

Workshop materials to accompany

Tomorrow's people

**Building a local government
workforce for the future**

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Introduction

What this booklet is for

This booklet has been produced by the Audit Commission to accompany the national study report *Tomorrow's People: Building a Local Government Workforce for the Future*.

The report makes a number of recommendations for councils to ensure that they have a workforce which can deliver the council's services and achieve its strategic objectives, now and in the future.

This booklet has been designed to help councils to take those recommendations forward. It contains a menu of activities which can help any council run a workshop, or series of workshops, for senior council staff to address the high-level issues raised in the national study report.

The Audit Commission believes that a competent and committed council workforce is a critical element in service improvement, efficiency and transformation. Because of this, the Commission is incorporating workforce issues in the new performance assessment framework through the 'managing resources' theme of the use of resources assessment. Although the Commission has assessed workforce planning before, the inclusion of a specific key line of enquiry which will explore whether organisations 'plan, organise and develop their workforce effectively to support the achievement of their strategic priorities' is likely to have more impact than ever before.

The activities in this booklet are designed to be used in a 'pick and mix' way, depending on the needs of individual councils. For example, using the material in this booklet, councils could design and run:

- a two-hour workshop for the council's **top management team**, to identify the key risks they need to manage around workforce issues; or
- a half-day workshop for the **senior management team of a directorate**, to review how effectively they are managing their workforce, and identify priority actions.

As well as this booklet, the Audit Commission has produced a video and PowerPoint presentation that can be used to open any workshop on workforce issues¹. All of these materials, along with good practice case studies, are available from the Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/workforce

The Commission would welcome feedback on these workshop materials. If you have tried them out, please let us know what worked well and what could be

¹ The Audit Commission presentation was inspired by a presentation created by Karl Fisch, a teacher at Arapahoe High School in Centennial, Colorado. The original presentation can be found at <http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/2006/08/did-you-know.html>

improved. And if you have any other suggestions or comments, please contact Chloe Schneider at c-schneider@audit-commission.gov.uk.

Who this booklet is for

This booklet is designed for anyone who is planning to run a workshop with senior-level teams on workforce issues within a council. For example, you could be:

- a strategic director who wants to involve the organisation in planning for service changes;
- a human resources (HR) director who wants to take forward some of the issues identified in the Commission's national study report;
- a team manager who wants to involve your team in planning for service changes;
- a project officer working on recruitment and retention; or
- a consultant or external advisor working with a council on workforce issues or organisational development.

Ideally you will have some experience in facilitating meetings and workshops, but we recognise that this is not always the case. So each activity includes step-by-step instructions, and identifies the supporting materials you will need, and top tips for making the activity work.

How to use the presentation

The presentation that accompanies this booklet comes in two formats:

- a Windows Media video file, that can be played on any PC with Windows Media Player installed. This version of the presentation includes music, so is best viewed on a computer with a soundcard and speakers;
- a PowerPoint presentation. This version does not include music.

The presentation is designed to be used at the start of the workshop. It is intended to catch the attention of the workshop participants, to challenge them, and to show that workforce issues are fundamental to the ability of councils to deliver their key services and strategic objectives. The presentation is also intended to communicate the risks of not taking workforce issues seriously.

The PowerPoint version of the presentation can be edited to remove slides or insert additional slides. For example, you may want to include additional slides that are relevant to the particular council where you are running the workshop.

The Windows Media Video version of the presentation includes music which is timed to work with the images in the presentation. If you have the CD-ROM version of these materials, it is best to copy this file directly to the hard drive of the computer which will run the presentation, rather than run it from the CD-ROM. And please do test out the presentation before you start the workshop, to ensure that it will work on the equipment that you have available.

How the activities can be used

Each of the activities is presented in this booklet in a similar format:

- an explanation of the purpose and outcome of the activity;
- a short summary of how the activity works;
- suggestions for the audiences the activity can be used with, and group sizes;
- an estimated running time for the activity;
- materials needed;
- step-by-step instructions;
- top tips for making it work; and
- a copy of any participants' handouts that are needed for the exercise.

You should feel free to adapt the activities to suit your own personal style in running workshops, and to meet the needs of the particular group you are working with. You should also feel free to edit and adapt the participants' handouts that have been included in this booklet – we have deliberately produced this booklet in an editable format so that you can adapt the materials to your own needs. For example, if the language in the activity or in the handout doesn't sound like the language your council uses, just change it.

A workshop can only ever be part of a process of improvement; by itself it won't make change happen. So you also need to be clear about how any workshop that you are planning will fit into the wider process of change in your council. You will need to know what is supposed to happen with the outputs of the workshop, and who will have responsibility for acting on them.

The activities can be combined in a 'pick and mix' way depending on your objectives and the needs of the people taking part (see examples 1 and 2).

Example 1: a review by the council's top management team of the council's current approach to workforce planning

Some members of the council's management team have noticed that their discussions about service improvement are often diverted into discussions about staff shortages. As a result, the management team decides to extend one of its normal meetings by an hour, in order to spend some focused time on this issue.

A project officer who is working on recruitment and retention in social services is asked to lead the discussion. The project officer decides to use Activity 1 ('plotting your progress: using the workforce self-assessment guide to assess your stage of development'). She knows that time will be tight, as this activity should take one to one-and-a-half hours. But this is a small group that is used to working together, and they have also had some discussions on this topic before. She feels that if she keeps the introductory session quite brief, she'll be able to help the team keep to time.

She looks at the suggested handout, and decides that the language isn't right for this council – they don't talk about workforce issues in that way. So she adapts

the wording to suit her audience, and sends the handout to members of the management team a week in advance. Knowing that they are busy people, she doesn't assume at the start of the workshop that they have read the handout, and she also brings spare copies with her in case the team members don't have theirs to hand.

Example 2: involving second and third tier managers in planning their future workforce

The HR manager responsible for environmental services has persuaded the service director that it would be a good idea to involve second and third tier managers in planning their future workforce. He now needs to design and run a half-day workshop to kick off that process.

Knowing that the workshop will start after lunch, he decides to use an ice-breaker that will get the 30 participants moving around the room and talking to each other. He remembers an activity that worked well on a course he attended a couple of years ago, and decides to use that. He'll follow that with the video version of the presentation, to set the right tone for the following couple of hours.

Looking at the workshop materials available, he decides to use a combination of activities. He'll start with 'Activity 5: brave new world: ensuring your workforce is fit for the future'. He expects that some of the managers will already have seen or used PEST analysis before, but he rehearses how he will explain the activity for those that are not familiar with it. He prepares some examples that are relevant to environmental services to help with the explanation.

The HR manager thinks that 'Activity 7: menu of choices' will follow on well from Activity 5. Having already given some thought to the changes that lie ahead for environmental services, the managers will be in a good position to identify the most relevant options for the future workforce. He makes a note to talk to his director about the menu – he thinks the version in the handout needs to be tweaked to make it relevant for this directorate. The HR manager decides to allow quite a lot of time for discussion, first in small groups and then in plenary, and decides not to do the second part of the activity (narrowing down the choices). He doesn't think that the workshop will be the best environment for that work. But he makes a mental note that this work will need to be done after the workshop.

Finally the HR manager decides to use a very cut-down version of 'Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps' just to capture the actions arising out of the workshop, and to identify who in the room will take them forward (this will include the 'narrowing down' activity he has postponed). He hopes the action planning can be done in 15-20 minutes rather than the suggested 1 to 1.5 hours, but keeps some 'slack' in the programme just in case this activity runs over.

Top tips for running workshops

- It is difficult to facilitate a workshop and also take an active part in discussions. If you feel that you need to take an active part in the discussion, invite someone else to play the facilitator's role if you can. For example, because of their strategic role, an HR director would be better placed taking part in the session as a participant rather than as a facilitator.
- With all of the suggested activities, it is the action that follows from them that is important, not the activity itself. Encourage groups to see the 'bigger picture' and focus on the key issues, and avoid getting bogged down in debating details that don't really matter.
- Participants who don't know each other very well may appreciate a fun ice-breaker at the start of a workshop. Even groups that are used to working together may appreciate a 'warm-up' exercise to signal that they are going to have a different type of discussion to the ones they are used to having.
- For longer workshops, try to include different types of activity – discussions in small groups as well as a main group, or activities that involve pictures and diagrams as well as activities that focus on numbers or words.
- Remember to include breaks in longer workshops, and have a 'warm-up' or energiser activity in your back pocket in case energy levels drop.

Where to get more help

The Improvement Network² offers a range of resources on organisations and people on its website at

<http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/imp/core/page.do?pagelId=1006269>.

The website draws on the expertise of the four national partner organisations to encourage improvement in local government. These resources are free to people working in local government.

The Improvement and Development Agency has a number of resources to help councils to develop workforce strategies. They include:

- Engaging service managers in workforce planning: this will be a set of activities and guidelines to help engage service managers in the workforce planning process. It will include versions of the activities used in this Audit Commission booklet, eg:
 - future mapping;
 - risk assessment and succession planning; and
 - developing direction of travel statements.The activities can be used to complement a workshop run with senior staff using the materials in this booklet.
- The workforce planning toolkit: a three step approach to workforce planning, breaking it down into manageable activities for parts of the organisation or the whole organisation.
- Data analysis: what to collect and how to analyse it. How to keep data as simple as possible and not get bogged down in useless facts and figures.

² The Improvement Network is a partnership of the Audit Commission, the Improvement and Development Agency, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and the Local Government Leadership Centre.

- Skills pathways: reports on successful projects to help meet skills shortages and advice on what's available.
- Recruitment and retention support: information about tackling workforce challenges. Includes graduate recruitment, talent pools, new ways of working, skills for life, retention schemes, and "Best Council to Work For".
- Labour market data: where to get it and how to interpret it, both regional and national data.
- Equality and Diversity: advice on diversity issues and the equality standard.

The IDeA also has case studies, tools and techniques which can be found at www.idea.gov.uk/talentmanagement. And you can find information, discussion forums and events posted on the Workforce Planning sub-section of the IDeA's Talent Management Community of Practice. You can sign up at www.communities.idea.gov.uk; membership is free for councils.

'Local government talent' is a website designed to be a one-stop-shop about working in local government. This website, www.lgtalent.com, includes profiles of a range of local government jobs, information for graduates and listings of current vacancies.

For more information on the IDeA's work in this area you can contact Joan Munro, IDeA National Advisor, Workforce Strategy at Joan.munro@idea.gov.uk or on 020 7296 6579

For more information about this Audit Commission study and its associated products, please contact Chloe Schneider at the Audit Commission: c-schneider@audit-commission.gov.uk

Menu of activities

Facilitators should choose from the following 'pick and mix' menu the activity or combination of activities that best fits the objectives of the workshop they are running. Activities should be freely changed and adapted so that they work best with the participants who will be involved.

Activity 1: plotting your progress: using the workforce planning self-assessment guide to assess your stage of development	Page 11
What is it? Participants agree a high level assessment of their council's current approach to workforce planning based on a workforce planning self-assessment guide, and agree how and when they wish to reach a future stage.	
Who is it for? A council's senior management team and other staff responsible for planning the future workforce	
How long should it take? One to one-and-a-half hours	
Activity 2: a picture of performance: using an image to share views about workforce planning	Page 14
What is it? Using a visual image, this quick activity allows participants to share how they are feeling about workforce planning.	
Who is it for? Any group of up to 15 people	
How long should it take? 15-20 minutes	
Activity 3: assessing the 'now': using a SWOT analysis to understand your approach to workforce planning	Page 17
What is it? This activity gives participants a comprehensive 'snapshot' of their council or department's strategic approach to workforce planning.	
Who is it for? Any size of group, from directors and senior management teams to frontline teams.	
How long should it take? A minimum of one hour	
Activity 4: the human resources perspective: pulling data together to understand your current position	Page 20
What is it? Enables participants to assess how well their council is managing its workforce and planning for the future, and helps them to identify the internal and external workforce challenges.	
Who is it for? Management teams across the council, including the top management team.	
How long should it take? A minimum of two hours.	
Activity 5: brave new world: ensuring your workforce is fit for the future	Page 25
What is it? This activity uses a step-by-step approach to identify the key drivers that are affecting how services will be delivered in the future. It helps participants to identify and describe the implications for the workforce of those key drivers.	
Who is it for? A group drawn from the different services within a council directorate. Ideally at least two representatives of each service would attend.	
How long should it take? A minimum of one to two hours.	

Activity 6: ‘mapping the Future’: using future mapping to plan for your future workforce	Page 29
What is it? Participants develop a clear vision of what their council and service will look like in the future, the workforce they will need in order to deliver that vision, and what they are going to do to ensure that a suitable workforce is in place.	
Who is it for? Any size of group, at any level in a council.	
How long should it take? A minimum of one-and-a-half hours.	
Activity 7: menu of choices: understanding and evaluating your options	Page 31
What is it? This activity offers two models which can help a council to identify and then evaluate the range of options available for addressing its workforce challenges.	
Who is it for? Managers at corporate, directorate and service levels in a council	
How long should it take? The models are designed to be used as part of a wider workshop activity; the time they will take to use will depend on the time available for that wider activity.	
Activity 8: mapping the barriers: understanding the real blockers to effective workforce planning in our council	Page 34
What is it? This activity generates a list of the barriers to effective workforce planning using the McKinsey ‘7S’ model to ensure that all aspects of the council are considered. Participants then decide which of the barriers they have control/influence over, and which they do not. The group then decides on actions for each barrier.	
Who is it for? Any size of group, at any level in a council.	
How long should it take? A minimum of two hours.	
Activity 9: understanding your risks: assessing priorities for succession planning	Page 41
What is it? This activity uses a risk assessment matrix to help managers carry out informed succession planning.	
Who is it for? This activity can be used by a council’s top team to think about different groups in the workforce, by groups of managers or directors who might want to look at a whole department, or by team managers to think about the teams for which they are responsible.	
How long should it take? At least an hour.	
Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps	Page 46
What is it? Participants use a simple framework to identify specific actions that they are going to take, their priority ratings, and make commitments to specified timescales for which they take individual responsibility.	
Who is it for? Teams of any size and at any level in a council.	
How long should it take? One to one-and-a-half hours.	

Activity 1: plotting your progress: using the workforce planning self-assessment guide to assess your stage of development

Purpose and outcome

- The workforce planning self-assessment guide (Handout 1) outlines the characteristics of councils at different stages in developing effective workforce planning. It assesses two important and interrelated areas – a council's **approach** to workforce planning and its **commitment** to it. It outlines five stages of development – Resisting, Intending, Starting, Developing and Achieving.
- The purpose of the guide is to help people understand and explore the complexity of getting workforce planning right. The activity gets people talking about all the different areas they need to address in order to ensure effective workforce planning in their councils, with the key message that it is a journey that takes time.
- The group agrees a high level assessment of their council's current approach to workforce planning based on the workforce planning self-assessment guide, and agrees how and when they wish to reach a future stage. More detailed planning can then take place, for example using Activity 10 'Moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps.'

Short summary

Participants share their individual assessments of where the council currently sits on the self-assessment guide with the wider group. Through facilitated discussion the group reaches agreement (where possible) on both the stage the council is at and the reasons why. The group then agrees what stage it wants the organisation to reach in the future, and in what timescale.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This workshop is intended for use with the Council's senior management team and for other staff responsible for planning the future workforce (eg human resources managers).

Note: this activity covers some of the same ground as activity 3 ('assessing the now'). It is unlikely that you will want to use both activities with the same group.

How long should the activity take?

This will depend on the size of the group, but in order to ensure good discussion you should allow one to one-and-a-half hours.

Materials needed

The workforce planning self-assessment guide (see handout), a flipchart, pens and PostIt notes.

Step-by-step instructions

Preparation

You should send a copy of the self-assessment guide to each participant a week before the workshop, so that they can spend some time thinking about how they

would assess the organisation (Handout: the workforce planning self-assessment guide). This will help get a fuller picture.

Introductory Session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of the session.
- Discuss potential benefits of a strategic approach to workforce planning as described in the Audit Commission report – this will help you and the group see where people are in understanding its importance.
- Go through the self-assessment guide and make sure everyone understands how it works. Explain that this is not a scientific assessment exercise and that the discussions around where the council ‘fits’ in the guide are as, if not more, important than the final assessment.

Step one: where are we now?

- Individuals (or in pairs/small groups if large numbers) should look at the self-assessment guide and assess what stage (Resisting, Intending, Starting, Developing, Achieving) they think the council is at - with evidence of real behaviours/actions to support the assessment.
- Ask each individual/group to share their assessment with the wider group.
- If there are significant differences in assessments then you should help the group to explore why – encourage people to share the evidence and assumptions on which they are basing their judgements. There may, for example, be areas where the council is ‘starting’ and other where it is ‘resisting’ – it’s a good idea to encourage people to share their ‘gut feelings’ about where the council is overall.
- Work with the team to reach consensus (if possible) about what stage the council is at and the key reasons for this. Challenge the evidence so that the conclusion is realistic.

Step two: where do we want to be?






- Ask each individual or small group to decide which stage they would like the organisation to move to next, and by when, and put it on a PostIt note.
- Explore areas of difference as above and work with the group to agree the next stage and commit to it.
- Agree a realistic timescale for achieving this.
- Agree how and by when (including using resources from this toolkit) they are going to take the next step – how the organisation will get there. They may find Activities 6 (mapping the future), 7 (menu of choices), 8 (mapping the barriers), and 10 (Moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps) helpful.

Top tip for making it work

- Ensure people stick to the ground rules, particularly those on honesty and confidentiality. It is much more helpful for the council to honestly identify itself as ‘intending’ for example, than to assess itself as ‘developing’ when that is not a true reflection.

Handout 1: the workforce planning self-assessment guide

Note: To prepare for the workshop, spend some time studying this self-assessment guide, and think about how you might assess your council on its approach and commitment to workforce planning.

	Resisting	Intending	Starting	Developing	Achieving
					
Approach to workforce planning	<p>Believe recruitment and retention is not a problem for them.</p> <p>No understanding of how workforce planning can help strategic recruitment and retention.</p>	<p>Poor understanding of scale and nature of change required.</p> <p>Focus on unrelated and isolated workforce strategies/ plans.</p>	<p>Council has a high level workforce vision, but it is not based on rigorous data analysis.</p> <p>Action is reactive and led by short term needs.</p>	<p>Council knows its workforce, understands issues affecting it and where it wants to be in 5-10 years.</p> <p>Council prioritises action based on robust information.</p>	<p>Council has a clear vision of the future and has prioritised workforce developments so they lead to specific local outcomes.</p> <p>Developing partnerships on workforce issues with other public sector agencies.</p>
Commitment to workforce planning	<p>Little or no commitment from senior management or members.</p> <p>Service managers do not believe workforce planning is part of their role.</p>	<p>Some senior level commitment but not consistent across council.</p> <p>Human resources still seen as a transactional support function.</p>	<p>Focus on workforce planning for specific job roles rather than whole council.</p> <p>Service managers engage in workforce planning only when it is critical.</p>	<p>Visible commitment from senior management and members.</p> <p>Workforce and recruitment and retention strategies integrated into wider strategic planning.</p>	<p>Senior management and members lead workforce planning throughout the council and hold officers to account.</p> <p>Regular review and evaluation of workforce strategies, processes and plans takes place.</p>

Adapted from Figure 12 in Audit Commission (2008) Tomorrow's People: Building a Local Government Workforce for the Future.

Activity 2: a picture of performance: using an image to share views about workforce planning

Purpose and outcome

- By using a visual image, this quick activity allows participants to share how they are feeling about workforce planning.

Short summary

The facilitator pre-prepares a hand-drawn picture on a flipchart of a plateau, a river, trees and a mountain (Figure 1). The facilitator then invites each participant to come up to the flipchart and mark where on the picture they currently are. The participant explains to the wider group why they feel the way they do.

Using an image gives people a very concrete way of expressing how they feel, which can otherwise be difficult to put into words. This activity is often very creative – people interpret the picture in their own ways to make it relevant to them. It also helps to bring out diverse views in the group – it is easy to assume that everyone else feels the same way, but this activity usually reveals a range of different feelings.

For longer workshops, the activity can be run at the beginning, and then again at the end to see whether participants have moved to a different place by the end of the workshop.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This activity works with any group of up to 15 people (with bigger groups it becomes repetitive).

How long should the activity take?

You should allow about 15-20 minutes for the main activity.

Materials needed

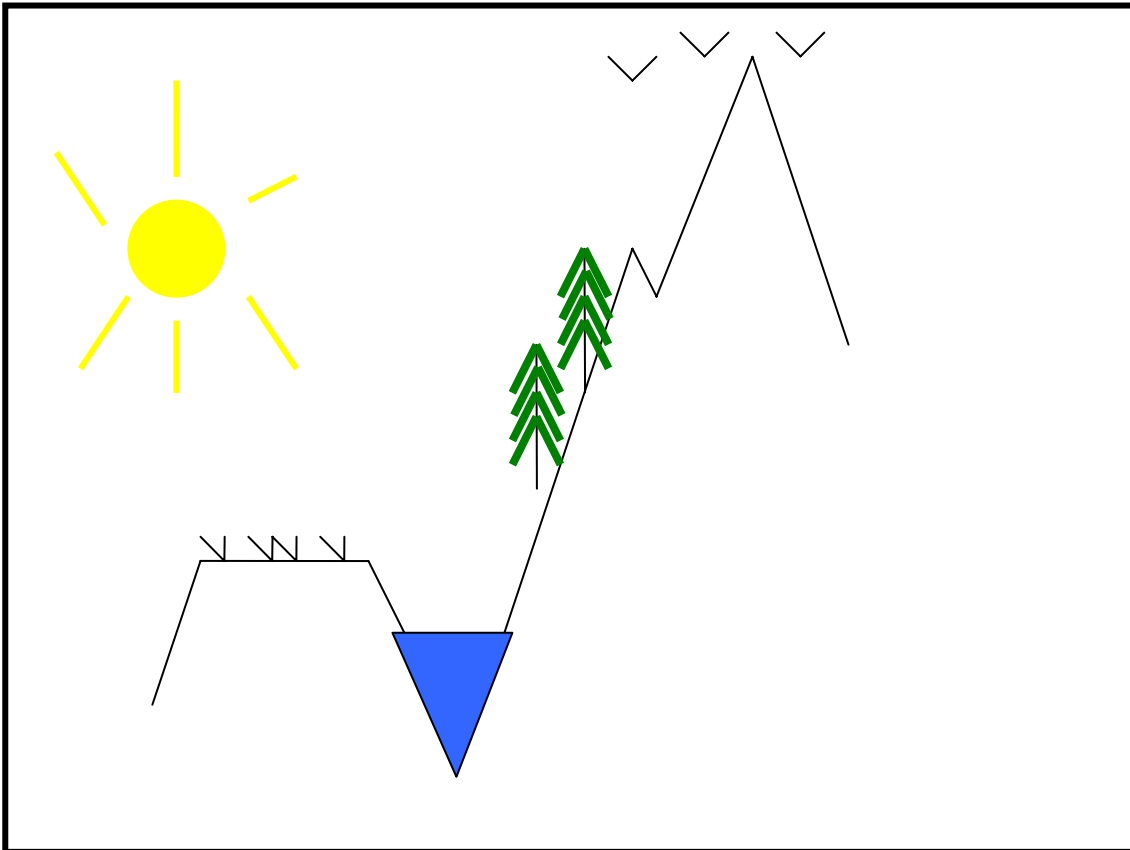
Flipchart, pens of different colours. You can use sticky dots for the participants to mark their locations on the flipchart.

Step-by-step instructions

Preparation

- Make a copy of the picture below on a flipchart. Use a range of colours as appropriate.

Figure 1: plateau, river, trees and mountain



Source: Audit Commission

Introductory session

- Briefly describe to the participants what the picture shows – a grassy plateau where the sun is shining, a ravine with a deep river at the bottom, a steep slope, woods, and a mountain top with birds circling. Beyond the mountain top the picture becomes unclear.

Step one: here I stand

- Invite the participants to come up one at a time, mark a cross or place a sticky dot on the picture that describes where they currently are in terms of their workforce planning, and explain to the rest of the group why they have chosen that place on the picture.
- Keep a mental note of who has come up to the flipchart, so you can be sure that everyone has had their turn.

Step two: summary

- When everyone has marked their position on the flipchart, very briefly summarise the final outcome to bring out differences and similarities – is everyone close together on the chart or are they spread out? Have people given very different reasons for choosing their positions, or are they very similar?
- Thank the participants for taking part in the activity.

- Leave the flipchart on display somewhere in the room as a reminder of how people were feeling at this point in the workshop.

Top tips for making it work

- Not everyone will be comfortable with using an image – some people prefer words, some prefer pictures. It's ok for people not to be comfortable with this activity, but encourage them to give it a go anyway.
- Some people will ask for a lot of explanation and interpretation of the picture. Resist giving your own view or interpretation – encourage them to interpret it in any way they want to. Explain that they just need to express their gut feeling – there are no right or wrong answers.
- Let the participants volunteer when they are ready to come up to the picture – don't choose who goes first. Some groups may need some thinking time before the first person steps up.

Activity 3: assessing the ‘now’: using a SWOT analysis to understand your approach to workforce planning

Purpose and outcome

- A SWOT analysis will give the participants a comprehensive strategic ‘snapshot’ of the council/department’s approach to workforce planning.

Short summary

SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and can be used to assess the council’s current approach to workforce planning. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors influencing success (or otherwise) and opportunities and threats are external factors.

The participants generate and discuss a matrix of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Figure 2). The group then looks at how these interact together, and agrees how to address each area (by confronting, exploiting, preparing/avoiding or addressing).

Figure 2: a SWOT analysis for workforce planning

Internal factors Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities External factors	Threats

Who is this activity suitable for?

This can be used with any size group, from manager/director through to senior management teams and frontline teams.

Note: this activity covers some of the same ground as activity 1 (‘plotting your progress: using the workforce planning self-assessment guide to assess your stage of development’). It is unlikely that you will want to use both activities with the same group.

How long should the activity take?

You should allow a minimum of one hour; you may need longer with a larger group.

Materials needed

Flip charts, pens and PostIt notes.

Step-by-step instructions

Introductory Session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of session.
- Explain the SWOT analysis to the group and make sure everyone understands what it means. Explain the use of internal factors (resources, practices and knowledge within the council) and external factors (conditions outside the council). Here are some examples you could use:
 - **Strengths:** good commitment from senior management team; new human resources officer with skills and experience of workforce planning in a similar council;
 - **Weaknesses:** this human resources officer is the only resource with the right skills and he or she is very busy with another key strategic project; human resources and financial systems don't talk to each other;
 - **Opportunities:** a large private sector local employer is relocating abroad in two years' time; a new training college is expanding;
 - **Threats:** a neighbouring council will need similar scarce skills; rising house prices and a lack of good amenities for young people.

Step one: making the assessment

- Invite individuals (or pairs) to generate their own thoughts about the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of the council's approach to workforce planning, and the **opportunities** and **threats** they feel the council faces from outside. They should write each one on a PostIt note.
- Put up four pieces of flip chart paper – one for each area of the SWOT (with headings).
- Go through each area one by one as follows:
 - Ask each individual or pair to put all their PostIt notes for 'strengths' on the relevant flipchart. Encourage them to notice whether they have written something similar to someone else and if so put it close by, so you can begin a grouping exercise.
 - When everyone has put their PostIt notes up lead the group to complete the grouping exercise. Go through any PostIt notes that have not been grouped, checking with participants whether they belong in another group or belong on their own. Check to see if you have groups that make sense, and then ask the participants to name each group.
 - Check the group agree to the groupings and headings – if there is any disagreement as to where a PostIt note should go then the author of the PostIt note should have the final say.
- Repeat the above process for weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Step two: so what should we do?

- This session then moves on to how these SWOTs should be addressed. Either work with the whole group in plenary, or if numbers are too large split them up as above and feed back to the wider group.

- Go through each set of issues as follows and brainstorm action:
 - **Strengths** – how can we draw on these to improve our workforce planning? How can we increase our strengths?
 - **Weaknesses** – how might we use our strengths to overcome these? What other opportunities are there to address these weaknesses? Even if they feel outside our control do we have any creative ideas on dealing with them? What exposure do they give us in workforce planning and how might we guard against it?
 - **Opportunities** – how do we sense the opportunities externally that might help us in planning our workforce? Are there more opportunities we haven't thought of? How do we exploit them to help us achieve our vision and overcome our weaknesses?
 - **Threats** – how do we respond to these? Do we need to confront them in workforce planning or should we try and work with them? How can we use our internal strengths to neutralise external threats?
- This wider brainstorm will then need to be turned into specific action plans (see Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps).

Top tips for making it work

- Make sure you encourage the group to keep to the ground rules of brainstorming – no judgement/evaluation of ideas, confidentiality et cetera so that they keep thinking creatively and feel free to be honest.
- Mix up people in groups – levels/departments et cetera.

Activity 4: the human resources perspective: pulling data together to understand your current position

Purpose and outcome

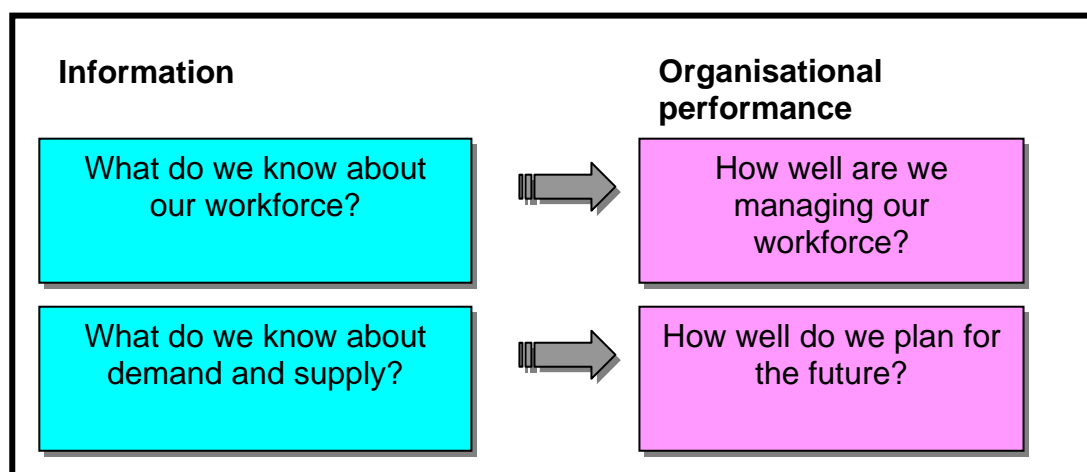
- Given your comment, shouldn't we tighten up the purpose:
- To assess how well the council understands its own workforce and its labour market
- To assess how well the council is managing its workforce and planning for the future

Short summary

Councils need to understand their current workforce and the relevant labour markets in order to plan for the future. This understanding is not enough by itself - councils also need a capacity to act on it.

This activity starts by pulling together a snapshot of a council's workforce and relevant labour markets, and of the council's performance in managing its workforce and planning for the future. Management teams (either the top management team, or at directorate level within the council) can then review this information to judge how effectively they are achieving their workforce aims (Figure 3).

Figure 3: key questions for reviewing how effectively your council is achieving its workforce aims



Source: Audit Commission

Who is this activity suitable for?

This activity can be used by management teams across the council, including the top management team. Before the activity, the facilitator needs to arrange for information to be collated from human resources, with input from other areas, for example, service departments, economic development and finance.

The activity can also be used to bring together people from across the council who are involved in workforce initiatives, to learn from each other and identify opportunities for working together.

How long should the activity take?

The length of the activity will depend upon the group size, but you should allow a minimum of two hours. You also need to set aside sufficient time to prepare for the activity; the extent of this will depend upon the availability of data within the organisation.

Preparing for the workshop involves sourcing and analysing a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data. This should be done by someone who has the authority to request the data from across the council, and the ability to analyse it and present that data clearly.

Materials needed

Preparatory materials:

- The facilitator should arrange for the data set out in the questions in Handout 2 ('corporate workforce profile') to be brought together in a form that can be presented to the group (eg a PowerPoint presentation or short briefing paper), with input from relevant services, finance and economic development where needed.
- The facilitator should prepare an organisation- and locality-specific workforce quiz (we suggest up to a maximum of 12 multiple choice questions to link in with the presentation eg percentage of staff in the workforce who are black or minority ethnic, number of mentions of the workforce in the corporate strategy, projected number of school leavers joining the workforce, service area that has the greatest number of vacancies, and so on. The *Did you know?* presentation that accompanies these workshop materials can be used for inspiration.)
- Council corporate strategy – ideally, whoever collates the human resources data will also have analysed the council's corporate strategy to identify the human resources needs arising from the corporate strategy, and links to any human resources strategy that the council may have.

Activity materials:

- Hardware to deliver the presentation; hard copies of the presentation or briefing.
- Flip chart, PostIt notes and pens.

Step-by-step instructions

Introductory session

- Facilitator to confirm purpose of activity and the shape of the session
- Confirm expectations and objectives of the session

Step one: where are we now?

- Facilitator to issue the quiz to all participants and give them 5 minutes to fill in their answers.

- Presentation drawn from the questions in Handout 2 (say, 10-15 mins). This presentation could provide answer to the questions in the quiz (or these can be answered before the presentation).
- The facilitator should announce the scores from the quiz and award a small prize for the top score.
- Facilitator to lead a short discussion reflecting on the presentation, with perhaps 3-4 questions to ask, for example:
 - which piece(s) of information surprised us the most?
 - what do we think are our biggest workforce challenges arising from the presentation?
 - what are the greatest barriers to overcoming these challenges?
- The outputs of the discussion to be captured on flipcharts under these headings.

Step two: how do we plan for the future?

- [The second part of the activity assumes that the workshop group includes people involved in workforce initiatives in different services or functions. If this is not the case then the activity can be changed accordingly.]
- The facilitator should lead a session where the participants tell each other about their processes for planning the future workforce and dealing with workforce challenges. Depending upon numbers this can be conducted either in plenary or in small groups; if split into small groups then it would be preferable for the groups to be formed by service or function so that each group can explain to the others what they do.
- The break-out groups should consider the following questions
 - who leads the workforce planning process for us, and who else is involved?
 - who collects the data to inform it?
 - how often is this done?
 - how are actions implemented?
 - what interesting initiatives have we implemented?
 - what works well/not so well about the approach?
- A discussion to follow (supported by the facilitator) discussing the differences and similarities in each approach, and their strengths and weaknesses. This should be informed by question 4 in Handout 2.
- The facilitator should capture the discussion on the flipchart.

Top tips for making it work

- Invest sufficient time in gathering the appropriate data – the quality of this data will be instrumental in informing the group's discussion.
- Keep the focus on practical rather than aspirational approaches.

Handout 2: the corporate workforce profile

1. What do we know about our workforce?

- How is the shape of our workforce changing?
 - age
 - gender
 - ethnicity
 - skills
- Where are the current workforce shortages?
 - how are we dealing with them?
- Where are the potential shortages?
 - how are we preparing for them?

2. How well are we managing our workforce?

- What are our turnover, and absence, figures?
 - where are the key variations in our workforce?
- How much are we spending on:
 - recruitment
 - agency staff
 - market supplements
 - training and development
- How do our figures compare with regional and national averages?
- What are the service and financial costs to our authority of not making any changes?
- Where are the priorities for action?

3. What do we know about the supply of and demand for labour?

- In which labour / skills markets is our council facing most competition?
 - what *internal* actions (recruitment and retention) have we taken to improve our position?
 - what *mutual* actions (working with partners) have we taken?
 - what *external* actions (using external suppliers) have we taken?
- How effectively do we use recruitment and retention data alongside economic development and planning data to build a picture of future local and regional labour markets – and our council's position in them?
- How is demand for services affecting the way in which we deliver services and what are the recruitment and retention implications of these changes?

4. How well do we plan for the future?

- How corporate is our council's approach to workforce planning?
 - how do the executive / corporate management team ensure integration of workforce and service planning?
 - what is the role of workforce planning in our medium-term financial plans?
- When we plan for major changes in services, how well do we take account of workforce issues
 - corporately?
 - in services?

- What are we doing to address the challenges to the sustainability of the local public service workforce?
 - gathering information and intelligence?
 - analysing risks: opportunities and threats?
 - planning internal, mutual, or external solutions?
- Do we have an appropriate level of resources and skills to be able to conduct effective workforce planning?
 - corporately?
 - in services?
- How well do we integrate our workforce planning with our council's objectives?
 - linking workforce and other objectives?
 - promoting the business case for the workforce role in achieving other objectives?
 - using common performance indicators?
- What level have we reached on the Equality Standard for Local Government?

Activity 5: brave new world: ensuring your workforce is fit for the future

Purpose and outcome

- To develop a shared understanding of:
 - the drivers that are changing demand for council services;
 - how delivery of services might change; and
 - the implications of change for the service area and organisation's human resources.

Short summary

This activity uses a step-by-step approach to identify the key drivers that are affecting how services will be delivered in the future. It helps participants to identify and describe the implications for the workforce of those key drivers.

Who is this activity for?

This activity is designed for a group drawn from the different services within a council directorate. Ideally at least two representatives of each service would attend.

How long should the activity take?

The length of the activity will depend upon the group size, but you should allow a minimum of 1-2 hours. The participants also need to set aside some time to prepare for the activity.

Materials needed

Flip chart, PostIt notes and pens

Step-by-step instructions

Before the activity

- About a week before the workshop, the facilitator should send each participant a copy of handout 3: 'the service workforce profile'. Participants should take some time to think about their answers to each question, from the perspective of their service.

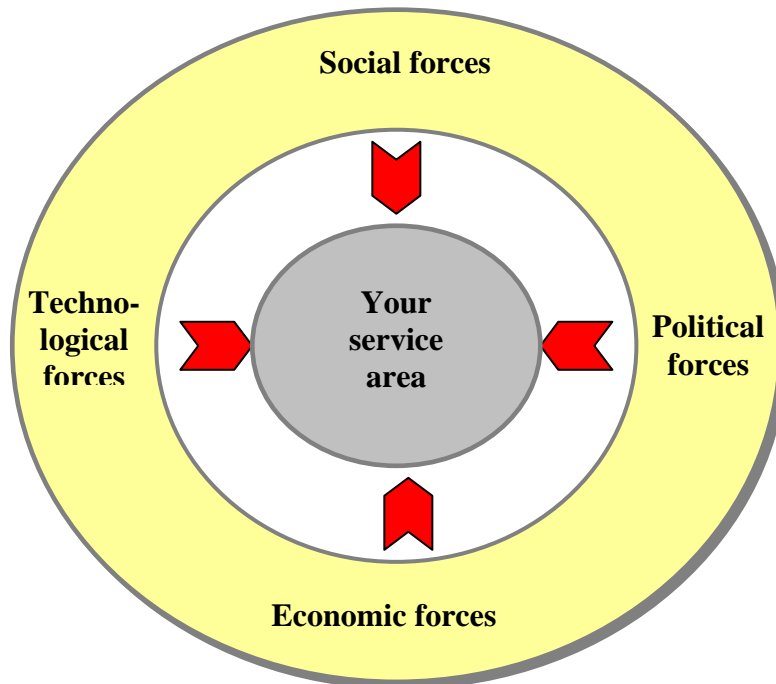
Introductory session

- Facilitator to define the purpose of the activity and shape of the session
- Confirm expectations and objectives of the session

Step one: what are the drivers that are changing our service?

- Using the PEST (political, economic, social, technological) framework (Figure 4) the group should identify the key drivers that will affect future services. In order to get the discussion going each participant should be given 5 minutes to write drivers on PostIt notes and stick them on to the PEST chart, which is hung on a wall (if it is easier each force could be on a separate flip chart). The facilitator should then lead a discussion, which clusters the drivers and considers briefly the implications of each.

Figure 4: the PEST framework



Step two: so what?

- The facilitator should ask participants to form small break-out groups according to the services in which they work (these groups may be as small as two people if only two attend from each service). Each group should think about how these drivers will affect the way in which their services might be delivered and the workforce implications of these changes for their service area. The facilitator should focus the discussion around the following themes:
 - the most significant changes and degree of change required eg transformational vs incremental change
 - the changing staff profile eg number, skills, roles of staff required (general trends rather than detail will be enough)
 - the retention challenges eg skills development, career progression, work-life balance, stress, rewards packages
 - the recruitment challenges eg supply, partnering, outsourcing, rewards packages
 - the degree of risk arising from to not addressing each challenge
- The facilitator should capture the outputs of the discussion on flipcharts under these headings.

Step three: pulling it all together

- The facilitator should lead a discussion that pulls together the groups' analyses in Step 2 in order to draw out the key cross-cutting issues that are common across service areas, and that may need to be addressed at a higher level than the service area itself.
- This may involve consideration of how services might be delivered differently. For example, if staff need to be closer to the community in order to better deliver their service then there may be potential for sharing office space

across departments or agencies. If there is a significant recruitment shortage in services where staff visit clients, then information technology could help. For example, on a visit to a council tenant, a social worker could electronically record a request for a repair to the property, with the request automatically being relayed to the housing department.

- The facilitator should capture the discussion on the flipchart.

Top tip for making it work

- This activity is about identifying the key strategic challenges ahead. These are likely to be those that apply to more than one service.

Handout 3: the service workforce profile

Service area _____

1. What are the drivers that are changing my service?
 - demographic/social changes
 - economics/budgets
 - technology
 - politics/policies

2. What are the likely human resources implications of these changes?
 - numbers of staff required
 - skills of staff required
 - training and development required
 - in-house or outsourced
 - changes to terms and conditions that may be needed

3. Where are the key staffing shortages or other workforce issues in my service?

4. What are the risks to my service if we don't address these human resources challenges?
 - delivery of the service itself
 - meeting targets
 - cost
 - quality
 - reputation
 - litigation

5. What are we already doing to address some of these issues?

Activity 6: ‘mapping the Future’: using future mapping to plan for your future workforce

Purpose and outcome

- An approach to help councils plan their future workforce – short, medium or long term.
- Participants will develop a clear vision of what their council and service will look like in the future, the workforce they will need in order to deliver that vision, and what they are going to do to ensure that a suitable workforce is in place.
- This exercise can work well after Activity 1 (‘plotting your progress: using the workforce planning self-assessment guide to assess your stage of development’), as it enables the council further to develop their picture of the future.

Short summary

Future mapping is an alternative approach to planning. It is a powerful process for agreeing a vision, deciding how to achieve it and helping people to become motivated to act, without focussing too much on current constraints. For workforce planning, participants imagine already living in the future with the workforce they need. They describe it in real terms and then ‘remember’ how they got there, which helps them then to plan action in the present.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This technique can be used at any level within the council, with any size of group.

How long should the activity take?

You should allow a minimum of one-and-a-half hours. You may need longer for a larger group.

Materials needed

Flip chart and pens.

Step-by-step instructions

Introductory session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of session and agree ground rules
- Explain the future mapping technique, its benefits for workforce planning and make sure everyone understands how the technique works.

Step one: vision session

- First, help the group to fix a future time and date as the basis for their vision, for example in 3, 5 or 10 years’ time. Your council’s corporate plan and community strategy will often suggest suitable timescales.
- Then encourage the group to describe this successful outcome **in the present tense** (as if it has already happened). For example - What is our council or service like? What does it look like? What are people saying

about it? What is it helping us do to? How does it feel different from now? How is it helping us to deliver the council's vision? What is the evidence that it is effective? Who is in the workforce now? How does it feel to work here?

Step two: how did we get there?

- The group stays in the future for this session. The next step is to look back and identify the major steps that got them to their future of excellence..
- First help the group to identify the key milestones leading to their success. For example if the group's vision is of 2013 they may want to look at what happened in 2008/9 and 2009/10 that led to this success.
- Then get the group to fill in the gaps between the milestones that helped to achieve them. What workforce planning did we do to get this result? What else happened? What changed? What did we learn that helped?

Step three: 'returning to now'

- The final step for the group is to return to real time. Having lived through the successful result of good workforce planning they should now have a much better idea of how they could make it happen in the council.
- The group should first focus on the positive. Invite them to answer the question 'what are we **already doing** that will contribute towards success in 5 years' time?'
- Then help the group to agree how it will do more detailed action planning (see Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps) to deliver the ideal workforce for the future.

Top tips for making it work

- Make sure you give the exercise sufficient time.
- Some people will find this exercise different or uncomfortable and may well doubt its benefits. Explain that it is not new – that it builds on a way of thinking that most people use to some extent when planning anyway. It does not replace other forms of planning but adds to them through encouraging creative thinking and the sharing of ideas.
- Make sure when you talk about your future success you describe it in the present tense. Try not to slip into 'we will be doing this' but rather 'we are doing this'.

Activity 7: menu of choices: understanding and evaluating your options

Purpose and outcome

- for participants to recognise that there is a range of choices available for resolving workforce challenges; and
- to evaluate the choices available.

Short summary

This activity offers two models which can help a council to identify and then evaluate the range of options available for addressing its workforce challenges. The first model draws on the research carried out for the Commission's national study, and identifies a range of short-term and long-term options, and inward-facing and outward-facing options. The second model offers a way of comparing different options to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Who is this activity suitable for?

Managers at corporate, directorate and service levels in a council.

How long should the activity take?

The models are designed to be used as part of a wider workshop activity; the time they will take to use will depend on the time available for that wider activity.

Materials needed

No special materials.

Step-by-step instructions

Step one: choosing from the menu

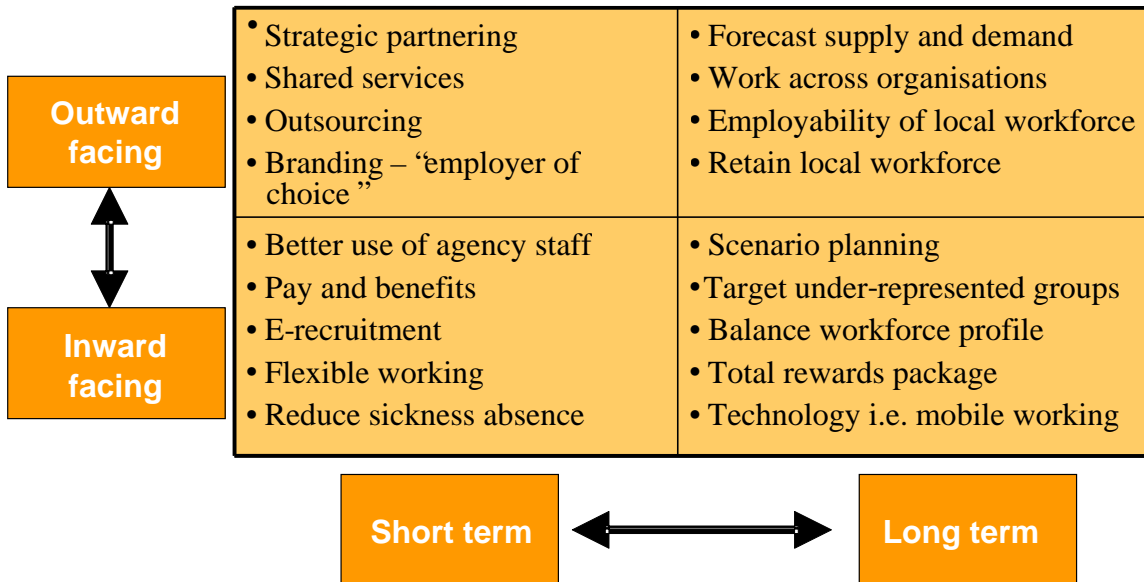
The menu of choices [Figure 5] is taken from the national report for the workforce study. It is intended to prompt a discussion about the range of options available and the merits of short-term and long-term, internal-facing and external-facing approaches.

The model illustrates the Audit Commission's conclusions that a strategic approach to workforce planning is more effective than a series of uncoordinated initiatives, and that councils should choose from a range of solutions that meet their needs and particular situations. These solutions range from outward facing partnerships to deal with the issues of today, to forecasting of future requirements and scenario planning. The best councils adopt approaches that are consistent with the maturity and local context of their organisations, informed by an understanding of different labour markets and collaborative working with their partners.

The model does not show every option that is available, but instead includes some examples in each of the boxes. Councils and services are likely to need to pursue more than one option at the same time.

Council or service management teams can use the model to structure a discussion about the range of options available to them for addressing workforce issues. The discussion is likely to generate ideas in addition to those included in Figure 5.

Figure 5: the menu of choices



Source: *Tomorrow’s People: Building a Local Government Workforce for the Future*

Step two: narrowing down the choices

The discussion of the menu of choices may have identified a wide range of options. Choosing which of the options to pursue is likely to depend on views about:

- the costs of each option;
- the ease of making any changes required, including overcoming any barriers;
- how well the option fits with the strategic approach taken by the council or the service; and
- the scale of the anticipated benefits from each option.

Completing a table like Table 1 can help in deciding which option(s) to pursue. Completing the table can be done individually, and then discussed as a group, or completed in a group discussion. By itself, the table does not identify which options to pursue – the process of filling in the table, and discussing it with others, is where the most benefit lies.

Table 1: evaluating options for addressing a shortage of social workers

Option	Cost	Benefits	Barriers
1. Introduce flexible working to retain more staff	Say, £150,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity issues in terms of case management • May be slow to implement
2. Target under-represented groups	Say, £100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will help meet diversity targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow process • Council has poor external reputation with minority groups
3. Outsourcing	Say, - £75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheaper • More flexible • Different skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union resistance • Greater dependence on supplier • Long implementation time
4. Review service delivery model eg joint appointments with PCT	Say, £60,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced cost of service over time • Better partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCT funding situation • Complexity of managing joint appointment

This is a deliberately simplified example, and assumes that there are only four options for addressing a shortage of social workers. The key point about the table is that there is no obvious single 'best' option – this will often be the case. But the table can help to focus a management team discussion about which option to pursue, and can potentially help to develop a consensus about the final choice(s) made.

Top tips for making it work

- Don't forget to factor in both the financial and non-financial consequences of the choice.
- There is unlikely to be one 'best' answer. You may need to pursue a range of short-term and long-term, internal-facing and external-facing options at the same time.

Activity 8: mapping the barriers: understanding the real blockers to effective workforce planning in our council

Purpose and outcome

- An in depth look at the **real** barriers to effective workforce planning in your council. These are often different from barriers that are publicly stated, and sometimes more complex and difficult to overcome. This activity enables the group to focus on understanding the barriers that exist fully and honestly, and come to some agreement as to which they can and want to address, how, and when.

Short summary

The session first generates a list of all the barriers to effective workforce planning that the group perceive to exist, using the McKinsey '7S' model to ensure that all aspects of the council are considered. The final session leads the group to decide which of these barriers they have control/influence over, and which they do not. The group then decides on actions for each barrier.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This technique can be used at any level within the council, with any size of group.

How long should the activity take?

This will depend on group size, but you should allow a minimum of two hours.

Materials needed

Flip chart, PostIt notes, pens and copies of Handout 4 (the McKinsey '7S' model).

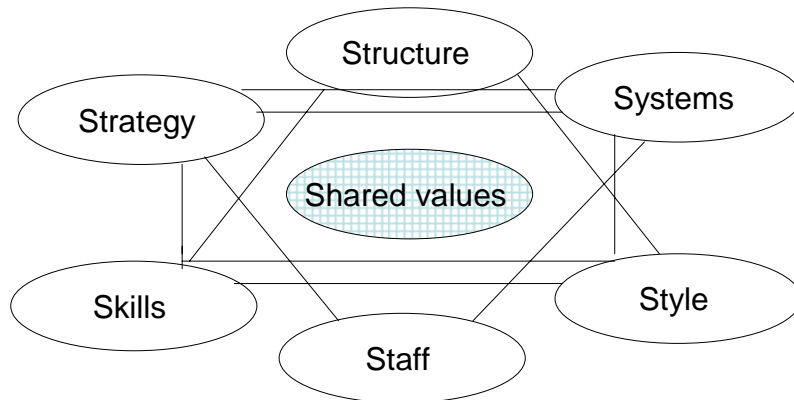
Step-by-step instructions

Introductory session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of session.
- Discuss with the group the benefits of an in-depth conversation on this topic that will help them understand what could stop them getting to their future vision of effective workforce planning.
- Explain the McKinsey '7S' model and what each heading might mean in the context of the council. The model, and some areas to consider under each heading, are outlined in Figure 6 overleaf, and in Handout 4.

Figure 6: the McKinsey 7S model

Identifying your barriers – the ‘seven S’ model



Explaining the seven ‘S’ areas:

- **Shared values.** This interconnects with all the other areas and is key to understanding them. It refers to the council’s central beliefs and attitudes – what it stands for and believes in.
Questions to ask: Does the council believe that good workforce planning is an essential part of delivering its vision and sustaining its services? Is it prepared to work with partners in a coordinated approach?
- **Strategy.** How the vision and goals are developed and how resources are allocated and prioritised to reach them.
Questions to ask: Is there a long-term workforce planning strategy and objectives? Is there a shared sense of ownership of the strategic importance of this area across the council? Are there sufficient resources to deliver the strategy? Does the top team prioritise it? Is the workforce strategy linked to wider corporate and strategic objectives?
- **Structure.** The way the council is organised into departments/units et cetera. Is it centralised/decentralised/a matrix?
Questions to ask: Does the way in which the council is organised help or hinder effective workforce planning? Does it make communication and decision-making easier or more difficult?
- **Systems.** The procedures, processes and routines that characterise how work should be done eg financial systems, recruitment and retention procedures, information and decision processes.
Questions to ask: What effective processes or systems exist for effective workforce planning? Do other systems (eg reward, communication) emphasise its importance? Are workforce planning processes integrated with

other systems? Does the council have a good idea of its data and information requirements? Does it use its data effectively to plan for workforce needs?

- **Staff.** The number and types of staff in the council.
Questions to ask: *Does the council have the right number and type of staff in the council/human resources to do effective workforce planning and convert it into action? What support do they have? Does the council need to improve the capacity of human resources and labour market specialists? Should it develop this internally/externally/with a partner?*
- **Style.** The cultural style of the council and how key managers behave in achieving its goals.
Questions to ask: *Do key leaders and managers behave in a way that shows they think effective workforce planning is important? Do they get involved? Do they take a strategic approach to recruiting and retaining staff.*
- **Skills.** The skills and capabilities that certain staff have or that are common to the council as a whole.
Questions to ask: *Who has the right skills in the council? Does it need to recruit or retrain to ensure effective workforce planning?*

Step one: brainstorming the barriers

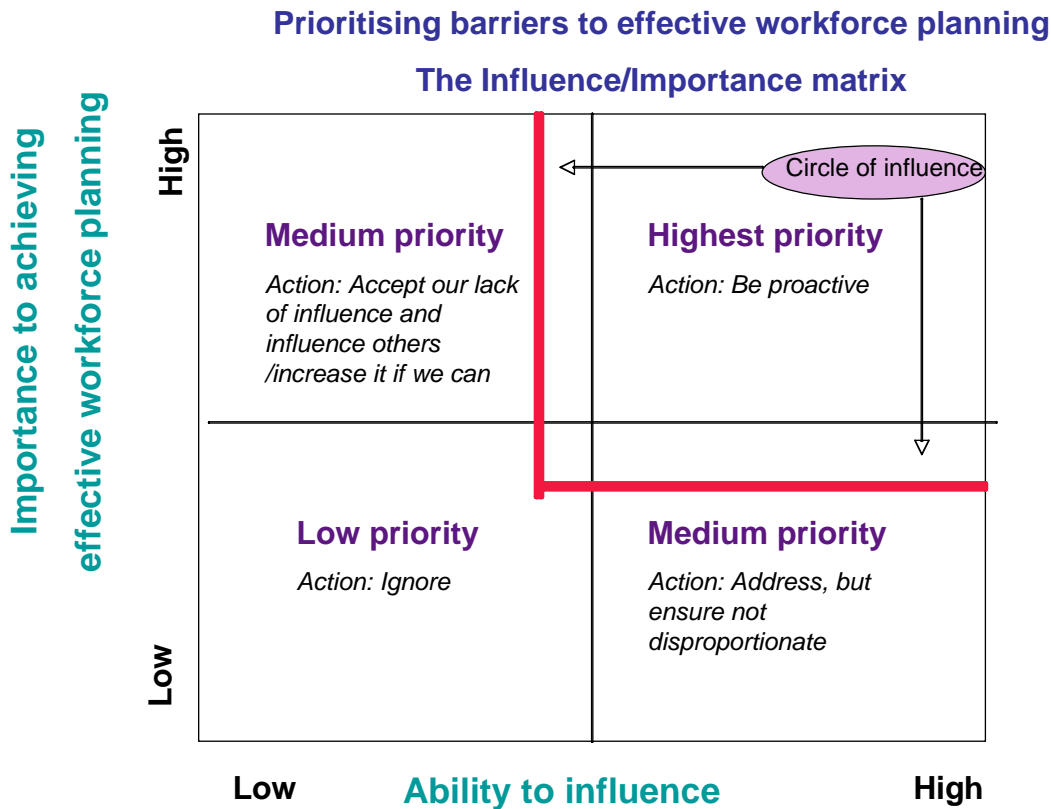
- Put up seven flipcharts, each one labelled with one of the 'S' headings.
- Ask the group (individually/in pairs/groups) to brainstorm the barriers they perceive to exist in under each heading, and to put each one on a PostIt note.
- Groups will often spend most of their time on the 'harder' areas of, for example systems and skills so you should encourage them to also think about 'softer' issues (eg style, shared values) .
- Go through each 'S' area as follows:
 - ask each individual or pair to put all their PostIt notes for the relevant area on the pre-prepared flipchart. Encourage them to notice whether they have written something similar to someone else and if so put it close by, so you can begin a grouping exercise under each of the seven 'S' areas.
 - when everyone has put their PostIt notes up lead the group to complete the grouping exercise under that area. Go through any PostIt notes that have not been grouped, checking whether they belong in another group or belong on their own. Check to see if you have groups that make sense to the participants, and then ask the participants to agree headings for each group.
 - check that the group agree to the groupings and headings – if there is any disagreement as to where a PostIt note should go then the author of the PostIt note should have the final say.
- Repeat the above process for each of the remaining seven 'S' areas.

Step two: prioritising the barriers

- Even after grouping the barriers the sheer number of barriers can feel overwhelming to a group, so the first task is to help the group to **prioritise**

the barriers in terms of how easily they can be addressed by the group. The 'influence/importance matrix' is a useful tool for doing this (Figure 7).

Figure 7: the influence/importance matrix



The matrix looks at two key dimensions, and identifies areas where the group can be proactive.

- **the importance** to achieving effective workforce planning of overcoming the barrier; and
- the degree of **influence** we have over the barrier.

As the matrix shows, barriers over which you have little or no influence and are not critical to a successful strategy should be ignored. Barriers that are not important but over which the group has high influence should be addressed but care taken that these do not consume a disproportionate amount of time. Barriers that are critical to success, but over which the group has little influence are difficult and potentially wasting of energy – the group should think of ways to reframe the barrier in a way that puts it into the top right hand corner. If that is not possible, the group should identify those with significant influence over the barrier and ask them to address it.

- Working with the whole group, go through each 'S' labelled flipchart and plot the individual groups of issues on the matrix. Use copies of each of the group headings to plot on the matrix (leave the original headings where they are).

- Invite the group to reflect on the distribution of the issues on the matrix – eg Are there more that they can be proactive about than they thought, or less?

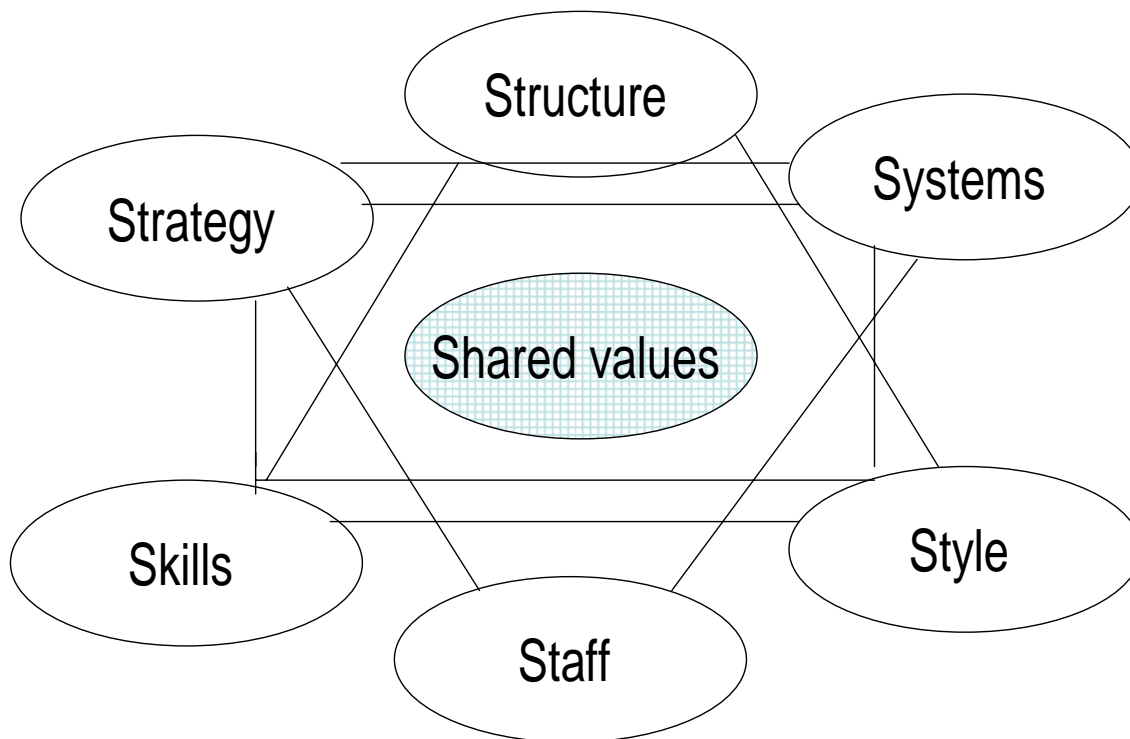
Step three: identifying action

- Now work with the group to identify action against the barriers, starting with those in the top right hand corner (highest priority). This is where the group's 'circle of influence' starts – and where action guarantees the quickest results. The group should agree who is going to do what, in what timescale. Then work with the group on addressing the medium priority areas. The results of this exercise should be fed into the detailed Action Planning session (Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps).

Top tips for making it work

- Ensure the group keeps to the rules of brainstorming, particularly in areas of honesty and confidentiality.
- Don't allow the group to get bogged down in detail, negativity or blaming of individuals
- Encourage realistic prioritisation of barriers, actions to address and agree who is going to take them forward.

Identifying your barriers – the ‘seven S’ model



Explaining the seven 'S' areas:

- **Shared values.** This interconnects with all the other areas and is key to understanding them. It refers to the council's central beliefs and attitudes – what it stands for and believes in.
Questions to ask: *Does the council believe that good workforce planning is an essential part of delivering its vision and sustaining its services? Is it prepared to work with partners in a coordinated approach?*
- **Strategy.** How the vision and goals are developed and how resources are allocated and prioritised to reach them.
Questions to ask: *Is there a long-term workforce planning strategy and objectives? Is there a shared sense of ownership of the strategic importance of this area across the council? Are there sufficient resources to deliver the strategy? Does the top team prioritise it? Is the workforce strategy linked to wider corporate and strategic objectives?*
- **Structure.** The way the council is organised into departments/units et cetera. Is it centralised/decentralised/a matrix?
Questions to ask: *Does the way in which the council is organised help or hinder effective workforce planning? Does it make communication and decision-making easier or more difficult?*
- **Systems.** The procedures, processes and routines that characterise how work should be done eg financial systems, recruitment and retention procedures, information and decision processes.
Questions to ask: *What effective processes or systems exist for effective workforce planning? Do other systems (eg reward, communication) emphasise its importance? Are workforce planning processes integrated with other systems? Does the council have a good idea of its data and information requirements? Does the council use its data effectively to plan for workforce needs?*
- **Staff.** The number and types of staff in the council.
Questions to ask: *Does the council have the right number and type of staff in the council/human resources to do effective workforce planning and convert it into action? What support do they have? Does the council need to improve the capacity of human resources and labour market specialists? Should it develop this internally/externally/with a partner?*
- **Style.** The cultural style of the council and how key managers behave in achieving its goals.
Questions to ask: *Do key leaders and managers behave in a way that shows they think effective workforce planning is important? Do they get involved? Do they take a strategic approach to recruiting and retaining staff.*
- **Skills.** The skills and capabilities that certain staff have or that are common to the council as a whole.
Questions to ask: *Who has the right skills in the council? Does the council need to recruit or retrain to ensure effective workforce planning?*

Activity 9: understanding your risks: assessing priorities for succession planning

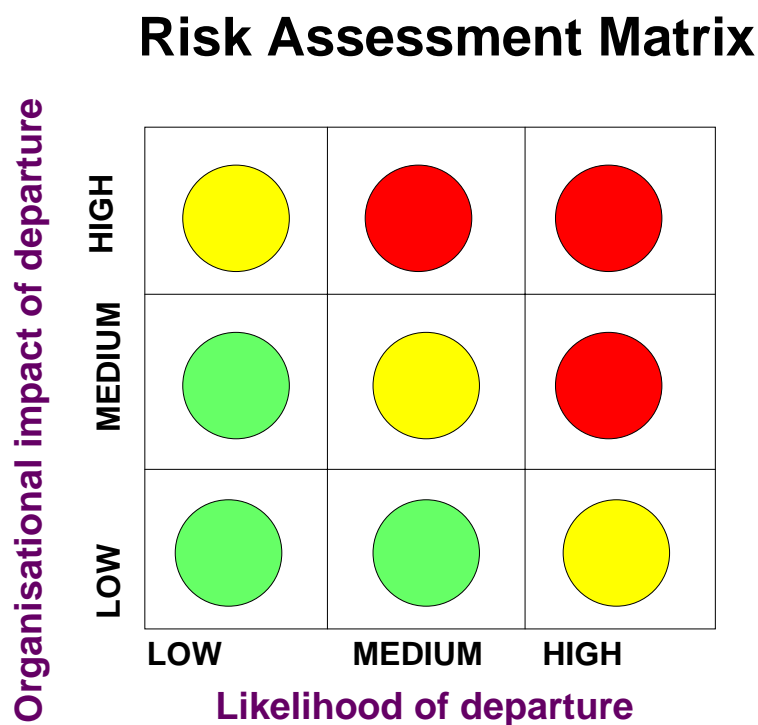
Purpose and outcome

- One of the greatest risks in any organisation is not having the right people to do the jobs that need doing. As workers become ever more mobile this risk is likely to increase.
- The risk assessment matrix (Figure 8) helps managers to carry out informed succession planning through assessing the risk of individual employees leaving and the impact that will have on the organisation's ability to deliver its vision.
- The tool gives participants a summary snapshot of their overall team/department's risk which they can then decide how to manage.

Short summary

The risk assessment matrix (Figure 8) enables managers to assess each individual in their team on two dimensions – the likelihood of their leaving and the likely impact of their departure on the organisation. The manager can then assess the risk to the department/team as a whole, and make an informed judgement about how to address each individual situation.

Figure 8: risk assessment matrix



Source: based on materials created by Roger Britton, Head of Human Resources at Worcestershire County Council. Our thanks to Roger for giving us permission to adapt his materials.

The areas highlighted in red are the department's/team's area of greatest risk and where managers need to focus retention or succession planning efforts. The green areas should be of little concern, and the yellow areas are where the managers will need to keep a 'watching brief'.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This tool can be used by individual team managers, with or without their direct reports, groups of managers/directors who might want to look at a whole department, or by a council's top team who can think about different groups in the workforce.

How long should the activity take?

This depends on the size of the group, but allow at least an hour.

Materials needed

Flip chart, pens and a copy of Handout 5 for each participant

Step-by-step instructions

This example is for a facilitated group exercise with a group of departmental team managers looking at key **individuals** in their team. If you were using it with a top team, you might look at key **groups** of employees instead (eg primary school teachers, care assistants, planners et cetera).

Introductory session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of session.
- Explain the risk assessment matrix, how it works and the benefits for succession planning. Ensure you cover the following:
 - there is a fundamental shift in the nature of work today. The old idea of a job for life is long gone – councils can no longer offer that luxury and employees often do not want to be tied to an organisation for more than a certain length of time.
 - people tend to think of risk management in terms of health and safety or IT – but one of the greatest risks is lack of the right people to do the job. So managers need to assess how great their risk is.

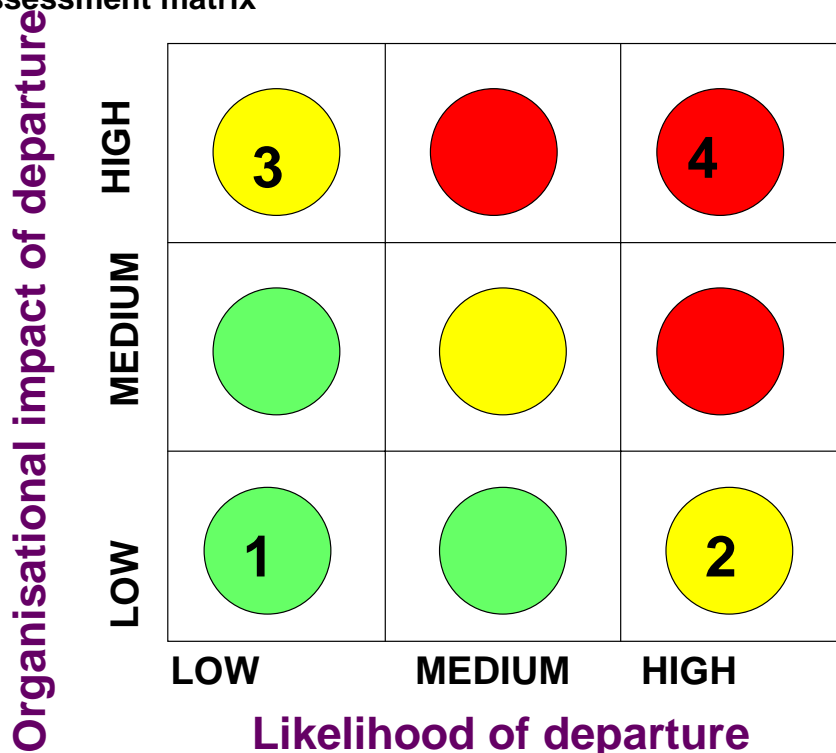
Step one: assessing my risks

- Ask each manager to go through each member of their team and ask the following questions
 - i. what is the **likelihood** that this individual will leave (low medium or high)? (The likelihood of an individual leaving will depend on their life stage (eg near retirement or looking to take a break from work), satisfaction with their current position and any 'pull' factors of attractive alternative jobs.)
 - ii. what would the likely **impact** be on the organisation of this individual leaving (low medium or high)?

The impact of their leaving will depend on the organisation's reliance on that individual, how unique their skills and knowledge are, and how pivotal a role they play in achieving the council's objectives. This will include not only more obvious technical or specialist roles, but also individuals that 'oil the wheels' – or get things done in ways that may not be quite so formally recognised.

- Ask each manager to plot their judgements about each team member on the matrix (Figure 9).

Figure 9: judgements about four members of staff plotted on the risk assessment matrix



The numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 represent example employees, and the conclusions that a manager could draw.

Employee 1 – Low concern. They are unlikely to depart and even if they did the impact of that departure would be minimal.

Employee 2 - Low concern. They may well be likely to leave the council, but possess few skills that can not be replaced. It may however be worth checking that they don't have other valuable attributes.

Employee 3 – Medium concern. They would leave a significant gap if they left. Although the likelihood of them going seems low managers should check on an ongoing basis that their judgement is correct.

Employee 4 - High concern. These employees seem close to deciding to go and their departure would cause great disruption. Managers here have a choice

between trying to make him/her stay or planning for their replacement in a considered way.

- Based on their individual matrix, each manager should assess whether their overall risk is high, medium or low.
- Ask each manager to share their assessment with the wider group, and encourage a summary assessment for the whole department. Which teams are most at risk? Are there any common issues or themes that emerge eg is it one particular type of employee/skill who is in the high risk group in all teams?

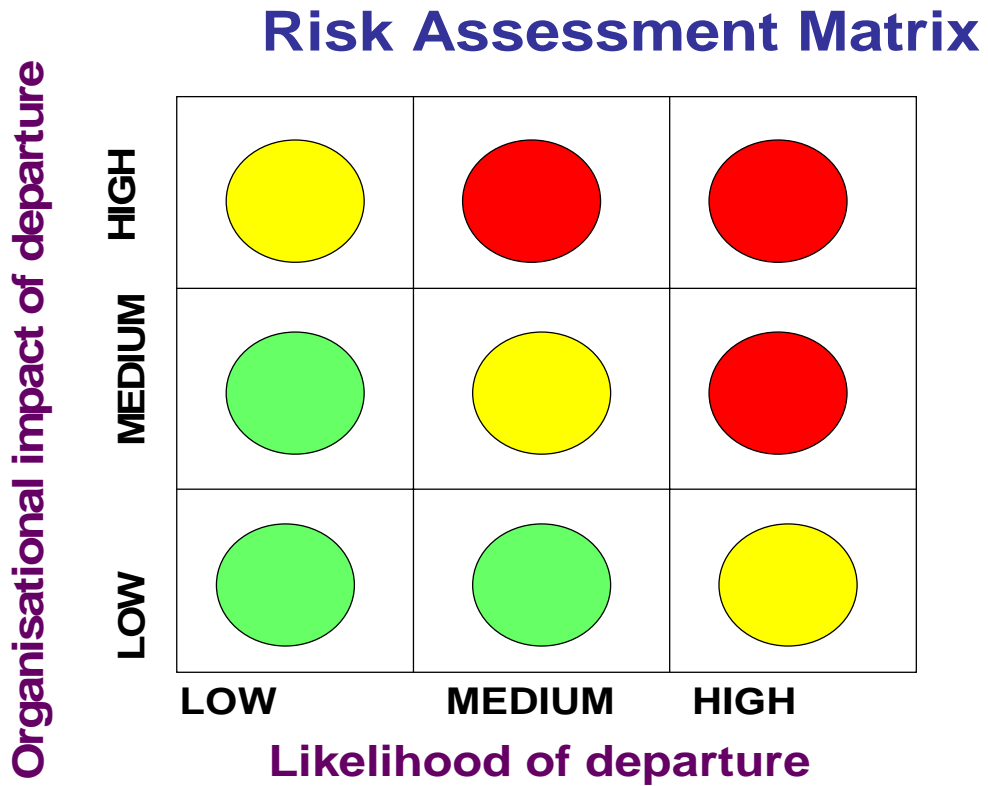
Step two: deciding on action

- This session needs to focus on both individual and departmental actions.
- First ask each manager to spend some time thinking/planning how they are going to address their 'high concern' individuals.
- Secondly ask the group to discuss and decide if there are any common issues that they need to address as the management team, or highlight to a higher level.
- Activity 10 – 'Moving to act – a planning framework' offers a structure for more detailed future planning.

Top tips for making it work

- Encourage people to be as honest and open as possible, while asking the group to ensure everything remains confidential.
- Encourage individuals to think through each individual carefully and not make too hasty a judgement about their likelihood of departure or their value to the organisation.
- Encourage participants to think and plan further around these issues after the workshop.

Handout 5: the risk assessment matrix



Activity 10: moving to act: using a planning framework to agree next steps

Purpose and outcome

- This activity helps to complete many of the earlier activities in this booklet by focussing on the last but important stage in any exercise: action planning. This activity is of particular value if used to bring together a range of actions agreed in other workforce planning exercises in one place.
- The group will develop a simple framework (Table 2, overleaf) which outlines specific actions that they are going to take, their priority ratings, and commitments to timescales and individual ownership.

Short summary

The facilitator works with the group to complete the action plan framework in a specific and focussed way. Individuals responsible for actions share any concerns they have and ask the rest of the group for support in resolving them. The group then agree how the plan will be used to monitor progress.

How long should the activity take?

This depends on the size of the group, but allow one to one-and-a-half hours.

Who is this activity suitable for?

This can be used with any team of any size and level.

Materials needed

Flip chart and pens, large piece of paper, empty versions of the action planning framework for participants and a larger one for the wall.

Step-by-step instructions

Introductory session

- Confirm expectations and objectives of session.
- Explain the action planning framework, how it leads on from earlier sessions and ensure everyone understands.

Step one: action planning

- Ask all participants to brainstorm the actions they think have been agreed in earlier sessions on PostIt notes.
- Put up a large piece of paper and ask participants to transfer their PostIt notes to this. Ask them to notice if they have something similar to someone else so that you can begin to organise the actions into groups. Ensure their action is **specific** eg 'improve the IT system' is too vague – they need to be clearer about **how** this will be done.
- Complete the grouping of actions with the wider group and ask participants to give each category a heading (eg 'improving systems', 'communication' et cetera). Check for any disagreements/differences in interpretation.
- Put up your larger version of the empty action planning framework on the wall. It should look something like this:

Table 2: an action planning framework

Action we will take	Priority	Individual who will lead	When it will be finished

- Working with the whole group, take each action category and go through the action planning framework for each individual action within it. Ensure you do the following:
 - be as specific as possible about the action and the timing ('summer' is not specific enough!)
 - give each action a priority rating of 1, 2, or 3 (1 is the highest priority). This will help participants not feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of things that need to be done!
 - ensure an **individual** in the room (not a group or an individual who is not present in the room) signs up to lead on ensuring that action takes place.
- Then ask each individual to look at what they have committed to and share any thoughts and concerns with the group. These may be new barriers they have thought of, or other issues. Ask others to suggest any ideas they may have. This is important to ensure people leave the room feeling able to act.
- Get the group to agree how they will use the action plan as a living document to monitor progress. They need to agree how to manage it eg who is responsible for updating/revising it? How often and in which forum will it be reviewed?

Top tips for making it work

- Encourage the group to be as specific as possible.
- Check for ownership – are the actions shared relatively evenly among the group or has one person ended up being responsible for most of it?
- Ensure that people who are leading the action feel empowered and supported by others to carry it out – this is critical to success.