy rate	8.4% (121,000 FTE)	[kingsfund.org.uk]

What This Means for Northamptonshire

The data shows **severe but improving pressure** on adult social care staffing in the county.

Vacancies have fallen since 2022/23, but the system still faces:

- Persistent recruitment challenges, especially in home care.
 - Restrictions on what carers can and can't do for patients
- Ongoing retention problems linked to low pay, workload, working conditions
 - Emerging hostility in some areas
- Reduced international recruitment capacity.
 - Reduction in working visas
- A rapidly ageing population creating higher demand for services.
 - Lack of progression in the carer profession.
 - Lack of progression in NHS settings

Conclusion

Combined, these issues mean Northamptonshire's health and social care system continues to operate with **structural workforce shortages**, impacting service capacity, hospital discharge flow, and care quality.