



2026

Market Insights & Salary Guide

CARE

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OVERVIEW

The UK Care sector continues to evolve under sustained pressure from workforce shortages, increased regulatory scrutiny, and rising operational costs. Demand for skilled care professionals remains high across Elderly, Adult, Mental Health and Children’s Residential services.

While pay growth in Elderly Care has risen steadily, the Children’s Residential sector has seen a dramatic uplift, with salaries for Children’s Home Managers increasing by approximately 50% over the last 18 months.

Chroma Recruitment’s 2026 Care Salary Benchmarking Guide provides insight into market averages across residential, mental health, children’s and adult services, drawing from our internal placement data (July - December 2025) and national sources including Indeed, TotalJobs, and Reed.

KEY INSIGHTS

- **Pay growth** in Elderly Care has averaged 4–7% year-on-year.
- **Children’s Home Manager** roles have risen from £40,000–£42,000 to around £60,000, which is now widely considered the standard rate.
- **CQC ratings** continue to heavily influence salary expectations, with candidates from Outstanding homes commanding premiums of 10%–15%.
- **Peripatetic and regional leadership** roles continue to pay above-market due to multi-site responsibility.
- **Work-life balance**, development pathways and employer culture remain major decision factors for senior candidates.

2025 UK SALARY BANDS - PERMANENT

JOB TITLE	JUNIOR	MID-LEVEL	SENIOR
Nursing Home Manager	£52,000 - £57,000	£62,000 - £68,000	£72,000 - £78,000
Peripatetic Manager	£47,000 - £52,000	£62,000 - £68,000	£75,000 - £85,000
Regional Manager	£58,000 - £62,000	£65,000 - £72,000	£75,000 - £85,000
Care Home Day Nurse	£18.00 - £19.50 per hour	£20.00 - £21.50 per hour	£22.50 - £24.00 per hour
Clinical Lead	£20.00 - £21.00 per hour	£22.00 - £23.50 per hour	£24.00 - £25.00 per hour
Registered Manager	£45,000 - £50,000	£52,000 - £60,000	£65,000 - £75,000
Responsible Individual	£52,000 - £58,000	£62,000 - £68,000	£78,000 - £85,000
Operations Manager	£78,000 - £85,000	£92,000 - £100,000	£115,000 - £125,000

NOTES

Hourly pay for nursing and clinical positions is based on permanent full-time roles (37.5–40 hours). Premiums apply for night shifts, weekends, or agency contracts.

Salaries above are averages for permanent UK roles as of Q4 2025 and exclude bonuses, pension contributions, or housing allowances. Adjustments should be made for service size, regulatory performance, and regional cost of living.

For tailored benchmarking or bespoke data by region or service type, contact the Chroma Care team.





REGIONAL MODIFIERS

Salary variance across the UK care sector is largely driven by home fees and regional demand. As a guideline:

- ▶ **Manchester / Northwest:** Benchmark region (data baseline).
- ▶ **London & South East:** Typically 10%–20% above the listed bands.
- ▶ **Midlands:** Generally 5%–10% below Northwest averages.
- ▶ **Scotland & North East:** Generally 10%–15% lower, depending on demand.
- ▶ **South West & Wales:** Generally 5%–10% below Northwest averages.

Additional premiums may apply for roles requiring multi-site travel, specialist services (e.g. complex mental health or learning disabilities), or nurse registration.

2025 CONTRACT & INTERIM RATES

ROLE	TYPICAL DAY RATE
Registered Manager (Interim)	£400 - £500 per day
Regional / Peripatetic Manager	£450 - £600 per day
Clinical Lead (Interim)	£25 - £35 per hour
Care Home Nurse (Agency)	£23 - £32 per hour
Operations Manager (Interim)	£450 - £600 per day

NOTES Rates vary depending on urgency, CQC rating improvement projects, and geographic scope. Inside IR35 roles or umbrella arrangements typically reduce take-home by 20%–25%.

GUIDANCE FOR CLIENTS

- ▶ Holiday allowance is a major differentiator. Many providers still offer 28 days, including bank holidays, but the market standard is now 33 days, with the most competitive employers offering up to 38 days.
- ▶ Quality-led providers attract stronger managers. Candidates want to work for organisations with clear staffing expectations, strong support structures, and leadership cultures that empower managers to operate autonomously. A transparent, consistent approach to quality helps attract high-performing leaders.
- ▶ Cultural alignment matters. Matching a manager’s leadership style with the ethos of the service increases retention and supports positive CQC outcomes.
- ▶ Investment in development is key. Management pathways, coaching, and training remain core motivators for senior hires.
- ▶ Review your total reward package annually. Benchmark salaries, bonuses, allowances and benefits to remain competitive.

GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

- ▶ Show evidence of impact: link your leadership to improved outcomes (occupancy, CQC ratings, staff retention, profit margins).
- ▶ Stay current with compliance: updates to CQC frameworks, Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act, and Liberty Protection Safeguards are valued.
- ▶ Pursue progression: nurse-qualified managers and those with Level 5/7 Leadership or equivalent remain in highest demand.
- ▶ Balance ambition with culture: the best roles are those offering development, stability, and the chance to lead quality care.





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Based in Manchester, we are specialists in Care, Technology, Digital, and Engineering recruitment, supporting professionals and companies across the UK. We provide permanent and contract staffing solutions, tailoring our approach to suit your requirements.

Founded in 2016, our commitment is to Listen, Understand, Consult and Deliver the best possible service. We truly value all our customers, both our clients and candidates, and believe in a quality over quantity approach to recruitment. With a multi-talented team on hand to offer assistance, our personalised approach means that you'll be able to find the ideal new hire or position in no time.

Chroma Care Division

Chroma Care focuses on Elderly, Adults and Children's Residential services for Management and executive level hires. In addition to Chroma's values, Care works on a level of transparency and consultation with both client and candidate to improve the careers and businesses of those that we recruit for.

To us, the personal and cultural fit is just as important as the technical, and getting the right balance is key.



GET IN TOUCH

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