

Recruitment and retention

A public service workforce for the twenty-first century

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Public sector staff want to ‘make a difference’, in a job that satisfies them, and with a reward package that meets their needs. But...

- people are leaving the public sector because of negative experiences rather than compelling alternative options
- most public sector employers do not know why their staff are leaving – only one in five public sector workers interviewed had an exit survey
- seven in ten leavers believe the image of their job is off putting

Reports of recruitment and retention problems in local public services are widespread...

- demand for staff in public services is growing faster than supply
- the cost of living and increased employment opportunities exacerbates problems in London and the south east
- the public sector workforce is ageing

...but it is difficult to construct a comprehensive picture of the size of the recruitment and retention problem.

- information on shortages is collected by a vast array of organisations, using different definitions of a vacancy, and different methodologies – and reaches different conclusions

The public sector workforce is changing...

- between 1981 and 2001 the proportion of the UK workforce employed in the public sector fell from nearly 30 to under 20 per cent
- the number of people working in public service has increased, with many providing a public service while employed by a private company

...and the remedy for problems in overall demand and supply is inevitably long term.

- focusing on problems which can be addressed in the short and medium term is critical. Action can, and should, be taken now

There are no simple solutions...

- recruitment and retention are issues that go to the heart of how organisations are led. Pay is one, but only one, aspect of this
- Government and national bodies can play a key role in creating a positive image of public service work

...but there are four critical success factors for joint action.

- people’s experience of work must match their expectations
- their working environment must engage, enable and support staff
- staff need to feel valued, respected and rewarded
- the impact on staff of the shift to a mixed economy of provision needs to be actively managed