

IPEM

Institute of Physics and
Engineering in Medicine



Rehabilitation Engineering Workforce Survey Summary Report 2022

Introduction

This data in this report is compiled from IPEM’s Rehabilitation Engineering Workforce Survey 2022, carried out in October 2022. An invitation to respond was sent to Rehabilitation Engineering and Wheelchair services in the UK, including NHS and Independent providers.

At the time of compiling this report, the survey achieved a response rate of 56% covering 40 Rehabilitation Engineering services. Data was gathered on 2 professional groups: Clinical Scientists and Clinical Technologists, with information also being gathered on other staff essential to the provision of the service.

Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to show a summary of the results to the survey on how the current workforce is managing in terms of staffing levels, including establishment in Headcount and WTE (Whole Time Equivalence), vacancies in WTE, and age profiles. It also shows staffing provision satisfaction and the split of activities supported in the UK.

- The Rehabilitation Engineering workforce has an average vacancy rate of 10%
- This vacancy rate is similar to Clinical Engineering but higher than the Medical Physics specialisms
- Vacancies for Clinical Scientists are greatest at band 7 and 8a and for Clinical Technologist all entry level positions have vacancies
- Clinical Technologists are becoming an aging workforce with 45% over the age of 50
- Departments are having difficulties recruiting suitable candidates to vacant posts
- These vacancies and recruitment difficulties have persisted over many years

Workforce Headlines

	WTE of responding centres	Estimated WTE across UK*	Vacancy Rate
Clinical Scientists	86.2	146.1	15%
Clinical Technologists	214.5	371.6	7%
Other Staff	225.4	310.7	7%

*Estimates made from previous years responses to workforce surveys from missing centres and averages for centres that we hold no data on.

Establishment and Vacancy Rates

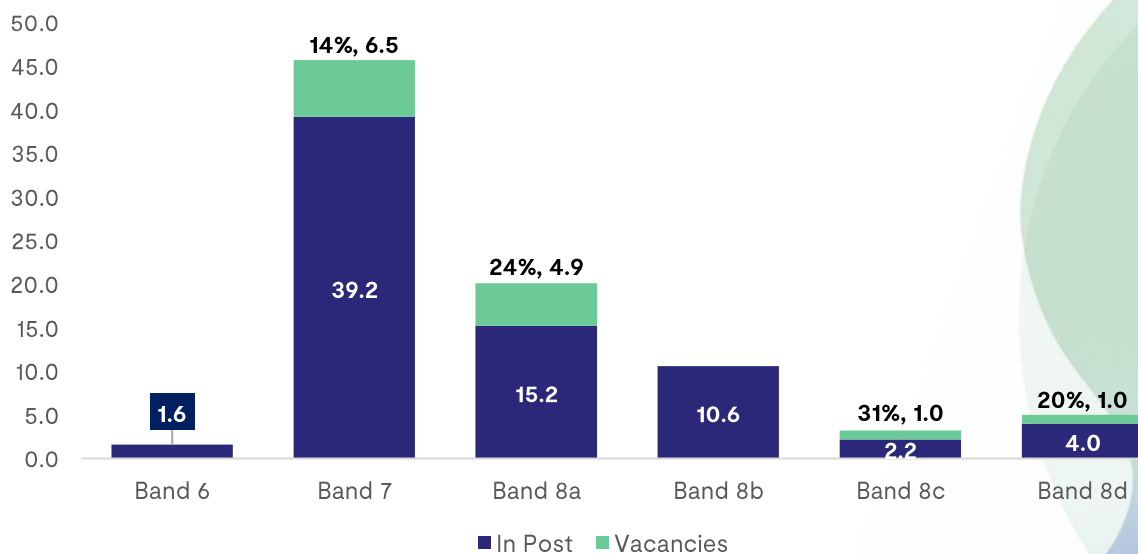
Rehabilitation Engineering has 15% of Clinical Scientist posts vacant, this is slightly higher than other Clinical Engineering specialisms and 7% of Clinical Technologist positions vacant, putting it in line with other Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering specialisms. All specialisms appear to have around a 10% shortfall on their staffing. Further input into the workforce must come from increased training opportunities and not diverting staff or training positions away from other specialisms.

	Clinical Scientists	Clinical Technologists
Rehabilitation Engineering	15%	7%
Clinical Engineering	13%	9%
Radiotherapy	7%	8%
Diagnostic Radiology and Radiation Protection	9%	7%
Nuclear Medicine	8%	8%

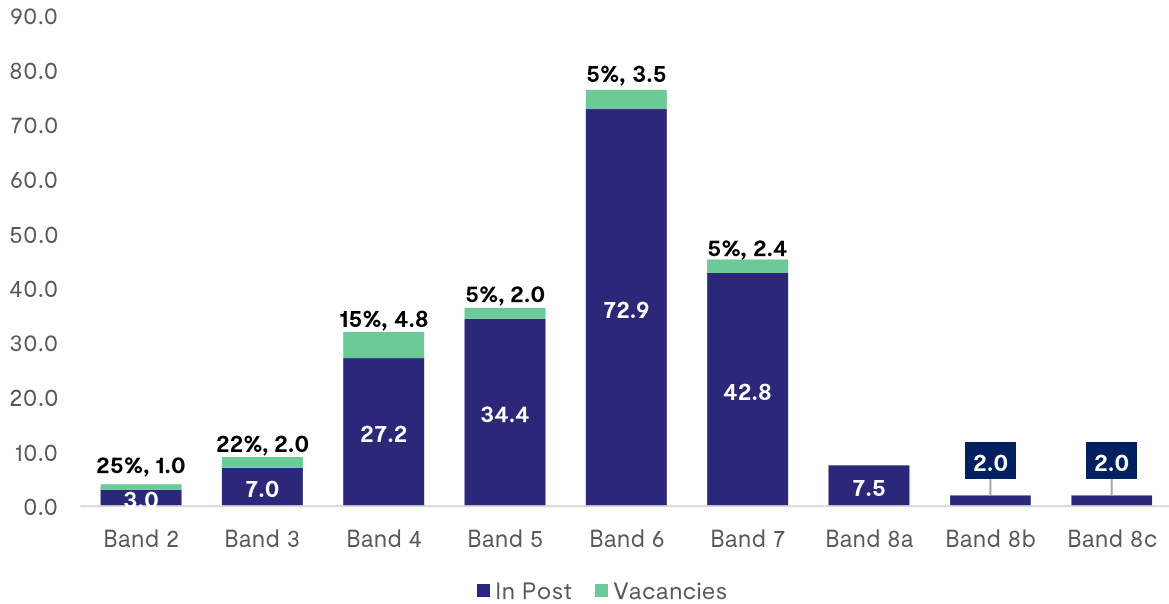
Bands 7 and 8a for Clinical Scientists have the most vacancies with 14% and 24% of positions at these levels not filled, and Clinical Technologists having 5% vacancy rates in fully qualified positions at Band 6 and 7. This can be seen in the below charts which show the establishment in whole-time equivalence, split into in-post and vacant positions and broken down by Agenda for Change banding for each group.

Working alongside the Clinical Scientists and Clinical Technologists there are also Other Staff who are essential to the clinical service provision. These are mainly apprenticeships and trainees who are not in established posts, though they also include positions such as administrators, equipment store support, technicians, and therapy assistants.

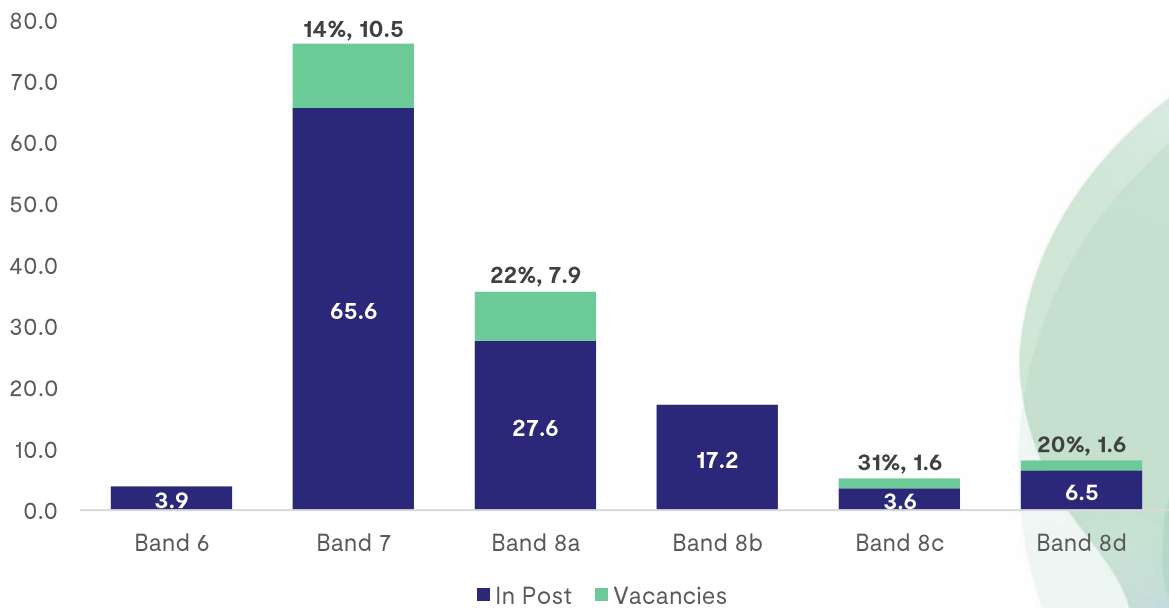
Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Scientist Banding (Survey Response)



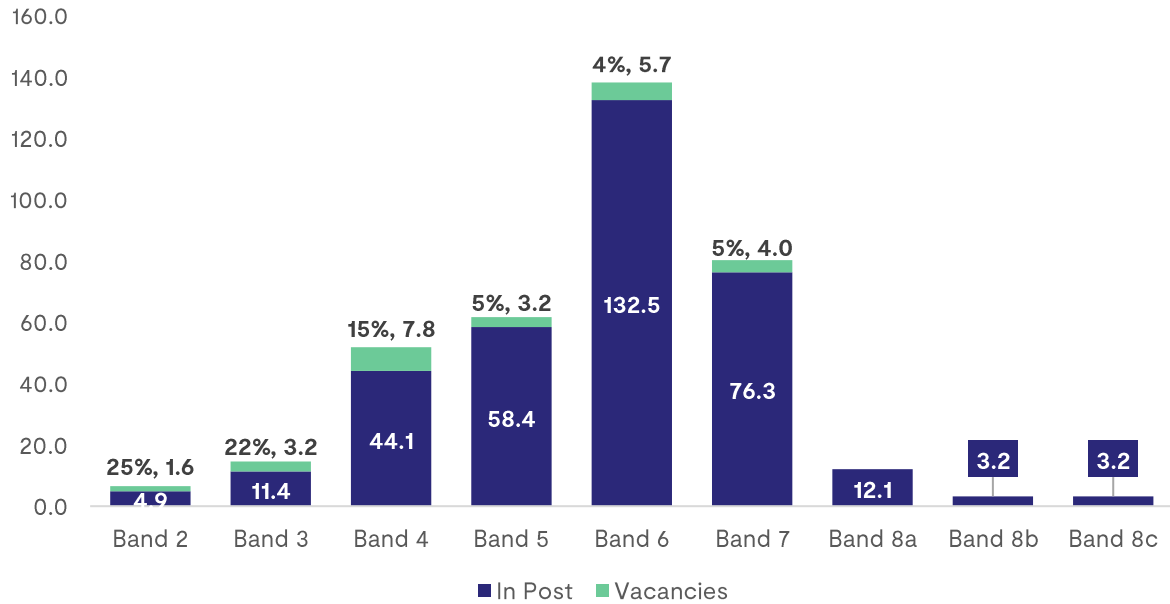
Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Technologist Banding (Survey Response)



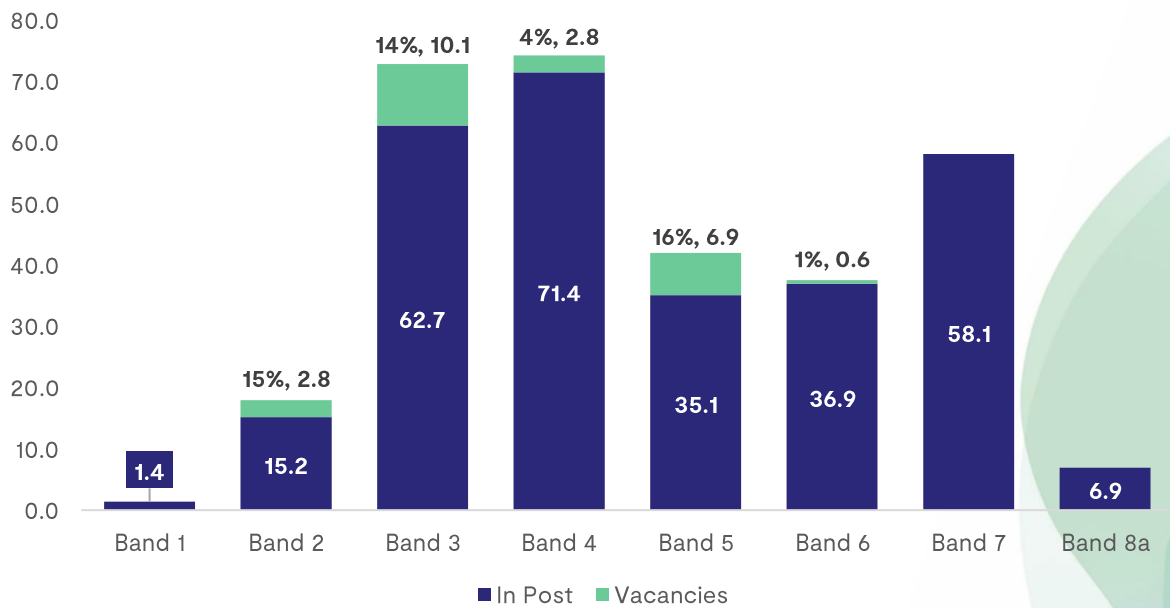
Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Scientist Banding (Estimated UK Total)



Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Technologist Banding (Estimated UK Total)



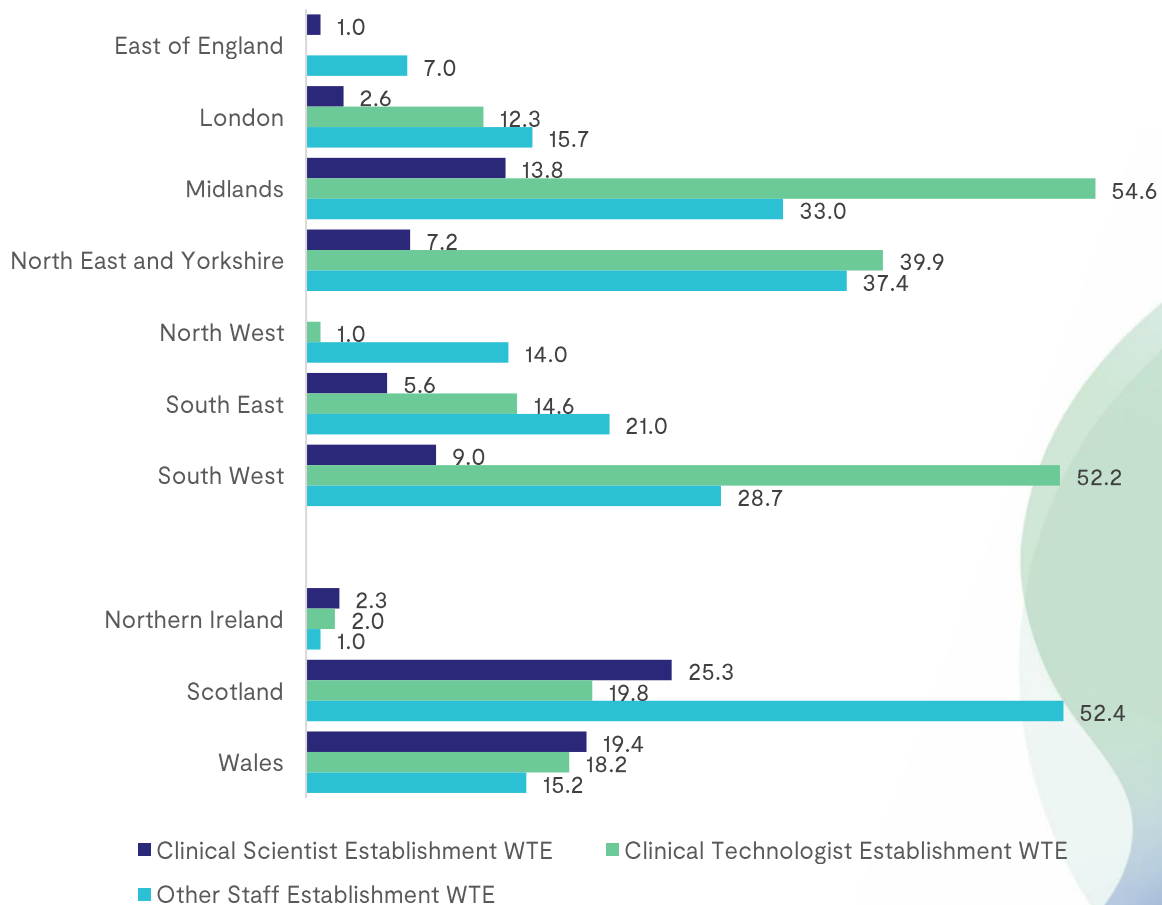
Rehabilitation Engineering Other Staff Banding (Estimated UK Total)



Establishment by Region (Survey Response)

	Clinical Scientist WTE	Clinical Technologist WTE	Other Staff WTE	Survey Response Rate
East of England	1.0	0.0	7.0	43%
London	2.6	12.3	15.7	30%
Midlands	13.8	54.6	33.0	50%
North East and Yorkshire	7.2	39.9	37.4	89%
North West	0.0	1.0	14.0	17%
South East	5.6	14.6	21.0	57%
South West	9.0	52.2	28.7	75%
Northern Ireland	2.3	2.0	1.0	100%
Scotland	25.3	19.8	52.4	100%
Wales	19.4	18.2	15.2	100%

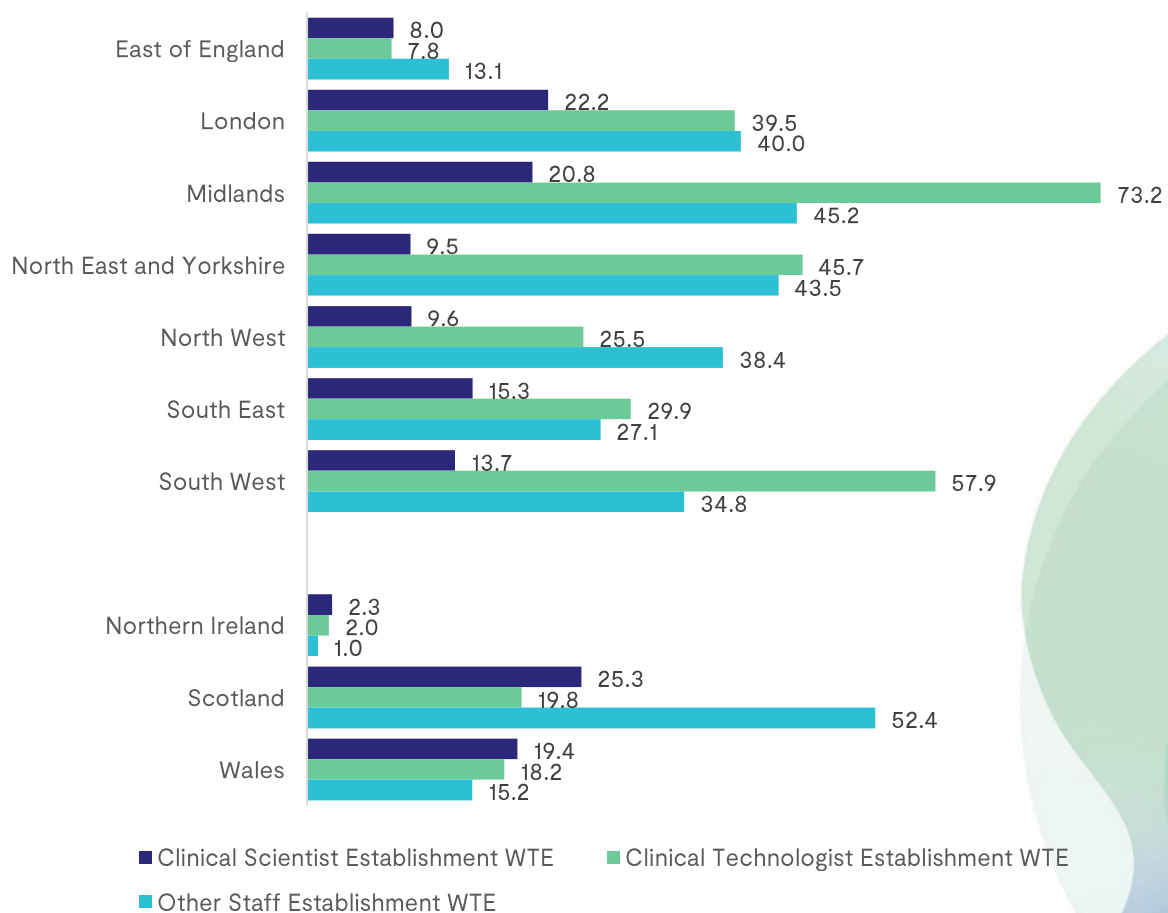
Rehabilitation Engineering Establishment (Survey Response)



Establishment by Region (Estimated UK Total)

	Clinical Scientist WTE	Clinical Technologist WTE	Other Staff WTE
East of England	8.0	7.8	13.1
London	22.2	39.5	40.0
Midlands	20.8	73.2	45.2
North East and Yorkshire	9.5	45.7	43.5
North West	9.6	25.5	38.4
South East	15.3	29.9	27.1
South West	13.7	57.9	34.8
Northern Ireland	2.3	2.0	1.0
Scotland	25.3	19.8	52.4
Wales	19.4	18.2	15.2

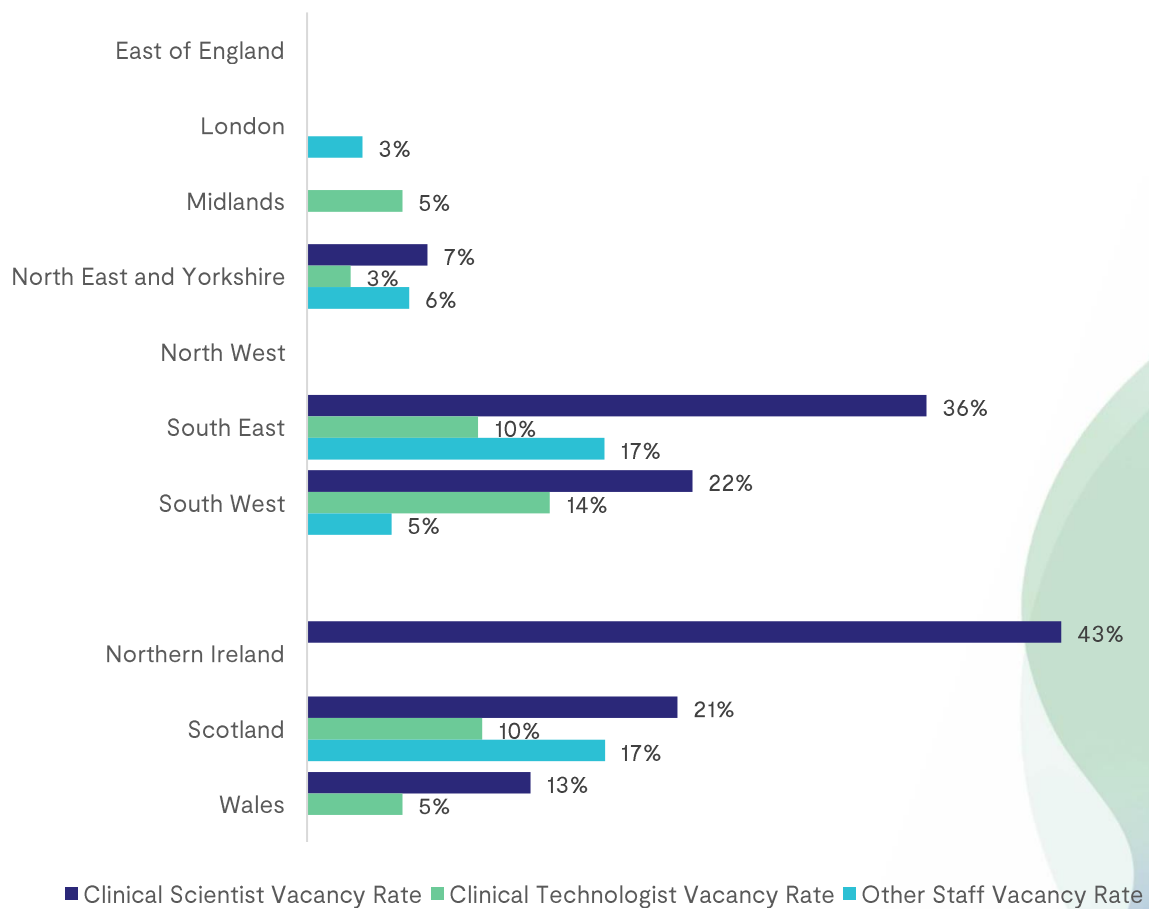
Rehabilitation Engineering Establishment (Estimated UK Total)



Vacancy Rate by Region (Survey Response)

	Clinical Scientist	Clinical Technologist	Other Staff	Survey Response Rate
<i>East of England</i>	0%	0%	0%	43%
<i>London</i>	0%	0%	3%	30%
<i>Midlands</i>	0%	5%	0%	50%
<i>North East and Yorkshire</i>	7%	3%	6%	89%
<i>North West</i>	0%	0%	0%	17%
<i>South East</i>	36%	10%	17%	57%
<i>South West</i>	22%	14%	5%	75%
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	43%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Scotland</i>	21%	10%	17%	100%
<i>Wales</i>	13%	5%	0%	100%

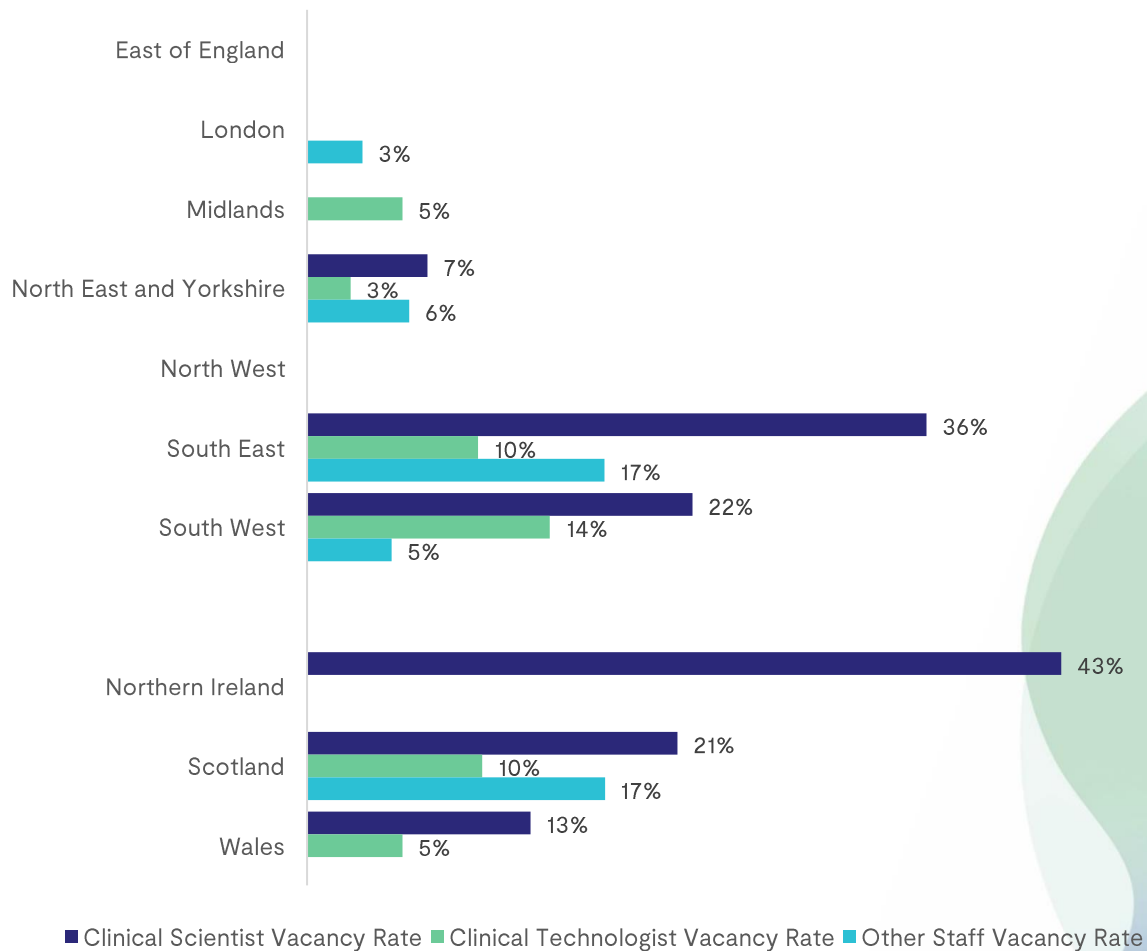
Rehabilitation Engineering Vacancy Rate by Region (Survey Response)



Vacancy Rate by Region (Estimated UK Total)

	Clinical Scientist	Clinical Technologist	Other Staff
<i>East of England</i>	14%	5%	3%
<i>London</i>	13%	4%	6%
<i>Midlands</i>	5%	5%	2%
<i>North East and Yorkshire</i>	9%	3%	6%
<i>North West</i>	15%	7%	5%
<i>South East</i>	18%	6%	15%
<i>South West</i>	20%	13%	5%
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	43%	0%	0%
<i>Scotland</i>	21%	10%	17%
<i>Wales</i>	13%	5%	0%

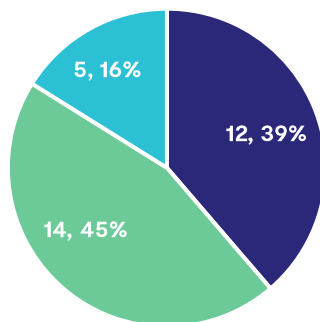
Rehabilitation Engineering Vacancy Rate by Region (Estimated UK Total)



Staffing Provision

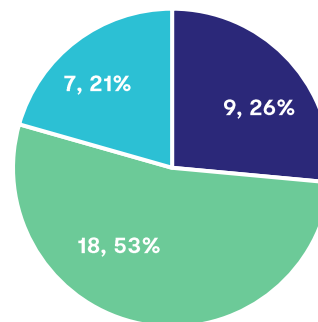
61% of respondents stated they feel their current Clinical Scientist staffing provision is under what they require to provide the level of service they would like to, with 74% stating the same for Clinical Technologists. Clinical Scientist staffing provision being under what is wanted is up slightly from the previous time we asked this question in 2015 when 58% stated the same, and Clinical Technologist staffing provision has slightly improved since we last asked this question when 78% of respondents stated they were understaffed.

Clinical Scientist Staffing Provision



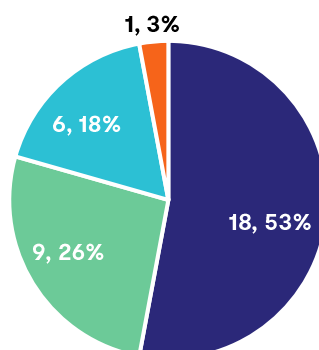
■ Sufficient ■ Too little ■ Far too little

Clinical Technologist Staffing Provision



■ Sufficient ■ Too little ■ Far too little

Other Staff Staffing Provision



■ Sufficient ■ Too little ■ Far too little ■ Too much

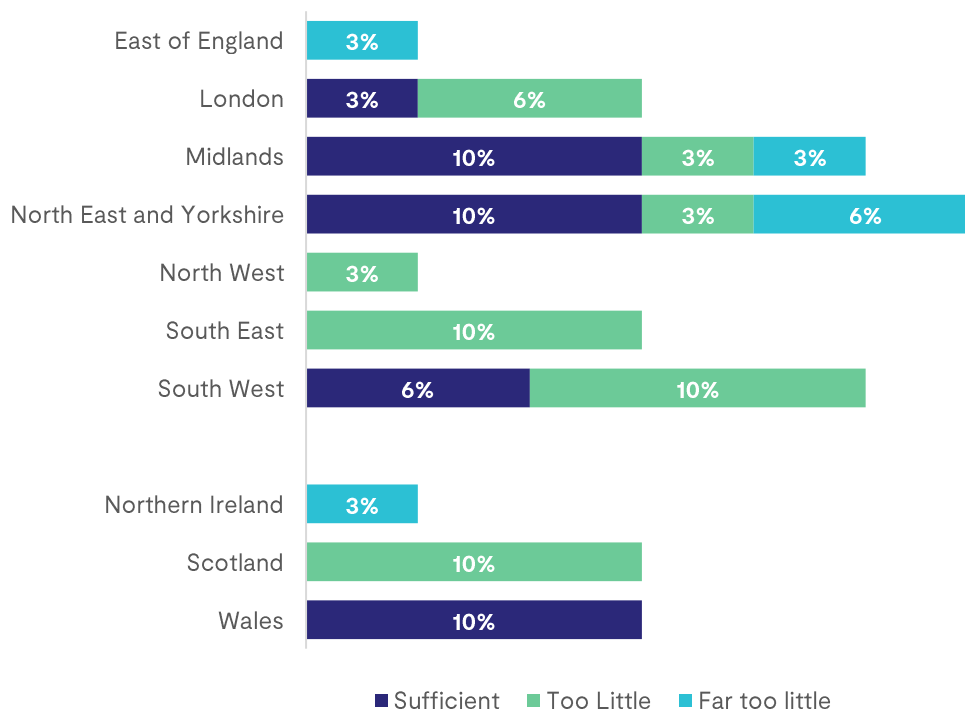
Departments that feel they have too little staffing provision state they often struggle to recruit to Clinical Scientist posts with a lack of suitable candidates applying. Some relatively small services also have additional barriers such as difficulties with career progression. Appointing to available Clinical Technologist posts is also tough with a lack

of registered or qualified applicants, with several departments having to turn their vacancy posts into training posts.

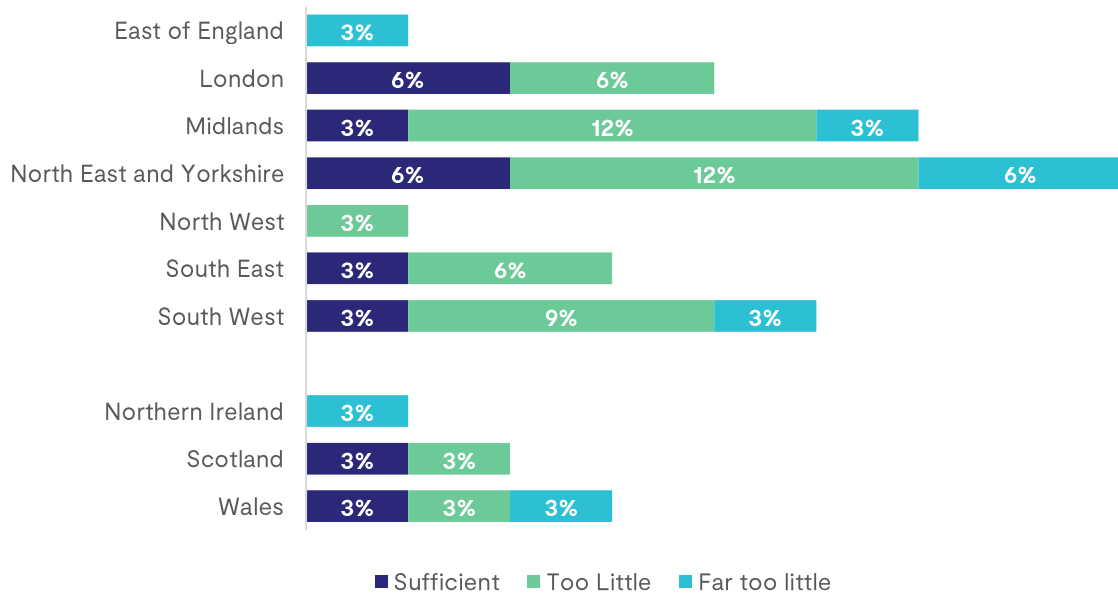
Geographical issues have also been brought up as a factor with the cost-of-living increasing, departments in the south of England are struggling to recruit to lower band vacancies. Along with maternity/paternity and sick leave cover often having a detrimental effect on services with no staffing resilience.

Staffing Provision by Region

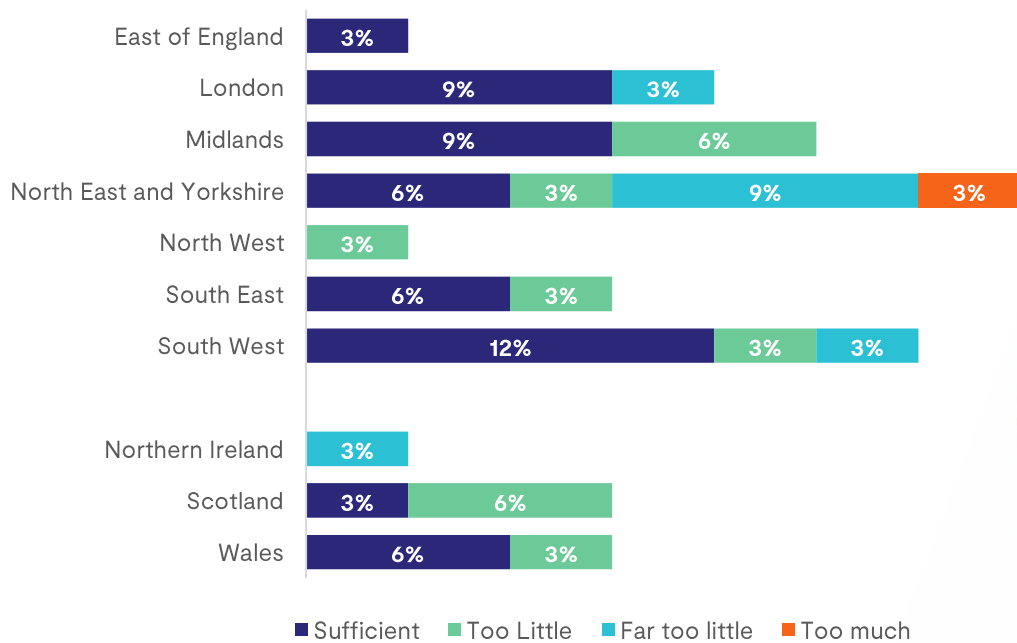
Clinical Scientist Staffing Provision Satisfaction by Region



Clinical Technologist Staffing Provision Satisfaction by Region



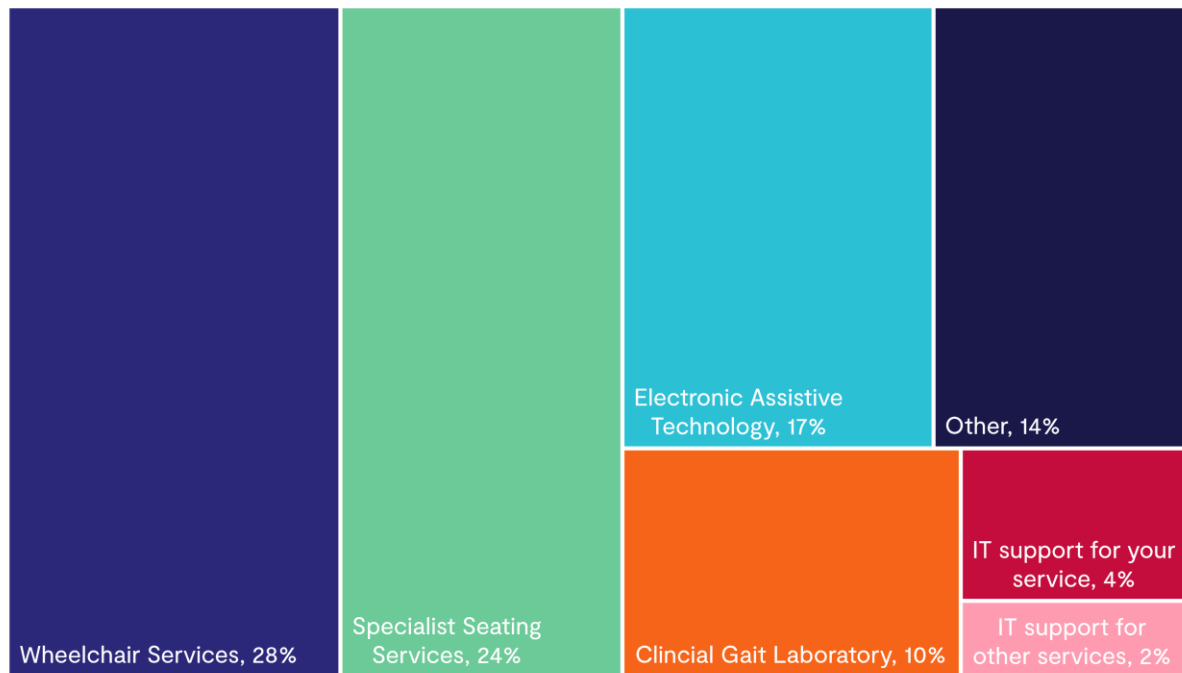
Other Staff Staffing Provision Satisfaction by Region



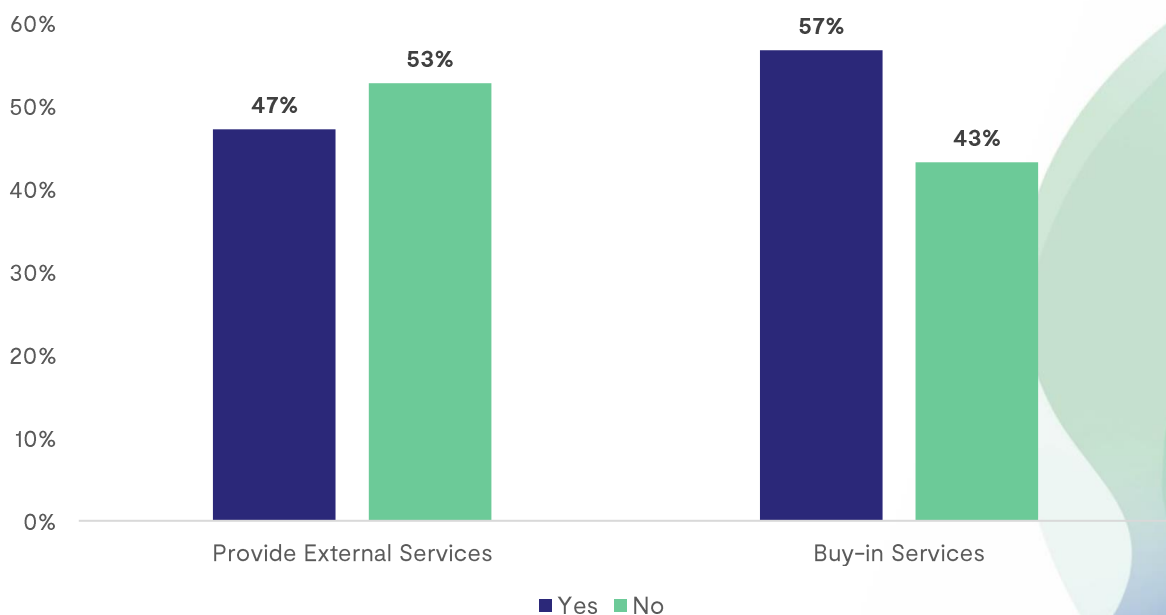
Rehabilitation Engineering Activities Supported throughout the UK

Wheelchair and specialist seating services make up a substantial portion of the services departments offer with 28% and 24% of departments who responded providing these services.

Rehabilitation Engineering Activities Supported



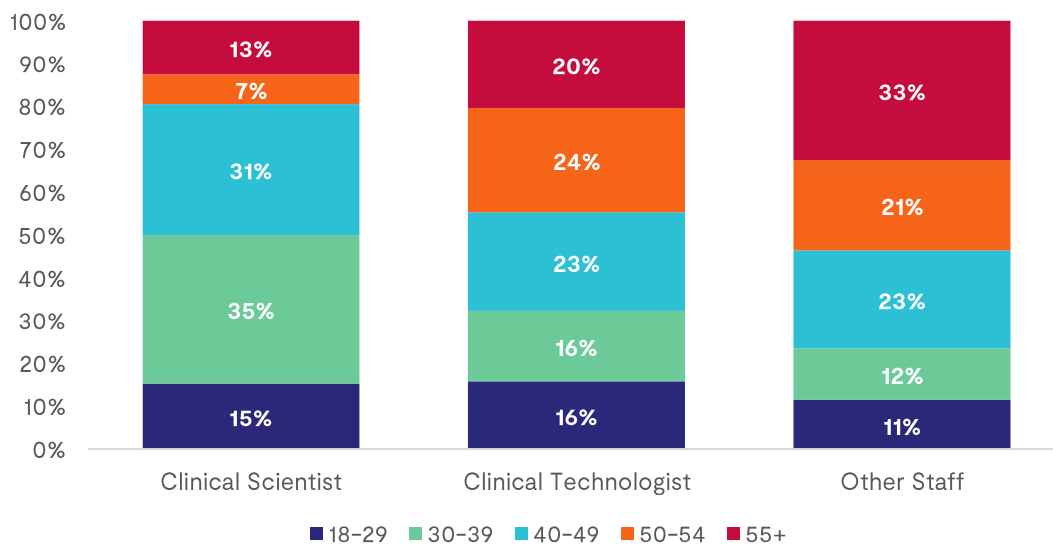
Departments providing and buying in external services



The majority of services which are being provided externally are wheelchair services, with a few providing gait analysis and other specialised assistive technology. Of the departments buying-in services, the majority of these are for manufacturing support, mainly in specialised seating, but maintenance is also sometimes being contracted out.

Age Profile

Rehabilitation Engineering Workforce Age Profile

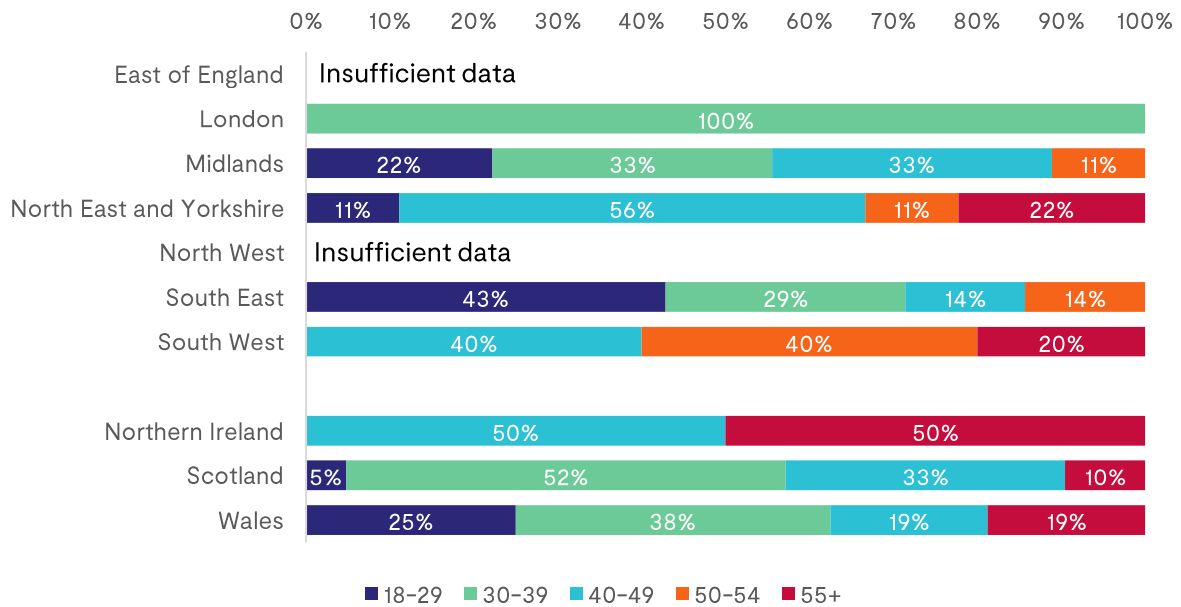


13% of Clinical Scientists and 20% Clinical Technologists are approaching retirement age (55+). 44% of Clinical Technologists are over 50 and with a vacancy rate of 7% already, thought will be needed to determine how to fill the vacancies created once these retire.

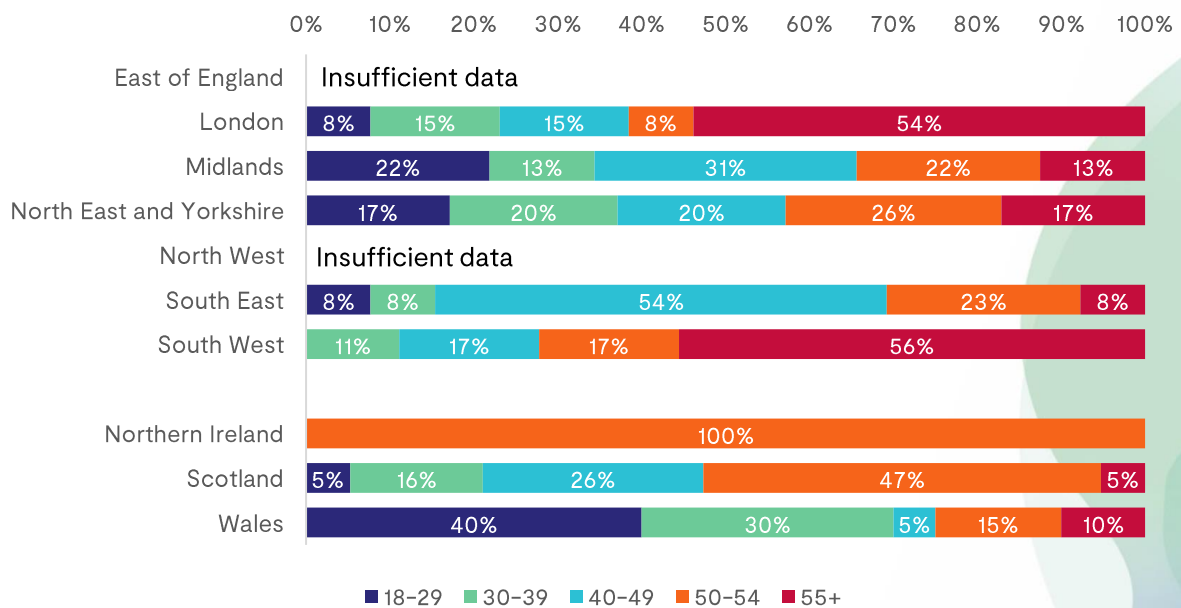
Comparing with other Healthcare Professionals, 15% of Professionally Qualified Clinical NHS Staff are approaching retirement age, 13% for doctors and 17% for nurses and midwives (NHS Digital, 2020). This puts Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Scientists under and Clinical Technologists over the national average for Healthcare Professionals approaching retirement age.

Age Profile by Region

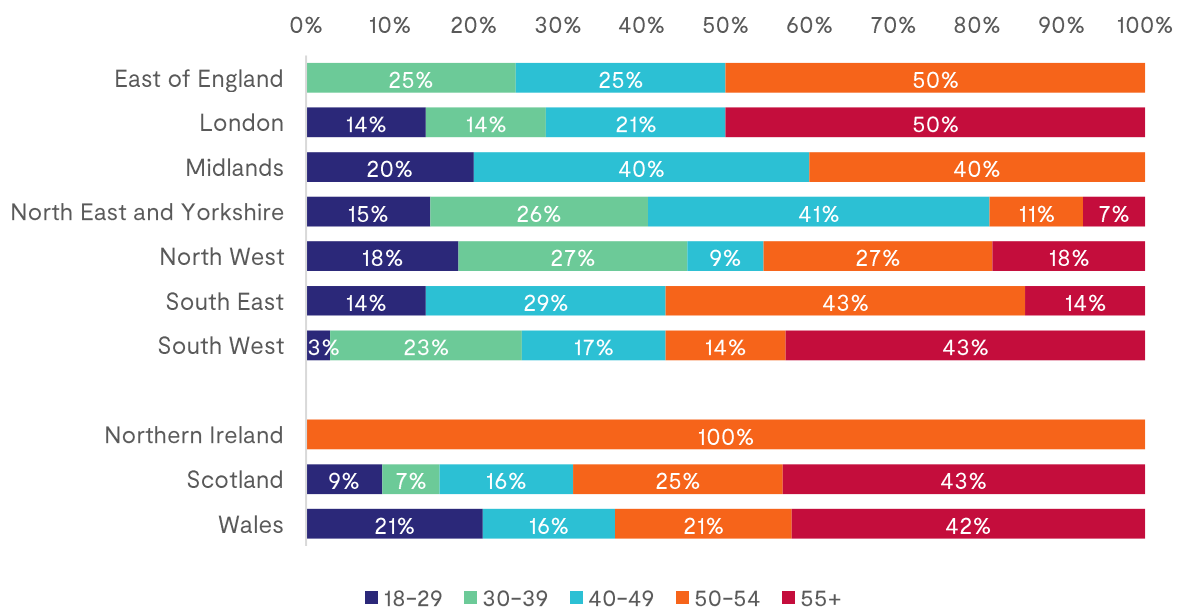
Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Scientist Age Profile by Region



Rehabilitation Engineering Clinical Technologist Age Profile by Region



Rehabilitation Engineering Other Staff Age Profile by Region



Summary

The data collected shows that the Rehabilitation Engineering workforce is currently managing to provide an adequate service, however, has a need to increase staffing provisions to enable services to develop and not stagnate.

Departments often struggle to recruit suitable candidates for vacant positions and are in some cases having to train candidates to sufficient levels, demonstrating a need for a better training pipeline. This also impacts current services with additional training needs with not having experienced staff replacing those who have left.

Vacancy rates are similar to other Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering specialisms, but with all specialisms having 7%-15% vacancy rate and this level of vacancy existing over multiple years, expanding training and awareness of paths to become Clinical Scientists and Clinical Technologists are essential. Any further input to the workforce must come from additional training and not from diverting existing training places from other specialisms.

We also see an aging workforce in the Clinical Technologists, with far more approaching retirement age than just starting out in the profession.

References

NHS Digital. (2020, December). *Equality and Diversity in NHS Trusts and CCGs December 2020*. Retrieved from <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/december-2020#>.