

Appendix A - Local government workforce capacity plan

1. Children's social workers

What are the issues?

- 1.1 58 per cent of social workers say that their caseloads are unmanageable and are experiencing deteriorating mental health because of their roles. Some children's social workers are exposed to significant public criticism, including via social media, without right of reply. The top factors which influence social workers' desire to stay in roles are:
- (i) feeling positive/ able to cope with work most of the time;
 - (ii) satisfactory one to one supervision;
 - (iii) access to professional development and training.
- 1.2 Sufficiency of staffing levels both at social worker and supervisory levels are therefore an issue, as well as the resourcing of training and development. Newly qualified staff make up a greater proportion of posts in children's social care: since newly qualified staff require more oversight and support, this places additional work on managers and may introduce risk when expertise and practical experience is needed to make effective decisions about children and their families.
- 1.3 23 per cent of children's social workers leaving the profession in 2020/21 went to agency roles, which have been identified as offering competitive incentives as well as providing flexibility, which is valued. High use of agency workers comes at a financial cost to councils as well as impacting on stability of relationships for children and their families.
- 1.4 The number of looked after children has increased by 23 per cent in the last ten years, the number of assessments carried out because children are believed to be at risk of significant harm increased by 75 per cent and Ofsted has noted that the complexity of cases has increased since the pandemic began, meaning rising workloads even where the number of children on the caseloads has remained stable.

What can councils do?

- 1.5 Councils can:
- (i) provide flexible working options;
 - (ii) engage in regional/ sub-regional commitments to work cooperatively to manage the agency supply chain and regulate agency pay rates;
 - (iii) adhere to Employer Standards for social workers which support good

retention practices, including good quality and timely induction and ongoing professional and career development.

1.6 Subject to funding, councils can also:

- (i) increase the number of social workers entering and progressing through the profession via academies for newly qualified workers and CPD/ support for more experienced workers;
- (ii) increase their establishment to reduce caseloads;
- (iii) provide health and wellbeing support and ongoing career development
- (iv) Speed up development of new starters by structured training and support packages
- (v) work to reduce demand through early intervention/ prevention or involvement of other professions.

What can other bodies do?

1.7 The Department for Education (DfE) is consulting on draft national rules on the engagement of agency children's social workers. Its 'Stable Homes, built on Love' strategy includes a range of activities targeted towards social worker retention, including work with local authorities to identify sector-wide technical solutions to reduce time spent by social workers on case recording to maximise time available for practice. It has also announced proposals to establish an Early Career Framework. The programme of Families First Pathfinders will test the potential for a greater proportion of social work to be devolved to non-qualified social workers.

1.8 Social Work England (SWE) is working to address recruitment and retention issues in the sector in liaison with a wide range of bodies including the Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee (JUCSWEC) which supports liaison between social work and local authorities in response to employer need. The LGA will liaise with SWE and JUCSWEC to ensure that this activity addresses needs in all regions.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

1.9 The LGA will:

- (i) provide a package of guidance and best practice including actions to manage use of agency workers, workforce planning, health and wellbeing support, flexible working options and the 'London Pledge' approach, disseminated via regional networks;
- (ii) provide support and challenge through the Children's Improvement Programme to ensure the conditions for good social work are in place,

including quality supervision, manageable caseloads, effective support and continuing professional development;

- (iii) adapt, publish and promote guidance on flexible working prepared for adult social workers, for use in the children's social work context;
- (iv) identify current good practice in councils working with universities to develop a pipeline of children's social workers and promote through regional networks; review existing activity in the university sector to coordinate social work education and promote joint working via regional networks where appropriate;
- (v) review a toolkit on the establishment of Social Worker Career Academies for adult social care when produced (see 2.11 below) and consider its adaptation for the children's social worker context.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

1.10 The LGA's established policy lines call for:

- (i) a holistic 10-year workforce strategy for children and families;
- (ii) funding for administrative support, supervision capacity and training;
- (iii) Government-funded training programmes and bursaries to encourage retraining from other professions and the return of previously qualified social workers

2. Adult and mental health social workers

What are the issues?

2.1 58 per cent of social workers say that their caseloads are unmanageable. Two-thirds of adult social workers say they are experiencing deteriorating mental health because of their roles. The top factors which influence social workers' desire to stay in roles are:

- (i) feeling positive/ able to cope with work most of the time;
- (ii) satisfactory one to one supervision;
- (iii) access to professional development and training.

2.2 Sufficiency of staffing levels both at social worker and supervisory levels are therefore an issue, as well as the resourcing of training and development.

2.3 In 2021/22, employers relied on agencies for 7% of social worker roles.

2.4 The number of requests for adult social care from new working age clients has increased by 11 per cent, and 87 per cent of directors say that more people are seeking support for mental health issues.

What can councils do?

2.5 Councils can:

- (i) undertake workforce modelling and capacity planning;
- (ii) carry out targeted and/or values-based recruitment;
- (iii) adhere to Employer Standards for social workers which support good retention practices, including good quality and timely induction and ongoing professional and career development and flexible working options that aid wellbeing and retention;
- (iv) make full use of the apprenticeship levy to increase the supply of relevant professionals.

2.6 Subject to funding, councils can also:

- (i) provide pastoral care for overseas recruits;
- (ii) establish academies and/or other arrangements to support newly qualified social workers and CPD/ support for more experienced social workers;
- (iii) establish local 'entry into social work' initiatives, potentially piloting approaches to ascertain the most successful.

What can other bodies do?

2.7 The Department for Health and Social Care provides financial support to the costs of international recruitment which may be used to support the recruitment of social workers.

2.8 In 'Next steps to put people at the heart of care', the Government has announced that £250m (a reduction to the previous commitment) will be used to 'better recognise social care as a profession' and 'increase opportunities to develop skills and expertise and undertake learning and development'. This includes the 'Think Ahead' programme: a fast-track graduate programme to become a qualified social worker, with support through the Education Support Grant and Social Work Bursary.

2.9 Skills for Care, with ADASS and the LGA, has a workforce priority plan for adult social care for 2020 – 25, focused on the following themes:

- (i) strategic workforce planning, including a national workforce survey;
- (ii) growing and developing the workforce to meet future demand;

- (iii) enhancing the use of technology;
- (iv) enhancing the wellbeing of the workforce;
- (v) building and enhancing social justice in the workforce.

2.10 Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development body for adult social care, and their data set covers more than half of the people who work in social care. They propose to take a system leadership role to work with Government, local government, health partners, social care employers and people drawing on care and support to implement the Government's vision for the social care workforce, including the creation and implementation of a competency framework and career pathways, a workforce hub and investment in skills, learning and continuing professional development.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

2.11 The LGA will work with ADASS and Skills for Care to:

- (i) conduct a survey to understand the current extent of agency usage in adult social worker roles;
- (ii) work with ADASS and Skills for Care to support councils to deliver their workforce priorities;
- (iii) provide a package of guidance and best practice including actions to reduce use of agency workers and health and wellbeing support;
- (iv) conduct a national evaluation of local adult social care recruitment initiatives to identify and share 'what works', promoted via events in each region;
- (v) develop and pilot an adult social care workforce peer challenge;
- (vi) research use of digital and other technologies in social work and promote good practice to free up social worker capacity and achieve better outcomes for service users;
- (vii) provide support for the development and evaluation of Social Worker Career Academies involving providers, universities and other training providers and councils (with consideration of the business case and lessons learned), alongside the launch of an interactive toolkit with guidance on how to establish them. These products will be promoted strongly across the sector.

2.12 The LGA has already published [guidance](#) on integrated workforce planning in adult social care and resources, top tips and tools to support retention and flexible working.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 2.13 The LGA's established policy lines call for Government to help promote a positive image of social care as a rewarding and fulfilling career.
- 2.14 Once the products relating to Social Worker Career Academies are launched (see 2.11 (vii) above), the LGA may wish to consider strengthening further its encouragement to councils to establish such academies either individually or in partnership with others in the region.
- 2.15 Consider, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, whether the current role and responsibilities of the social worker profession ensure the maximum effectiveness of the role

3. Adult care workers

What are the issues?

- 3.1 The top reasons for domiciliary care workers leaving their roles are better pay outside the care sector, seeking better hours and/or conditions, and feeling burnt out and/or stressed. 95 per cent of the respondents to a Homecare Association Survey said that their staff had expressed anxiety about the rising cost of living and 21 per cent reported that staff were looking for work elsewhere because they cannot afford fuel and other costs.
- 3.2 There is a lack of parity of esteem compared with the NHS workforce. Around 93 per cent of the social care workforce are employed by independent providers rather than councils which limits' councils' ability to control the terms and conditions of the sector.
- 3.3 It has also been estimated that, due to demographic changes, an estimated 490,000 more people will need to be working across all providers of adult social care in England by 2035.

What can councils do?

- 3.4 Councils can work with providers and Integrated Care Boards to:
- (i) undertake workforce modelling and capacity planning;
 - (ii) carry out targeted and/or values-based recruitment;
 - (iii) offer more flexible working options that aid wellbeing and retention.
- 3.5 Subject to funding, councils can also work with providers to provide pastoral care for overseas recruits.

What can other bodies do?

- 3.6 The Department for Health and Social Care provides financial support to the costs of international recruitment of the adult social care workforce.
- 3.7 In 'Next steps to put people at the heart of care', the Government has announced that £250m (a reduction to the previous commitment) will be used to 'better recognise social care as a profession' and 'increase opportunities to develop skills and expertise and undertake learning and development'. This includes:
- (i) launching a call for evidence for behaviours, knowledge, skills and experience pathways for frontline care workers;
 - (ii) providing a new training offer including funding for a new Care Certificate level 2 qualification, training courses and digital skills training;
 - (iii) a new website to provide access to support, information and advice on careers in adult social care.
- 3.8 Skills for Care, with ADASS and the LGA, has a workforce priority plan for adult social care for 2020 – 25, described at para 2.8 above, and proposals for system leadership to address workforce challenges, at para 2.10. Skills for Care is working with Government to identify improvements which may reduce delays to care worker recruitment arising from the DBS process.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 3.9 The LGA will work with ADASS and Skills for Care to:
- (i) support councils to work with their providers to deliver their workforce priorities;
 - (ii) conduct a national evaluation of local adult social care recruitment initiatives to identify and share 'what works';
 - (iii) develop and pilot an adult social care workforce peer challenge;
 - (iv) provide support for the development and evaluation of Social Care Academies.
- 3.10 The LGA (with Skills for Care and ADASS) has already published [guidance](#) on integrated workforce planning in adult social care and resources, top tips and tools to support retention and flexible working.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 3.11 The LGA's established policy lines call for:
- (i) funding to enable improvement in pay, conditions and career development opportunities for the frontline care workforce;

- (ii) an independent review of care worker pay;
- (iii) Government to help promote a positive image of social care as a rewarding and fulfilling career;
- (iv) parity of esteem for adult social care workers and NHS workers;
- (v) the NHS workforce plan to include adult social care (and limit the potential for 'poaching' staff);
- (vi) implementation of the knowledge and skills framework for adult social care.

4. Planning officers

What are the issues?

- 4.1 Following the pandemic, planners have been reported to be taking early retirement or finding work in the private sector: more people are retiring than are entering the sector.
- 4.2 There is a perception that public sector planning is not valued or seen as an attractive career. Local authorities are directly competing with the private sector in a relatively small pool of professionals, in addition to other public sector agencies such as PINS and Homes England. In 2019, approximately 44% of planners worked primarily in the private sector, with 56% in the public sector, with an apparent trend towards a greater proportion of planners in the private sector in recent years.
- 4.3 Thirty-eight per cent of local planning authorities reported that they could not administer and deliver new 'No Net Loss/ Net Gain' and Biodiversity Offsetting policies and, of these, 62 per cent identified lack of staffing resource as the reason. A lack of in-house ecological expertise is cited as a major obstacle.
- 4.4 Some planners choose to work for agencies where they feel less personally visible in the context of politically charged decision-making: some planners are exposed to significant public criticism without right of reply. Some planning services have up to 80 per cent of their staff provided by agencies, with impacts on both cost and quality of service.

What can councils do?

- 4.5 Councils can:
 - (i) establish their own planners' academy (or join with other councils to do so): Birmingham and Central Bedfordshire are two examples;
 - (ii) provide ongoing training and development opportunities. Many councils fund or part-fund postgraduate qualifications with a contractual requirement to remain with the council for a set period following completion.

What can other bodies do?

- 4.6 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has:
- (i) committed to deliver a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the sector;
 - (ii) funded the [Public Practice Associates programme](#) to help public sector organisations recruit mid-career planners as an affordable alternative to agency recruitment;
 - (iii) launched consultation on increases to planning fees with the aim of increasing capacity in the local planning system;
 - (iv) funded pilot projects to improve digital solutions which will reduce officer time spent processing data;
 - (v) convened a capability and capacity group to identify solutions to the planning recruitment and retention challenge (on which the Planning Advisory Service is represented).
- 4.7 The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has worked with Milton Keynes to develop their local planners' academy and is conducting a survey of planners' wellbeing.
- 4.8 Discussions involving RTPI, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and the Planning Officers Society (POS) (with LGA, DLUHC and University training provider attendance) have commenced to identify the root causes of and potential solutions to the recruitment challenge in the public sector. A proposed action plan is expected, to be discussed further in the early Autumn. TCPA is also planning research on the scale of the resourcing gap.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 4.9 The LGA will:
- (i) deliver a Pathways into Planning programme to attract new graduates into local authority planning careers, funded by DLUHC;
 - (ii) conduct a skills audit of the local authority planning workforce, funded by DLUHC and leading to a gap analysis in comparison with future needs.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 4.10 The LGA's established policy lines call for:
- (i) resources to deliver planning reforms and new policy commitments;

- (ii) councils to be closely involved in developing the resources and skills strategy;
- (iii) planning fees to cover the cost of processing applications;
- (iv) changes to the planning system to reduce its onerousness, for example discouraging speculative applications and easing the burden of the Local Plan process.

5. Legal professionals

What are the issues?

- 5.1 Anecdotally, a large cohort of experienced professionals are retiring or moving into more flexible interim roles or moving into the private sector for better pay for similar levels of work. A significant proportion of local government lawyers are nearing retirement in the next five to eight years, which, notwithstanding current work to bring new entrants to the profession, will lead to a loss in experience and additional roles to fill. While local government previously attracted lawyers due to opportunities for flexible working, in recent years this has also been offered by the private sector, in addition to more attractive remuneration.
- 5.2 A survey conducted in 2019 identified that recruitment and retention has become the biggest single issue facing local authority legal departments. 87 per cent of respondents to the survey described recruitment of qualified staff as 'difficult' and 39 per cent as 'very difficult'. 44 per cent expect recruitment to get harder still in the foreseeable future.
- 5.3 New work is tending to be more complex, and heads of legal services are therefore seeking to recruit more experienced senior lawyers.
- 5.4 Average local authority lawyers' pay is well behind their peers in private practice, and the relative difference between public and private sector pensions has decreased. Seven per cent of all roles advertised on the Public Law jobs website in 2022 attracted a market supplement.
- 5.5 The structure of most legal departments means that promotion – and higher pay – is only open to those prepared to take on management responsibility: there is little reward for developing technical expertise. In the more in-demand disciplines, experienced lawyers can earn significantly more by working as a locum (the imposition of IR35 has not dented the use of locums by local authorities, only made it more expensive).
- 5.6 Local authorities have cut back on training contracts in recent years: there were only 69 in 2021, for a pool of around 4,500 in-house solicitors in local government, and only ten trainee solicitor roles were advertised in councils in 2022. This supply is inadequate to compensate for those leaving or retiring. It also remains common for local authority trainees to have to find a role

elsewhere at the end of their training period. Legal apprenticeships are growing in number but do not address the problem of finding more experienced staff.

What can councils do?

- 5.7 Subject to funding, councils can provide training contracts with an associated career path.

What can other bodies do?

- 5.8 In 2019, Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) began work on a national campaign aimed at encouraging graduates to apply for training contracts. This will be supplemented by a single hub for graduate recruitment into local government legal services. LLG also run a 'National Work Experience week' to enable students to gain an insight into a career as a local government lawyer and are launching a leadership development programme for local government lawyers.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 5.9 The flagship recruitment campaign (see para 9.20 below) will support councils to market local government as an employer of choice, with a focus on values and wider benefits, with the aim of attracting those who may consider a move from the private sector.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 5.10 The LGA will continue to argue for the reduction in the legislative burden placed on councils.

6. Environmental health officers

What are the issues?

- 6.1 A cross-government task group has identified the following issues:
- (i) an ageing workforce. Post-COVID, environmental health officers are reported to be taking early retirement;
 - (ii) a loss of officers to other sectors and agencies, exacerbated by COVID;
 - (iii) a limited pool of professional capacity;
 - (iv) limited management time to mentor new officers;
 - (v) lack of funding for training posts: 52% of councils did not have a single apprentice or trainee in environmental health. This is thought to be partly because there is insufficient management capacity to supervise them and

partly because, in small teams, councils are prioritising posts at a more experienced level;

(vi) because councils are unable to carry specialist posts within their headcounts, and many officers are taking on generalist roles, there is a loss of specialist expertise.

6.2 These are compounded by the uncoordinated creation of new enforcement duties, creating additional capacity issues for already stretched services. In some places there is concern about the predominance of food work over other areas of regulation. It may be expected that work to review housing conditions (particularly in the private rented sector) will bring further pressures on environmental health.

6.3 There has also been a reduction in the number of environmental health university courses on offer, and in the number of students accessing them.

6.4 There is a discussion about the potential for one qualification for overlapping roles in regulatory services (there are a number of distinct specialisms within the fields of environmental health and trading standards). However, some councils no longer have roles/ officers focusing on distinct professional specialisms, with officers more likely to cover a range of specialisms within their profession (and, likely, significantly less work taking place in some specialisms). Research commissioned by the LGA nearly ten years ago explored the scope for a generic regulatory services officer role, concluding that although there may be scope for a generic food officer role, in many other regards the two professions were moving further apart in their work profiles.

What can councils do?

6.5 Councils can 'grow their own' through apprenticeships and other training.

What can other bodies do?

6.6 The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health has produced an [apprenticeship toolkit](#) to support employers to set up apprenticeships in the field of environmental health. It has also produced a toolkit of career information resources to support councils to raise awareness of the role of environmental health in schools and colleges and runs a leadership development programme to enable graduates to gain the qualifications to become a registered practitioner.

6.7 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is conducting a review of resourcing in local environmental health and trading standards services.

6.8 The Chartered Trading Standards Institute is developing an apprenticeship for licensing roles.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

6.9 The LGA will:

- (i) continue to engage with senior regulatory services professionals to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and scale of the recruitment and retention challenges facing the sector;
- (ii) review the findings of FSA research when published;
- (iii) undertake basic modelling of how new cost recovery mechanisms in regulatory services could inject new resources into the sector;

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

6.10 The LGA's established policy lines call for:

- (i) consideration of the cumulative impact of additional duties for regulatory services which taken on their own have not generated (sufficient) new burdens funding and of solutions to address the funding gap;
- (ii) measures to ensure that duties for regulatory services are appropriately funded, including measures for cost recovery;
- (iii) DLUHC to play a convening role in regulatory services, particularly on capacity issues, representing local government in cross-Government discussions as appropriate.
- (iv) reforms to the apprenticeship levy to enable councils to target resources at regulatory services.

6.11 In the absence of a cross-Government approach, DEFRA will be approached directly to raise awareness of the challenge and discuss potential solutions.

7 ICT professionals

What are the issues?

- 7.1 Anecdotally, a large cohort of experienced professionals are retiring or moving into more flexible interim roles. There is competition from the private sector for candidates and some councils pay market supplements to attract appropriate expertise.
- 7.2 Information management and technology professions are not codified or structured with clear professional pathways or qualifications, making it difficult for managers to identify their requirements or individuals to decide which qualifications to pursue.

What can councils do?

- 7.3 Councils can take up training and mentoring support for ICT officers provided by SOCITM to support retention rates.

What can other bodies do?

- 7.4 [SOCITM lead](#) aims to grow the pipeline of talent for public sector information management and technology.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 7.5 The LGA is currently developing a Capabilities Framework for the sector workforce. This will focus initially on 6 service areas (including adult social care, planning and corporate services), with the aim of supporting managers to identify the capabilities required. Once this work is completed (by September 2024) it will be possible to map career pathways and conduct gap analysis.
- 7.6 The LGA will also deliver a 'Women in Tech' event, followed by initiatives to promote the local government tech sector to women.
- 7.7 The flagship recruitment campaign (see para 9.20 below) will support councils to market local government as an employer of choice, with a focus on values and wider benefits, with the aim of appealing to those who may consider a move from the private sector.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 7.8 The LGA will consider whether any lobbying is required following completion of the Capabilities Framework.

8. Building control officers

What are the issues?

- 8.1 A significant proportion of the workforce may be expected to retire in the coming years (64% are aged 45+) and the need to obtain registration to practice under the Building Safety Act may add further challenges.
- 8.2 To some building control officers, local authority work is less engaging/rewarding, since they cannot 'cherry pick' the work they undertake. The private sector recruits people trained in public sector with attractive terms and conditions.
- 8.3 There is difficulty in finding qualified/ competent surveyors for the salary offered, and particularly for team leadership roles.
- 8.4 Because very few council building control departments have a full complement of staff, councils regularly resort to agency staff.

What can councils do?

- 8.5 Councils can support staff to gain validation at the appropriate level to gain registration

What can other bodies do?

- 8.6 Local Authority Building Control has carried out workforce modelling and is now funded by DLUHC to recruit and train officers to fill the capacity gap and support legislative change. This programme is successfully attracting and training good quality recruits for the sector. It also conducts skills analysis of the existing workforce and validation assessments to meet new requirements.
- 8.7 The Building Safety Regulator is introducing a register of professionals and will carry out awareness raising of building control services and careers.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 8.8 The LGA can discuss with LABC later in 2023 whether any strategies are required to ensure officers remain within the local government sector following training, in light of experience.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 8.9 The LGA's established policy lines call for sustained investment in building control.

9. Sector-wide activity

Apprenticeships

What are the issues?

- 9.1 Due to the requirement that councils return levy underspends to government, often the 10 per cent top-up funding paid to councils sits unused for two years and is returned to government unspent (£3.25m per month). Being able to use this funding more flexibly to pay for the administration of programmes, cover salary or backfill costs, or help support underrepresented groups to break down barriers to apprenticeships would help the sector to create more opportunities in key areas of the workforce and ensure this funding is spent productively on apprenticeships.
- 9.2 The issue of people completing an apprenticeship and moving on is understood to be a risk for some councils, however, some councils have good retention rates, rates also vary by level of apprenticeship and in some cases people move from one council to another. Apprenticeship Levy funds belong to the Government and not to the council, and so any funds returned to the council by an apprentice if they left within a set period would have to be returned to the Government. Additionally, there would be costs to councils in administering any such arrangements.

What can councils do?

9.3 Councils can:

- (i) implement good practices in employee retention, including strategies for progression into other roles when apprenticeships are complete;
- (ii) have a policy for apprentices' pay and grading (88 per cent of councils already do);
- (iii) introduce and implement an apprenticeship strategy or action plan (66 per cent already do, a further 26 per cent are in the process of developing one). This should involve appropriate governance to support and account for delivery; plan the spending of the levy and assess the impact of the apprenticeship programme on the council's wider objectives.
- (iv) introduce mentoring schemes and network opportunities to apprentices and consider providing additional employability support for qualifying apprentices (eg 24 per cent of councils provide guaranteed interviews to support them into permanent roles).

What can other bodies do?

9.4 The Institute of Apprenticeships approves standards in development and oversees access to training providers. However, 33 per cent of councils reported they could not find a training provider for at least one standard: Pest Control Technician Level 2 and Town Planning Assistant Level 4 have been raised as a concern over several years. Faster approval of new standards would also assist councils to provide apprenticeships which meet their needs.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

9.5 The LGA will:

- (i) support up to 40 councils to make better use of apprenticeships at all levels, to map demand and develop new solutions (this number is predicated on the proposal for DLUHC funding, more councils could be supported if additional resources were identified through other routes);
- (ii) provide advice and guidance to councils on good retention practice;
- (iii) conduct an apprenticeship survey for the sector, to provide an overview of the sector's use of apprenticeships and to highlight key challenges and potential areas to lobby Government;
- (iv) promote the use of apprenticeships and T levels in the sector;
- (v) enable and facilitate employers to collaborate to create more apprenticeships.

What will the LGA do to lobby for change?

- 9.6 The LGA is calling for councils to be allowed to use apprenticeship levy funds more flexibly, particularly for things like apprentice salary subsidy, administration costs of programmes, pre-apprenticeship training or other apprenticeship support. These changes would help us to deliver more apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and to target skills shortage areas within our sector, such as planning, housing, environmental health and social work. We estimate that local government (including our maintained schools) receives in the region of £14m per year in top-up funds.
- 9.7 If the funds were used to provide a salary subsidy of £2,800 per apprentice, we could create 5,000 more apprenticeship starts, supporting care leavers and addressing skills shortage areas in the sector. An additional 5,000 apprentices, targeting key skills shortage areas plus some entry-level apprenticeships for care leavers could also unlock almost £100m more apprenticeship levy spending in our sector, helping us to reduce losses and push our percentage spend up around 12 percentage points (44.5 per cent to 56.8 per cent).
- 9.8 The LGA has proposed to DfE and HMT that they create a pilot project allowing councils to use the 10 per cent top-up funding councils receive from government to their Levy Accounts more flexibly to create apprenticeship opportunities in key skills shortage areas, like regulatory services, where take up is low, and to provide more apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
- 9.9 If flexibilities were introduced to enable councils to spend top-up funds on administration, each of the 151 upper and single tier councils could, for example, hire two full-time apprenticeship leads, allowing for greater focus on promotion and delivery of their apprenticeships programme, including to maintained schools who currently lag behind when it comes to offering apprenticeships.
- 9.10 The possibility of increasing the cap that restricts employers to transferring a maximum of 25 per cent of their levy funds per year to 35 per cent was also raised with Government (66 per cent of upper and single tier councils support an increase in the levy transfer cap to at least 35 per cent, with 40 per cent supporting an increase to 40 per cent or more). These points were also raised with the Skills Minister on 25 April who agreed to further discussions.
- 9.11 The LGA will test the extent to which apprentices leaving their employing council within a short period of completing their training is an issue across the sector, through means of a survey of heads of priority occupations. This topic was also raised in the meeting with DfE and HMT.
- 9.12 Discussions between DfE and HMT are continuing on the potential for
- (i) increasing the transfer cap from 25 per cent to 35 per cent;
 - (ii) further long-term options on use of the 10% top-up funding.
- 9.13 A further meeting with Government will be scheduled for early Summer.

- 9.14 The LGA will also continue to press the DfE and Institute for Apprenticeships to speed up the approval of the standards that councils want and to ensure sufficient training providers are available.
- 9.15 Explore mechanisms for councils to recoup training costs (outside the Apprenticeship Levy) if a trainee leaves soon after securing a qualification.

Attracting candidates to work in priority occupations

What are the issues?

- 9.16 Work in some local government services is not always seen as an attractive career. Other sectors are perceived as providing more attractive career options by offering some better terms and conditions and the above factors. A perceived lack of appreciation and recognition, low public profile, negative perceptions arising from public criticism of individuals, financial challenges and service failures in the sector generally all add to the challenge of being able to recruit new entrants. This is despite the sector offering over 800 different career opportunities, offering interesting challenges, good flexible working and favourable terms and conditions. The National Graduate Development Programme demonstrates what can be achieved through a targeted marketing approach providing development opportunities, attracting around 4,500 applicants per year.
- 9.17 In comparison with significant recent Government investment in **recruitment campaigns** for professions such as [teaching](#) and [defence](#), there has been minimal investment in local government as a 'brand'.

What can councils do?

- 9.18 Councils can:
- (i) invest in and demonstrate their 'Employee Value Proposition';
 - (ii) engage with local schools and colleges to promote careers at the local council;
 - (iii) make clear in their recruitment advertising that they welcome applications from candidates of all ages and protected characteristics and will provide appropriate training and support.

What can other bodies do?

- 9.19 Many professional bodies run campaigns and/ or training opportunities to encourage people to consider their roles as career opportunities. Where these exist for priority occupations, these are listed above.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 9.20 The LGA will:

- (i) continue to deliver the National Graduate Development Programme;
- (ii) launch a new flagship recruitment campaign, co-produced with Solace and the sector, to attract new talent and increase capacity in the sector. This recruitment campaign will market local government as a career of choice, highlighting the infinite variety of roles that local government has to offer, opportunities for career development and the benefits beyond pay such as flexibility and pension. The campaign will have a number of distinct – but complementary- messages to ensure a wide audience is reached, including both new entrants and those already in the sector with the potential to fulfil new roles. This will be developed over two years: in year 1 the approach will be piloted in at least one region and options identified for ongoing delivery, for example shareable template resources for councils to run their own campaigns. There would then be the potential for individual professions and councils to ‘piggy back’ their own content, building on the wider campaign.

Research

What are the issues?

- 9.21 It was previously suggested that there may be regional variation in the nature of the workforce capacity challenge. The Research team has confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference in the reported scale of the recruitment and/or retention challenge between regions.
- 9.22 There is a lack of data on the age profile of the local government workforce (although some data is held in relation to individual professions, as noted above).
- 9.23 There is a need to maintain a current understanding of council use of agency, pay, capacity and other HR indicators to inform wider understanding and responses to capacity issues.

What can councils do?

- 9.24 Councils can respond to the LGA’s surveys and engage in research projects to demonstrate the scale and nature of the capacity challenge, to inform the identification of solutions

What will the LGA do to support councils?

- 9.25 The LGA conducts the following research on behalf of the sector, to inform councils’ workforce planning:
- (i) agency usage;
 - (ii) pay data;
 - (iii) workforce capacity risks and plans;

(iv) HR benchmarking.

9.26 The 2020 LGPS valuation data, currently being prepared, will identify the age profile data for the LGPS active and deferred membership as at March 2020. This data will inform further workforce planning on behalf of the sector.

Advice and guidance on best practice

What are the issues?

9.27 Respondents to the 2022 workforce survey identified access to examples of best practice as an important source of support to address the workforce challenge.

What can councils do?

9.28 Councils can engage with other councils on a sub-regional and regional basis to collaborate, share learning and good practice.

What will the LGA do to support councils?

9.29 Officers will continue to monitor learning from organisations piloting flexible working policies, including the four day week trial which has recently been extended at South Cambridgeshire council, to identify learning for the sector.

9.30 The LGA will:

- (i) produce and disseminate best practice and guidance on recruitment, retention, workforce planning, apprenticeships and organisational design;
- (ii) conduct pay benchmarking and support to redesign the pay spine;
- (iii) provide bespoke support for councils with specific needs.

Addressing the financial challenge

What are the issues?

9.31 The LGA's lines relating to the need for financial sustainability for the sector overall are well-developed. These do not, at present, highlight the link between the financial challenges of the last decade and the workforce challenges now being experienced by the sector, or the risks to delivery of key priorities if the challenges are not addressed.

9.32 What has been highlighted is the need for additional funding to meet the rising National Living Wage cost, which placed more significant pressure on local government than other parts of the public sector (where the impact of the NLW affects the pay levels of far fewer employees). The additional funding made available from 2023/24 may assist in a small way with the challenge of meeting the NLW cost in 2023/4 but leaves the cumulative cost highlighted in 2022 unmet: it is therefore unlikely that this will provide much support for councils in meeting their workforce capacity challenges. While the 9.2 per cent increase in local government core spending power announced in the 2023/24 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement will help councils deal with inflationary

and other cost pressures, the LGA will continue to make the case for the underlying and existing pressures that remain. Many councils will also see much lower increases in Core Spending Power in the next financial year.

What can the LGA to do lobby for change?

9.33 The LGA's established policy lines include raising the profile of the National Living Wage challenge with Government and flag to all parties the costs to local government relating to policies on the NLW.

9.34 In addition to reflecting any implications arising from local government pay negotiations, future submissions for Autumn/ Spring statements/ budgets can include a focus on the need for:

- (i) medium-term financial settlements so that effective workforce planning can take place over the medium term, and a degree of certainty is provided for jobseekers considering a role in the sector;
- (ii) sufficient funding for councils to enable:
 - HR capacity to undertake workforce planning, in collaboration with local skills providers as part of local planning for economic development;
 - organisational development, health and wellbeing support, training and development (including digital skills) and 'grow your own' activities;
 - adequate levels of management supervision;
 - the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of skilled and motivated staff;
 - the accommodation of government policy on the National Living Wage.