

Local Government workforce survey 2011/12: summary findings for England



Introduction

The Local Government Workforce Survey 2011/12 provides information on key elements of the workforce within councils. The survey was conducted by Local Government Association Research and Information Team and updates previous surveys in this series.

All Heads of Human Resources (or equivalent position) in England were asked to complete an online survey between September and November 2012. The final response rate achieved was 48 per cent (168 authorities). By authority type, response was highest from shire counties (63 per cent) and lowest from shire districts (44 per cent). Regionally, response was highest from Yorkshire and the Humber (68 per cent) and lowest from the East Midlands (38 per cent).

Type of authority	No. of respondents	No. surveyed	Response rate (%)
London Borough	15	33	45
Metropolitan District	18	36	50
Shire County	17	27	63
Shire District	88	201	44
Unitary Authority	30	52	58
England	168	353	48

Type of authority	No. of respondents	No. surveyed	Response rate (%)
East Midlands	17	45	38
East of England	23	52	44
London	15	33	45
North East	7	12	58
North West	17	41	41
South East	34	74	46
South West	19	41	46
West Midlands	21	33	64
Yorkshire and the Humber	15	22	68
England	168	353	48

Findings

Training and development

- Sixty five per cent of authorities had Investors in People (IiP) status for the whole of their authority; a further six per cent of councils had recognised IiP for part of their authority. In total for responding authorities 69 per cent of the local government workforce was covered by IiP status
- In addition, three per cent were committed to achieving IiP recognition for the whole or part of the authority in the future, 14 per cent were not yet involved and 11 per cent had rejected involvement.
- In 2011/12 the median gross training expenditure (GTE) was £178 per employee.

Table 3: Gross training expenditure per employee for 2011/12 by all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Gross training expenditure per employee	Median	£125	£223	£178
	Mean	£180	£219	£203
	Base	51	70	121

- In 2011/12 the median GTE per member was £143.

Table 4: Gross training expenditure per member in 2011/12 by all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Gross training expenditure per member	Median	£200	£135	£143
	Mean	£240	£165	£202
	Base	47	48	95

- Councils reported a median average of 0.9 off-the-job training days per employee in 2011/12.

Table 5: Off-the-job training days per employee in 2011/12 by all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Off-the-job training days per employee	Median	0.5	1.7	0.9
	Mean	0.6	2.0	1.3
	Base	28	27	55

- On average there was a median average of five apprentices per council in 2011/12, and 17 work experience placements.

Table 6: Number of apprentices and work experience placements by all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Apprentices	Median	29	2	5
	Mean	34	4	18
	Base	74	88	162
Work experience	Median	34	9	17
	Mean	67	14	35
	Base	49	76	125

Recruitment and retention

- Councils were asked if they had experienced an increase in recruitment and retention difficulties in the 2011/12 financial year:
 - 61 per cent stated that they had not experienced an increase in difficulties for recruitment or retention;
 - 31 per cent stated that they had experienced an increase in recruitment difficulties;
 - 15 per cent had experienced an increase in retention difficulties;
 - Six per cent did not know.
- Of those (62 councils) experiencing an increase in recruitment difficulties over half (63 per cent) reported that this was in children's and education services, with a third (33 per cent) reporting a shortage in adult social care, and just over a quarter (27 per cent) selecting central services.
- Of those (26 councils) experiencing an increase in retention difficulties, 18 councils stated that this was for children's and education services, 11 for adult social care and six for planning services.
- The median average annual labour turnover rate for 2011/12 was 13 per cent.

Table 7: Annual labour turnover rate by English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Annual labour turnover rate	Median	14.3	11.6	13.1
	Mean	14.7	12.8	13.8
	Base	76	75	151

- The median average annual vacancy rate on 1st April 2012 was around five per cent.

Table 8: Annual vacancy rate by English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Annual vacancy rate	Median	6.3	2.3	4.5
	Mean	8.4	3.9	6.3
	Base	42	37	79

Sickness absence

- The median average sickness absence level in England 8.2 days per full-time employee (FTE).
- One hundred and twenty two councils were able to provide a breakdown of their long term/short term sickness absence rates. Long term sickness absence was 4.6 days per FTE and short term sickness absence a median average of 3.6 days per FTE.

Table 9: Sickness absence rate in 2011/12				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Sickness absence rate (FTE total)	Median	8.9	7.6	8.2
	Mean	9.1	7.8	8.4
	Base	74	83	157
Sickness absence rate (long term total)	Median	5.1	3.7	4.6
	Mean	5.4	3.9	4.7
	Base	60	60	120
Sickness absence rate (short term total)	Median	3.6	3.8	3.7
	Mean	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Base	60	60	120

- Councils provided data on the percentage of their days lost to sickness absence. For short and long-term sickness absence combined, on average councils lost a median of 3.6 per cent of their total contracted hours.
- Seventy three councils were able to provide a breakdown of their long term and short term days lost to sickness absence. The percentage of days lost to long term absence was a median average of 2.0, whilst short term was a median average of 1.5.

Table 10: Percentage of days lost to sickness absence by all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
Days lost to sickness absence in total (overall)	Median	3.7	3.1	3.6
	Mean	4.5	3.9	4.2
	Base	48	36	84
Days lost to sickness absence (Long term total)	Median	2.1	1.7	2.0
	Mean	2.6	2.3	2.5
	Base	40	30	70
Days lost to sickness absence (Short term total)	Median	1.6	1.5	1.5
	Mean	1.5	1.9	1.7
	Base	40	30	70

- The top three causes of sickness absence¹ were stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue (21.7 per cent), followed by other muscular skeletal problems (14.7 per cent) and back and neck problems (12.3 per cent).
- On average there was a median of 23 incidents of external unacceptable behaviour against employees per council (a mean of 117)²; for the 99 councils who responded, this equates to an incident rate of approximately 1,400 incidents per 100,000 employees (or 1.4 per 100).

¹ This excludes and councils who stated that over 25 per cent of their days lost was caused by 'other' types of sickness absence, as it suggested their coding of sickness absence causes was not precise, and this would skew the overall findings for the causes of sickness absence.

² Please note that the mean is much higher than the median as it is skewed by a small number of authorities which have had a high number of incidents of external unacceptable behaviour.

Leadership development

- On average (median), the percentage of the top five per cent of earners who were women was 43 per cent, while three per cent had a disability and two per cent were from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups.

Table 11: Top 5 per cent of earners for all English authorities and authority type				
		County/single tier authorities	Shire districts	All authorities
From Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) groups	Median	4%	0% ³	2%
	Mean	7%	2%	4%
	Base	78	84	162
With a disability	Median	3%	1%	3%
	Mean	4%	4%	4%
	Base	78	83	161
Women	Median	51%	31%	43%
	Mean	51%	32%	41%
	Base	78	83	161

- Over two fifths of respondents (41 per cent) reported that their authority had a remuneration committee or panel to oversee the rewards package for the chief executive, with two per cent planning to implement one in the 2012/13 financial year. Seventeen per cent stated that this existing committee had representation from outside the council.
- Nearly two-fifths (38 per cent) of authorities reported that their authority had a remuneration committee or panel to oversee the rewards package for senior officers, with two per cent planning to implement one in the 2012/13 financial year. Thirteen per cent stated that this existing committee had representation from outside the council.

Pay and rewards

³ The majority of shire districts (54 out of the 84) reported that they did not employ any people from BAME groups in their top five per cent of earners. The maximum percentage of people from BAME groups in the top five per cent of earners for the remaining 32 shire districts was 10 per cent.

For all responding councils:

- The majority of councils (83 per cent) stated that they were using 'other flexible benefits' (such as salary sacrifice schemes) in their rewards approach, followed by 'other flexible leave benefits' (57 per cent).
- The majority of councils (70 per cent) were using a 'time served' (that is, annual incremental progression) pay system for the majority of their staff; whilst just under a fifth of councils (19 per cent) were using performance-related pay for the majority of their staff.
- Nearly a quarter of councils (24 per cent) had carried out a review of their reward structure, with 29 per cent carrying out a review of their grading structure.

Senior staff cost reduction

- The majority of councils (61 per cent) had reduced the number of senior staff in the 2011/12 financial year, and 20 per cent making other changes to terms and conditions for senior staff.

Employee-led organisations

- Seven per cent of councils (twelve councils) had received requests to set up an employee-led organisation and, of these, 10 councils had supported these requests.
- Eight per cent expected to actively promote employee-led organisations in the 2012/13 financial year, with 49 per cent stating they would not and the remainder being unsure.



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