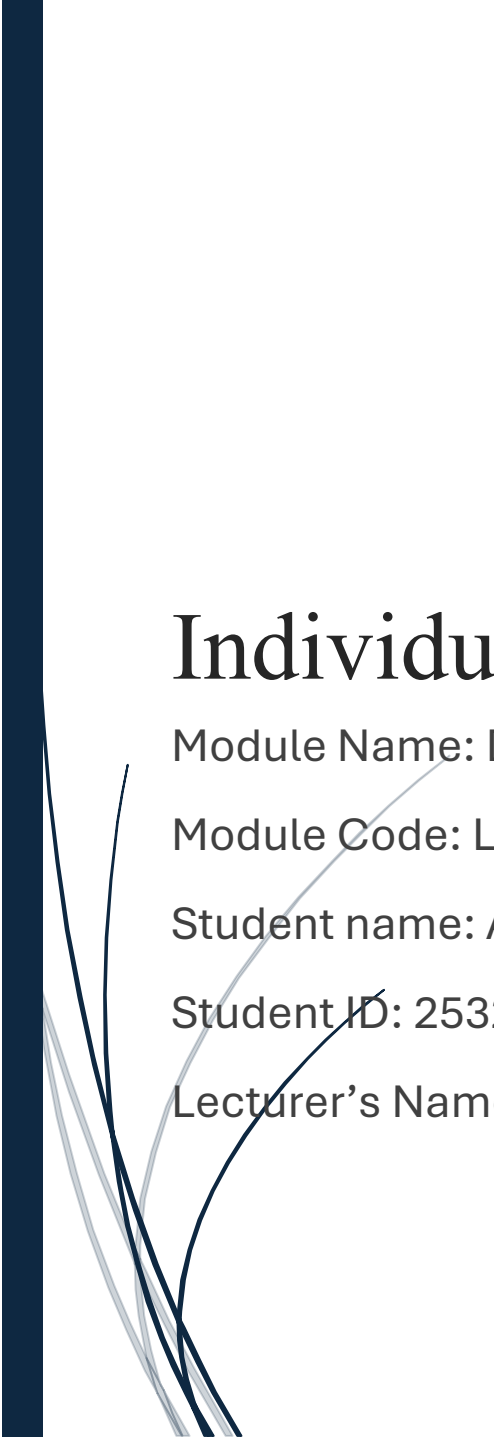




Individual Report

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Introduction

Staff shortages are a serious issue in health and social care services in England. This report focuses on how staff shortages affect service quality in this setting. The issue is important because a lack of staff can reduce safety, delay support, and affect the experience of patients and service users. This report explains why the topic matters, why it was chosen, evaluates three information sources, and discusses research methodologies and data collection.

Task 1 – Selection of a Research Topic

1.1 The Issue and Why It Matters

Staff shortages are a current issue in health and social care services in England. This means that there are not enough workers to meet the needs of patients and service users. The problem affects many services, such as hospitals, GP services, community care, mental health services, and adult social care.

Many people are affected by this issue. Patients and service users may wait longer for care and may receive less support. Staff may feel more pressure, stress, and burnout because they have too much work. Families may also be affected when services cannot respond quickly enough. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2026) shows that low pay in adult social care can lead to high staff turnover and staff shortages. This makes recruitment and retention more difficult.

This issue is important because good care depends on having enough skilled staff. When there are not enough workers, care can become slower, less safe, and less effective. According to the Care Quality Commission (2025), staff shortages and service pressure can affect access to care and service quality. Skills for Care (2024) also shows that recruitment and retention are still important problems in adult social care in England. Shemtob et al. (2023) explain that staffing shortages in health and adult social care are limiting the delivery of services. This shows that staff shortages are a serious problem in England today.

1.2 Personal Reflection – Why I Chose This Topic

I chose this topic because staff shortages are a real problem in health and social care in England. I am interested in this issue because it affects the quality of care that people receive every day. It also affects workers, patients, service users, and families.

This topic links to my studies because it helps me understand how health and social care services work in real life. It is also useful for my future career because safe staffing, teamwork, and communication are important in many roles. Learning about this issue helps me understand challenges in the sector and why improvement is needed.

Task 2 – Evaluating Information Sources

2.1 Source 1

Care Quality Commission (2025) The state of health care and adult social care in England 2024/25.

This source is useful because it is an official report about health and social care services in England. It explains that demand for care is increasing and many services are under pressure. It also shows that staff shortages in adult social care, especially in homecare and reablement, can cause delays in support and problems with service quality (Care Quality Commission, 2025). This is important for my topic because it shows a clear link between staff shortages and the quality of care people receive.

This source is credible because it is current and relevant. It was published in 2025, so the information is recent. It is also written by the Care Quality Commission, which is the official regulator in England. This means it is a trusted source. It is reliable because it uses inspections, surveys, and service data. The source supports my topic because it gives strong official evidence that staff shortages can affect access to care and service quality.

2.2 Source 2

Nuffield Trust (2024) The NHS workforce in numbers.

This source is useful because it gives national information about staffing and staff shortages in the NHS in England. It explains that the NHS had 125,572 vacancies between March and

June 2023, and that sickness absence and unfilled shifts created extra pressure on services (Nuffield Trust, 2024). This supports my topic because it shows that staff shortages are a large and current problem in England.

This source is credible because it is recent, relevant, and produced by the Nuffield Trust, which is a well-known health policy organisation in the UK. It is also reliable because it uses official workforce data. This means the information is based on real evidence, not opinion. A limitation is that it mainly focuses on the NHS, so it gives less detail about social care services. However, it is still very useful because it shows the scale of the staffing problem and helps explain why services are under pressure.

2.3 Source 3

NHS England (2023) NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

This source is useful because it gives an official national view of the staffing problem in England. It says that local services had more than 112,000 vacancies and warns that the NHS could face a much larger workforce shortfall by 2036/37 if no action is taken (NHS England, 2023). It also explains that staff shortages already affect patient experience, service capacity, and productivity. This supports my topic because it shows that staff shortages are both a current problem and a future problem.

This source is credible because it is recent, relevant, and published by NHS England. It is also reliable because it uses national workforce data and official planning information. This makes it a strong source for my report. One limitation is that it mainly focuses on the NHS, not the whole health and social care sector. Even so, it is useful because it gives official evidence about why staffing matters for service quality.

2.4 Gaps in Current Research

Although these sources are useful, there are still some gaps in current research. Most strong evidence focuses on the NHS rather than the whole health and social care sector. There is less detailed research on how staff shortages affect social care, especially homecare and residential care in England. Shemtob et al. (2023) discuss staffing shortages in both health and social care, but more detailed research is still needed on how these shortages affect service quality in different social care settings. More research is also needed on the

experiences of service users, families, and front-line staff. These views are important because they can help explain how staff shortages affect care in everyday practice.

Task 3 – Research Methodologies

3.1 Definitions and Examples

Quantitative research uses numbers and measurable data. It helps the researcher find patterns, trends, and links between different things. In health and social care, a quantitative study for this topic could collect data about staff vacancies, waiting times, sickness absence, or delayed hospital discharges in England. This type of research is useful because it can show the size of the problem.

Qualitative research focuses on people's experiences, opinions, and feelings. It helps the researcher understand how people are affected by an issue in real life. For this topic, a qualitative study could include interviews with nurses, care workers, managers, patients, or family members. They could talk about how staff shortages affect daily care and support.

Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research. It uses numbers to show the size of a problem and personal experiences to explain it in more detail. For example, a researcher could collect data on vacancies and also interview staff and service users about their experiences.

3.2 Chosen Methodology and Justification

For this topic, I would use mixed-methods research. I think this is the best method because staff shortages are a complex issue. Quantitative data can show how many vacancies there are and whether they affect waiting times or service performance. Qualitative data can explain how staff shortages affect workers, patients, and service users in everyday practice.

Mixed-methods research is the most suitable approach because it gives a fuller understanding of the issue. It shows both the scale of the problem and its human impact. This would help create a clearer picture of how staff shortages affect service quality in health and social care services in England.

Task 4 – Data Collection

4.1 Primary vs Secondary Data

Primary data is information collected directly by the researcher for a specific study. This means the researcher collects new data by themselves. Examples of primary data are interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and observations. In health and social care, an example would be asking nurses or care workers questions about how staff shortages affect their daily work.

Secondary data is information that already exists. It has been collected by other people or organisations. Examples of secondary data are government reports, NHS documents, research articles, and workforce statistics. For this topic, secondary data could include reports from NHS England, the Care Quality Commission, and the Nuffield Trust.

4.2 Chosen Data Type and Justification

For this topic, I would use secondary data. I think this is the best choice because there is already a lot of useful information about staff shortages in health and social care services in England. Existing reports give data on vacancies, waiting times, workforce pressure, and service quality. This makes secondary data suitable for my topic and for my chosen mixed-methods approach.

4.3 Advantages and Challenges

One advantage of secondary data is that it saves time because the information has already been collected. Another advantage is that it can come from large and reliable sources, such as NHS England and the Care Quality Commission, so it can show a wider picture of the problem.

However, there are also challenges. One challenge is that some data may be out of date, especially if staffing levels change quickly. Another challenge is that secondary data may not show personal experiences in enough detail, so it may not fully explain everyday problems for staff, patients, and service users.

Conclusion

In conclusion, staff shortages are a serious problem in health and social care services in England. This report has shown that not having enough staff can affect access to care, service quality, patient safety, and staff wellbeing. It has explained why this topic is important, looked at three useful sources, and discussed research methods and data collection. Overall, staff shortages remain an important issue because good care depends on enough skilled workers. Improving staffing levels and keeping workers in their jobs could help improve the quality of health and social care services in England in the future for many people.

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