

Scotland's Local Government Workforce Report 2024



This report has been commissioned and prepared by Scotland's local authority senior officers:

Solace is the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, a non-political, pan-public sector professional association committed to promoting public sector excellence. Solace Scotland's membership consists of circa 200 senior leaders in local government in Scotland, including all 32 local authority Chief Executives, who are responsible for almost £19bn collective budget and over 240,000 staff who provide a huge range of essential services to the entirety of Scotland's population.

SPDS is the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland, a professional membership organisation open to all HR and OD professionals working in or with Scottish local authorities. The Society is led and directed by the SPDS Executive Committee which consists of the Heads of HR from Local Authorities. SPDS are trusted advisers on employee matters at both a local and national level, working closely with other bodies, including COSLA and providing HR leadership and support to hundreds of thousands of council employees working across Scotland. Society members share best practice on common issues, contribute to policy development and drive partnership working in the local government HR community.

The Improvement Service (IS) is the 'go-to' organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. Established in 2005, the IS was set up to deliver improvement support that would help councils provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and deliver high quality, efficient local services.

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Purpose of Report	9
The Council Workforce – an Overview/Context	10
Addressing inequalities	10
Planning for the future	11
Recommendations	13
Survey Results	15
What is the current state of workforce planning?	15
What are the challenges?	20
What can be done to overcome these challenges?	31
Conclusions	36
Recommendations	38
Appendix 1 - Audiences for Report	40
Appendix 2 - Council Workforce Characteristics	41

Executive Summary

- Scotland's councils are facing significant challenges in maintaining and developing workforce capacity caused by a range of factors including financial pressures; an ageing workforce; increased service demand; recruitment difficulties; differing population changes across the country; skills gaps and pay competition from other sectors.
- Despite these challenges all councils across Scotland are fully committed to building a strong future workforce to support the delivery of services to our communities who need them most.
- To support this work, Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) and SPDS (Society of Personal and Development Scotland) commissioned a workforce survey in late 2023 to explore the status of workforce planning and key skills gaps and issues local government faces today. This report summarises the findings from this survey, with recommendations and next steps identified.
- In addition, the Improvement Service carried out a review of the local government workforce profile based on equalities data published on local authority websites. This provided a picture of the council workforce that is:
 - Largely female (74%),
 - Made up of almost a third of staff aged between 55 and 64, and
 - Different from local authority to local authority, based on services, size and geography.
- The survey also shows that the majority of councils are acutely aware of their workforce risks with many now developing mature workforce plans, and others actively working towards this goal.
- Almost all councils (97%) have clear action plans underpinning their workforce plans. These mainly have a long-term focus, with 57% targeting actions over the next two years or more.
- Positively, councils were almost all (97%) confident or somewhat confident that their workforce plans allowed them to identify critical gaps.
- The report identifies many acute challenges in several job roles, especially in social care and social work, identified by 97% and 91% of respondents as critical workforce gaps. There are also gaps in a growing number of professional roles such as trading standards officers, planners, and environmental health officers.

- Barriers and challenges highlighted by councils as employers in recruiting to the most critical job roles included competition from other sectors (97%), skills shortages locally (90%), and pay related issues (90%). More broadly, the main issues that presented gaps to addressing workforce challenges were limited and short-term resourcing, including budgets savings, which was identified by 94% of respondents, a lack of funding for development and “grow your own” schemes (88%) and local labour market challenges (84%).
- Many councils are already exploring how best to respond to the challenges they face by setting goals and taking proactive steps to achieve these. These included recruitment campaigns, upskilling and development, undertaking detailed succession planning, and working to identify factors that could lead to improved retention of existing staff.
- The report also identifies that councils are willing to consider what national coordination is needed, such as sharing of best practice, aligning the information they collect, and working together to engage with further and higher education providers to develop solutions.
- This includes better promotion of local government in Scotland as a rewarding sector in which to pursue a career, with many varied types of roles and benefits.
- Importantly a key message within the report is the need for local government to forge strong partnerships and gain support from key agencies in taking the recommendations of the report forward, including COSLA, further and higher education, national skills agencies, Scottish Government, relevant professional bodies and trade unions.
- Lastly, the report identifies many case studies, highlighting the excellent work that councils are undertaking or have planned across specific local areas or services as they work towards a shared goal of building a strong council workforce for the future across Scotland.

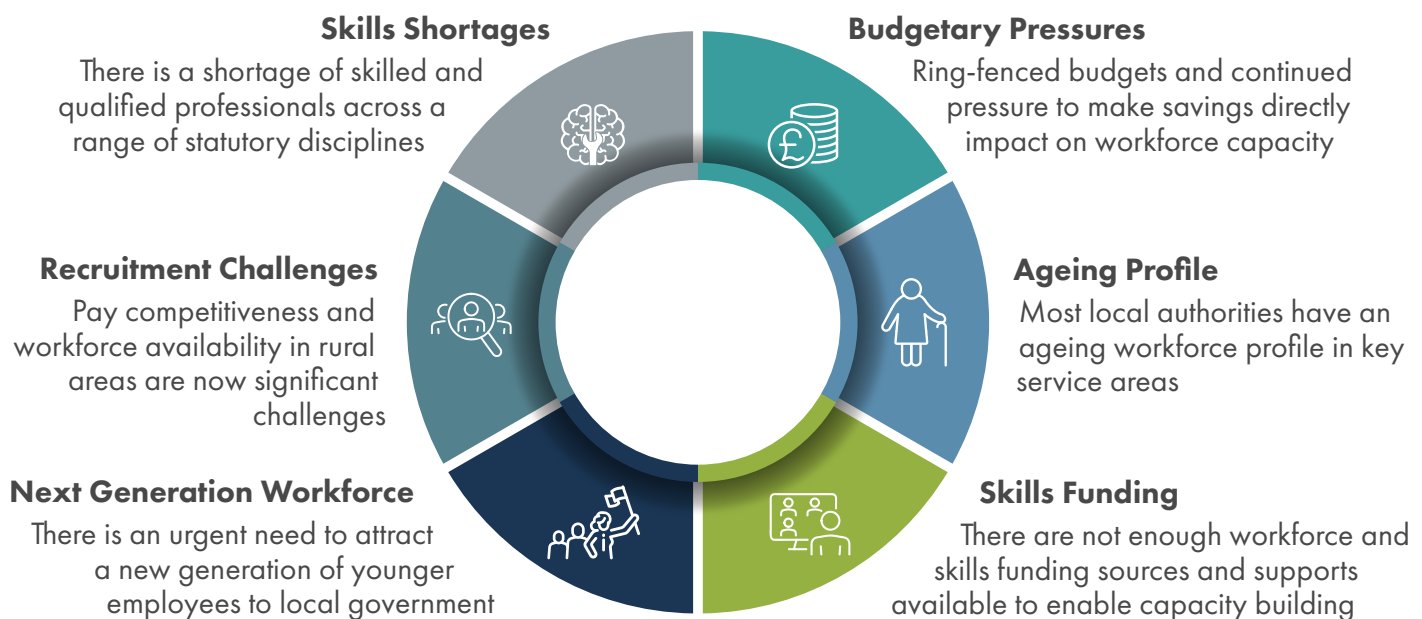
Introduction

Councils, like many other large public bodies, are operating in a very difficult economic, financial, and labour market context, with a range of ongoing organisational pressures and risks that are complex and often difficult to mitigate against. One key area of challenge, as recently highlighted by Audit Scotland,¹ is how local government is managing its known and emerging workforce planning and capacity issues, given the significant range of services it is to deliver, many of which are statutory and critical to supporting Scotland's local communities every day.

It is well understood that some workforce capacity issues being faced by councils are historical, linked to ringfenced budgets; pressure to make year on year savings; an ageing workforce demographic; geographic disparities in population; and generally reduced availability of funding and other supports to enable suitable or sustained workforce investment. Other workforce challenges being experienced are new and have emerged more recently, with some linked directly to post Brexit and Covid-19 pandemic impacts. These include significant shifts in local labour market workforce availability; recruitment difficulties due to skills and talent shortages; wage inflation and associated pay erosion in professional roles across a range of services and functions, with many roles going unfilled across Scotland. At a time when demands on councils are increasing across many services, these additional workforce capacity issues have compounded and increased the scale of challenges which now need to be addressed to ensure the longer-term sustainability of local government. The agenda for digital transformation also brings challenges. Changing expectations around when customers want to access services means more flexibility is required around service delivery than ever before. Councils are working to anticipate future digital trends and skills required, and new ways of working that will impact on the workforce. There is also acknowledgement that the nature of the work in particular settings including schools and social work has become more challenging post pandemic. There are increasing concerns regarding violence and aggression in schools, for example, which is potentially putting people off joining the profession and contributing to experienced professionals leaving the workforce.

1 <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/local-government-in-scotland-overview-2023>

Figure 1: Key Drivers of Local Government Workforce Challenges



Despite these many challenges, councils are taking a proactive and collaborative approach nationally to building a sustainable future workforce for local government in Scotland. This includes a recent workforce planning and capacity survey of all councils across Scotland which was commissioned in late 2023 by Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) and SPDS (Society of Personal and Development Scotland). A similar survey of all councils was undertaken by SPDS in 2019.

The sustainability of the local government workforce is a key part of ensuring delivery of the council of the future, as articulated in the Solace/IS report [Delivering a future for Scottish Local Authorities](#). If local government, and the broader public sector, is to successfully undergo the radical public service reform needed to meet the needs of the 21st century, an appropriately resourced, skilled and innovative workforce model will be required.

This report provides further information on the current workforce planning and workforce capacity building work currently underway across Scotland's councils. The report also identifies a number of innovative ongoing programmes and initiatives, which include strategic partnerships with key professional institutions, national government agencies and further and higher education bodies to develop sustainable solutions to our most pressing gaps.

This report exclusively focuses on the local government workforce. It is acknowledged, however, that many local authorities also have commissioning

models in place for social care and have arrangements with partner providers and ALEOs to deliver services and whose workforce challenges and risks will also have a potential impact for local authorities.

Purpose of Report

A survey was carried out between September and October 2023, with councils asked to respond to 31 questions covering the current state of workforce planning within councils; delivery and governance structures for workforce planning; critical workforce gaps; attitudes to a coordinated local government response to workforce planning; barriers and constraints; priorities and enablers; and finally good practice case studies. A 100% response rate was achieved, with all 32 councils providing a response.

The results of the survey offer a comprehensive source of data from across the entirety of Scottish councils and establishes a refreshed baseline of current workforce planning practices and workforce gaps. An up to date understanding of the current situation and the multifaceted workforce capacity pressures that are being experienced is critical to be able to address the challenges, with the support of partners.

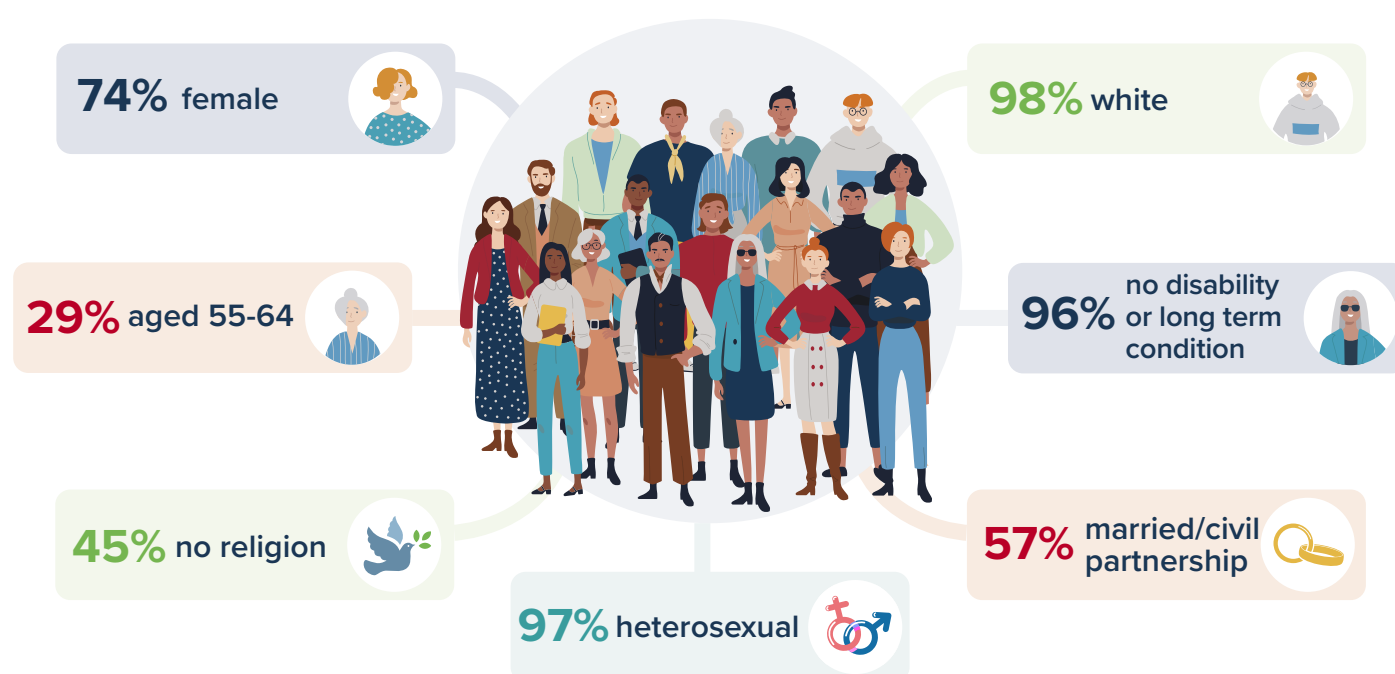
This report will present the results of the survey and what this means for councils, outline the major challenges in the local government workforce as well as highlight good practice that councils are taking to address these challenges in innovative ways. It will also identify recommendations and priorities for local government in workforce planning and suggest what action is needed at national and regional levels if we are to collectively meet these challenges. It is anticipated that this report will be of interest to a wide range of local and national stakeholders. It should be noted that there has not been a detailed analysis of the teaching workforce as part of this report, but it is intended that this may form part of future work to be taken forward following publication of the report

Key local authority professional organisations that represent a broad range of local government Chief Officers have been engaged with in the development of this report: Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO), CIPFA Directors of Finance Group (Directors of Finance), Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS), Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group (SLAED), Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health Scotland (SoCOEHS), Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS), Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR) and Social Work Scotland (SWS).

The Council Workforce – an Overview/Context

In March 2023 the Improvement Service produced a briefing pulling together data from equalities monitoring reports to provide an overall picture of what the Scottish council workforce looks like, and how this compares to the characteristics of the general population within councils.

Across councils in Scotland, these are the most common characteristics of the council workforce.²



Some characteristics in the council workforce are overrepresented when compared with the population.³ A full breakdown is included in Appendix 2.

Addressing inequalities

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, councils have a statutory obligation to tackle inequalities in their workforce and within their local area. Better understanding of council workforce characteristics can support councils in understanding their contribution as employers in having workforces which are more representative of all population groups in a way that helps to ensure

² These figures exclude staff who were not recorded or recorded as “other”.

³ Comparisons were made with population characteristics using data from the 2019 Scottish Survey Core Questions (SSCQ). It should also be noted that response rates to survey questions about equalities characteristics are typically variable.

services are accessible and inclusive for all residents. Having a workforce that reflects the culture and diversity of the community is essential in making sure that public services are designed to meet the needs of all citizens and to build trust and a positive reputation with community groups.

The data also shows that councils have relatively low levels of employees in terms of ethnicity and disability, and a number of councils are now actively working in this space to change their diversity profile to ensure that their workforce is more representative of the communities they serve.

Although the data shows that females are proportionately overrepresented in the majority of council workforces, both at a national and a local level, this is known to be linked to the type and structure of professions within local government. For example, social work/social care and teaching make up approximately 50% of the overall council workforce and it is well known that the workforce in both these sectors are predominantly female. Approximately 85% of council employed social work/social care staff and 79% of teaching staff were female in 2021. Therefore, the overall high rate of females in the council workforce is likely driven by the predominance of females in these professions, with a similarly high proportion of females employed in private and third sector social care.

Planning for the future

Older employees bring a wealth of experience and skills to local government. An ageing workforce does however remain a challenge across the Scottish council workforces, with many councils finding it more difficult to attract younger workers into roles and professions at all levels. As a result of these national trends, councils, and employers in all sectors, will need to explore how they can better support the health and wellbeing of workers to enable them to remain in the workforce. Other options, such as developing ways of making jobs more attractive and flexible to encourage people back into the workforce, should also be considered.

The age profile of employees is a particular challenge for councils' workforce planning, when compared to other employers. The Scottish Government workforce, for example, has a younger profile with 29%⁴ of the workforce aged over 45, compared with 61.7% across councils. Data on the social work/social care workforce also suggests older age groups are more prominent in councils. In 2021, 54% of the social work/social care workforce employed by councils were aged over 45, whereas of those employed in the private sector 42% were aged 45 and over.⁵

4 Scottish Government. (September 2023). *Diversity and inclusion of the Scottish Government workforce – 2022*. <https://data.gov.scot/workforce-diversity-2022/>

5 Scottish Social Services Council. (2022). *Scottish Social Services Workforce Data*. <https://cutt.ly/awv6exlo>

More research is needed to understand the challenges in recruiting younger people in the council workforce, both generally and within the context of local labour market dynamics. Perceptions of council roles may contribute to these challenges. Research by Deloitte on public attitudes found that in 2021/22 when asked which areas should be prioritised for public spending as the UK recovers from Covid-19, only 11% of the Scottish respondents mentioned local authority services, such as waste collection and parks.⁶ On the other hand, healthcare and social care were commonly referenced.

While councils' own insights highlight that their services are highly regarded, the above findings might suggest that at least some of the Scottish public may not be aware of the wide range of roles available within local government. As highlighted by Audit Scotland, and as regularly publicised by local government, councils deliver a range of vital local services, relied upon by local communities, and play a key role in shaping these communities as well as delivering on national policies.⁷ More may need to be done to showcase the breadth of work that councils do and the opportunities to work in fulfilling roles that support the local community.

Attracting a younger generation into the local government workforce as well as making local government an attractive place to work is critical for future workforce planning. Linked to this is the challenge to engage with and attract the 1 in 5 adults in Scotland that are economically inactive.

Further analysis of the relationship between age and the skills needed within councils may also support understanding of why age structure differs in different council workforces and the implications this may have in the future.

6 Deloitte (2021/22). *The State of the State 2021/22*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/public-sector/articles/the-state-of-the-state-scotland.html>

7 Audit Scotland (May 2023). *Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2023*. <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/local-government-in-scotland-overview-2023>.

Recommendations

Council workforce data provides a picture of some of the issues and challenges that influence workforce planning. Further work could improve the data quality to allow additional research questions to be explored.



Improve reporting of council workforce characteristics

- o Improved reporting would enable more accurate analysis of these measures. It may also enable more regular analysis at a national level to understand how these profiles change over time and what influence the council has over any changes. This is important when considering the council's role as an employer and how this can be utilised to reduce inequalities.
- o Making improvements may involve emphasising the importance of employees disclosing this data and reassurance about how it will be used. Sharing of best practice amongst councils would also be of value.



Improve consistency of reporting on equalities characteristics in recruitment and leavers

- o Some, but not all councils already provide this information within their equalities reports. Improvements here would enable a better understanding of what can influence characteristics of the council workforce.
- o To achieve this there would first need to be an understanding of what prevents some councils from providing information on certain categories



Explore the relationship between workforce characteristics, skills, job roles and pay grades.

- o Employee characteristics alone can't tell us about any potential skills shortages within the workforce. Given the council workforce is predominantly older, exploring these relationships could help with forward planning for the loss of experienced staff. It may also provide insight into whether the workforce is representative across the council structure and highlight development opportunities for staff.



Further explore the reasons why certain groups are underrepresented, including younger people.

- o There are likely a range of reasons why certain groups do not work within councils. This may include public perceptions of working in a council, public awareness of the roles available, competitiveness of the private/other sectors, or other barriers. Exploring these factors within different groups would allow councils to better understand what actions could be taken to influence this.



Use all available mechanisms to better promote local government as an employer of choice.

Technical Note: Data Improvements

The data used in this section was collected from publicly available equality reports. However, this data was not always easily accessible and often limited with underreporting of several measures. There was also variability between councils in the information reported including reports from different time periods, varying levels of detail and categories that did not align. Many of these issues are common across public sector data collections, and as the data is self-reported by employees, this is often challenging to collect. Nevertheless, consistent, and reliable data sharing is a vital component of evidence-based decision making, therefore improvements in how data is collected, collated, shared, and used can support councils in responding to the challenges outlined. This includes adopting best practice in publishing and sharing the data; exploring how categories can be aligned across the sector to allow consistent reporting; and providing more detailed figures for analysis.

Survey Results

What is the current state of workforce planning?

Maturity of plans

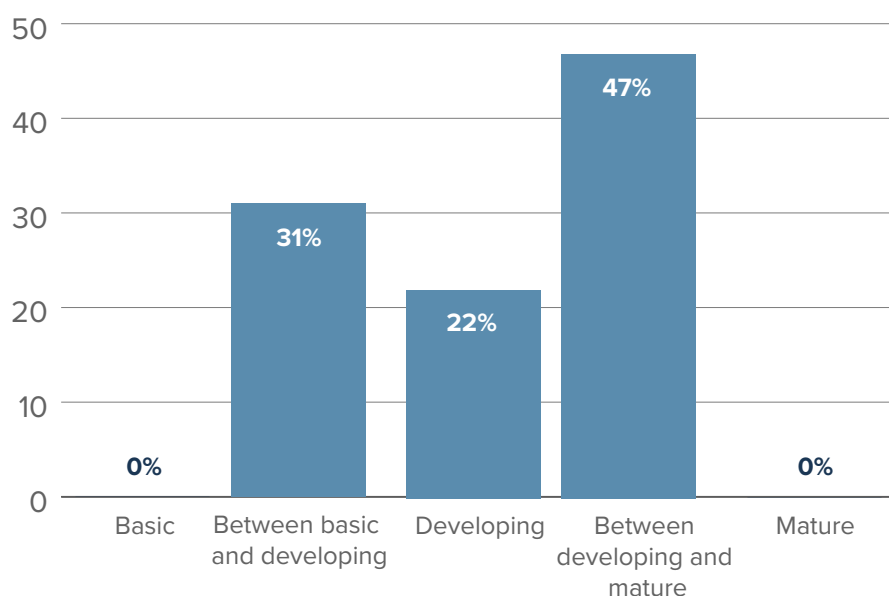
With increased scrutiny from Audit Scotland and the publication of overview reports suggesting that workforce planning practice in councils should be improved,⁸ councils were asked to rate their current level of workforce planning maturity against the Audit Scotland Workforce Planning Maturity Matrix.

The scale ranges from basic, where goals are short term and not linked to strategic priorities, through to mature where plans are more long term and comprehensive. The framework is displayed below in Figure 3.

Survey results were largely encouraging, with no respondents describing their plans as basic and 46.9% describing their plans as somewhere between mature and developing. However, just under a third of councils (31%) said they were not yet at the developing stage, sitting between basic and developing, and no councils rated themselves as mature. These figures are displayed in Figure 2.

Most councils (69%) said that workforce plans existed at both local authority wide and service level. 13% said that their plans only covered service level, while 22% were only at local authority level.

Figure 2 - Local government workforce planning maturity



8 https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2023/nr_230517_local_government_overview.pdf

Case Study: Developing Digital Skills in the Workforce

Digital Champions Programme in Aberdeenshire Council

As part of their digital strategy, Aberdeenshire Council launched the Digital Champions Network in 2019, a programme that trains and supports staff and volunteers to help others improve their digital skills.



- Over 150 digital champions have been recruited and trained, representing a range of council services, partner organisations and community groups
- Over 1,000 people have received digital skills support from the digital champions, covering topics such as online safety, email, social media, online banking, video calling and more
- Over 90% of the digital champions and learners have reported increased digital skills, confidence and motivation as a result of the programme
- The network supported the council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, by providing digital skills support to staff and residents who had to adapt to remote working and learning, and by delivering online events and activities to reduce social isolation

Angus Council's Digital Learning Hub

Angus Council have created a Digital Learning Hub using Microsoft's Learning Pathway tool. All employees have a Microsoft 365 account and can access the Digital hub from their work device. The hub contains a wide range of resources and learning materials which includes some Microsoft training along with bespoke materials created by the in-house team. The Digital Learning Hub highlights information about the council's latest digital developments such as the rollout of new products, and links news items to relevant learning materials available. This approach puts individuals in control of their own digital skill development, enabling them to access information and resources when and where they need them.

Enhanced Learning Pathways at Perth and Kinross Council

As part of their strategy to foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, Perth and Kinross Council have created a learning pathway which exposes staff to the opportunities of automation. These skills enhance personal productivity and can be applied across different roles and functions.

The approach includes:

- **Foundational Training:** Foundational training sessions that demystify automation and its potential, making it accessible for all staff members regardless of their technical background.
- **Practical Workshops:** Through hands-on workshops, staff members learn to apply automation tools in real-world scenarios, gaining insights into how these technologies can streamline their daily tasks.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Working with different teams to explore how automation can enhance their business processes. This collaborative effort often leads to service redesign, optimizing operations and improving service delivery.
- **Continuous Learning:** The pathways are not static; they evolve with the changing technological landscape, ensuring that the workforce remains agile and forward-thinking.

While councils recognised that they had room to develop their workforce planning, a great deal of proactive steps had been taken to improve since the previous survey in 2019. Examples included:

- Developing skills pipelines in partnership with universities and colleges.
- Making use of Microsoft Power BI to access and analyse data.
- Taking a more proactive approach to risk around workforce gaps and succession planning.
- Dedicating more funding to “grow your own” schemes and critical skills gaps.

In addition, all councils had further plans for improving their approach to workforce planning. Some of these continued to build on improvements made since 2019, with a focus on a younger workforce, continuing to proactively identify and address critical skills gaps, investing in priority areas such as net zero, and aligning workforce planning with strategic objectives.

Figure 3 - Audit Scotland Workforce Planning Maturity Matrix

Basic	Developing	Mature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term operational focus • Limited workforce data and analytics • Workforce plan not linked to priorities and delivery of strategic plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-term focus • Aligned to delivering priorities • Workforce and recruitment plans • Some workforce analysis • Annual review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term focus on strategic priorities • Workforce and market analysis • Recruitment, development, retention and succession included in workforce planning • Workforce plans reflect new ways of working and scenario planning of future models service delivery and demands • Real time monitoring including of performance levels and staff wellbeing

Risks

For the vast majority of councils, workforce planning or workforce gaps appeared within council risk registers (94%), and in almost all cases as a corporate level risk or a corporate and service level risk (97%).

Action Plans

When asked whether their workforce plans were supported by clear action plans almost all councils, with one exception, said that this was true (59%) or partly true (38%).

More mature workforce planning means that plans are connected to long-term and strategic goals, and most councils did indicate that they were planning in this way. More than half of respondents (57%) said that their action plans had a long-term approach, that is covering a period of longer than 2 years. Overall, there was a tendency towards long or medium-term planning with 10% of respondents saying that plans covered the next 6 months, 23% saying they covered the next 6 to 12 months, 33% covering 12-18 months and 57% longer than 2 years. Some councils noted that they had in place action plans covering multiple timescales, meaning they had distinct short, medium, and long-term action plans.

The tracking and implementation of these plans varied by local authority. In many cases reporting to Central Management Teams (CMT) took place on a regular basis, sometimes on an annual or bi-annual basis, but often more regularly. As workforce planning formed part of risk registers, in some cases the plans were reviewed as part of regular risk monitoring. Where reporting to CMT was done less frequently, more regular reviews often took place at service management level. In some cases, there were specific groups set up to monitor the plans with a Workforce Planning Group mentioned by one local authority, while another noted that they had established a Strategic People and OD Planning Group. Progress was also reported to committees in several councils. In terms of the practicalities of reporting, often this was done through existing performance management systems, such as Pentana.

In the main, review and refresh of the content of plans took place annually in the vast majority of councils, however this did vary. Some councils undertook more frequent progress reviews, such as quarterly or bi-annual reviews. Others held these reviews less often, with plans covering three or four-year periods, although this often came with more regular review sessions in between. Some councils noted that while corporate level plans may take place annually or less often, individual services or teams, particularly in areas deemed high risk, may have more regular reviews. Lastly, some noted that while reviews were planned on a regular basis, a refresh of their content only took place as and when it was deemed necessary, for example in response to events that had a major impact.

Case Study: Engaging a Younger Workforce in Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire

Inverclyde Workforce Refresh Programme



Inverclyde Council won the Best Workforce initiative category for its workforce refresh programme at the APSE Awards in 2023. The programme, which began in November 2020, aimed to deal with the twin issues of an ageing workforce and low youth unemployment. It allowed council employees aged between 55 and 65 to access their pension early while offering those vacancies to young people in Inverclyde, giving young people the opportunity to start their career in local government.

A targeted voluntary severance trawl was undertaken, aimed at those employees who were members of the pension scheme and between the ages of 55 and 65. They also had to be in a post at Grade 5 or below, which included positions like clerical roles, pupil support and catering. These were deemed to be the most suitable employment opportunities for local people with varying qualifications and experience, who would need a reasonable period of support.

The financial package on offer to eligible interested employees was early access to their pension and up to three compensatory added years. To account for service delivery and workforce planning implications, employee releases under the Workforce Refresh Programme were phased over an 18-month period. This also allowed for human resources and local employability groups to prepare people for their new jobs.

As a result of the programme, applications increased by 496 for under 30s, resulting in an extra 94 young workers employed between 2020/21 and 2021/22. Of the vacancies created by the programme, 100% went to Inverclyde residents, with 15% going to people aged 16-29 and there was an 8% increase in the number of Modern Apprentices securing employment with the council, which is expected to increase year on year.

North Lanarkshire Council Summer Student Placement

North Lanarkshire Council are now in their second year of a summer student placement with the recruitment of 120 school-based 5th and 6th year pupils over the summer period into paid 6-week placements across the council. Importantly these placements have included key frontline service opportunities in workforce shortage areas such as homecare and health and social care. This approach has been very successful in engaging young people with a number of student placements progressing onwards to modern apprenticeships and other employment opportunities within the council after leaving school.

In line with what would be expected as determined by local contexts and structures, ultimate responsibility for implementation also varied, with a quarter saying HR took responsibility, 44% leaving this to operational managers and chief officers, and 47% saying authority was with an “other” source. In some councils, responsibility was shared, with each action or set of actions the responsibility of different areas or individuals. For example, in some areas Human Resources develop and lead on the implementation of corporate action plans while chief officers have responsibility for their own teams, departments, or service areas. In many cases, the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Teams will take ultimate responsibility for delivery of the plans.

There was often also political oversight of action plans, with 28 councils saying this was the case (87.5%). While some councils only provided an update to specific committees, in some cases workforce plans were voted on by the full council or sub-committees.

Recommendations



Local government should:

- Continue to work towards maturity of workforce plans.
- Learn from best practice since 2019 and for future years, including examples included in this report.
- Ensure that workforce plans are supported by detailed action plans.
- Put in place robust tracking systems for action plans.

What are the challenges?

Critical workforce gaps

As stated by the Accounts Commission in the 2023 Local Government Overview report, “councils are finding it difficult to recruit the staff they need to run some services, in particular social care.” The survey explored some of these gaps further, highlighting areas of particular need, challenges to recruitment, and some of the most critical gaps where nationally coordinated solutions may be helpful.

Firstly, councils were asked about their confidence that their workforce plans allowed them to identify critical workforce gaps. While only one respondent said that they were “not at all confident”, only 37.5% said they were confident, with the remainder, 59%, describing themselves as “somewhat confident”. This

Case Study: Working in Partnership with HE & FE

Many councils are working closely with local universities and colleges and building relationships with further education institutions to establish routes into roles which have proved difficult to fill through modern and graduate apprenticeships and MA programmes. North Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, West Lothian and Stirling councils are just some of those that have established linked with universities and colleges to develop a pipeline into local authority careers.



Our Local Government Workforce Survey has identified a clear shortage of planners across councils, and this complements previous research carried out by the Royal Town Planners Institute and Heads of Planning Scotland in 2022 and updated in 2023 predicting a demand for 730 planners over the next 10-15 years across Scotland. This is in the context of only one available undergraduate planning degree programme now being available in Scotland at Dundee University.

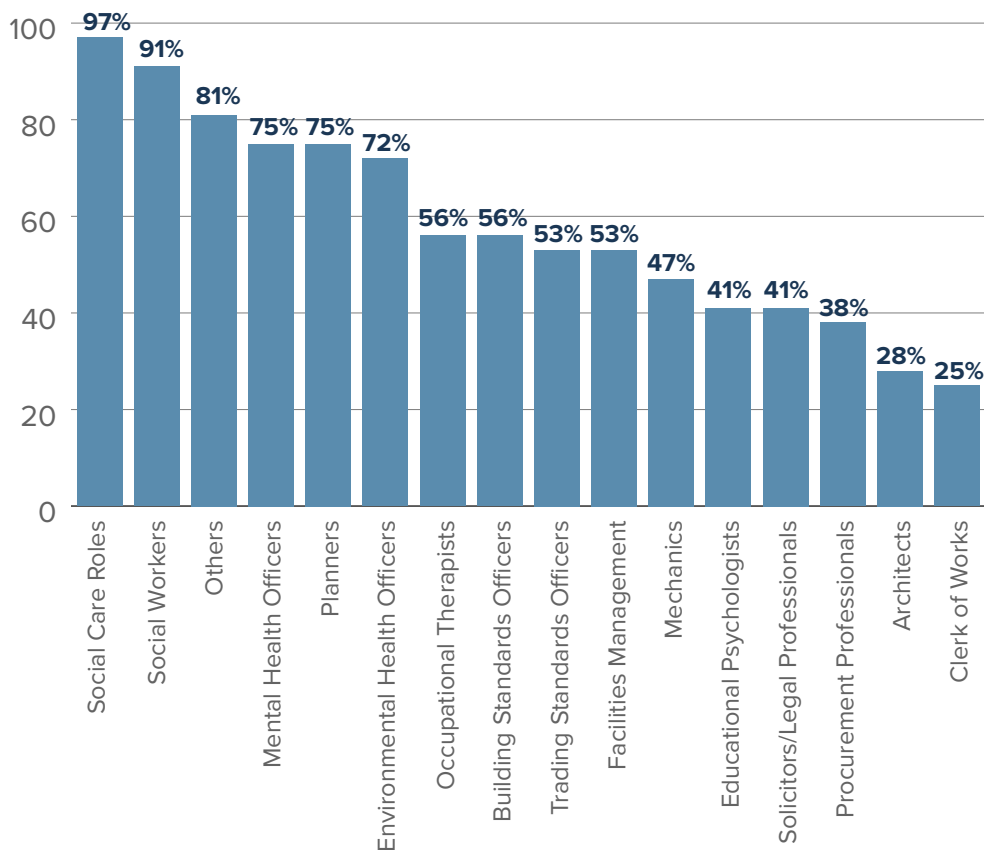
To address this gap in a way which directly meets the needs of councils, an initiative to develop and implement a bespoke work-based learning degree for Town Planners is now being taken forward in partnership with the University of the West of Scotland. This work is fully supported and sponsored by the Glasgow City Region Chief Executives Group, aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy and Future Skills Programme. The degree programme is due to be launched in the Autumn of 2024, with between 10 and 20 places initially being taken up by Glasgow City Region and other councils linked to the central belt in Scotland. If successful, it is hoped that this initiative will provide a sustainable route for the development of a pipeline of talented RTPI qualified planners who will support the regeneration and economic development ambitions of the Glasgow City Region and linked councils. The next phase of this programme will look at the development of a schools based “Young Planner” programme offering to develop a pathway which will encourage more young people to consider a rewarding career in Planning.

was reflective of the results highlighted above, where many workforce plans were still at a “developing” stage. When asked to explain why they were not confident, many respondents highlighted the need for further development in order to understand short, medium, and long-term need across the organisation, based on succession plans and service delivery requirements. Respondents also mentioned a lack of data, or at least real-time or current data, that would allow needs to be monitored and identified more effectively. This particularly applied at an individual service level, with engagement of service managers identified as a key requirement for improvement. Other gaps included a broader understanding of local barriers to recruitment, as well as horizon scanning to identify particular needs and demands on services now and in the future.

Respondents were then asked to identify which occupational groups still have significant workforce gaps. These groups were based on areas identified as gaps in the 2019 survey. The survey also asked which occupational groups were most critical and likely to require a nationally coordinated response. Most respondents identified social care and social worker roles as areas with critical gaps in their council, as shown in Figure 4, and the most likely to benefit from a nationally co-ordinated approach. There are long standing issues with the sustainability of the social care and social work workforces, further exacerbated by the demands of the pandemic and demographic change. Levels of national and local integrated workforce planning are in place or under development for these professions. The development of the proposed National Care Service and National Social Work Agency will bring further focus to what can be done nationally, as well as locally. In the meantime, local and national government and other core stakeholders must prioritise continued strategic work to tackle these workforce pressures.

Some of the other roles identified as critical and requiring this joined up approach were those requiring professional qualifications where it was noted that too few graduates were being produced. This included planning, building standards, environmental health, trading standards, as well as secondary teachers in many subject areas. Mental health officers (also part of the Social Work profession) and occupational therapists were also identified as roles with critical gaps and where national coordination between councils would be most beneficial. Councils did, however, recognise that alongside national approaches additional work could be done locally or at a regional level, including for skills gaps that were particularly acute for their area and across all of the critical gap roles. Much of this work is already underway, such as developing career pathways and working with local further and higher education providers. Coordinated approaches are discussed in the section below.

Figure 4 - Proportion of councils who have critical workforce gaps by occupational group⁹



Councils also provided the number of vacancies within these roles. These figures varied widely, and not all councils were able to provide a detailed breakdown of this data. The largest gap in terms of posts and FTEs was in social care roles. Seventeen councils provided these figures with a total of 771.5 FTE vacancies. There was also a large number of vacancies amongst social worker roles, with 296.4 FTE vacancies in the 15 councils that could provide data. Some councils also reported significant vacancies amongst facilities management roles, occupational therapists, environmental health officers, teachers and head teachers, and housing officers. Challenges recruiting the right talent for programme managers in the housing space in addition to housing officers is a concern for councils and is particularly important in the context of the housing emergency. A further professional group noted by a number of councils under 'other', as well as being highlighted as a challenge by the CIPFA Directors of Finance Group, is experienced accountants. Such is the shortage in this area that the emerging trend for some Scottish councils is to recruit apprentice accountants and train them in-house

⁹ "Others" includes IT roles, such as cyber security; HGV and other drivers; teachers, especially in secondary schools; trades and craft roles; finance roles; housing officers; and HR professionals.

Case Study: Scotland Excel Flexible Procurement Resources

Shared services and shared staff resource can be complex to establish however councils are increasingly exploring what options are available through shared service models as a way to address recruitment challenges.



The demand for procurement services has exceeded the availability of skilled public sector resource and driven the cost upwards. Recognising these challenges, Scotland Excel's flexible procurement team and project resources seek to provide councils, and other public sector member organisations, with a trusted supplementary resource option.

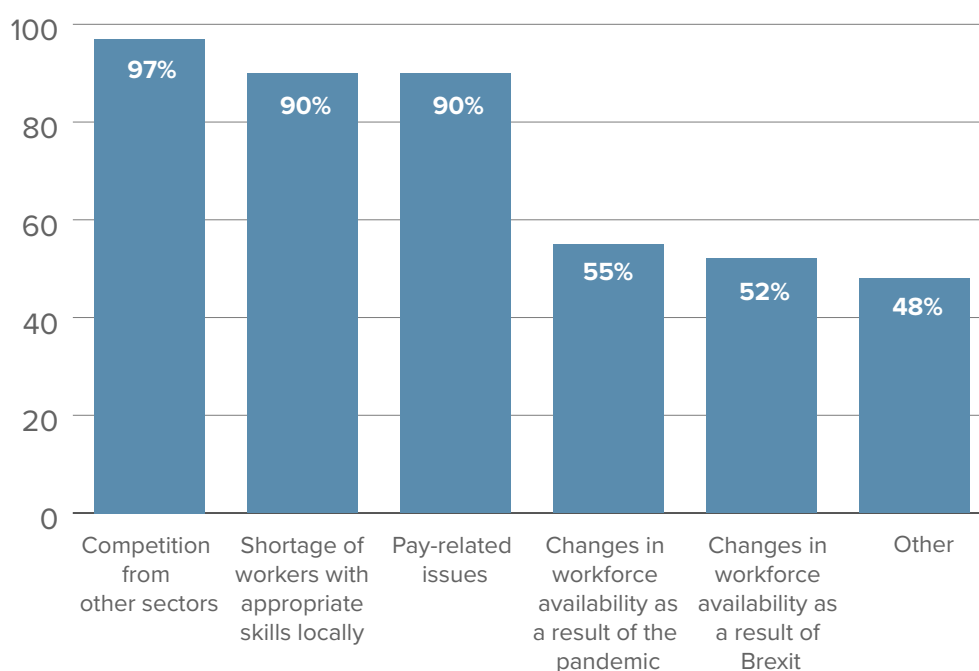
The flexible procurement service gives organisations the opportunity to source additional procurement resource as and when they need it and their dedicated flexible team is made up of highly trained procurement professionals with a mix of experience and specialist knowledge delivering a range of services, from small, short-term projects to long term partnerships. Not only do councils benefit from a flexible resource, the wider knowledge and experience and facilitation of good practice and collaboration provides an additional benefit of this approach. Services are priced at public sector preferential rates and significantly lower than utilising private sector providers to fill gaps.

Increasingly, councils are exploring the opportunities for shared services as a way of becoming more efficient, saving costs and addressing workforce gaps. As part of a programme of transformation work being taken forward by Solace and the Improvement Service, for example, Midlothian and West Lothian councils are leading a piece of work to consider what options are available for shared staff in the medium-long term.

however the necessity of this approach means that there is an experience lag while new accountants gain the skills and experience needed to fulfil the role. Not all councils could provide accurate data and it was noted that these figures can change at short notice as roles are filled or removed.

Councils also identified several issues contributing to an inability to recruit to these roles. Most commonly, this was competition from other sectors, such as the private sector, with 97% of councils identifying this challenge. Other common factors included pay related issues, which was cited by 90% of respondents and may relate to wage competition from other sectors, and a shortage of workers with the appropriate skills locally, which was linked to a lack of qualifications in certain areas. The majority of respondents also indicated that the pandemic, which has led to a decrease in the size of the labour force relative to the number of available roles across the whole jobs market, and Brexit have had an impact on their ability to recruit into these roles. A breakdown of these figures is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Proportion of respondents facing issues to recruitment into these roles



48% of respondents identified “other” issues to recruitment into these roles, which included limited and short-term funding meaning roles are often only available on a temporary basis and that development opportunities, such as offering qualifications, are not available. Respondents also highlighted a change in attitudes and expectations from work, with an increased expectation of flexibility. Local conditions also play a role in certain areas, with island, remote, or rural councils often facing challenges in recruiting people, partly due to the difficulty in commuting to these areas or due to local conditions, such as

Case Study: Challenges for Island Authorities

Rural and island councils can face particular challenges recruiting staff to fill vacancies. Rural and island councils can struggle to attract people to live and work locally, due in part to some pay levels that are set nationally, and a higher cost of living. There are also additional factors including a lack of affordable housing in some areas which has been shown to negatively impact local job markets.



Shetland Islands Council has undertaken a programme of work to try to attract people to live and work in Shetland and fill hard to recruit professions. Working with Promote Shetland, three 'professions' pages were developed for planners, teachers and social care careers and the pages were populated with video and written 'spotlight' accounts from existing staff to highlight their positive experiences and career development opportunities in their roles. For those who had relocated, a description of the benefits of living and working in Shetland, such as exceptional work/life balance, friendly community, dynamic economy, beauty and wildlife etc, was also included. The pages also provided an opportunity to provide Shetland related, organisation and service information and links. Campaigns were launched via the council's communications team and Promote Shetland, with links to each advertisement.

The campaigns, together with a re-vamp of the advertisement wording, yielded excellent results for Shetland Islands Council, following many previous unsuccessful re-advertisements. The first advertisement for planning officers following the launch saw 100% success rate in the appointment of three planning officer vacancies, and more than a year later these staff remain in post. Furthermore, the council has gained a further two preferred candidates from a recent planning officer advertisement, providing further evidence of this being a successful approach to appointing hard-to-fill vacancies.

housing shortages. Other issues included the lack of profile or “brand” for the public sector as an employer. Some respondents also mentioned that retention and staff turnover were bigger challenges than recruitment.

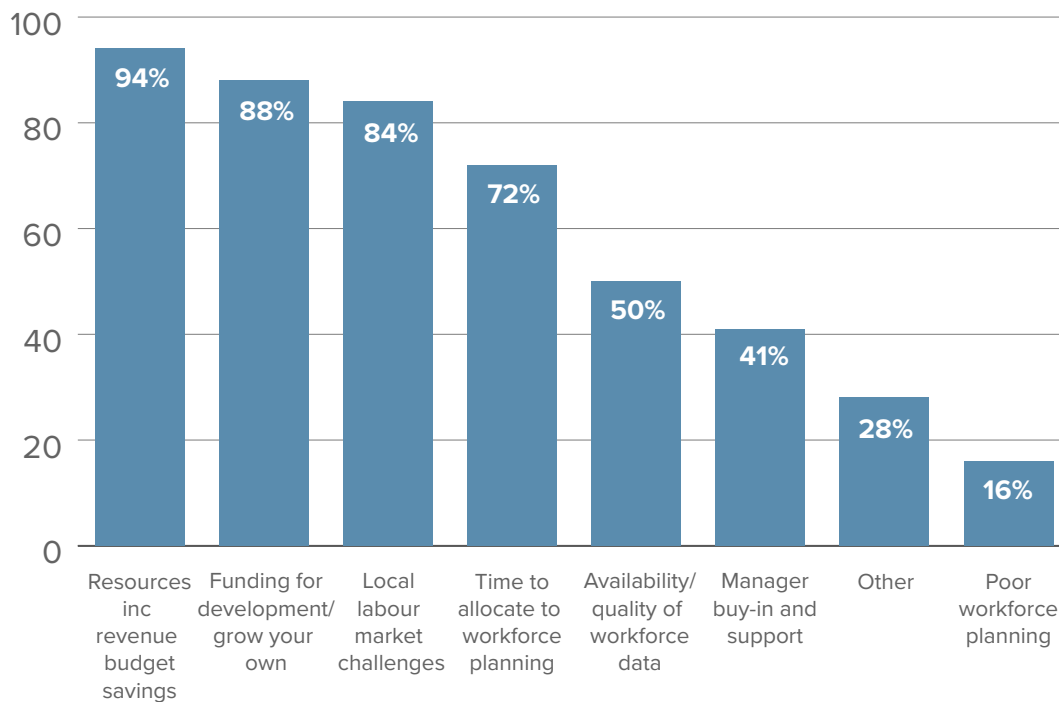
Although the pandemic has had a negative impact on the ability of councils to recruit staff, the move to more flexible and hybrid modes of working that was accelerated by the pandemic has improved the ability to recruit for some of the roles identified as critical gaps. 61% said that these changes had impacted their ability to recruit, with most saying that this had been positive, albeit with some caveats. While recruitment is possible from a wider pool across a broader geographic spread and employees have the incentive of increased flexibility, it also provides more competition, with local workforces able to take up jobs based further afield.

Barriers

Councils were then asked to identify the main barriers and constraints to addressing workforce gaps more generally. The most frequently identified challenge was a lack of financial resource and a pressure to make budget savings. In part this was due to the short-term nature of funding, meaning roles can only be offered on temporary contracts, but may also relate to other issues identified elsewhere, such as rates of pay. Similarly, a high proportion, 88%, identified wider funding for development and “grow your own” initiatives as a barrier to addressing gaps. Labour market challenges, as discussed in relation to the specific key gaps above, were also selected as a barrier by 84%. Notably only a very small number of councils, 16%, felt that poor workforce planning was an issue, with a lack of skills and capacity a contributory factor to this. 28% of respondents said there were “other” challenges, which included capacity issues amongst managers and HR colleagues and siloed ways of working that limited development opportunities.

A full breakdown of the main barriers is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 - Proportion saying they experienced each barrier



Case Study: Fife Council Wellbeing Roadshow

In September 2022, Fife Council had an opportunity to run a Wellbeing Roadshow using £10,000 of short life Unison funding. The project consisted of 3 events at Fife Council waste depots with around a dozen wellbeing-based services promoted to waste staff, 3 events delivered in partnership with Fife Sport and Leisure Trust which promoted around 25 council or community based services to all council and trust staff, an online programme of 28 live and recorded webinars with a focus on management and staff development and development and launch of a new wellbeing brand with digital and physical material.



The project enabled the council to increase engagement with wider groups of staff as well as educate staff around what they can do to take ownership of their wellbeing and how to seek support if needed. Feedback to the Wellbeing Roadshow was very positive from both staff that attended and the stakeholders involved in the event, and it was felt that delivering face to face events on the work sites which targeted services with high absence rates worked particularly well.

Recommendations



Local government should:

- o Continue to work to ensure they can identify current gaps and future vulnerabilities. This includes:
 - Improving availability and use of workforce data. This may mean making use of data from MyJobScotland and other sources such as SSSC and national surveys
 - Undertaking local research into barriers to recruitment.
 - Horizon scanning and forecasting of future service demand including workforce projections (balancing supply and demand factors).
 - Understanding and contributing to the development of population strategy/ies
- o Identify high priority areas, such as social care, and explore collaborative approaches to addressing these, locally, regionally and nationally.
- o Make a clear ask of national government to recognise its role in helping overcome these barriers, particularly around providing long-term funding that will make these roles more attractive to candidates and allow competition with the private sector.
- o Work collaboratively with Further and Higher Education providers to help produce more graduates in areas of particular need, also with regulators such as SSSC.
- o Explore factors that can lead to retention of existing staff, including older people who are considering retirement, as well as considering options for returners to the workforce.
- o Work through COSLA to further collaborate with the Scottish Government on workforce planning and workforce projections, also to improve understanding of the relationship between local, regional and national workforce planning.

Case Study: Environmental Health Officers

There has long been concern about the declining numbers of environmental health officers (EHOs) in Scotland, with more than 50% of council employed EHOs eligible to retire in the next ten years and a critically low supply of qualified EHOs coming through training routes. EHOs are a key component of the core public health workforce and have delegated powers in councils over a substantial range of legislation across public health, water, licensing, animal health, dog control, the built environmental, health and safety at work, food safety, food standards, pollution control and waste management.



The Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health (SoCOEHS), together with the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS), have done a full analysis of the challenges which include an ageing workforce, funding cuts, lack of training places, competition from other public bodies and the private sector and have set out recommendations on how to address these concerns. These include supporting the development of a revised university course to include practical work and enable a student to attain the professional qualification needed without being dependent on a training placement over and above the university course; supporting the work by the SQA to scope develop and implement an Apprenticeship in Regulatory Services; supporting the development of alternative post graduate academic courses, based in Scotland, that would allow professionals working in related fields to move into the EHO profession; development of leadership capacity within Environmental Health and development of workforce education and development strategies to ensure that the future leadership role of Environmental Health is sustainable.

Officers in councils are proactively taking forward work to mitigate against future recruitment challenges and working in innovative ways to identify solutions to workforce gaps.

What can be done to overcome these challenges?

As outlined, councils are already taking steps to improving their workforce planning approaches and have a number of policies and projects in place designed to improve their ability to fill gaps within certain roles. This section explores some of their goals and what could help to achieve these. It also looks at how collaboration could play a role.

Goals and enablers

Responses to the survey indicate that councils are already working towards addressing some of the gaps and challenges that they face. The survey asked councils to identify their most pressing goals for the next 6 to 12 months in addressing workforce gaps, with respondents highlighting plans and actions already in place to achieve these. These goals and actions included running recruitment campaigns for specific roles, especially those deemed most urgently needed, for example social care and teaching, learning from previous experiences and aligning with national campaigns where appropriate. Councils also highlighted an ambition to improve workforce plans to ensure these were fit for purpose, with many identifying the need to put in place succession plans and to build pipelines and career pathways for their employees. Reskilling and upskilling also featured prominently, with the recognition that this may be easier to accomplish than recruiting highly skilled staff. Similarly, retention was a key goal for many, and actions to achieve this include a focus on promoting employee wellbeing. Other goals included engaging with young people and promoting the sector to them through higher, further, and secondary education settings. Promoting digital skills and making use of new technology to improve capacity and capability was another goal.

National coordination

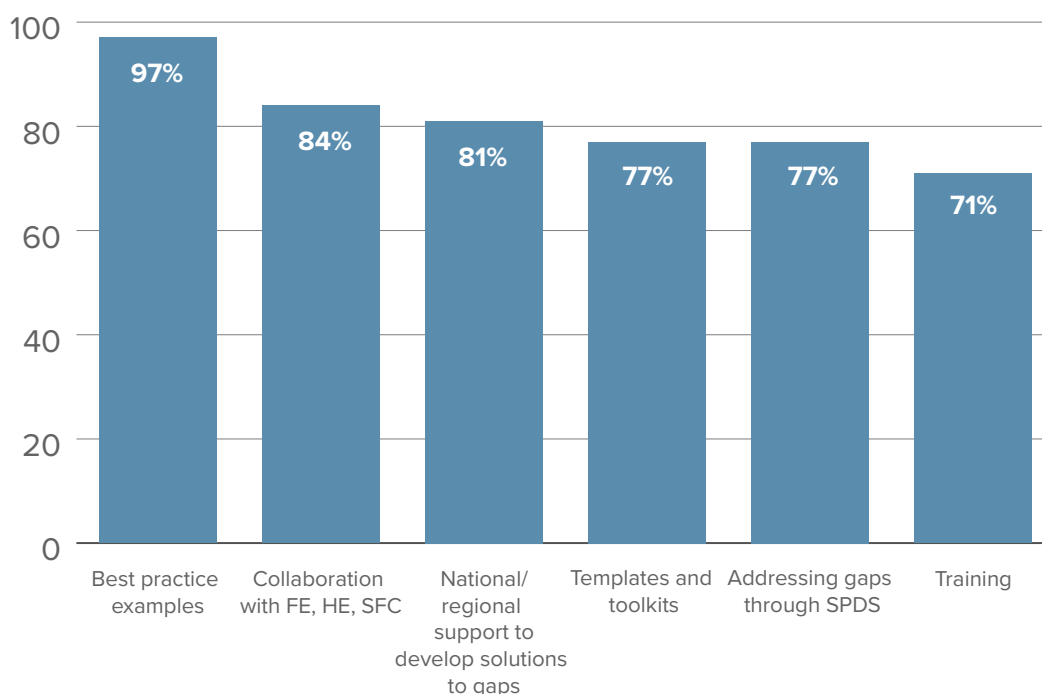
Respondents were asked to comment on how national or regional coordination could support them to achieve their goals and overcome challenges. While respondents recognised that coordinating approaches to common workforce challenges could help to support in addressing some of the challenges they face, many also noted the importance of ensuring continued flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities. When asked about whether they felt that a common approach to workforce planning should be developed, respondents tended to agree, with 81% saying that some elements should be aligned, but with freedom to tailor these locally. 6% said that there should ideally be a common approach and process, while 19% thought each council should take the approach that best suits their requirements.

Respondents were then asked to comment on where coordinated or common approaches could be developed. This included collecting the same types of information, which was chosen by 69%, using common templates (42%), and aligning timescales (31%).

Considering broader opportunities for collaboration, almost all respondents (97%) felt that sharing best practice examples of workforce planning would be of value. Most respondents also supported collaborative work in engaging with further and higher education (84%) and in developing solutions to address gaps at a national or regional level (81%). Shared templates and toolkits, addressing gaps through the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland (SPDS), and shared training opportunities all also had high number of respondents in support. The proportion of respondents who said they would support each of these six options is displayed in Figure 7.

Respondents were also asked to provide other opportunities for collaboration that could raise levels of practice. One suggestion was developing shared resources for data analysis, particularly in the use of Power BI, benchmarking, and reporting. It was noted that the Improvement Service already has some resources here and could play a role in developing these. Other examples included alignment on classifications and categories for reporting, which could facilitate cooperation; engagement with schools and young people; regional collaboration, such as regional deployment lists and pools; and learning from others in both the public sector, such as the NHS, and the private sector.

Figure 7 - Proportion of respondents supporting areas for collaboration



Improved use of data and data analysis is a central aspect in improving workforce planning maturity, according to the Audit Scotland workforce planning matrix. All respondents indicated that they would be in favour of exploring the potential for nationally gathering, reporting, and analysing workforce data across all councils as a way to enable better use of the data. Respondents did, however, note concerns around the additional reporting burden were this to be implemented. Any shared solution would therefore require consultation with councils to ensure that a coordinated approach added value without placing additional demands on already limited capacity.

Case Study: Growing Our Own - Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion

The recruitment drive to deliver the 1140 hours ELC expansion highlights a good example of what can be achieved when local government is appropriately funded and supported by the Scottish Government to deliver a national policy priority. Qualifications were quickly developed and streamlined, funding was made available to promote posts locally and many young people were brought into the local government workforce. Across the sector, statistics collected by the Improvement Service show that FTEs almost doubled from 9576 in 2016/17 to 18,657 in September 2023. We collectively need the same level of urgency and support to build the workforce capacity in roles currently under extreme pressure, for example social workers.



'Grow your own' programmes are prevalent across Scottish councils as a way to ensure that they are making the best use of their existing workforce to help fill hard to recruit posts including teachers, social workers, building standards officers and early years practitioners.

Like a number of councils in preparing for the expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC), Aberdeen City Council knew that they had needed to recruit a number of qualified Early Years Practitioners (EYP) very quickly. An internal traineeship was developed and promoted to current employees across the organisation who may be interested in changing their careers. This was done on a secondment basis and on successful completion of the traineeship, they were matched to an EYP role. This successful programme, which had three cycles, saw 63 existing employees successfully complete the programme and gain permanent EYP roles which was critical to delivering the ELC expansion. Further to this, the council also developed a 'Stepping into Leadership' Programme for aspiring Senior EYPs whereby 57 employees participated resulting in 38 successfully appointed to Senior EYP roles.

It is also critical that existing workforce pressures in early years are taken into account by national government in considering any further ELC expansion.

Other examples of good practice from ELC expansion include:

- o [West Lothian School Pupil ELC pilot](#). In West Lothian Council some pupils were offered the opportunity to take up paid positions after school supporting ELC practitioners between 1600 and 1800. This provided extra capacity for the ELC settings, while offering valuable experience and training for students.
- o [Perth and Kinross Learn to Work in Early Years](#). To support the expansion of early years provision, Perth and Kinross Council launched this programme looking to provide the opportunity for existing staff to retrain and make a career change into ELC. This included the launch of a 12 month qualification, with the opportunity promoted across the existing workforce. Applicants were also guaranteed a 12-month contract at the end of their training. So far three cohorts have completed the programme.
- o [Stirling Workforce Planning](#). As well as recruiting new staff, ensuring that existing staff are engaged and able to provide additional capacity has been crucial to the success of ELC expansion. In Stirling Council staff engagement was central to workforce planning, with a focus on ensuring flexibility and promoting staff wellbeing as workforce terms and conditions changed. This was done through staff and union engagement, a phased roll-out, and commitment to listening and responding to feedback.

Recommendations



Local government should:

- Work together to identify areas for regional or national coordination, and those best tackled locally, such as
 - Sharing of best practice and what works in e.g. recruitment and retention, aligned to goals and ambitions.
 - Engaging proactively with Further and Higher Education providers to formulate common asks and areas of mutual benefit.
 - Sharing resources, such as templates
- Explore the feasibility of nationally collecting, reporting, and analysing workforce data. Identify resources and capacity held by national organisations, such as the IS, and that could be utilised to support this.
- Consider aligning workforce challenges and opportunities to 'Council of the Future' workstreams.

Conclusions

Scotland's councils are facing significant challenges in maintaining and developing workforce capacity across a number of key professional roles. Financial pressures, an ageing workforce, increased service demand, recruitment difficulties, differing population changes across the country, skills gaps and pay competition from other sectors are all contributing factors. Despite working in this challenging environment, local government is innovating its workforce and service delivery models to support the delivery of services to our communities that depend on local authority service provision and all councils across Scotland are fully committed to building a strong future workforce.

A strong, appropriately resourced and appropriately skilled local government workforce is vital to deliver the council of the future and the level of service transformation and public sector reform that is required if we are to collectively meet the needs of Scotland's communities.

This report has detailed the key workforce challenges facing local authorities in Scotland, as informed and evidenced by the survey results collected as part of this exercise. The results shows that the majority of councils are acutely aware of their workforce risks, with many developing mature workforce plans and almost all have clear action plans underpinning their workforce plans.

Social work and social care were identified as the job roles with the most critical workforce gaps and there are also significant and growing gaps in a number of professional roles such as trading standards officers, planners and environmental health officers.

This work has also demonstrated the workforce innovation practices that are prevalent across local government in Scotland. Councils are exploring how best to respond to the challenges they face and taking proactive measures to mitigate risks and transform their workforce for the better. Progressive recruitment campaigns, upskilling and development of the existing workforce, shared services, working with higher and further education and bringing a new generation into the local government workforce are just some examples highlighted throughout this report however this represents just a fraction of the innovative practice underway.

We are clear that the local government workforce, and the dedication and commitment they demonstrate in delivering services to every community in Scotland, is one of our greatest assets. To continue to meet the demands of delivering public services in the 21st century, local government must position ourselves as an employer of choice and better promote local government as a rewarding sector in which to pursue a career, with many varied types

of roles and benefits available. In particular, we must work on attracting the younger generation into the workforce. The way that councils deliver services is changing, and our workforce is a key component of being able to deliver the council of the future.

We can't do this alone, however. It is absolutely critical that strong partnerships are in place if we are to deliver the recommendations set out throughout this report. Councils need the support from further and higher education, national skills agencies, the Scottish Government, relevant professional bodies and trade unions and only by working in partnership will we address the challenges and risks that the sector is facing. Our intention is that the contents and recommendations in this report act as a catalyst to aid regional and national work with partners and result in genuine and meaningful change that will ultimately be to the benefit of all communities and citizens in Scotland.

Following the publication of this report a steering group of senior officers and key partners will be established to take forward the recommendations contained in this report, with the intention to develop a clear plan linked to stated and known national priorities set out for local government and linked to our wider ambition to be a leader of transformational change across public services in a way that meet the needs of all those living in our communities.

Recommendations

Workforce Data

1. Improve reporting of council workforce characteristics
2. Improve consistency of reporting on equalities characteristics in recruitment and leavers
3. Explore the relationship between workforce characteristics, skills, job roles and pay grades.
4. Further explore the reasons why certain groups are underrepresented, including younger people.
5. Use all available mechanisms to better promote local government as an employer of choice.

Workforce Plans

6. Continue to work towards maturity of workforce plans.
7. Learn from best practice since 2019 and for future years, including examples included in this report.
8. Ensure that workforce plans are supported by detailed action plans.
9. Put in place robust tracking systems for action plans.

Workforce Gaps

10. Continue to work to ensure that local government can identify current gaps and future vulnerabilities of the workforce.
11. Identify high priority areas, such as social care, and explore collaborative approaches to addressing these, locally, regionally and nationally.
12. Make a clear ask of national government to recognise its role in helping overcome these barriers, particularly around providing long-term funding that will make these roles more attractive to candidates and allow competition with the private sector.
13. Work collaboratively with further and higher education providers to help produce more graduates in areas of particular need, also with regulators such as SSSC.
14. Explore factors that can lead to retention of existing staff, including older people who are considering retirement, as well as considering options for returners to the workforce.
15. Work through COSLA to further collaborate with the Scottish Government on workforce planning and workforce projections, also to improve understanding of the relationship between local, regional and national workforce planning.

National Coordination

16. Work together to identify areas for regional or national coordination, and those best tackled locally.
17. Explore the feasibility of nationally collecting, reporting, and analysing workforce data.
18. Consider aligning work around workforce challenges and opportunities to 'Council of the Future' work.

Appendix 1

Audiences for Report

Audience	Asks/Recommendations
Councils	<p>Note recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve workforce planning capacity and practice to identify gaps. Continue to develop innovative solutions to address workforce gaps, working with other key skills, employability and education agencies. Share, learn and implement best practice. Make further use of available data, and explore opportunities to improve data quality, to identify areas of greatest need. Collaborate regionally and nationally
Scottish Government	<p>Recognise the scale of the challenge faced by councils and provide the additional support that LAs need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to sustainable funding and long-term skills and workforce funding models Directing the FE and HE Sector to meet the workforce needs of local government Allow flexibilities on current funding options for councils to direct spend based on local need
FE/HE providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with councils to provide courses/ placements to support development of skills within key gaps. Share research and evidence to help inform local government approaches to retention, recruitment etc. Offer local and regional creativity and innovation about use of available skills funding to support local government skills gaps.
Audit Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the workforce challenges local government sector is facing. Note good progress and areas of good practice already underway. Provide insight on areas for further improvement and development.
Improvement Service/ COSLA/ SPDS etc	<p>Support councils to collaborate on areas of most value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection, reporting, analysis Sharing of templates and other resources Encouraging implementation of best practice Engagement with other organisations and sectors to promote needs and solutions for local government e.g. national government and FE/HE providers Political oversight and engagement of Scottish Government in this agenda.

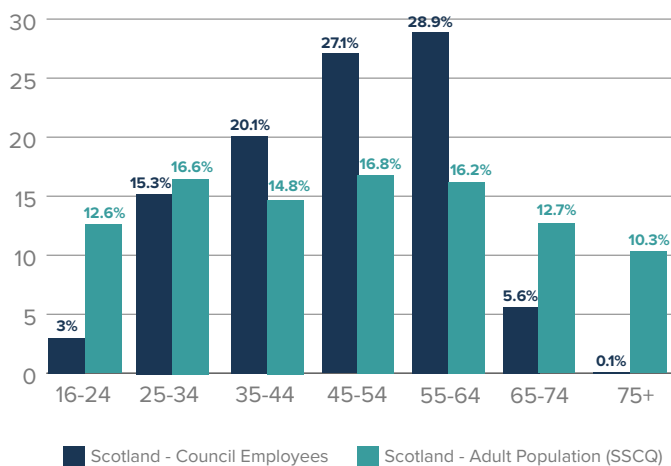
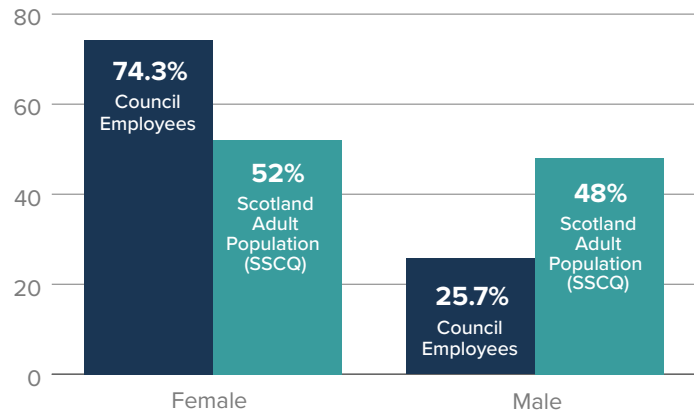
Appendix 2

Council Workforce Characteristics

Sex

Council employees are predominantly female and are overrepresented when compared to the Scottish population.

The proportion of **females** in the council workforce is **74.3%** compared with **52%** in the Scottish population.



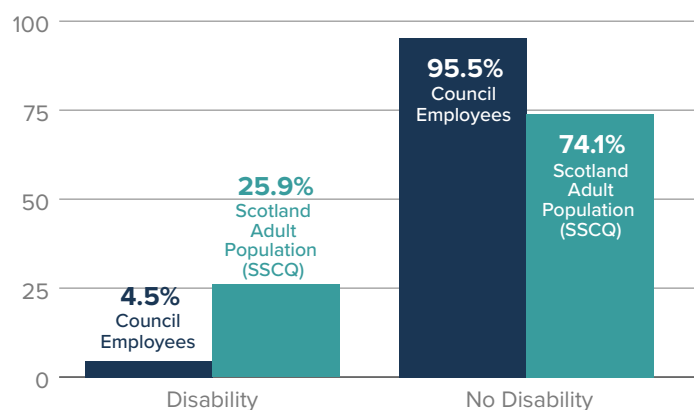
Age

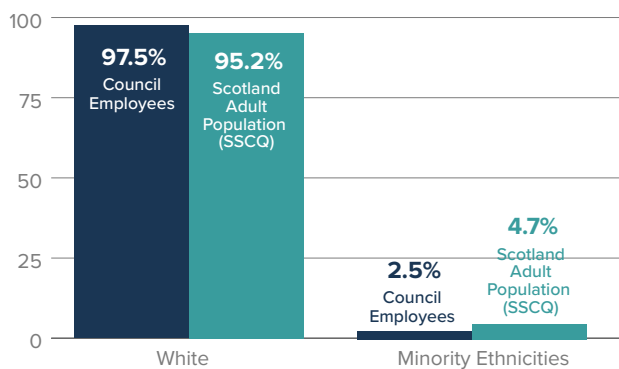
Some age groups are over and underrepresented within the council workforce. In particular the 45- to 64-year-old age groups make up a higher proportion of the workforce than the Scottish working age population.

Those aged **55-64** make up the largest proportion of the council workforce, accounting for **28.9%**. This is higher than the Scottish adult population where **16.2%** are aged 55-64.

Disability

4.5% of council employees are recorded as **living with a disability or long-term condition**. However, disability status was not recorded for a large proportion (42.1%) of council employees, therefore this figure is likely higher.



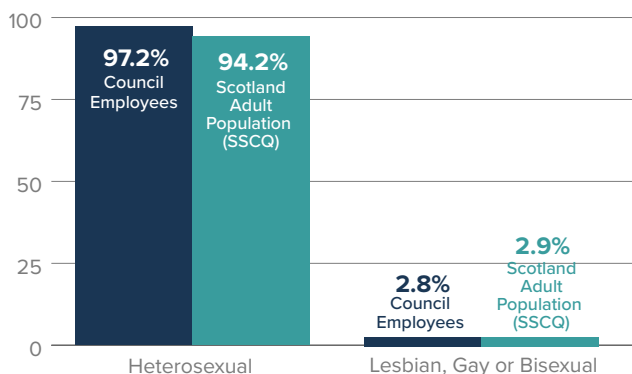
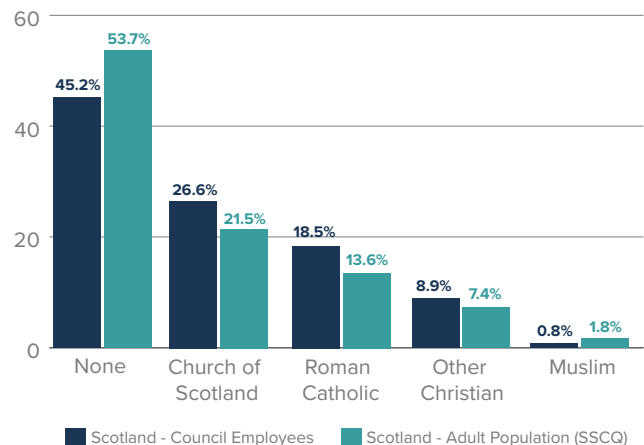


Ethnicity

2.5% of council employees are recorded as a **minority ethnicity**. This underrepresents the Scottish population, but the actual figure may be higher due to underreporting (ethnicity was not recorded for 25.9% of all council staff).

Religion

Although religious belief is not well reported by council employees, there is a similar proportional structure of religions in the council workforce as there is in the Scottish population. The largest proportion of council employees are recorded as having **no religious belief (45.2%)** which is also true of the Scottish population where 53.7% are recorded in this category. However, for 57.4% of all council staff religious belief was not recorded or recorded as “other”.



Sexual Orientation

2.8% of council employees are recorded as **lesbian, gay or bisexual**, compared with 2.9% in the Scottish population. However, the true figure may be higher as sexual orientation was not recorded for 54.7% of council employees.

Marital Status

The largest proportion of council employees are recorded **as married or in a civil partnership (56.5%)**. Whilst marital status is not recorded for a large proportion of council employees (26.9%), the marital status of those that are recorded follows a similar proportional structure to the Scottish population.

