

# Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18

Research report  
June 2019



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## Foreword

Once again, we would like to thank all those who took the time to complete this survey. We recommend that the report is used to inform local discussions on vital organisational and workforce issues. At a national level, the analysis of the previous survey was used to develop the recently published [Workforce Focus](#) which sets out the results of the LGA's consultation on priorities for workforce improvement across local government and shares ideas and recommendations. This latest survey will help us take forward our programme of support work at a national level.

Councils continue to carry out major change programmes which affect the workforce and it is important to see how priorities are judged and tackled in this context. This foreword looks very briefly at a few highlights from the survey. As always we have to caution that the samples each year do not necessarily match, so trends can be difficult to interpret and statistically significant changes have a higher threshold. The response rate to the survey has improved this year which is most welcome and shows the importance that the sector attaches to benchmarking and the ability to inform policy development with good quality data.

Average spending on training and development for staff in respondent authorities is about the same as last year in cash terms across all councils; and in line with last year 60 per cent of respondents intend to retain current levels of spending next year. The average number of days per person spent in off-the-job training currently stands at one day which is encouraging.

Average vacancy rates appear to have remained static and there is little or no change in turnover. It is possible that vacancy rates reflect the availability of jobs in other sectors, especially as the survey shows that recruitment and retention difficulties remain high overall; with targeted recruitment campaigns the most common responses to these difficulties. The biannual examination of recruitment and retention issues for key jobs was included in the survey this year, showing some interesting increases compared to 2015/16. Changes include: increases in market supplements for planning officers and adult social workers, increases in recruitment difficulties of finance and environmental health officers as well as recruitment and retention difficulties of legal professionals; detailed information can be found in the annex.

Working days lost to sickness absence has remained the same as has the more straightforward measure of average days lost per FTE employee.

Some special questions were asked about the effects of Brexit, including an attempt to identify the number of EU and EEA nationals in local government

employment. There is a variation in the extent of the effect that Brexit appears to be having with roughly equal numbers of councils noticing or not noticing changes in the numbers leaving or applying for jobs.

The survey looks regularly at diversity in leadership. There have been no significant changes in the percentage of women in the top five per cent of earners, nor in the percentage of people who are Black, Asian or from other minority groups or people with a disability in the top five per cent.

Overall, the survey shows no dramatic changes. There are perhaps some marginal improvements, but it is too early to say if they are trends, whilst other indicators remain static. This indicates that the challenges around recruiting the right workforce and keeping people engaged remain as strong as ever.

The LGA has a variety of commentaries, tools and offers on a wide variety of issues available at [www.local.gov.uk/workforce](http://www.local.gov.uk/workforce). As well as advice on employment law and industrial relations, our work focuses increasingly on the priorities set out in Workforce Focus around leadership, organisational change, recruitment and retention, skills and pay and reward.

*The Local Government Association's Workforce Team*

## Summary

The Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18 provides information on key elements of the workforce within local authorities in England. The figures provided by councils include school support staff, but exclude teachers. The survey is conducted annually by the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information team and the previous surveys in the series can be found on the Local Government Association (LGA) website<sup>1</sup>. All data refers to the financial year 2017/18 unless otherwise stated.

All heads of human resources (or equivalent position) in England were asked to complete an online survey between February and April 2019. The final overall response rate achieved was 50 per cent (174 councils<sup>2</sup>). By council type, the response rate was highest from metropolitan districts (64 per cent / 23 councils) and lowest from shire districts (44 per cent / 87 councils).

Regionally, response was highest from Yorkshire and the Humber (86 per cent / 19 councils) and lowest from the East Midlands (33 per cent / 15 councils)

### Summary of results

- The median gross training expenditure per full time equivalent employee was £143 and three fifths (60 per cent) of respondent councils planned to maintain current levels of spending during 2018/19.
- The median gross training expenditure on member development per councillor was £76 and just over half (52 per cent) planned to maintain current levels of spending during 2018/19.
- On average 0.97 days were spent on off-the-job training per employee.
- In 2017/18 there was a median of 14 apprentices, 9 work experience placements and one graduate placement per council.
- There was a median average labour turnover rate of 13.4 per cent and a median average vacancy rate of 8.0 per cent.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-workforce-survey-201617>

<sup>2</sup> The survey was sent to 350 authorities as a result of shared services.

- Under TUPE there was a median of one person transferred into employment of a council and two transferred out of a council in 2017/18.
- One in ten respondent councils (10 per cent) had a recruitment freeze in place at some point during 2017/18.
- Nearly four in five councils (78 per cent) noted that their council was currently experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties.
- Three quarters of councils (75 per cent) used targeted recruitment campaigns to correct the difficulties they were having with recruitment and retention.
- Per council there was a median of nine non-UK or Republic of Ireland EU nationals directly employed and around half had not noticed a reduction in the number of EU/EEA nationals applying for posts (46 per cent), or noticed an increase in number of EU/EEA nationals leaving the organisation (54 per cent).
- Almost all councils (99 per cent) said they encourage staff to work flexibly.
- More than nine in ten councils (93 per cent) said flexible working is available to employees at all levels and across all departments within the organisation, where it is operationally feasible.
- Over half (57 per cent) included a statement in job adverts to say the council is open to discussing flexible working options from day one e.g. that there can be flexibility on hours or location, or start and finish times for the right candidate.
- More than six out of ten respondent councils (62 per cent) said hiring managers and recruiters are trained in how to answer questions from candidates about flexible working practices during the recruitment process.
- On average, 3.6 per cent of days were lost due to sickness and 8.8 days per FTE employee.
- The most frequently reported cause of sickness absence was “stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue” (26.8 per cent of days lost).
- On average 49.3 per cent of the top 5 per cent of earners were women, 3.1 per cent were Black, Asian or from other Minority Ethnic (BAME)

groups and 3.3 per cent identified as having a disability.

- Eight out of ten respondents (79 per cent) reported that their council was using “other flexible benefits (including salary sacrifice schemes)” in their approach to employee rewards
- Three quarters of respondent councils (75 per cent) use “time served (i.e. annual incremental progression)” as the system of individual pay progression for the majority of staff.

## Introduction

The Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18 provides information on key elements of the workforce within councils and includes data on school support staff, but excludes teachers. The survey was conducted by the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information Team and updates previous surveys in the series.

## Methodology

The survey was conducted by the LGA's Research and Information team using an online form. An email containing a unique link was sent to 350<sup>3</sup> heads of human resources (or equivalent position) in English councils.

The survey was available to complete online between February and April 2019. The final overall response rate from the workforce survey was 50 per cent (174 councils).

Table 1 shows response rate by council type. The response rate was highest from metropolitan districts (64 per cent / 23 councils) and lowest from shire districts (44 per cent / 87 councils).

<b>Table 1: Response rates by council type</b>		
<b>Council type</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
Metropolitan District	23	64
Shire County	17	63
English Unitary	30	54
London Borough	17	53
Shire District	87	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>50</b>

Regionally, response was highest from Yorkshire and the Humber (86 per cent / 19 councils) and lowest from the East Midlands (33 per cent / 15 councils) (Table 2).

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<sup>3</sup> Wandsworth and Richmond Upon Thames are a shared authority and were sent one survey to cover the two authorities. Likewise, Weymouth and Portland also included North Dorset and West Dorset. These shared service authorities reduced the total number of authorities from 353 to 350.

<b>Table 2: Response rates by region</b>		
<b>Region</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
Yorkshire and the Humber	19	86
East of England	36	69
North East	7	58
London	17	53
North West	21	51
West Midlands	17	52
South East	28	38
South West	14	36
East Midlands	15	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>50</b>

Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question and the number in brackets refers to the number of respondents who answered. Please note that bases vary throughout the survey.

Where the response base is less than fifty, care should be taken when interpreting percentages, as small differences can seem magnified. Therefore, where this is the case in this report, the non-percentage values are reported, in brackets, alongside the percentage values.

The results are broken down into two groups, with shire districts as one group and single tier and county councils combining to form the second group. This is because district councils are usually much smaller than both single tier and county councils. Presenting the results in this way means they can be viewed in the context of organisation size.

Throughout the report percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.

# Local Government Workforce Survey 2017/18

This section provides analysis of the full set of results.

## Training and development

Councils provided their gross training expenditure on employees. Data on numbers of employees, derived from the Quarterly Public Sector Employment Survey<sup>4</sup>, was used to calculate the average expenditure on training per employee.

The median gross amount that councils spent per employee in 2017/18 was £143. In shire districts the reported median was £221 per employee and in single and upper tier areas the median was £99. Please see Table 3.

<b>Table 3: Gross training expenditure per employee</b>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Mean (£)	241	137	186
Median (£)	221	99	143
<i>Base</i>	55	61	116

*Base: all respondents to the workforce survey and annual workforce benchmarking combined (116)*

Three fifths of respondents (60 per cent) said their councils planned to maintain 2017/18 levels of expenditure on training for staff in real terms during 2018/19 rather than increase or decrease expenditure, with 15 per cent saying they did not know. In shire districts two thirds (67 per cent) said they planned to maintain 2017/18 levels of expenditure compared to over half (54 per cent) of single / upper tier councils. See Table 4.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/ons-quarterly-public-sector-employment-survey>

**Table 4: Do you have plans to increase, decrease or maintain current levels of expenditure on training for staff in real terms during 2018/19?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
We plan to increase current levels of expenditure on training for staff (%)	16	13	14
We plan to maintain current levels of expenditure on training for staff (%)	67	54	60
We plan to decrease current levels of expenditure on training for staff (%)	10	10	10
Don't know (%)	7	23	15
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Similarly, data provided by councils on gross training expenditure for member development and data on the number of councillors (held by the LGA) was used to calculate average expenditure on member development per councillor.

The median gross amount spent per councillor was £76 across England as well as for shire districts and single and upper tier councils. Please see Table 5.

**Table 5: Gross training expenditure on member development per councillor**

Response	Shire district	Single/upper tier	England
Mean (£)	105	119	113
Median (£)	76	76	76
<i>Base</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>101</i>

*Base: all respondents to the workforce survey and annual workforce benchmarking combined (101)*

Around half of respondents (52 per cent) said their councils planned to maintain 2017/18 levels of expenditure on training for members in real terms during 2018/19, with 29 per cent saying they did not know. In shire districts and single / upper tier councils around half (53 per cent and 52 per cent respectively) said they planned to maintain 2017/18 levels of expenditure. In shire districts a quarter (25 per cent) said that they did not know and in single / upper tier councils around a third (32 per cent) saying they did not know. See

Table 6.

<b>Table 6: Do you have plans to increase, decrease or maintain current levels of expenditure on training for members in real terms during 2017/18?</b>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single / upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
We plan to increase current levels of expenditure on training for members (%)	18	14	16
We plan to maintain current levels of expenditure on training for members (%)	53	52	52
We plan to decrease current levels of expenditure on training for members (%)	2	2	2
Don't know (%)	25	32	29
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Thirty four councils provided a figure for the number of days of off-the-job training, so the values reported here should be taken as indicative only and the figures are not broken down by council type. Data on numbers of employees, derived from the Quarterly Public Sector Employment Survey<sup>5</sup>, was used to calculate the average expenditure on training per employee.

The median number of days of off-the job training per employee was 0.97. Please see Table 7.

<b>Table 7: Days of off-the-job training per employee</b>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Mean (days)	-	-	1.26
Median (days)	-	-	0.97
<i>Base</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>34</i>

*Base: all respondents to the workforce survey and annual workforce benchmarking combined (34)*

There was a median of fourteen apprentices directly employed by each council in 2017/18. In district councils there was a median of five apprentices and in single and upper tier councils there were forty two.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/ons-quarterly-public-sector-employment-survey>

In terms of work experience, there was a median of nine placements provided by councils. In district councils there was a median of five work experience placements and in single and upper tier councils the median was twenty two.

Respondents were also asked how many graduates their council provided placements for in 2017/18. For districts there was a median of zero, since most did not provide any graduate placements, and in single and upper tier areas the median was four. Overall, across all council types, the median was one because a majority did not provide any placements. Please see Table 8.

<b>Table 8: How many of the following were directly employed or placed in 2017/18...</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single / upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Apprentices	Mean	6	60	33
	Median	5	42	14
	Base	84	82	166
Work experience placements	Mean	7	36	19
	Median	5	22	9
	Base	64	43	107
Graduate placements	Mean	1	8	4
	Median	0	4	1
	Base	74	47	121

*Base: all respondents (apprentices: 166; work experience placements: 107; graduate placements: 121)*

## Recruitment and retention

Labour turnover is the total number of leavers as a percentage of the average headcount of employees over the financial year. The median average turnover reported by councils for 2017/18 was 13.4 per cent.

The vacancy rate is the number of vacancies as at 1 April 2018 as a percentage of the overall headcount on the same date. The median vacancy rate reported by councils was 8.0 per cent. Please see Table 9.

<b>Table 9: Labour turnover and vacancy rate</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/up per tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Labour turnover	Mean (%)	14.0	13.6	13.8
	Median (%)	13.1	13.4	13.4
	<i>Base</i>	75	84	159
Vacancy rate	Mean (%)	7.8	10.8	9.4
	Median (%)	6.8	9.5	8.0
	<i>Base</i>	34	36	70

*Base: all respondents all respondents to the workforce survey and annual workforce benchmarking combined (labour turnover: 159; vacancy rate: 70)*

The survey included questions on the numbers of staff who were transferred into and out of employment by councils under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE).

Of the authorities who provided information on TUPE nearly half (49 per cent) had not used TUPE to transfer staff into employment of the council. The other half had used TUPE to transfer between one to 550 employees into their council. The median number of people transferred was eleven.

Data on using TUPE to transfer staff out of employment of the council showed that 43 per cent had not transferred any employees out using TUPE. Of the 53 per cent of authorities who had used it, transfers ranged from one to 1,691 employees. The median number of people transferred was thirty seven. Please see Table 10.

<b>Table 10: During 2017/18, how many people were transferred into and out of the employment of your council under the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE)?</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/up per tier</b>	<b>England</b>
TUPE into employment of the council	Mean	17.9	47.0	37.2
	Median	8	12	11
	<i>Base</i>	26	51	77
TUPE out of employment of the council	Mean	33.1	194.2	152.5
	Median	4	72	37
	<i>Base</i>	<i>In 26 / Out 22</i>	<i>In 51 / Out 63</i>	<i>In 77 / Out 85</i>

*Base: all respondents who had one of more employee moved under TUPE (TUPE in: 77; TUPE out: 85)*

The survey asked whether pension tax rules (i.e. annual and lifetime allowance limits) had negatively impacted the ability to carry out certain HR functions. 1 per cent of councils said that pension tax rules had negatively

impacted their ability to recruit and 2 per cent their ability to retain. Nearly nine in ten (87 per cent) said that the pension tax rules have had no impact. Please see Table 11.

**Table 11: Has your ability to do the following been negatively impacted by pension tax rules (ie annual and lifetime allowance limits)?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Recruit (%)	0	2	1
Retain (%)	1	2	2
Restructure (%)	1	1	1
Promote an individual (%)	1	3	2
Other (%)	6	11	9
Pension tax rules have had no impact (%)	92	83	87
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

One in ten respondents noted that their council had a recruitment freeze in place at some point during 2017/18. See Table 12.

**Table 12: Did your authority have a recruitment freeze in place at any point during 2017/18?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	6	14	10
No (%)	92	86	89
Don't know (%)	2	0	1
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Nearly four fifths of respondents (78 per cent) said their council was currently experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties. This was higher in single and upper tier councils group, where more than eight out of ten (85 per cent) reported recruitment and retention difficulties. See Table 13.

**Table 13: Is your authority currently experiencing any recruitment or retention difficulties?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	71	85	78
No (%)	28	10	19
Don't know (%)	1	5	3
Base	87	87	174

Base: all respondents (174)

The top three actions councils were taking to address recruitment and retention difficulties were targeted recruitment campaigns (75 per cent), relocation packages (46 per cent) and secondments (40 per cent). In single and upper tier councils targeted recruitment campaigns (85 per cent) and relocation packages (62 per cent) were also the most popular solutions. See Table 14.

**Table 14: What actions, if any, are you taking to correct the difficulties you are having with recruitment and retention?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Targeted recruitment campaigns (%)	63	85	75
Relocation packages (%)	27	62	46
Secondments (%)	31	49	40
Job redesign (%)	29	45	38
Personal development offers (%)	23	32	28
"Golden hellos" (%)	16	35	26
Organisational redesign (%)	19	28	24
Lease cars (%)	8	20	15
Other (%)	41	45	44
None of the above (%)	8	4	6
Base	62	74	136

Base: respondents who answered "yes" to whether they were experiencing recruitment or retention difficulties (136)

For single and upper tier councils, the top three posts with recruitment difficulties were children's social workers (84 per cent), adult social workers (61 per cent) and mental health social workers (50 per cent). In district councils the top three posts were planning officers (73 per cent), building control officers (39 per cent) and legal professionals (37 per cent).

In terms of retention difficulties in single and upper tier councils, the top three posts were children's social workers (66 per cent), adult social workers (38 per cent) and mental health social workers (24 per cent). For district councils

the top three posts were planning officers (48 per cent), building control officers (21 per cent) and legal professionals (18 per cent).

The post with the highest number of market supplements in single and upper tier councils were children’s social workers (35 per cent) and 26 per cent of district councils gave market supplements to planning officers.

To see the full breakdown of posts where councils reported experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties and posts receiving market supplements, please see [redacted] in the annex to this report.

## EU Nationals

Only seventy two councils could provide a figure for how many non-UK or Republic of Ireland EU nationals they directly employed, so the values reported here should be taken as indicative only. Nearly a third (32 per cent) were still in the process of assessing the number of non-UK or Republic of Ireland EU nationals they directly employed and 28 per cent didn’t know. The median number of employees was nine. Please see Table 15.

<b>Table 15: How many non-UK or Republic of Ireland EU nationals do you directly employ?</b>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single / upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Mean	6	115	50
Median	4	37	9
<i>Base</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>72</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Respondents were then asked whether during the run-up to exiting the European Union they had noticed a reduction in the number of EU/EEA nationals applying for posts. Nearly half (46 per cent) had not noticed a reduction whilst over half (52 per cent) didn’t know if there had been a reduction. Results for whether there had been an increase in the number of EU/EEA nationals leaving the organisation were similar, with over half (54 per cent) saying that there had not been an increase and nearly half (45 per cent) saying that they didn’t know. For variation between council types, please see Table 16.

**Table 16: During the run-up to exiting the European Union have you noticed any of the following effects?**

Response category	Response	Shire district	Single/up per tier	England
A reduction in the number of EU/EEA nationals applying for posts (%)	Yes	3	0	2
	No	64	28	46
	Don't know	32	72	52
Increase in number of EU/EEA nationals leaving the organisation (%)	Yes	0	1	1
	No	79	29	54
	Don't know	21	70	45
<i>Base</i>		87	87	174

*Base: all respondents (174)*

## Flexible working

Almost all councils (99 per cent) said they encourage staff to work flexibly. See Table 17.

**Table 17: Does your council encourage staff to work flexibly?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	98	100	99
No (%)	1	0	1
Don't know (%)	1	0	1
<i>Base</i>	87	87	174

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Over nine out of ten respondents (93 per cent) said their council had flexible working available to employees at all levels and across all departments within the organisation, where it is operationally feasible. See Table 18.

**Table 18: Is flexible working available to employees at all levels and across all departments within your organisation, where it is operationally feasible?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	92	93	93
No (%)	7	7	7
Don't know (%)	1	0	1
<i>Base</i>	87	87	174

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Over half (57 per cent) said their council includes a statement in job adverts to

say it is open to discussing flexible working options from day one e.g. that there can be flexibility on hours or location, or start and finish times for the right candidate. Please see Table 19.

**Table 19: Does your Council include a statement on your job adverts to say you are open to discussing flexible working options from day one e.g. that there can be flexibility on hours or location, or start and finish times for the right candidate?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	52	62	57
No (%)	46	32	39
Don't know (%)	2	6	4
Base	87	87	174

Base: all respondents (174)

Around six out of ten (62 per cent) said hiring managers and recruiters are trained in how to answer questions from candidates about flexible working practices during the recruitment process. Please see Table 20.

**Table 20: Are hiring managers and recruiters trained in how to answer questions from candidates about flexible working practices during the recruitment process?**

Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Yes (%)	71	53	62
No (%)	21	33	27
Don't know (%)	8	14	11
Base	87	87	174

Base: all respondents (174)

## Sickness absence

Respondents were asked to provide their council's sickness absence rate in two different ways: sickness absence as a percentage of days lost and the days lost to sickness absence per FTE employee. For both rates, respondents were asked to provide a breakdown into short and long-term absence as well as the total. Short-term absence is defined as absence lasting up to and including twenty days and long-term is any absence over twenty days.

The sickness absence rate as a percentage is calculated by dividing the total number of days absence by the total days contracted to be worked and multiplied by one hundred. Councils reported a median of 3.6 per cent of days lost due to sickness overall. The medians for short and long-term sickness absence were 1.5 per cent and 2.2 per cent, respectively. Please see Table

21.

<b>Table 21: Percentage of days lost due to sickness</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/up per tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Short-term sickness absence rate	Mean (%)	2.4	1.5	1.8
	Median (%)	1.8	1.4	1.5
	<i>Base</i>	35	70	105
Long-term sickness absence rate	Mean (%)	3.1	2.8	2.9
	Median (%)	1.6	2.3	2.2
	<i>Base</i>	35	69	104
Total sickness absence rate	Mean (%)	5.0	3.9	4.3
	Median (%)	3.2	3.8	3.6
	<i>Base</i>	40	71	111

*Base: all respondents (short-term: 105; long-term: 104; total: 111)*

A greater number of respondents were able to provide data on the number of days lost due to sickness per FTE employee. Councils calculate this by dividing the total number of days of absence by the total number of FTE employees.

Councils reported a median of 8.8 days lost per FTE employee in 2017/18. The median for short term absence was 3.7 days and the median for long-term absence was 5.1 days. Please see Table 22.

<b>Table 22: Days lost due to sickness per FTE employee</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/up per tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Short-term sickness absence per FTE	Mean (days)	3.9	3.6	3.7
	Median (days)	3.8	3.7	3.7
	<i>Base</i>	66	77	143
Long-term sickness absence per FTE	Mean (days)	4.6	5.4	5.0
	Median (days)	4.4	5.4	5.1
	<i>Base</i>	66	76	142
Total sickness absence per FTE	Mean (days)	8.1	9.2	8.6
	Median (days)	8.2	9.2	8.8
	<i>Base</i>	80	81	161

*Base: all respondents (short-term: 143; long-term: 142; total: 161)*

Councils were asked to provide a breakdown of the number of days lost due to various illnesses. In total 108 were able to provide figures relating to each of the categories requested<sup>6</sup>. The percentages were calculated by dividing each cause by the total number of days across the categories. The response base was lower than in previous workforce survey reports, and the shire district and single/upper tier groups were particularly low. For this reason the results should be considered as indicative of the sickness absence causes for the groups of councils that responded only.

The biggest cause of days lost to sickness in 2017/18 was ‘*stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue*’ (26.8 per cent), followed by ‘*other musculo-skeletal problems*’ (14.8 per cent) and ‘*infections*’ (9.6 per cent). Please see Table 23.

<b>Table 23: Percentage of FTE days lost to sickness by cause</b>			
<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district (%)</b>	<b>Single / upper tier (%)</b>	<b>England (%)</b>
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue	27.9	26.7	26.8
Other musculo-skeletal problems	12.9	14.9	14.8
Infections	10.1	9.6	9.6
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	8.4	8.4	8.4
Back and neck problems	6.4	6.8	6.8
Chest, respiratory	7.1	5.6	5.7
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental; sinusitis	4.3	3.6	3.7
Neurological; headaches and migraines	3.1	3.6	3.6
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	2.5	2.8	2.8
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	1.6	2.4	2.4
Pregnancy related	0.7	1.5	1.5
Other	12.7	12.1	12.1
Unknown	2.3	2.0	2.0
<i>Base</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>108</i>

<sup>6</sup> This excludes councils who stated that over 25 per cent of their days lost was caused by ‘other’ types of sickness absence. This is because it suggests that their system for coding sickness absence was not equivalent to the categories requested by us, and would therefore negatively affect the validity of this analysis.

Base: varied per response category, all respondents (108)

## Leadership

The median average for the top 5 per cent of earners in councils who were women was 49.3 per cent. In shire districts the median was 38.5 per cent and in single and upper tier councils the median was 54.5 per cent.

The median average for the percentage of the top 5 per cent of earners in councils who were black, Asian or from other minority ethnic groups (BAME) was 3.1 per cent. In single and upper tier councils the median was 4.9 per cent, and in shire districts the median was zero per cent.

The median average for the percentage of the top 5 per cent of earners in councils who had a disability was 3.3 per cent across England, 3.5 per cent in single and upper tier councils and 0.3 per cent in shire districts. Please see Table 24.

<b>Table 24: Percentage of the top five per cent of earners who are women, BAME or disabled</b>				
<b>Response category</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single/upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Percentage of the top 5 earners who are women	Mean (%)	38.3	53.6	46.1
	Median (%)	38.5	54.5	49.3
	Base	81	85	166
Percentage of the top 5 of earners who are BAME	Mean (%)	3.2	7.1	5.3
	Median (%)	0.0	4.9	3.1
	Base	75	84	159
Percentage of the top 5 of earners with a disability	Mean (%)	3.4	3.6	3.5
	Median (%)	0.3	3.5	3.3
	Base	66	82	148

Base: all respondents to the workforce survey and annual workforce benchmarking combined (women: 166; BAME: 159; disability: 148)

## Pay, rewards and performance management

Eight out of ten respondents (79 per cent) reported that their council was using “other flexible benefits (including salary sacrifice schemes)” in their approach to employee rewards. This was followed by “other flexible leave benefits”, which over half (57 per cent) were using. Please see Table 25 for the full results to this question.

**Table 25: Which, if any, of the following elements do you use, or are you planning to use in your approach to rewards?**

Response category	Response	Shire district	Single / upper tier	England
Trading leave	Yes, already in use (%)	29	38	33
	Implementing in the next financial year (%)	5	8	6
	No, not implementing (%)	56	45	51
	Don't know (%)	10	9	10
Survey of employee reward preferences	Yes, already in use (%)	5	13	9
	Implementing in the next financial year (%)	13	10	11
	No, not implementing (%)	63	60	61
	Don't know (%)	20	17	18
Total reward benefit statements	Yes, already in use (%)	8	7	7
	Implementing in the next financial year (%)	10	7	9
	No, not implementing (%)	66	64	65
	Don't know (%)	16	22	19
Other flexible benefits (including salary sacrifice schemes)	Yes, already in use (%)	74	84	79
	Implementing in the next financial year (%)	3	5	4
	No, not implementing (%)	15	7	11
	Don't know (%)	8	5	6
Other flexible leave benefits	Yes, already in use (%)	54	61	57
	Implementing in the next financial year (%)	2	6	4
	No, not implementing (%)	30	21	25
	Don't know (%)	14	13	13

*Base: all respondents (174)*

Three quarters of respondents (75 per cent) said their council used “time served (ie annual incremental progression)” as the system of individual pay progression for the majority of staff. This was followed by “performance / contribution related progression”, which was used by 18 per cent of councils. See Table 26.

**Table 26: What system of individual pay progression does your authority use for the majority of staff?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single / upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Time served (i.e. annual incremental progression) (%)	77	72	75
Performance/contribution related progression (%)	16	20	18
Spot salaries (i.e. no incremental progression) (%)	2	7	5
Other (%)	3	1	2
Don't know (%)	1	0	1
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

More than half of councils (59 per cent) indicated that they carried out an employee engagement survey in 2017/18. See Table 27.

**Table 27: Did your authority carry out an employee engagement survey in the 2016/17 financial year?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Shire district</b>	<b>Single / upper tier</b>	<b>England</b>
Yes (%)	54	63	59
No (%)	44	36	40
Don't know (%)	2	1	2
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

*Base: all respondents (174)*

## Annex

This section contains large tables that were referenced elsewhere in the report. Statistically significant increases compared to 2015/16 are denoted with an arrow (↑)

**Table 28: Please indicate in which of the following occupations your authority is experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties and whether the occupation receives market supplements (single and upper tier councils)**

	Recruitment difficulties			Retention difficulties			Does the occupation receive market supplements?		
	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England
Children's social workers	0	84	46	0	66	36	0	35	19
Planning officers	73	38	54	48	15	30	26	8	16 (↑)
Building control officers	39	22	29	21	9	15	21	7	13
Legal professionals	37	49	43 (↑)	18	23	21 (↑)	6	16	12
Adult social workers	0	61	33	0	38	21	0	20	11 (↑)
ICT professionals	21	36	29	5	14	10	5	12	9
Chartered surveyors	31	30	30	8	7	7	10	5	7
Mental health social workers	0	50	27	0	24	13	0	14	7
Finance officers (other than s151)	16	18	17 (↑)	3	3	3	11	4	7
Environmental health officers	31	20	25 (↑)	11	7	9	8	3	5
Engineering professionals	5	35	21	0	15	8	0	9	5
Educational psychologists	0	42	23	0	14	7	0	5	3
Occupational therapists (adults)	0	43	24	0	19	10	0	4	2
Carpenters and joiners	2	3	2	0	0	0	2	3	2
Plumbers, heating and ventilating	6	5	6	2	4	3	2	3	2
Electricians, electrical fitters	6	8	7	2	7	4	2	3	2
Conservation and environmental protection officers	3	7	5	3	1	2	3	1	2

	Recruitment difficulties			Retention difficulties			Does the occupation receive market supplements?		
	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England
Painters and decorators	0	4	2	0	3	1	0	1	1
Plasterers	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Community drivers	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
School mid-day assistants	0	4	2	0	3	1	0	1	1
Occupational therapists (children's)	0	27	15	0	7	4	0	1	1
Children's residential care workers	0	23	13	0	11	6	0	1	1
Housing officers	11	14	13	6	5	6	2	0	1
ICT user support officers	19	5	12	3	3	3	2	0	1
Civil enforcement officers	15	7	10	5	5	5	2	0	1
Children's residential care managers	0	16	9	0	7	4	0	3	1
Heavy goods vehicle drivers	10	8	9	6	3	4	0	1	1
Economic development officers	8	5	7	2	0	1	2	0	1
Home care managers	0	11	6	0	4	2	0	1	1
Section 151 officer	2	8	5	0	1	1	3	0	1
Street scene operatives	6	4	5	3	1	2	0	1	1
Gardeners and groundsman/women	8	1	4	5	0	2	0	3	1
Cleaners, domestics	5	3	4	3	1	2	0	1	1
Kitchen and catering assistants	2	7	4	0	1	1	0	1	1
Refuse and salvage occupations	5	4	4	5	0	2	0	3	1
Administrative officers/assistants	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cooks	0	5	3	0	1	1	0	3	1
Personal assistants and other secretaries	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
Bricklayers, masons	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sports and leisure assistants	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	3	1
Sports coaches, instructors and officials	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Teachers	0	23	13	0	11	6	0	0	0

	Recruitment difficulties			Retention difficulties			Does the occupation receive market supplements?		
	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England	Shire District	Upper / Single Tier	England
Adult care workers	0	24	13	0	11	6	0	0	0
School crossing patrol attendants	0	16	9	0	3	1	0	0	0
Adult care community support worker	0	12	7	0	7	4	0	0	0
Adult day care workers	0	14	7	0	5	3	0	0	0
Home care workers	0	12	7	0	5	3	0	0	0
HR and industrial relations officers	10	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adult residential care managers	0	11	6	0	3	1	0	0	0
Adult day care managers	0	9	5	0	4	2	0	0	0
Benefits and local taxation officers/assistants	8	3	5	3	1	2	0	0	0
Childcare/playgroup assistants	0	8	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
Early years specialists	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education welfare officers	0	5	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Library assistants/clerks	2	4	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Play-workers	0	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Teaching assistants	0	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Call centre agents/operators	0	4	2	3	5	4	0	0	0
Librarians	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family support workers	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery nurses	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Countryside and park ranger/warden	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
Energy managers	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	13	29	20	2	14	9	7	10	8
<i>Base</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>174</i>

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