



STUC report into staffing resources in older people's care homes

This report uses Care Inspectorate data to examine differences in staffing resources across private, voluntary and public sector care homes for older people. It finds that:

- Staffing resources in older people's care homes are 20% lower in the private sector compared to the not-for-profit (public and voluntary) sector.
- This pattern is consistent over time. Staffing resources have been between 18 and 22% worse in the private sector compared to the public or voluntary sector in each of the last three years.

Background and methodology

A lack of time and being spread too thin amongst service users has been highlighted by trade unions as contributing to high levels of stress among the workforce. A GMB survey from 2021 found that nearly three quarters of care home workers felt that they did not have enough time to deliver safe and dignified care.¹ Different levels of staffing across older people's care homes is also a likely contributor to different standards of care, and higher numbers of complaints, across the private, voluntary and public sector.²

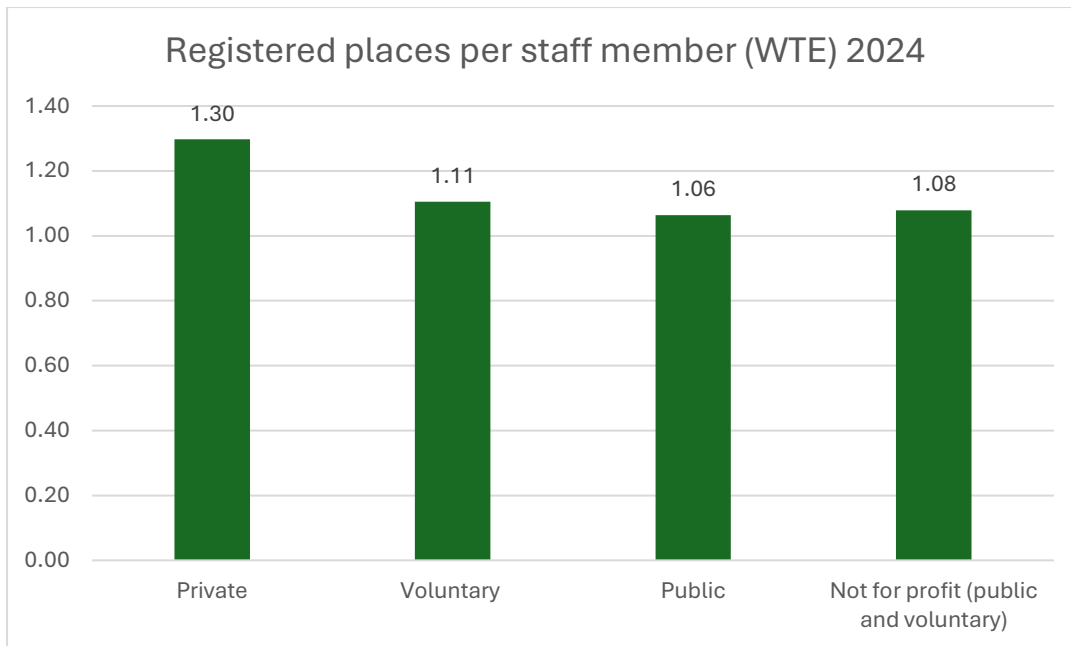
This report uses Care Inspectorate data to examine differences in staffing resources across private, voluntary and public sector care homes for older people.

It does so by dividing the number of registered places at a service by the number of whole time equivalent (WTE) staff.³

It's important to note that this is not a precise indicator of staffing ratios for a given shift. Work patterns fluctuate and care homes may meet staffing needs by booking agency workers to make up numbers for any given shift. However, it does provide an estimate of staffing resource.

Findings

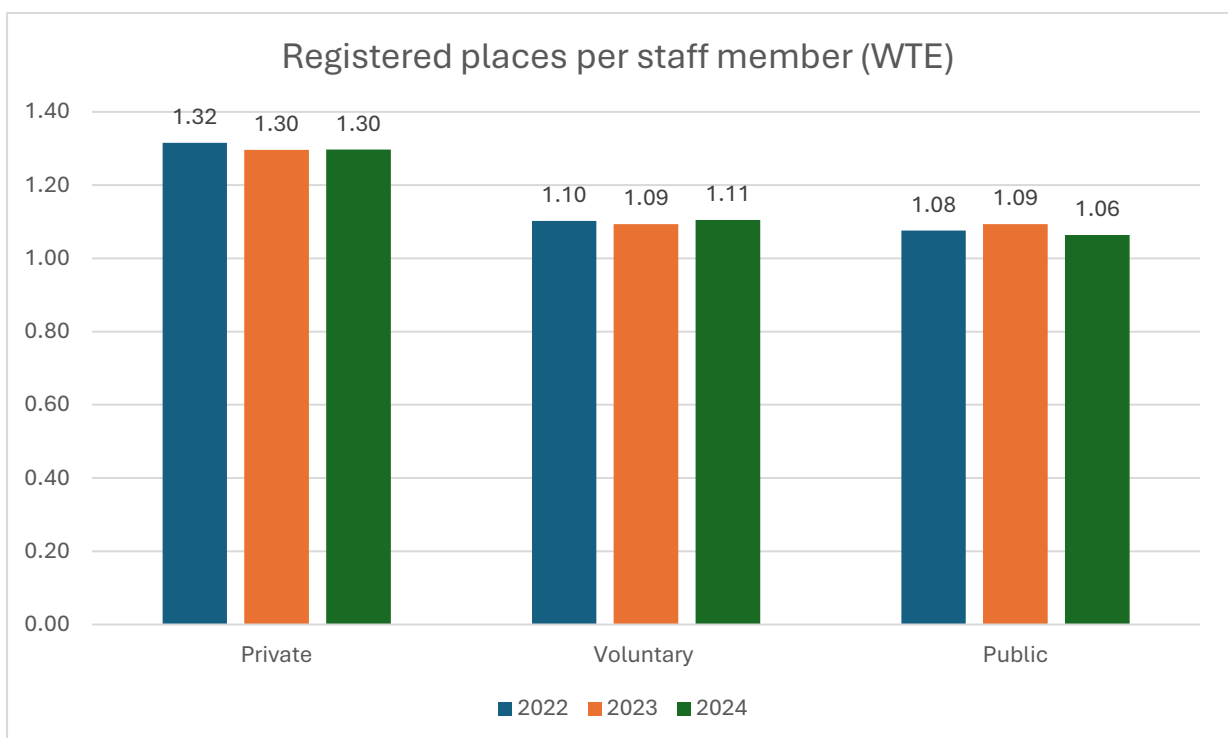
In 2024, the registered places to WTE staff ratio in the private sector is 1.30 compared to 1.11 for the voluntary sector, 1.06 for the public sector (local authority and NHS) and 1.08 for the not-for-profit sector (public and voluntary sector combined).



STUC analysis of Care Inspectorate data⁴

This suggests that staffing resources in the private sector are 23% more stretched compared the public sector, 17% more stretched in comparison to the voluntary sector and 20% more stretched when comparing the private sector to the not-for-profit sector (public and voluntary sector combined).

This pattern of lower staffing ratios in the private sector is consistent over time. In comparison to the public sector, staffing resources were 22% worse in 2022 and 19% worse in 2023. In comparison to the voluntary sector, staffing resources were 20% worse in 2022 and 18% worse in 2023.



STUC analysis of Care Inspectorate data⁵

Conclusion

Staffing ratios in residential care homes matter. They matter for patient care, for health and safety, and for staff wellbeing. This report shows that staffing resources in private care homes are significantly lower than in public and voluntary care homes.

Yet to date, Scottish Government proposals for reform of the care sector have not given any attention to different staffing ratios in the private, voluntary and public sector.

Given the plethora of evidence that the not-for-profit sector has better staffing ratios, less complaints, and higher pay, any meaningful reform to improve social care must propose substantive changes to who actually provides care.

For further information contact:

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¹ <https://www.gmbScotland.org.uk/Show%20You%20Care%20-%20Full%20Report%20Compressed.pdf>

² See associated STUC report into complaints in older people's care homes.

³ As part of their annual returns, registered services report the number of registered places and details on staff employed by the service. The Care Inspectorate uses this to publish whole time equivalent staffing figures.

⁴ Care Inspectorate Datastore as at March 31st 2024. Whole-time equivalent (WTE) refers to the number of staff required to deliver and manage direct care, as recorded on the Care Inspectorate register. This differs from the WTE data published by SSSC.

⁵ Ibid