

Health and Social Care

Sector demand landscape

- Healthcare is one of the UK's largest sectors by employment. The NHS employs [1.54 million people \(3% of the UK workforce\)](#) in addition to private providers. [Adult social care employed 1.6 million people in 2023/24.](#)
- The NHS and wider care sector face a deepening workforce crisis, with over [109,000 vacancies as of late 2025](#) and projections of a [360,000 shortfall by 2036/37 if unaddressed.](#)
- Skills shortages, amidst increased service demand, are in large part responsible for the crisis.

The business case for Health & Social Care engagement in careers education

Employers in the Health and Social Care sector showed a higher level of achievement on almost all Employer Standards than those in other sectors. The relative strongest were :

- Standard 1:** Provide meaningful opportunities (+15%pts vs other sectors)
- Standard 6:** Raise awareness of pathways into work (+15%pts vs other sectors)

This direct engagement with young people, based on national standards, is crucial to address the workforce challenges employers in the sector face.

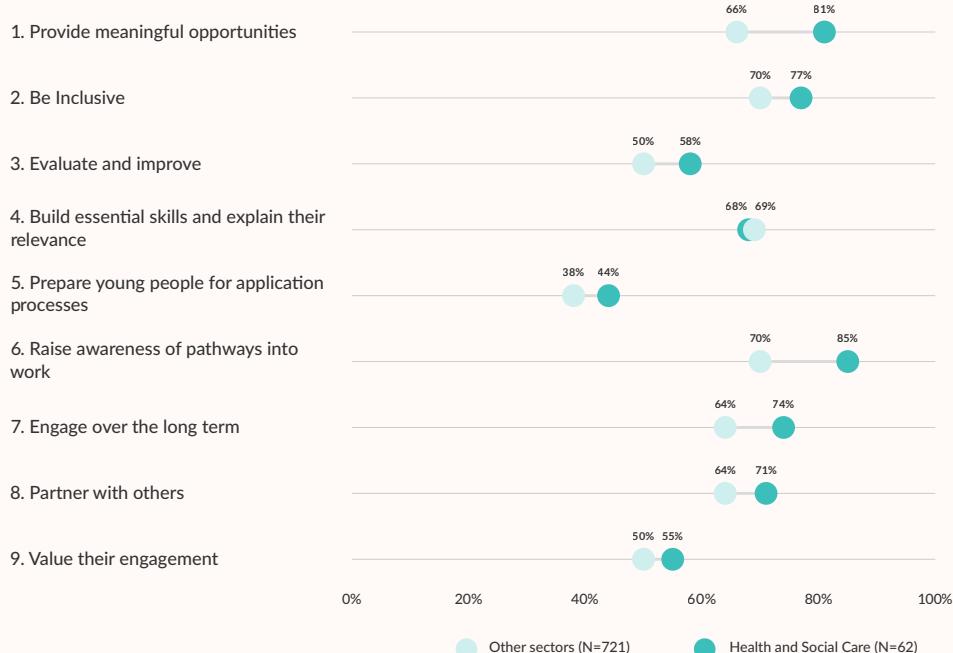
Amidst the growing workforce demands, skills shortages and capacity challenges, this strong engagement in careers education with schools and colleges helped most employers in the sector to:

- encourage young people to apply for jobs in the sector** (89% reported this benefit)
- develop new talent pipelines** (82% reported this benefit)

Crucially, **working with schools helps to close the skills gap**, with the majority of employers in the sector (77%) reporting this as a benefit of their careers outreach.

Fig 1: Employers in the Health and Social Care sector were most likely to achieve Standards 1 and 6

% of Employers achieving or exceeding each standard in the Health and Social Care compared to employers in other sectors



Source: Employer Standards data, end of September 2025 (N=783; Health and Social Care, N=62);

Young people's interest in the industry and confidence in their Essential Skills

This strong engagement from the Health and Social Care sector is also reflected in the significant interest from young people. According to [Future Skills Questionnaire data](#), **16% of Year 11 students express a desire to work in the sector**.

Within this, the most popular roles are:

- doctor (46%)
- nurse (25%)
- carer/social worker (23%)

There is a marked gender disparity: girls are significantly more likely to be interested in this sector (28%, vs 9% for boys).

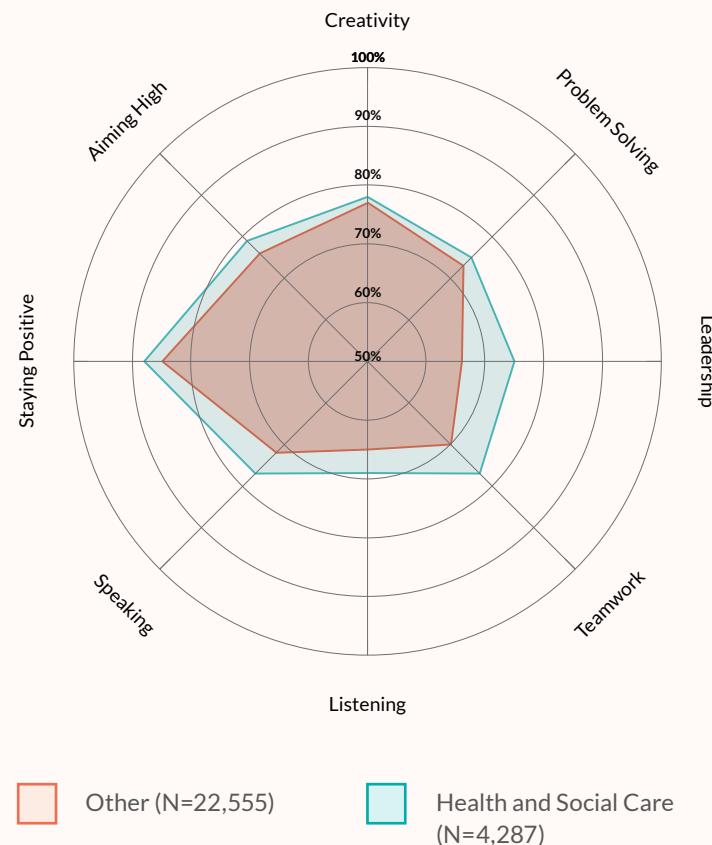
Overall, employers who help young people practise and progress essential skills in workplace experiences are 72% more likely to say that that young people's employability skills are improving as a result of their engagement.

Young people in year 11 who are interested in Health and Social Care are **more confident than their peers** in all Essential Skills, especially **Leadership** (+9%pts), and **Teamwork** (+7%pts).

To see the full insights, including other industry snapshots, click [here](#)

Fig 2: Young people interested in the sector are more likely than their peers to be confident in all eight Essential Skills

% of Year 11 young people saying they are confident in each Essential Skill



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire data, end of July 2025 (Year 11 responding to the industry/career question, N=26,842)