

Economic and social value of the UK adult social care sector: England

Summary report

Independent research by Alma Economics

Prepared for Skills for Care and Development

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About the authors

alma economics



Alma Economics combines unparalleled analytical expertise with the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly.

www.almaeconomics.com

About the commissioning organisation

Skills for Care and Development is an Alliance of seven organisations in the UK and Republic of Ireland, that focuses on regulation and workforce development in social care, social work, and early years. The Alliance consists of Skills for Care; Northern Ireland Social Care Council; Scottish Social Services Council; Social Care Wales; CORU; Early Years Alliance and Social Work England.

www.skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk

This report will be published by:



Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England. They work with employers, Government and partners to ensure social care has the right people, skills and support required to deliver the highest quality care and support now and in the future.

see: www.skillsforcare.org.uk



Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) is a public body established by the Department of Health to support high quality standards of social work and social care. NISCC helps raise standards in the social care workforce in Northern Ireland.

see: www.niscc.info



Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce in Scotland. Their work means the people of Scotland can count on social work, social care and children and young people services being provided by a trusted, skilled, confident and valued workforce.

see: www.sssc.uk.com



Social Care Wales is the regulator for the social care workforce in Wales, as well as supporting service improvement in social care.

see: www.socialcare.wales



Summary report

As of 2022/23, around 1.52 million people worked in the adult social care sector in England, representing 5% of the total workforce and surpassing the NHS workforce (1.43 million) ([Skills for Care, 2021](#)). The sector encompasses a diverse range of services tailored to support adults with care and support needs, spanning across public, private, and voluntary sectors. The demand for adult social care is expected to grow in the UK overall, as the number of people aged over 65 is projected to grow by 34% by 2037 ([Office for National Statistics, 2024a](#)).

Recognising the importance of the adult social care sector, Skills for Care and Development (herein referred to as “the Alliance”) commissioned Alma Economics to analyse the economic and social value of the adult social care sector in the UK and each of the four nations. The findings of this project will be used by the Alliance to inform public policy and improve public understanding, as well as reframe social care as an essential social and economic investment. This report focuses on the adult social care sector in England; the research team has produced separate reports discussing the findings for each of the four nations and the UK overall.

For this research, our team developed two types of models: one focusing on macroeconomic impacts and the other on socioeconomic impacts. Both models consider a wide range of care settings (e.g., residential, domiciliary, and day care) and types of service provision (e.g., local authority, private, voluntary), including informal care, across regulated and non-regulated sectors.

The macroeconomic models estimate the contribution of the adult social care sector to the economy. We estimated the macroeconomic impact by accounting for wages and earnings of employees in the sector, as well as the operating profits of independent care providers (direct impact). **The results suggest that the adult social care sector is estimated to comprise over £27.4 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and 1 million full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with a labour productivity of approximately £26,300 per FTE. When informal care is included, the direct GVA is estimated to be almost £110 billion, and the number of FTEs increases to almost 4.6 million, yielding a labour productivity of £23,900 per FTE.**

The research also considered the indirect and induced effects of adult social care. The indirect effect arises from increased demand in other sectors that are part of the adult social care’s supply chain, such as personal protective equipment or home adaptations. Both direct and indirect effects lead to a rise in household income across the economy, driven by increased employment. A portion of this additional income is spent on other goods, which constitutes the induced effect. **The indirect effect, i.e., the value and employment created in other sectors due to adult social care, is estimated at 379,000 FTEs and £13.4 billion of GVA. Similarly, the induced impact, resulting**

from the additional spending of individuals directly or indirectly employed in the sector is estimated at 204,000 FTEs and £19.3 billion of GVA.

Overall, the adult social care sector in England is estimated to support 1.6 million full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and generate £60.2 billion in value when considering direct, indirect, and induced impacts, not including informal care.

The estimated GVA of the adult social care sector represents approximately 3% of the total GVA in England in 2023, up from 1.4% in 2016 and 1.6% in 2021 ([ICF, 2018](#); [Office for National Statistics, 2024b](#); [KDNA, 2021](#)). However, we recommend such direct comparisons be treated with caution, given methodological changes and data quality concerns.

The adult social care sector also creates a wide range of benefits that are not captured in GVA or employment measures, such as the wellbeing of adults receiving care and peace of mind for the general population. To estimate the magnitude of these socioeconomic impacts, we compared the costs and benefits of adult social care to a hypothetical scenario in which the adult social care sector (both formal and informal) ceases to exist. The results of this analysis suggest that the socioeconomic benefits of the adult social care sector are £263.7 billion while costing £112.0 billion. This means that for every £1 spent, there are £2.36 in socioeconomic benefits.