

Workforce Planning

At it's simplest, workforce planning is about predicting the future demand for different types of staff and seeking to match this with supply.

What is workforce planning?

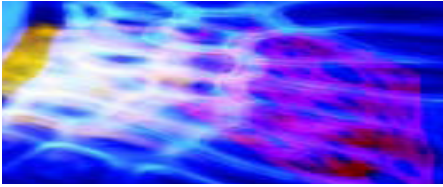
It's a cliché but it remains true that a council's most important asset is its people. Without the right people, it is unlikely that even the most comprehensive corporate and finance plans will deliver the step change in performance being demanded of local government.

Effective workforce planning is an important tool to support councils maximise resources and build capacity in a structured and planned way. People are the key to successful improvement and capacity building, and organisations that plan well are equipped to manage both day to day business needs and to address changing priorities.

Workforce issues are often viewed as an operational responsibility of limited relevance to strategic objectives. In the best performing councils, members, chief executives and heads of service engage strategically in workforce issues. Workforce planning has a central role to play in delivering improved services, and is an important issue for the corporate management of councils. Crucially, to be fully effective, workforce planning needs to include longer term thinking about future corporate and service pressures and needs, and what councils need to do now to get workable strategies in place in order to link service, financial and change management priorities with people plans.

Why is workforce planning necessary?

People are a key driver of organisational success. But a council's workforce and its management can be viewed as a largely operational area of limited relevance to achieving strategic objectives. As a result, there may be strategic oversight and management of planning, recruiting, developing, retaining and budgeting for councils' workforces. However, improving workforce planning can help councils achieve key corporate priorities such as service transformation, efficiency gains and mainstreaming equalities.



The main drivers for workforce planning are: -

Political and policy change - best value, inspections, modernisation etc have significant implications for service delivery and employment practice.

Labour market - labour market trends have implications for recruitment and retention of local government staff, and authorities already face difficulties in some occupations.

Demographic and social change - demographic change such as the ageing population affecting both the demand for services and the workforce supply.

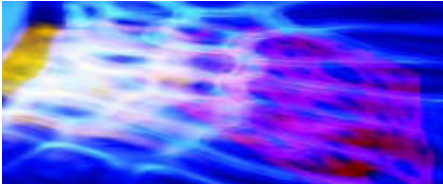
Technological change - technological change is leading to changes in service delivery, and changes in ways of working and the skills needed in the workforce.

Benefits of workforce planning

There is a positive correlation between effective workforce planning and comprehensive performance assessment results.

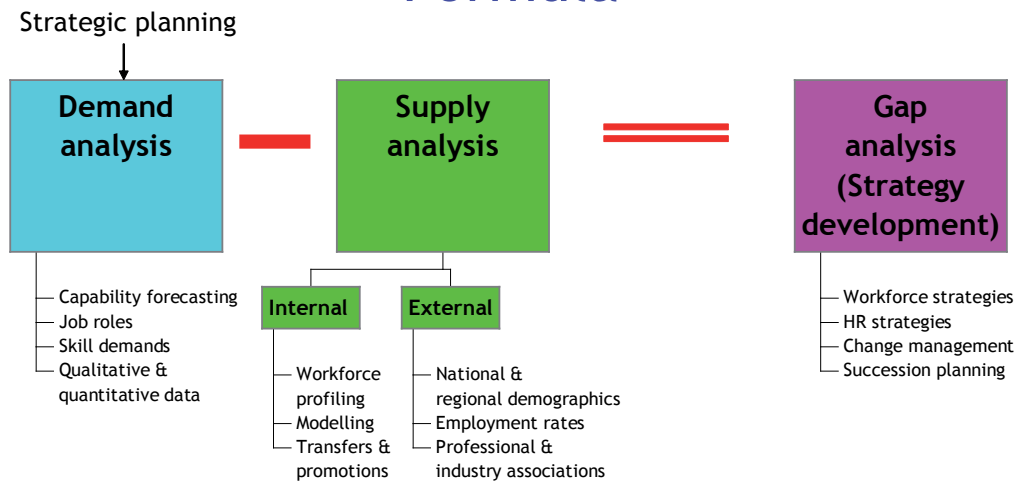
Workforce planning can help councils: -

- Deliver improved services by linking corporate strategy to people plans
- Determine what skills are required and how many employees are and will be needed
- Better manage supply at national, regional and local levels to meet demand
- Reduce competition between councils for staff
- Collaborate to increase specific labour supply
- Manage employment expenditure by anticipating changes
- Provide information to predict and address peaks and troughs in supply and demand for different skills
- Promote the sharing of good practice and development of benchmarks
- Make more informed and effective use of learning and development investments
- Retain employees and identify longer term workplace asset requirements
- Implement diversity policies effectively



Stages of Workforce Planning

Formula



Key questions for councils

What is the shape of your workforce? - Reliable, up to date information is crucial. The minimum data for effective workforce planning will include job title and job description, location and length of service, personal employee details and figures on vacancies, turnover and wastage, reasons for leaving and destination, qualifications and skills.

How is it changing? - Where are the current and potential pinch points and how is the council dealing with and preparing for them?

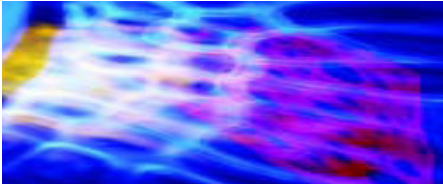
How well are you managing your workforce? - What is the productivity, turnover and absence rate, what recruitment and retention techniques are in place and how effective are they, what investment is being made in training and development and what is its impact?

How do the figures compare with regional and national averages?

What are the priorities of your key partners and how are you reflecting these in your workforce plans?

What do you know about relevant labour markets? - In which labour / skills markets is your council facing most competition and how effectively does it use recruitment and retention data alongside economic development and planning data to build a picture of future local and regional labour markets and your position in them?

What are the potential workforce implications of short, medium



and long-term strategic plans? - Scenario planning is important to consider different corporate and service decisions and directions to ensure the business strategy is as flexible and informed as possible.

What are the findings? - The result will be an analysis from which you can develop a strategy or series of strategies to bridge the gaps identified such as workforce strategy, change management, succession planning, skills development, structural refinements and ensure workforce planning is integrated into the wider planning process.

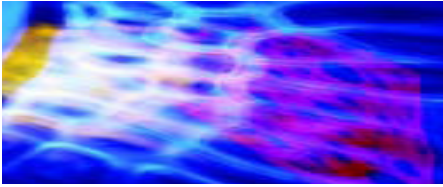
Workforce and capacity planning

Introduction

The Improvement Service, in conjunction with COSLA and the Society of Personnel Directors Scotland is leading the initial stage of the national workforce and capacity-planning project.

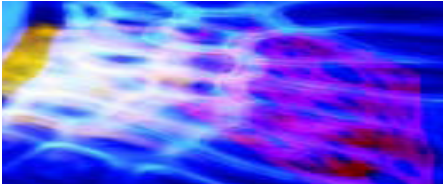
A team of secondees from 6 councils has been established to work in conjunction with IS staff which has progressed the 5 key activity areas identified by Cosla leaders. The key findings and developments are summarised below.

- 1 Marshalling existing labour market analysis and workforce planning data and approaches.
 - Extensive data is already collected by a range of organisations in different formats for a variety of purpose. This is not necessarily coordinated, shared or made available to councils for local workforce planning purposes.
 - There are established workforce planning resources and expertise at a national level for a number of job groups in councils.
 - There is considerable scope to exploit the available information, remove duplication and more effectively share resources. This will hopefully minimise the impact of the demand for information on councils.
 - All 32 councils participated in structured interviews, which provided a detailed picture of individual and collective activity and resources within councils.
 - In a number of councils profiling and planning activity is being carried out with community planning partners for particular job groups.
 - Links have been made to other organisations and agencies that are involved in planning or development of particular



job groups within councils.

- 2 Working with councils to create national demographic data templates to gather consistent and relevant data.
 - Baseline national data is essential for effective national workforce planning.
 - The national template needs to be sufficiently flexible to reflect local and regional circumstances.
 - Councils are 32 discrete entities with no commonality in terms of pay arrangements, grades, job titles, information systems and service structures.
 - The Standard Occupational Classifications developed by the Office of National Statistics has been used as a basis for establishing a common framework in order to articulate the national workforce. The proposals in this respect are being considered in relation to the interface with the national recruitment portal.
 - Councils were asked to complete the data template for 4 job groups that were consistently highlighted in the structured interviews as being, or likely to become, problematic in terms of recruitment, retention and skills development - Planners, Environmental Health Officers, Solicitors, and Engineers.
 - 22 of the 32 councils completed the template for the 4 job groups and 4 of the 25 impressively did so for their entire workforce.
- 3 Supporting councils to collect information, use information, and develop workforce planning.
 - Meetings were held with councils at various stages of the project and a number of councils provided a valuable 'critical friend' role to ensure the practical implications for councils of the proposals were explored.
 - Cosla and the Society of Personnel Directors Scotland have provided strategic direction and acted as a useful sounding board.
 - Examples of good practice that have been identified have been documented and will be shared among councils.
 - Professional organisations and other relevant public and private sector agencies relating to the 4 job groups have, or will be, involved in the project.
 - A framework for regional workshops has been established which will be linked with other appropriate national and regional professional groups.



- 4 Analysis of data to identify resourcing and skills trends, and issues to improve councils' capability to interpret and apply data in their own workforce planning activity.
 - The data once fully analysed will provide valuable information to help inform and direct national workforce planning activities for the 4 job groups.
 - The data will also provide a framework on which to pilot analytical and modelling techniques for use within the wider workforce when full baseline data is available.
 - Workforce planning has a central role to play in delivering improved services, and is an important issue for the corporate management of councils particularly when aligned with strategic and service planning.
 - While there is considerable commitment within councils to progress workforce planning current activity is largely committed to workforce profiling and there is a recognition that further work is necessary and that the process needs to consider demand analysis and the wider external environment and labour market.

- 5 Working with COSLA and stakeholders to promote local government requirements with universities, colleges, skills councils, etc.
 - Discussions are ongoing with a number of professional bodies, skills councils, academic institutions, Scottish Government policy teams etc. to address known and anticipated skills requirements and more generally to develop partnerships that address local government requirements.
 - Relevant Sector Skills Councils and the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils have been contacted to establish existing available information to help inform the current project and promote the interests of local government in more general skills development activities.
 - Discussions to date have identified considerable opportunities for local government to participate in and contribute to debate and development at a national level to more effectively exploit available transferable knowledge and resources to support this process.

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Next Steps

A report, based on the detailed findings of the project will be submitted to a future COSLA Leaders meeting.

