



# Homecare Association



## A Minimum Price for Homecare

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in Northern Ireland  
April 2024 to March 2025

Produced by  
**Homecare Association**

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## Executive summary

Fee rates for homecare in Northern Ireland have consistently lagged behind the other UK nations. Our [Homecare Deficit 2023](#) elucidated this once again, with no Health and Social Care Trust coming close to paying an average rate at, or above, the Homecare Association's Minimum Price for Northern Ireland. The Department of Health also has a [significant funding gap of around £470 million](#), exacerbating the situation still further.

The Homecare Association's new calculation for the Minimum Price for Homecare in Northern Ireland is **£29.37 per hour**.

We base this minimum on the Real Living Wage (as required according to public procurement rules that have been in effect since June 2022), which now stands at [£12.00 an hour across the United Kingdom](#).

Our Minimum Price for Northern Ireland is the amount required to ensure careworkers receive this wage (excluding any enhancements for unsocial hours working), their travel time, mileage, and wage-related on-costs. The rate also includes the minimum contribution towards the costs of running a care business, which complies with quality and other legal requirements.

We do not suggest that the Minimum Price recognises the value of homecare services to society by providing a fair reward for the essential workforce. This would be a '*fair price*'. Instead, we have calculated a '*minimum price*', and so this should not be treated as a national acceptable price capable of achieving a stable workforce.

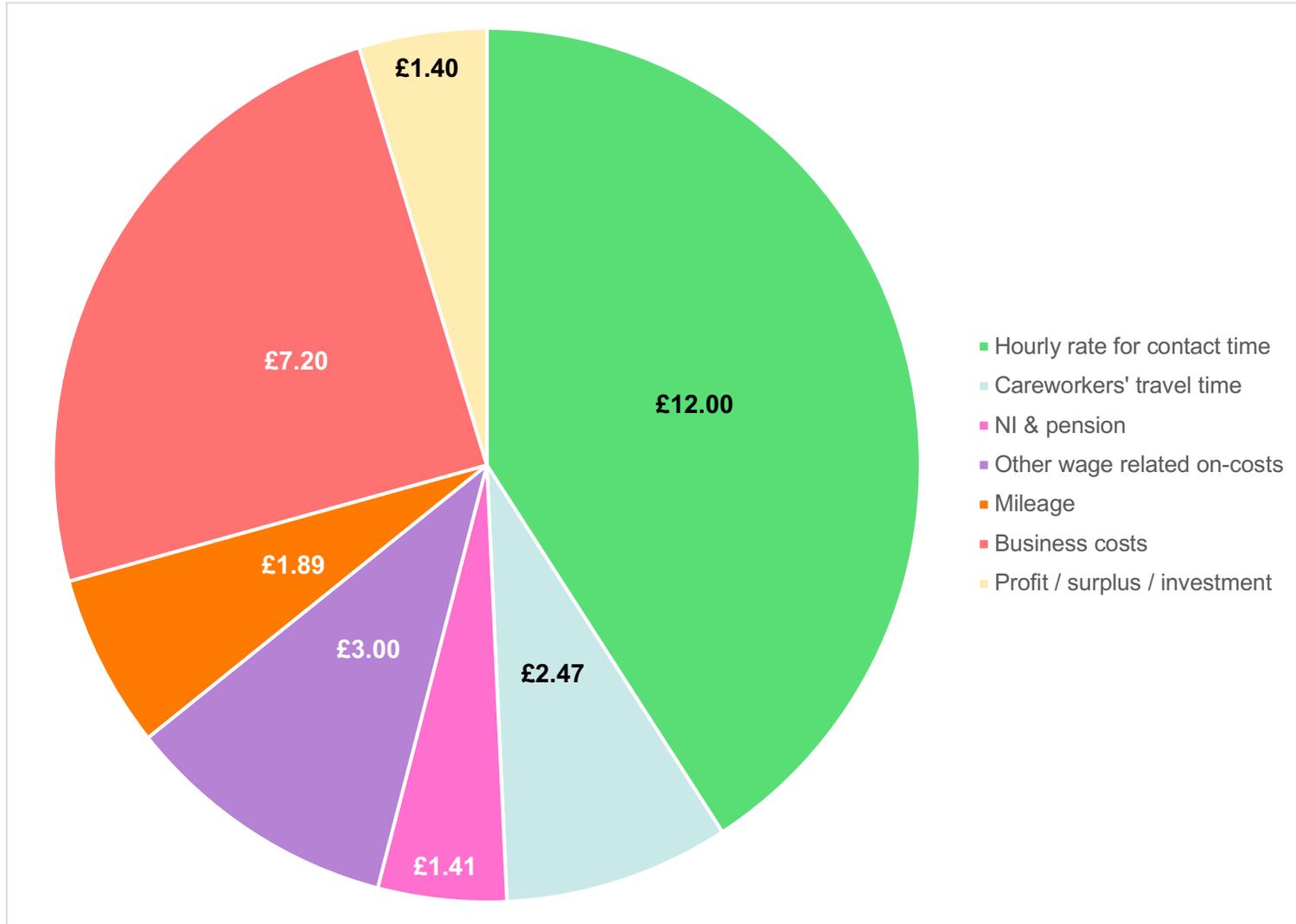
The Homecare Association's Minimum Price has gained wide recognition within the social care and health sectors in all four UK administrations.

We will continue to challenge central government on the overall funding of social care. It is, however, councils, the NHS, and Health and Social Care Trusts (in Northern Ireland) that determine the prices they pay for homecare services at a local level.

We show the results of our analysis in the chart and table which follow.

**NB. In this report, we have used exact figures when adding or subtracting numbers. As a result, there may be occasional rounding differences in the text and table.**

## Minimum Price for Homecare at the Real Living Wage (Northern Ireland)



Minimum Price for Homecare in Northern Ireland at the Real Living Wage (announced in October 2023)					Costs			
Careworker costs	Gross pay	Hourly rate for contact time	Real Living Wage		£12.00	£14.47	£20.77	
		Careworkers' travel time	20.56%	of hourly rate for contact time	£2.47			
	NI & pension	Employers' National Insurance	6.72%	of gross pay	£0.97	£1.41		
		Pension contribution	3.00%	of gross pay	£0.43			
	Other wage related on-costs	Holiday pay	12.07%	of gross pay, NI & pension		£1.92		£3.00
		Training time	2.45%	of gross pay, NI & pension		£0.39		
		Sickness pay	4.20%	of gross pay, NI & pension		£0.67		
		Notice & suspension pay	0.20%	of gross pay, NI & pension		£0.03		
	Mileage	Travel reimbursement	£0.45 per mile for 4.20 miles per hour of contact time			£1.89		£1.89
	Gross margin	Business costs	Management & supervisors		Estimated fixed cost	£2.46		£7.20
Back-office staff				Estimated fixed cost	£0.90			
Staff recruitment				Estimated fixed cost	£0.36			
Training costs				Estimated fixed cost	£0.41			
Regulatory fees				Estimated fixed cost	£0.03			
Rent, rates and utilities				Estimated fixed cost	£0.47			
IT & telephony				Estimated fixed cost	£0.57			
PPE and consumables				Estimated fixed cost	£0.72			
Finance, legal & professional				Estimated fixed cost	£0.41			
Insurance				Estimated fixed cost	£0.34			
Other business overheads			Estimated fixed cost	£0.52				
Profit	Profit/surplus/investment	5.00%	of careworker costs & business costs		£1.40	£1.40		
<b>Total price based on the Real Living Wage (announced in October 2023)</b>					<b>£29.37</b>	<b>£29.37</b>	<b>£29.37</b>	

## Data sources and assumptions

The methodology in calculating a Minimum Price for Northern Ireland broadly follows that for England. We, therefore, refer you to the England report for full details.

Where appropriate, we use electronic call monitoring data from leading suppliers of software for UK care organisations, namely [the Access Group](#) and [Birdie Care](#).

However, there are some differences and aspects to note for Northern Ireland, as outlined below.

## Careworker costs

### Employers' National Insurance

We set this at the same percentage to that calculated for the Real Living Wage in England, namely 6.72%.

### Training time

This determines the cost when a careworker attends training (as opposed to delivering care). We include other training-related costs, such as payment of trainers, in the 'business costs' section.

We can break careworker training down into three key items: induction, studying for qualifications and Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL).

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) has developed an [Induction Programme](#) for new careworkers. We estimate the annual number of training hours for this item per careworker, based on the assumption of six hours of training per day.

[Regarding qualifications](#), we focus our attention on the Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Northern Ireland) (total qualification time of 460 hours) and the Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Northern Ireland) (total qualification time of 580 hours). We do not consider higher qualifications, following a similar qualifications pathway for England. However, in our model, we take account of the fact that the Level 2 and 3 qualifications are not mandatory (both are only desirable for careworkers).

Moreover, social care workers must complete [at least 90 hours of PRTL](#) during each registration period of five years.

Using data on the [number of domiciliary care and supported living workers](#) (as of May 2022) and [number of domiciliary care agencies](#) (including supported living services,

as of October 2023), we calculate that an average-sized homecare provider in Northern Ireland has around 55 careworkers. Thus, we estimate the number of careworkers in such a provider completing each training item per year.

When multiplying the number of training hours by the number of careworkers for each training item and summing, we estimate an annual total of 1,465 training hours in an average-sized provider, or 27 hours per careworker.

Based on software supplier data regarding the average number of hours worked per employee in 2023, we finally find that a careworker in Northern Ireland typically spends 2.45% of their working time on training.

## Business costs

### Regulatory fees

Regulatory fees are split between annual fees for the business (assuming a provider has previously registered) and the careworker (in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland only, where individual careworkers must join a professional register).

According to the [Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority \(RQIA\)](#), there is no registration fee or annual fee applicable for a domiciliary care agency in Northern Ireland.

However, there is an [application, annual and renewal fee for careworkers of £30](#) as part of their NISCC registration, or, on average, £0.03 per hour for each careworker (according to software supplier data on average hours worked per employee).

### PPE and consumables

In Northern Ireland, the [COVID-19 guidance for homecare providers](#) was withdrawn in July 2023. Prior to this, the Public Health Agency (PHA) updated the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance, which essentially recommended a return to 'business as usual'.

Furthermore, personal protective equipment (PPE) is no longer provided free to the sector.

As with the calculation in England, we assume that providers need to be in a position to cover the costs of PPE, should a virulent, new COVID-19 variant (or other respiratory virus) emerge and PPE usage is stepped up again. The level of PPE accounted for would therefore be equivalent to that used during the pandemic, should it be needed.

## Other assumptions

### Break time

There are separate Working Time Regulations for Northern Ireland. However, [the stipulation as regards a rest break](#) is equivalent to the Working Time Regulations 1998. Consequently, given an assumption of around 5.26 hours worked per day on average (see England report), we again do not include this in our model.

## Caution and disclaimer

Our Minimum Prices for Homecare in each administration are indicative rates. Providers should not use them as an alternative to the accurate pricing of individual tender bids. Likewise, commissioners should not use them to set maximum prices in contracts. The Homecare Association accepts no responsibility for actions taken or refrained from solely by reference to the contents of this briefing, or that in the reports for the other UK nations.

We do, however, encourage homecare providers to share our briefings with the Directors of Adult Social Services (or their equivalents) in homecare commissioning bodies across the United Kingdom.

# Shaping homecare together

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