



# Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Active Recruitment Statistics - Vacancies at 31 December 2023

## Contents

	Page
Introduction and Background	2
Key Points	2
Overall Vacancies	3
by Staff Group	4
by Regional HSC Trust	7
by Other HSC Organisations	8
By Pay Band	9
Key Data Tables	10
Notes and Definitions	13
Quality Assessment	14

## Introduction and Background

This bulletin presents statistics on vacancies actively being recruited in Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland as at 31 December 2023. Statistics by staff group and HSC organisation are presented throughout.

All data used in this bulletin have been gathered from Recruitment Shared Services in the Business Services Organisation (BSO), HSC Trusts and regional HSC organisations. To ensure that the Department's information is accurate, high data quality standards need to be achieved and maintained by all HSC organisations.

The data presented in this bulletin is a measure of active recruitment to both permanent and temporary positions. Users should note that the figures do not indicate a measure of posts that are unfilled by permanent or fixed-term staff. Due to fluctuations in the data, caution should be taken when considering point-in-time comparisons.

The data accompanying this bulletin are available of the [Department of Health](#) website.

## Key Points

- At 31 December 2023, there were 5,906 vacancies actively being recruited across Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland, equating to a vacancy rate of 7.0%.
- The highest number of vacancies actively being recruited across HSC was in the Social Services staff group, with 1,458. This staff group made up 24.7% of all HSC vacancies in recruitment.
- The Social Services staff group had the highest vacancy rate, at 10.0% (1,458 vacancies).
- Of the five regional HSC Trusts, the Belfast HSC Trust had the highest number of vacancies actively being recruited (1,661 vacancies).
- The annual percentage change in vacancies was greatest in the Northern HSC Trust with a decrease of 48.2%, followed by Western (37.7%), Southern (22.0%), South Eastern (20.1%), and Belfast (20.0%) HSC Trusts.

## Contact

For further information regarding this statistical bulletin, please contact:

Information & Analysis Directorate,  
Department of Health,  
Room 11, Annex 2, Castle Buildings,  
Stormont Estate,  
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 028 9052 2493  
E-mail: [Workforce Statistics](#)

This bulletin presents the Quarterly Vacancies Statistics in a new format which will be subject to ongoing development. As such, we would appreciate any comments or feedback which can be sent to the responsible statistician, Joanne Hughes, at the e-mail address above.

**Active Recruitment Vacancy definition:** A vacancy is any position that is currently with the recruitment team and being actively recruited to. This will include those going through pre-employment checks, up to the point of a start date being agreed. Once a start date has been agreed with both parties (i.e. manager and applicant) this will no longer be classed as a vacancy. Vacancies that are on hold by managers are not included.

$$\text{Active Recruitment Vacancy Rate} = \frac{\text{Vacancies actively being recruited}}{\text{Active staff in posts}^* + \text{vacancies actively being recruited}}$$

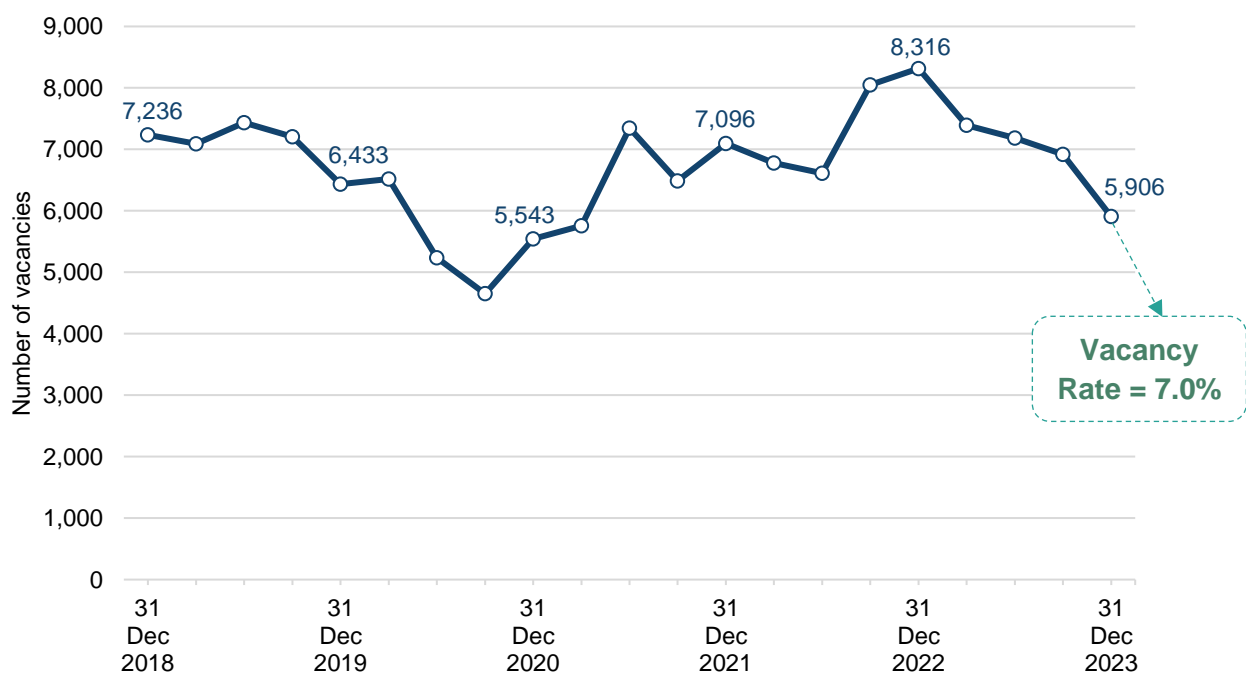
\* Includes HSC domiciliary care active staff in posts. This will not match with active staff in post figures published in the HSC Quarterly Workforce Statistics bulletin which excludes domiciliary care active staff in posts.

## Overall Vacancies

At 31 December 2023, there were 5,906 vacancies actively being recruited across Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland. This equated to a vacancy rate of 7.0% and was a decrease of 2,410 vacancies since the series high point at 31 December 2022 (8,316) - see Figure 1.

The total number of vacancies under active recruitment at 31 December 2023 is 29.0% lower than at 31 December 2022 (8,316) and 18.4% lower than at 31 December 2018 (7,236).

**Figure 1: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited, 31 December 2018 – 31 December 2023**



## Staff Group

Figure 2 below shows the proportion of vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023 for each staff group. Of the 5,906 vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023, the Social Services staff group made up the highest proportion, at 24.7% (1,458 vacancies). The second highest proportion of vacancies was in the Registered Nursing & Midwifery staff group, at 22.2% (1,314 vacancies), and a further 8.2% (482 vacancies) were in the Nursing & Midwifery Support staff group.

The Medical & Dental staff group made up 4.9% (288 vacancies) of all HSC vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023. Over three fifths (60.8%) of these vacancies were at consultant grade (175 vacancies).

**Figure 2: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited, by Staff Group at 31 December 2023**

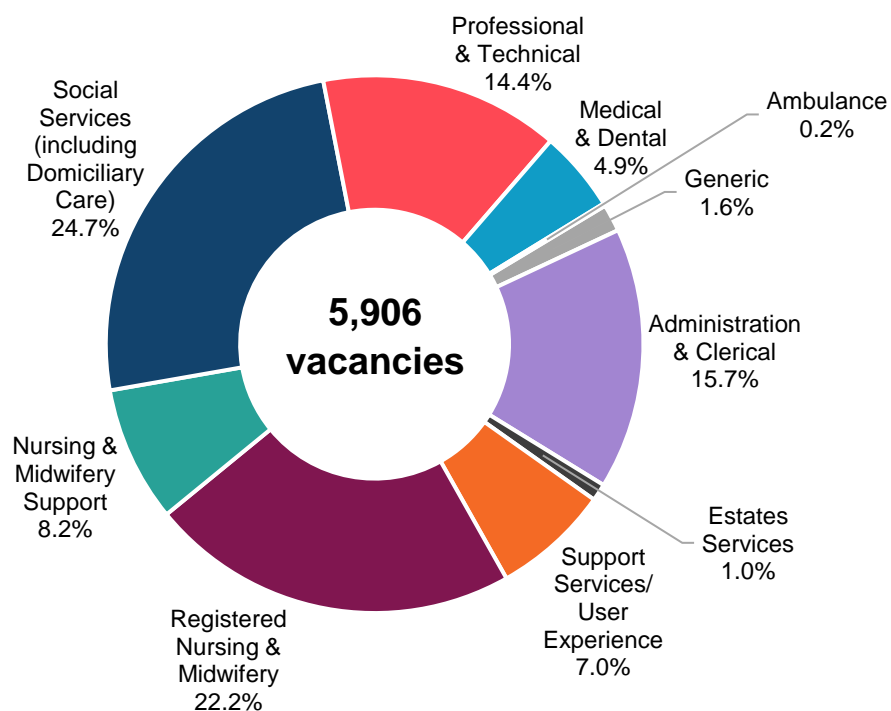
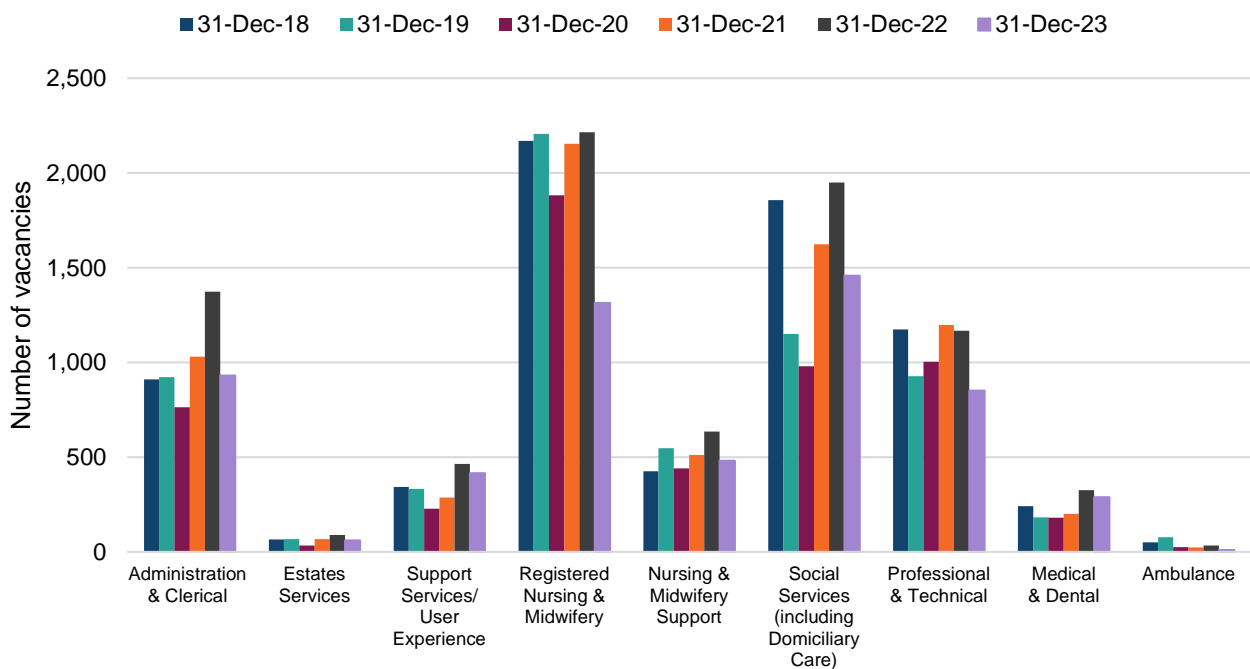


Figure 3 below shows the number of vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December over the last five years, in each staff group.

All staff groups have seen a decrease in vacancies actively being recruited since 31 December 2022. The largest change in the number of vacancies since 31 December 2022 was in the Registered Nursing and Midwifery staff group, which has seen a decrease of 901 vacancies (40.7%). The Social Services and Administration & Clerical staff groups also seen large decreases in vacancies since 31 December 2022, 491 vacancies (25.2%) and 443 vacancies (32.3%) respectively.

In the last five years, the largest decrease in the number of vacancies actively being recruited was in the Registered Nursing & Midwifery staff group (855 vacancies, 39.4%). The largest percentage change in vacancies since 31 December 2018 was in the Ambulance staff group, which has seen a decrease of 82.0% (41 vacancies). The Support Services/User Experience staff group has however seen the largest percentage increase since 31 December 2018 (72 vacancies, 21.0%) followed by the Medical & Dental staff group (47 vacancies, 19.5%).

**Figure 3: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited, by Staff Group<sup>#</sup>, 31 December 2018 – 31 December 2023**

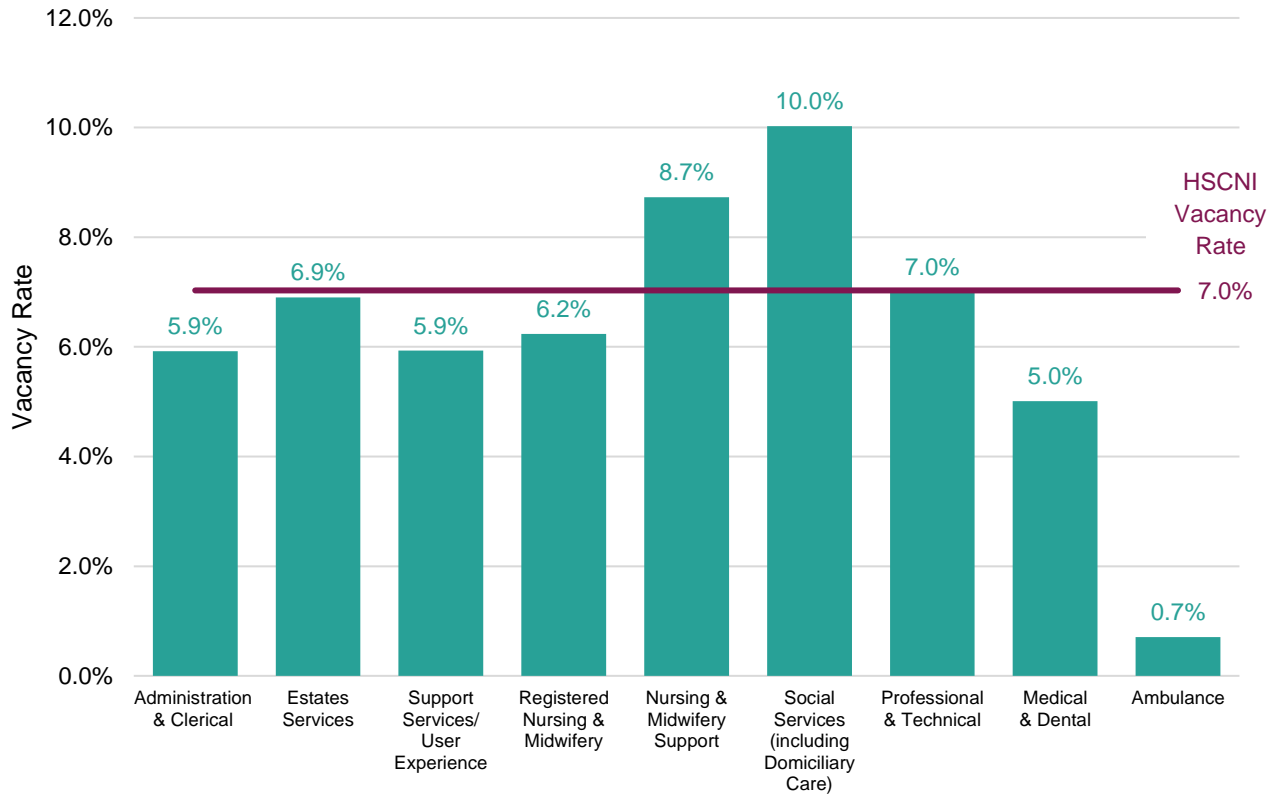


% Change	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2018-23	2022-23
Administration & Clerical	+2.1%	-13.3%	+33.3%	+25.2%	-32.3%	+2.1%	-32.3%
Estates Services	+20.0%	-25.0%	+25.0%	+25.0%	-31.5%	-6.2%	-31.5%
Support Services/ User Experience	+21.0%	-14.3%	+16.7%	+33.3%	-10.6%	+21.0%	-10.6%
Registered Nursing & Midwifery	+23.3%	+2.3%	-10.5%	+11.7%	-40.7%	-39.4%	-40.7%
Nursing & Midwifery Support	+22.2%	+22.2%	+11.1%	+11.1%	-24.1%	+13.1%	-24.1%
Social Services (including Domiciliary Care)	-35.1%	-22.6%	+63.0%	+47.6%	-25.2%	-21.5%	-25.2%
Professional & Technical	-17.4%	-10.5%	+10.0%	+16.7%	-27.0%	-27.4%	-27.0%
Medical & Dental	-20.0%	-20.0%	+0.0%	+0.0%	+75.0%	+19.5%	-11.4%
Ambulance	+100.0%	+100.0%	+100.0%	+100.0%	+100.0%	-82.0%	-82.0%

<sup>#</sup> Excludes vacancies coded as generic roles.

Figure 4 below shows the vacancy rates at 31 December 2023 in each staff group. The Social Services staff group had the highest vacancy rate, at 10.0%, while the Ambulance staff group had the lowest vacancy rate (0.7%).

**Figure 4: HSCNI Vacancy Rate, by Staff Group# at 31 December 2023**



# Excludes vacancies coded as generic roles.

All staff groups have seen a decrease in vacancy rates since 31 December 2022, the most notable being the Registered Nursing & Midwifery staff group which has seen a decrease in the vacancy rate from 10.4% (31 December 2022) to 6.2% (31 December 2023).

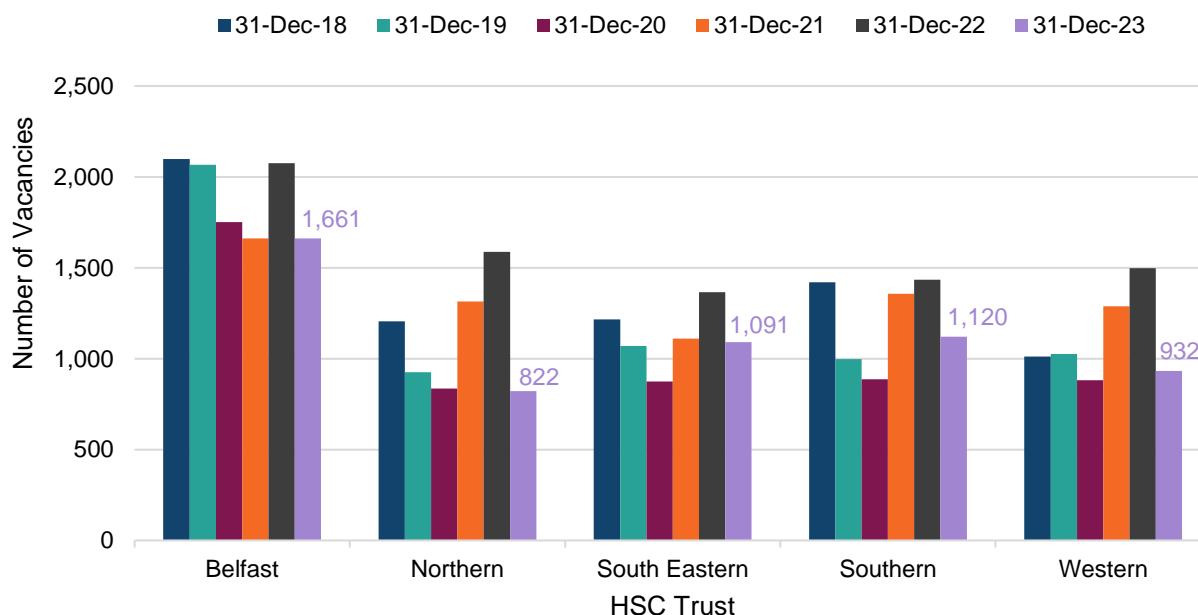
## Regional HSC Trust

Figure 5 below shows the number of vacancies actively being recruited in each regional HSC Trust at 31 December over the last five years.

The Belfast HSC Trust had the highest number of vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023 (1,661), a decrease of 415 vacancies since 31 December 2022. All regional HSC Trusts have seen an annual decrease in vacancies between 31 December 2022 and 31 December 2023. The largest annual percentage decrease was in the Northern HSC Trust (48.2%), followed by Western (37.7%), Southern (22.0%), South Eastern (20.1%), and Belfast (20.0%) HSC Trusts.

All regional HSC Trusts have seen a decrease in the number of vacancies actively being recruited compared with the position five years ago. The Belfast HSC Trust has seen the largest decrease, with 437 fewer vacancies actively being recruited (20.8%) since 31 December 2018. The largest five year percentage decrease was in the Northern HSC Trust (31.8%), while the smallest percentage decrease in vacancies since 31 December 2018 was in the Western HSC Trust (7.8%).

**Figure 5: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by Regional HSC Trust, 31 December 2018 – 31 December 2023**



% Change	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western
2018-23	-20.8%	-31.8%	-10.3%	-21.1%	-7.8%
2022-23	-20.0%	-48.2%	-20.1%	-22.0%	-37.7%

## Other HSC Organisations

Figure 6 below shows the number of vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023 in each of the other HSC organisations. The Business Services Organisation (BSO) had the highest number of vacancies actively being recruited (154).

**Figure 6: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by Other HSC Organisation, 31 December 2023**

		% Change	
		2018-23	2022-23
Business Services Organisation	154	+13.2%	-6.1%
NI Ambulance Service	46	-20.7%	-4.2%
Strategic Planning & Performance Group	29	-6.5%	-39.6%
Public Health Agency	18	-41.9%	-56.1%
NI Blood Transfusion Service	13	-13.3%	+30.0%
NI Medical & Dental Training Agency	11	+450.0%	+10.0%
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority	4	+100.0%	-81.8%
NI Social Care Council	4	0.0%	-33.3%
Patient Client Council	1	-50.0%	-80.0%
NI Practice & Education Council	0	-100.0%	-100.0%
Children's Court Guardian Agency for NI ^	0	-100.0%	0.0%

^ Formerly known as the Northern Ireland Agency for Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA).



## Pay Band

Figure 7 below shows the breakdown of HSCNI vacancies actively being recruited at 31 December 2023 by Agenda for Change (AfC) pay band group. At 31 December 2023, almost half (46.6%) of all vacancies actively being recruited in HSCNI were at AfC pay bands 5-7, and over two fifths (44.9%) were at AfC pay bands 2-4.

**Figure 7: HSCNI Vacancies by AfC Pay Band Group, 31 December 2023**

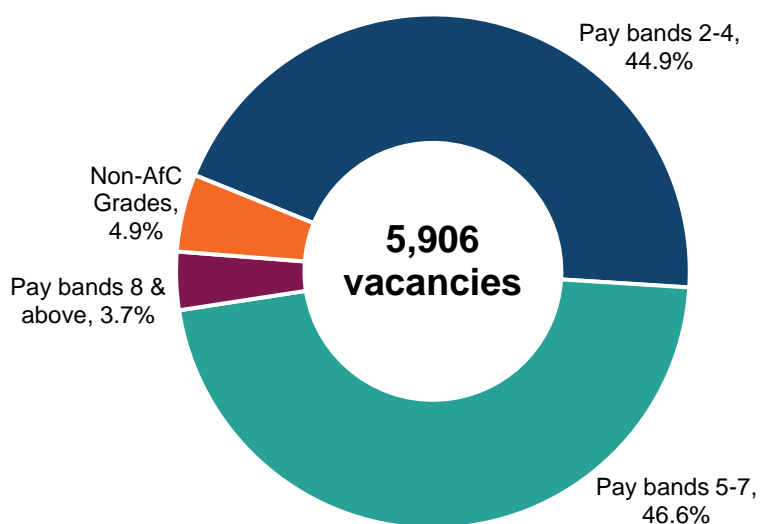


Table 1 below presents the percentage breakdown of vacancies actively being recruited in each staff group by pay band groups.

**Table 1: HSCNI Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by Staff Group and Pay Band Group, 31 December 2023**

Staff Group	Pay bands 2-4	Pay bands 5-7	Pay bands 8 & above	Non-AfC Grades	Vacancies
Generic	0.0%	90.7%	9.3%	0.0%	97
Administration & Clerical	69.5%	25.1%	5.5%	0.0%	930
Estates Services	49.2%	42.6%	8.2%	0.0%	61
Support Services/User Experience	96.9%	2.7%	0.5%	0.0%	415
Registered Nursing & Midwifery	0.0%	97.5%	2.5%	0.0%	1,314
Nursing & Midwifery Support	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	482
Social Services (incl. Domiciliary Care)	62.3%	35.3%	2.4%	0.0%	1,458
Professional & Technical	21.4%	69.1%	9.5%	0.0%	852
Medical & Dental	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	288
Ambulance	11.1%	88.9%	0.0%	0.0%	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>46.6%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>5,906</b>

## Annex 1: Key Data Tables

Additional data tables can be found in the NI HSC Active Recruitment Tables Excel file at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-vacancies>

**Table 1: HSC Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by Staff Group & Pay Band Group, at 31 December 2023**

Staff Group	Bands 2-4	Bands 5-7	Bands 8 & above	Non-AFC Grades	Total
Generic	0	88	9	[z]	97
Administration & Clerical	646	233	51	[z]	930
Estates Services	30	26	5	[z]	61
Support Services/User Experience	402	11	2	[z]	415
Registered Nursing & Midwifery	0	1,281	33	[z]	1,314
Nursing & Midwifery Support	482	0	0	[z]	482
Social Services (including Domiciliary Care)	908	515	35	[z]	1,458
Professional & Technical	182	589	81	[z]	852
Medical & Dental	[z]	[z]	[z]	288	288
Ambulance	1	8	0	[z]	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,651</b>	<b>2,751</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>5,906</b>

[z] Not applicable

**Table 2: HSC Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by Profession & Pay Band Group, at 31 December 2023**

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Bands 2-4</b>	<b>Bands 5-7</b>	<b>Bands 8 &amp; above</b>	<b>Non-AFC Grades</b>	<b>Total</b>
Generic	0	88	9	[z]	97
Administration & Clerical	646	233	51	[z]	930
Estates Services Staff	30	26	5	[z]	61
Support Services/User Experience	402	11	2	[z]	415
Health Visitors	[z]	28	0	[z]	28
District Nurses	[z]	9	2	[z]	11
Paediatric Nurses	[z]	70	2	[z]	72
Mental Health Nurses	[z]	241	0	[z]	241
Learning Disability Nurses	[z]	39	0	[z]	39
All Other Registered Nurses	[z]	831	26	[z]	857
Registered Midwives	[z]	63	3	[z]	66
Nurse Support	477	[z]	[z]	[z]	477
Midwifery Support	5	[z]	[z]	[z]	5
Social Workers	[z]	450	31	[z]	481
Social Care Workers	479	47	0	[z]	526
Domiciliary Care Workers	346	3	0	[z]	349
Other Social Services staff	83	15	4	[z]	102
Physiotherapists	[z]	117	9	[z]	126
Occupational Therapists	[z]	85	2	[z]	87
Speech & Language Therapists	[z]	54	2	[z]	56
Podiatrists	[z]	15	1	[z]	16
Dietitians	[z]	37	1	[z]	38
Orthoptists	[z]	2	0	[z]	2
Radiographers	[z]	63	2	[z]	65
Pharmacists	[z]	74	17	[z]	91
Clinical Psychology	6	23	36	[z]	65
Pharmacy Technician / Pharmacy Support	53	22	0	[z]	75
Scientist/ Scientist Support/ Medical Tech. Officer/ Assistant Tech. Officer	53	45	4	[z]	102
Other Professional & Technical staff	70	52	7	[z]	129
Consultant	[z]	[z]	[z]	160	160
Locum Consultant	[z]	[z]	[z]	15	15
SAS Doctor (Specialist Doc/Associate Specialist/Staff Grade/Specialty Doc)	[z]	[z]	[z]	58	58
Docs in training (core trainees, specialty registrars, foundation docs) [note 1]	[z]	[z]	[z]	0	0
Other Doctor	[z]	[z]	[z]	55	55
Dental Officer	[z]	[z]	[z]	0	0
HCPC Registered Paramedic	[z]	6	0	[z]	6
Emergency Medical Technician	0	0	0	[z]	0
Ambulance Officer	0	0	0	[z]	0
Patient Care Services	1	1	0	[z]	2
Control Officer	0	1	0	[z]	1
Control Assistant	0	0	0	[z]	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,651</b>	<b>2,751</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>5,906</b>

[z] Not applicable

Note 1: Relates to Trust local recruitment only and not training programme enrolment.

**Table 3: HSC Vacancy Rates by Staff Group, at 31 December 2023**

Staff Group	Vacancy Rate
Administration & Clerical	5.9%
Estates Services Staff	6.9%
Support Services/User Experience	5.9%
Registered Nursing & Midwifery	6.2%
Nursing & Midwifery Support	8.7%
Social Services (including domiciliary care)	10.0%
Professional & Technical Staff	7.0%
Medical & Dental staff	5.0%
Ambulance staff	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

**Table 4: HSC Vacancies Actively Being Recruited by HSC Organisation, at 31 December 2023**

HSC Organisation	Vacancies
Belfast HSC Trust	1,661
Northern HSC Trust	822
South Eastern HSC Trust	1,091
Southern HSC Trust	1,120
Western HSC Trust	932
NI Ambulance Service HSC Trust	46
Business Services Organisation (BSO)	154
Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG) [note 2]	29
Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland (CCGANI) [note 3]	0
NI Social Care Council (NISCC)	4
NI Patient & Education Council (NIPEC)	0
Public Health Agency (PHA)	18
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)	4
NI Blood Transfusion Service (NIBTS)	13
NI Medical & Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)	11
Patient Client Council (PCC)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,906</b>

Note 2: Former HSC Board staff have undertaken their functions from 1 April 2022 as part of the Department of Health's newly formed Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG). For consistency purposes, vacancies actively being recruited in SPPG are included in these data tables, and noted as SPPG.

Note 3: The Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland (CCGANI) was formerly known as the Northern Ireland Agency for Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA).

## Notes

The data included in this bulletin represents the number of vacancies actively being recruited and does not indicate the whole time equivalent (WTE) for these positions. The data includes both permanent and temporary positions. These figures do not indicate a measure of posts that are unfilled by permanent or fixed-term staff, and do not include posts not actively being recruited to at the specific point in time, including those outside the bounds of the definition e.g. those that have not reached recruitment stage yet.

Due to fluctuations in the data, caution should be taken when considering point-in-time comparisons.

These figures have not been assessed for seasonal adjustment and have not been seasonally adjusted.

The information presented in this bulletin is based on data obtained from Recruitment Shared Services within the Business Support Organisation (BSO), and from the HSC Organisations listed below:

Belfast HSC Trust  
Northern HSC Trust  
South Eastern HSC Trust  
Southern HSC Trust  
Western HSC Trust  
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service  
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service

Former HSC Board staff have undertaken their functions from 1 April 2022 as part of the Department of Health's newly formed Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG). For consistency purposes, vacancies actively being recruited in SPPG are included in this bulletin, and noted as SPPG.

The Northern Ireland Agency for Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA) has been renamed to the Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland. This change is effective from 6th March 2023.

## Definitions

**Active Recruitment Vacancy:** A vacancy is any position that is currently with the recruitment team and being actively recruited to. This will include those going through pre-employment checks, up to the point of a start date being agreed. Once a start date has been agreed with both parties (i.e. manager and applicant) this will no longer be classed as a vacancy. Vacancies that are on hold by managers are not included.

**Active Recruitment Vacancy Rate:** The number of active vacancies as a proportion of all posts (see formula below).

$$\text{Active Recruitment Vacancy Rate} = \frac{\text{Vacancies actively being recruited}}{\text{Active staff in posts}^* + \text{vacancies actively being recruited}}$$

*\* Includes HSC domiciliary care active staff in posts. This will not match with active staff in post figures published in the HSC Quarterly Workforce Statistics bulletin which excludes domiciliary care active staff in posts.*

**HSC:** Umbrella term for all Health and Social Care NI Organisations

## Quality Assessment

### Relevance

This publication provides a summary of HSC vacancies actively being recruited by broad staff groups and HSC organisation. The publication also includes HSC active recruitment trends. The publication meets the needs of users in terms of trends in active recruitment increases or decreases and the volume of active recruitment in staff groupings.

### Accuracy and Reliability

The data is sourced from the recording of each HSC organisation's requisition requests on the HSC e-recruit system. Each HSC organisation is responsible for the data in their requisition requests. Regular reporting and sharing of trends helps the data quality discussion. Figures are an accurate summary of recruitment data at a point in time, as per the definition detailed in the publication. Due to the processing time of a vacancy through the HSC e-recruit system, this may have an impact on figures, causing delays in data peaks and troughs.

Once the figures are prepared for publication in excel format, internal quality assurance is carried out by Information and Analysis Directorate (IAD). The report is drafted and the figures in tabular and chart form are inserted into the report; at this point, further internal quality assurance is carried out by IAD to ensure the report matches the excel file.

### Validation

IAD do not have the ability to verify aggregate data returns. However some general quality checks for missing data, changes and trends are monitored, any anomalies are checked and can be followed up as appropriate with HSC organisations or the regional recruitment group.

### Error

HSC organisations are responsible for their own data and occasionally variance in recording practices can result in inconsistent data patterns across the region. The system is primarily designed for the recruiting of staff, and whilst recruitment (advert) specifications will be accurate, reporting capabilities are sometimes limited and rely on the accurate coding and categorisation of data for analytical purposes.

### Revisions

IAD is committed to clarity around data revisions. As soon as possible after IAD ascertain that a correction to published data is necessary, all electronic documents containing the affected statistics on the DoH website will be updated and clearly marked with caveats and footnotes to detail any amendments. If the correction to the published data is minor, the necessary changes will be made by IAD without an announcement.

### Timeliness and Punctuality

IAD request this data from HSC organisations on a quarterly basis using a defined data template. A data definition of HSC active vacancies in recruitment was agreed with the regional HSC recruitment leads.

Data is requested from Recruitment Shared Services within BSO and other HSC Trusts/organisations within 1 week of quarter end. Data is usually returned to IAD within approximately 4 weeks, with publication of the data in this bulletin approximately 3 weeks later i.e. 8 weeks after quarter end.

Normal procedure is that twelve months advance notice of publications is given in the [IAD Statistical Releases Calendar](#) on the DoH website. In the majority of cases, the target publication deadlines are met. However, in the event of a change to a pre-announced release date, the delay is announced, explained and updated regularly.

### **Accessibility and Clarity**

The PDF report is accessible on the DoH Internet site via the Statistics section provided by Information and Analysis Directorate, and can be found under [staff vacancies](#).

The PDF report is published alongside MS Excel and CSV versions of data tables. The 24 hour pre-release list is published also. The report is not yet fully accessible for those using assistive technology.

### **Coherence and Comparability**

IAD are not aware of other published data sources of active recruitment data based on the regionally agreed definition detailed in the publication. HSC organisations are of course able to produce their own analysis of their own organisation only.

The data categories as presented in the report are comparable each quarter. Where data categorisation changes, this is noted.

### **Trade-offs between Output Quality Components**

None

### **Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions**

The publications are primarily used by those linked to health services and we take on board any feedback given. We sometimes get requests for lower level data than is published however prior experience of collating too much data (that was frequently unused) has influenced the current template of published information. Where the case for a particular breakdown is presented, it is considered and actioned where found appropriate. Some criticism is received from those that think we should be working to a different definition of vacancies, however for consistency and given the steer from recruitment leads on the definition, we have kept the collection as posts actively being recruited to. If any other outputs were to be developed, they would have to be presented as a different publication.

The publication will be used for a range of purposes by researchers and other users such as the NI Assembly and the DoH. IAD will ensure that the publication remains relevant to users' needs by taking on comments and feedback regularly.

User feedback is invited in this publication. Readers are provided with contact details for the relevant statistician. We gain awareness of users of our data from ad hoc requests for information.

### **Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden**

The publication represents a secondary use of the data and therefore adds no additional burden on health service organisations. The data are obtained from administrative systems within Northern Ireland.

### **Confidentiality, Transparency and Security**

Aggregate data is supplied on HSC active recruitment by staff group and AfC pay level group where applicable.

Data obtained from Recruitment Shared Services and HSC Trusts/organisations does contain some personal information but only aggregate information is published.

The Code of Practice for Statistics is adhered to from data collection to publishing.

DoH's 'Statistical Policy Statement on Confidentiality' can be found in the [Statistics Charter](#).