

## ADCS DCS Update 2023/24

### Introduction

As at 31 March 2024 there were 153 upper tier local authorities (LAs) in England. Current legislation requires each of these LAs to appoint a director of children's services (DCS). Due to the statutory nature of the post, there must always be a named DCS which results, on occasion, in short-term interim arrangements taking place when a serving post-holder leaves. The chief executive officers (CEO) of Trust/ADM arrangements are equivalent to DCSs in terms of ADCS membership, however, we do not refer to a Trust as being a separate local authority for the purpose of this report.

ADCS has gathered and recorded detailed information about changes in post-holders of the statutory DCS role since the Association was established in 2007. We also record the number of directors who hold both statutory roles of DCS and DASS (referred to in this report as 'twin hat').

The analysis that follows focusses on the ADCS membership year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It also offers some year-on-year comparisons, several of which date back to 2007, to highlight trends over time and patterns of change.

### Headlines

- 21 new permanent DCSs appointed in 2023/24
- Average length of time served as a DCS, when factoring in cumulative time spent in multiple LAs as a DCS, is over 4 years
- 102 LAs currently have a female DCSs
- "Twin hat" directors down to just 13
- 17 interim DCSs in post as of 31 March 2024
- 49 of 153 LAs have experienced changes in DCS across the reporting period
- 62 DCS changes in total (including all interim appointments).

### DCS changes

During 2023/24, there were 62 changes in DCS post-holder in total, this is amongst the highest levels of change within a 12-month period. The changes have taken place across 49 LAs, meaning less than a third of LAs have experienced changes in the DCS post holder across the reporting period.

Whilst the number of new permanent DCS appointments is on par with the average, the numbers of interim DCS appointments and DCSs moving from one LA to another are well above average.

Of the 62 changes:

- 21 were new permanent DCS appointments:
  - 8 were from assistant director/second tier level from the same LA
  - 11 were from assistant director/second tier level from another LA
  - 2 other appointments
- 28 were interim appointments:
  - 14 were filled by assistant directors from the same LA
  - 1 was filled by an assistant director from another LA
  - 9 were filled by a former DCS
  - 2 were filled by the DASS from the same LA

- 2 were filled by chief executives holding the statutory DCS role
- 11 DCSs have moved post from one LA to another
- 2 former DCSs returned to permanent DCS role.

62 changes within one reporting year is amongst the highest on record. Only in 2017/18 were there more (65). The average number of total changes in DCS post-holder per year currently stands at 49.

21 new permanent appointments were made during 2023/24, which is the exact average for new permanent appointments. The number of interim appointments and DCSs moving from one LA to another, however, are much higher than average.

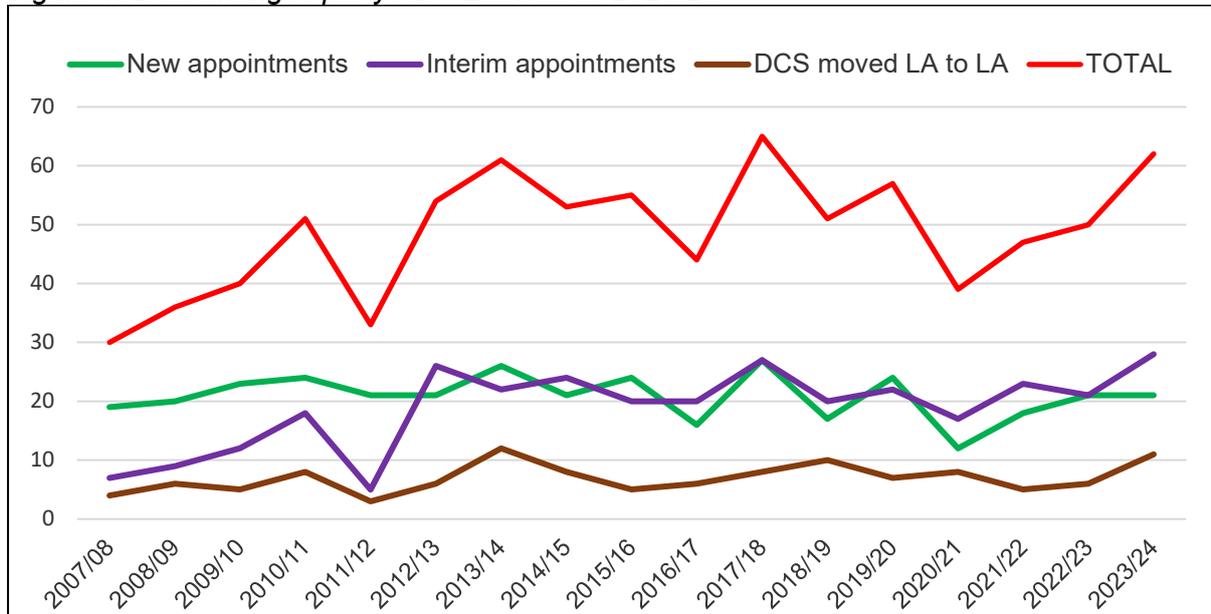
The average number of interim appointments per year is 19; in 2023/24 there were 28 interim appointments made. The majority have been short-term appointments pending a permanent appointment and have been filled, in the main, by former substantive DCSs or assistant director/ second tier level officers. As of 31 March 2024, there were 17 interim DCSs in post, two of which are twin hatters. 7 of the current interim directors have previously been a DCS in another LA. 9 of the 17 interim DCSs have been in post for 6 months or less.

The average number of DCSs moving from one LA to another in a DCS role is 7; this year there were 11 such changes.

The 62 changes have taken place across 49 LAs. 13 LAs have experienced 2 DCS changes, largely due to short-term interim appointments being made prior to a permanent appointment.

Figure 1 provides an illustration of the trends in DCS change since ADCS was established in 2007.

*Figure 1. DCS changes per year – 2007/08 to 2023/24*

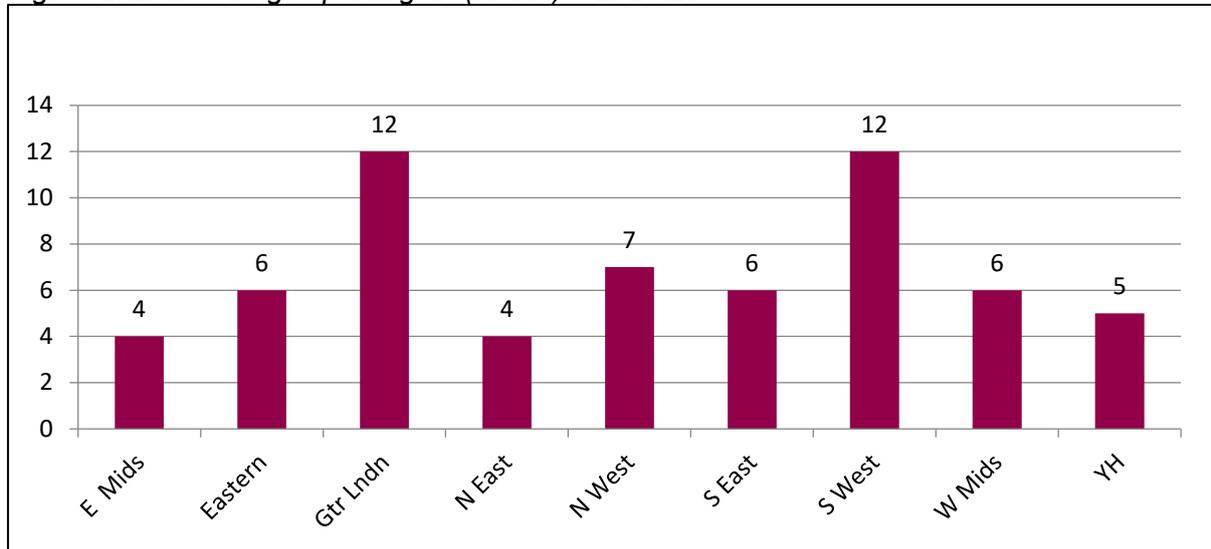


### DCS changes per region

The number of changes in DCS post-holders from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 by region is illustrated in Figure 2. Greater London and South West have each experienced 12 separate DCS changes, however, in both regions 4 LAs have experienced 2 DCS changes across the reporting period, which inflates the figures somewhat.

In percentage terms, the amount of change looks quite different in the regions with fewer LAs. Changes across 8 LAs in Greater London equates to 25% of LAs, whereas changes across 8 LAs in the South West is over 50% of LAs. Similarly, the Eastern region has experienced 6 changes across 5 LAs, which is almost 50% of LAs.

*Figure 2. DCS changes per region (actual) – 2023/24*



### Areas of responsibility

As of 31 March 2024, there were 13 'twin hat' directors. This is the lowest number since 2009 and the same as when ADCS was formed in 2007.

There are also a number of LAs where the DCS has overall responsibility for children and adult services but, whilst holding the statutory duty for children's services, they do not also hold the statutory duty for adult services. For the purposes of this report these arrangements are not considered 'twin hat'. To our knowledge, there are currently 3 LAs with this arrangement.

*Figure 3. Total number of 'twin hatters' – by year (as at 31 March respectively)*

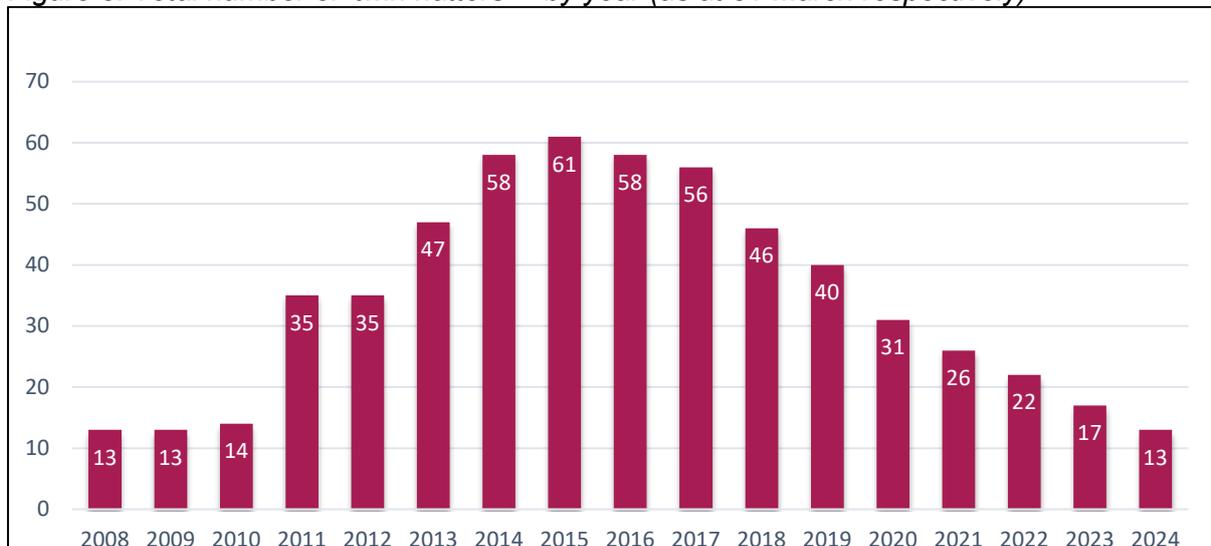
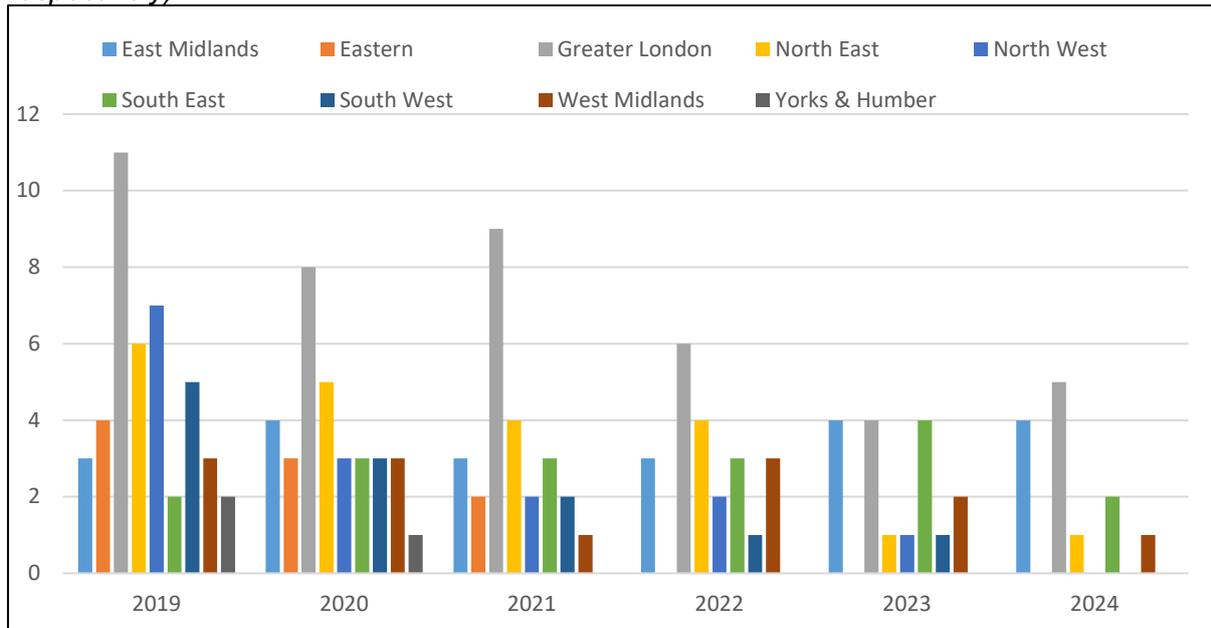


Figure 4 illustrates the decline in twin hatters per region. The Eastern, North West, South West and Yorkshire & Humber regions had no twin hat directors in post as of 31 March 2024. Greater London is the only region to have an increase in twin hatter, which is due to the creation of an interim 'twin hat' post.

In percentage terms, the East Midlands is an outlier with 40% of LAs having a 'twin hatter' in post; this is 4 out of 10 LAs in actual terms. By comparison, the next highest is Greater London with 15% of LAs with a 'twin hatter' in post, which is 5 out of 33 LAs in actual terms.

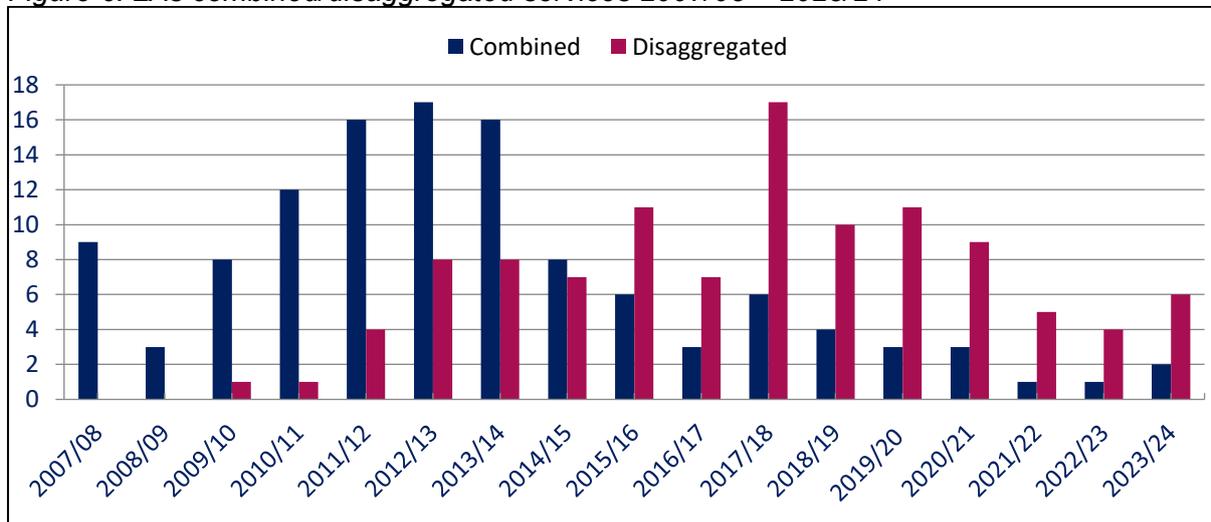
*Figure 4. Total number of 'twin hatters' by region – 2019 to 2024 (as at 31 March respectively)*



Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, 6 LAs disaggregated their children and adult director roles. Two LAs combined the children and adult director role during this period, both on an interim basis.

Figure 6 illustrates the pace of change of both the combining and disaggregating of the 'twin hat role'.

*Figure 6. LAs combined/disaggregated services 2007/08 – 2023/24*



## Time in post

As in most careers, individuals move from organisation to organisation. This is no different for many DCSs with over a third of the current DCS cohort having been a DCS in 2 or more LAs in either permanent, interim or multi-LA arrangements.

The average tenure of current DCSs, when factoring in cumulative time spent in multiple LAs as a DCS, is 51 months – this figure includes all permanent and interim appointments.

The average tenure of all current DCS post-holders in their current role is 33 months; 35 months for permanent post-holders and 8 months for interim post-holders.

The average duration of a DCS in post in the same LA (based on all interim and permanent appointments from 2007 to 31 March 2024) is 31 months – across all permanent appointments it is 40 months and for all interim appointments it is 7 months.

## DCSs in more than one LA

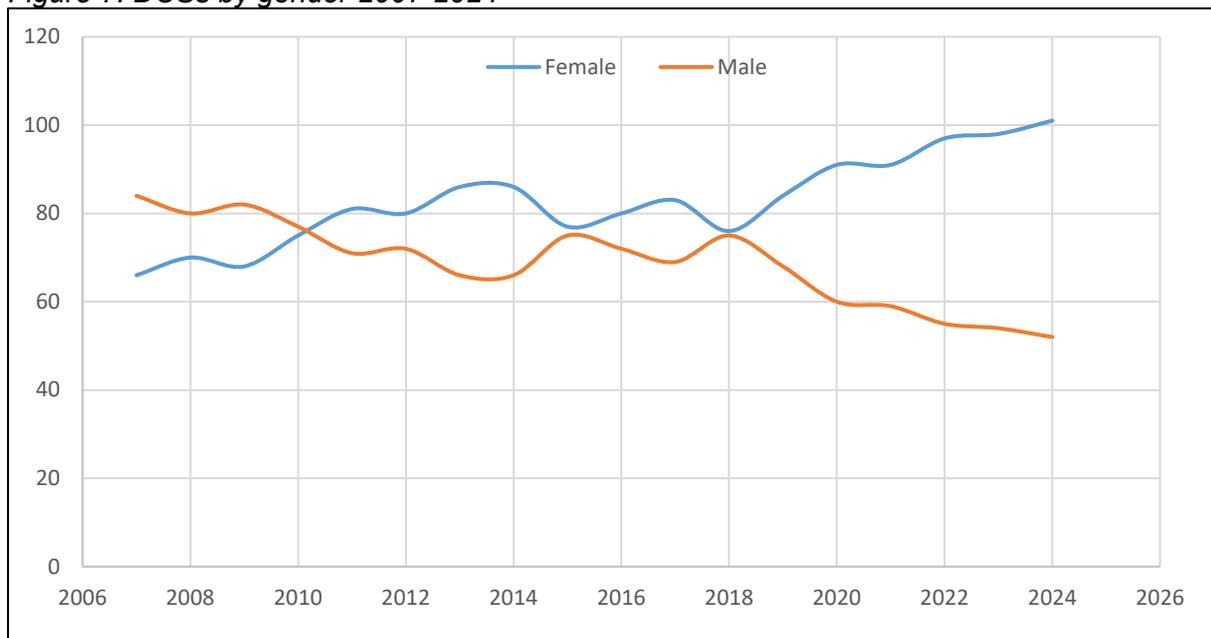
57 (37.5%) of current post holders have been DCS in more than 1 LA in either permanent, interim or multi-LA arrangements. 2 DCSs have been DCS in 6 LAs and 1 in 5 LAs.

In recent years, there have been several multi-LA arrangements, where a single DCS has responsibility for two LAs children's services. During 2023/24, two of these arrangements ended. As at 31 March, there were just two remaining multi-LA arrangements.

## Gender and diversity

As at 31 March 2024, there were 102 LAs with female directors and 51 LAs with male directors. Of the 102 LAs with female directors, 6 are 'twin hatters'. Of the 51 LAs with a male director, 7 are 'twin hatters'. Of the 17 interim directors currently in post, 11 are female and 6 are male.

Figure 7. DCSs by gender 2007-2024



ADCS collects diversity data on an annual basis via an anonymised survey of the entire membership.

In September 2023, 115 DCS/ trust CEOs responded to the survey, of these:

- 103 identified as white; 5 as mixed/ multiple ethnicity; 4 as Asian; and 2 as Black
- 79 were aged between 50 and 59; 18 aged between 60 and 65; and 14 aged between 40 and 49.
- 93 identified as heterosexual; 9 as gay; 7 as lesbian and less than 5 as bisexual.
- 40 identified as Christian and 59 stated that they had no religion or belief.

The 2023 survey received a lower response rate from DCS/ trust CEOs with 115 responses compared to 131 in 2022. A simple comparison between the 2022 and 2023 DCS/ trust CEO data sets shows:

- There has been a slight decrease in the number who identify as white (90% in 2023 compared to 93% in 2022)
- An increase in those aged between 50 and 59 (69% in 2023 compared to 60% in 2022) and a decrease in those aged between 40 and 49 (21% in 2022 down to 12% in 2023)
- A slight increase in the number identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual (16% compared to 15% in 2022)
- An almost identical comparison in stated religion/beliefs.

## **Alternative delivery models and trust arrangements**

There are a number of alternative delivery models (ADMs) currently providing aspects of children's services on behalf of local authorities:

- Achieving for Children provides children's services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Achieving for Children also provides some services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Together for Children provides children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council
- Brighter Futures for Children provides children's services on behalf of Reading Council
- Slough Children First provides children's services on behalf of Slough Borough Council
- Worcestershire Children First provides children's services on behalf of Worcestershire County Council. In September, the Council will take back control of all children's services as the contract with Worcestershire Children First comes to an end.

As of 31 March 2024, Trust arrangements were in place in Birmingham, Bradford Northamptonshire and Sandwell.

## **Comparison with other roles**

In order to offer some comparative context to the rate of turnover of statutory DCSs, ADCS has collected data relating to chief executives.

The data does not include any changes that may have taken place in-year, therefore any short-term interim appointments which may have taken place will not be included in the figures.

Between March 2023 and March 2024:

- There have been 33 changes in chief executives, compared with 19 in the previous year
- As of March 2024, 16 chief executives had previously been a DCS
- As of March 2024, there were 11 interim chief executives – including one instance of a twin hatter also acting as interim Chief Executive
- There were 2 instances of multi-LA arrangement where the Chief Executive holds the role for two LAs simultaneously - East Sussex & West Sussex and Richmond & Wandsworth. West Sussex has recently made a permanent appointment, therefore this arrangement will soon come to an end.
- The gender balance of chief executives is slowly changing. There are currently 86 male and 67 female chief executives. This compares to 90 male and 62 female in 2023, and 96 male and 56 female in 2022.

14 LAs have experienced a change in both chief executive and DCS – in the previous reporting period there were just 4 areas which had experienced both changes.