

Letter to all Stakeholders, Leaders, Chief Executives and Heads of HR

Dear Colleague,

Feedback on Consultation on *Delivering Through People*

When I wrote to you a few weeks ago about the pay and negotiation proposals, I also asked for your views on the wider workforce issues facing local government, as set out in the IDeA/LGE/LGA document *Delivering Through People*.

The aim of this linked and complementary consultation was to seek your views on:

- The key shared workforce challenges facing us as a sector;
- The most important action for us to take at a national level, to support you in tackling these challenges.

As with the pay and negotiations consultation, this letter provides a summary of the balanced and thoughtful feedback you gave us and tells you about the next steps we are taking.

We received replies from seventy-eight councils, as well as a number of other organisations and individuals. The replies provided a clear picture of your major shared workforce issues, the barriers you face, what you are trying to achieve, and what you feel we need to do nationally to support you. The attached 'headline' document provides an overview of your feedback.

We were delighted that most of you strongly supported the proposed Workforce Strategy Vision. Several of you commented that it could be shorter and sharper. In response we are working on a more succinct version. Several commented that the key issue was turning the vision into programmes of practical action. That is exactly what we are working on now.

Your views provide a strong foundation for the revised Local Government Workforce Strategy we are currently producing for England. (In Wales the Welsh Local Government Association leads the work on the Welsh equivalent.) This revised English Strategy will support the implementation of the new DCLG/LGA Improvement and Efficiency Strategy and the LGA's Framework for Excellence and Raising Our Game initiative.

Your views have also been fed into the local government central bodies' Business Strategy process to inform priority setting for the next three years and they have been circulated to Regional Employers' Organisations to inform the planning of action on regional workforce issues.

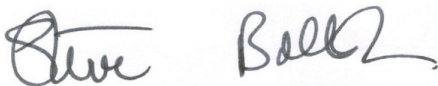
One of the major things you wanted us to do was to facilitate learning across the sector. You wanted us to help you support each other in addressing the common difficulties you are facing, as well as promoting good practice ideas and innovations. If you haven't done so already, I would encourage you to join and contribute to IDeA's Communities of Practice (see www.idea.gov.uk) as well as telling us about your success stories so that we can promote them more widely. If these successes are about organisational development, leadership development, skills development or recruitment and retention issues please contact joan.munro@idea.gov.uk. If they are about pay and reward issues please contact jon.sutcliffe@lge.gov.uk.

The revised Workforce Strategy will be circulated to English authorities in the autumn following the publication of the Improvement and Efficiency Strategy. We will also keep you informed about national action being taken to support you in tackling the key shared workforce challenges via IDeA, LGE and LGA briefings, as well as our websites and regional meetings.

If you have any questions about the detail of what is happening please contact Joan Munro, the National Advisor Workforce Strategy in IDeA, email: joan.munro@idea.gov.uk or telephone 020-7296-6579.

We look forward to continuing to support you in achieving a committed, flexible and high performance workforce in this increasingly competitive labour market.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S" and "B".

Sir Steve Bullock
Chair, LGA Human Resource Panel

Headline Response from authorities on 'Delivering Through People'

Your major shared workforce challenges

Your responses indicated that the major shared workforce challenges are:

Organisational Development:

- Achieving change to produce better, more efficient, lower cost services, including making better use of technology
- Developing strategic partnerships and cross-boundary working
- Developing more flexible working, including remote working

Leadership Development:

- Building capacity to lead and manage change

Skill Development:

- Developing new skills

Recruitment and Retention:

- Addressing skill shortages
- Taking action on age of the workforce, e.g. attracting and developing sufficient trainees to replace those about to retire; operating flexible retirement; workforce planning
- Moving to a 'talent management' approach (taking account of equal opportunities)

Pay and Rewards:

- Modernising pay and reward frameworks (matching pay and performance)
- Implementing job evaluation and single status
- Offering competitive pay and rewards to attract the right staff

The major shared barriers you are facing in tackling these issues

- Supply shortages in occupational areas
- Lack of strategic HR/OD capacity
- Middle managers' abilities/attitudes
- Lack of consistent workforce data so difficult to amalgamate and compare
- Restricted budget (including funds to invest in change)
- Rigid local trade union officials (in some authorities, in others strong partnership approach)
- Perception that local government terms and conditions are rigid
- Continually changing government agenda

Your main shared priorities for action (with your partners)

General:

- Develop integrated workforce strategies with partners, undertaking joint workforce planning, joint action on equality, working regionally and sub-regionally to achieve economy of scale

Organisational Development:

- Set up shared front office and back office services

Leadership Development:

- Undertake succession planning between sectors to develop staff who can bridge and flex between the sectors, developing broad understanding, embedding partnership working, including joint work on developing young people 'beyond a graduate programme'

Skill Development:

- Organise multi-faceted development/learning programmes to address skills gaps, including management development (key to people development/talent management), change management, project management, partnership working, strategic thinking

Recruitment and Retention:

- Promote public service career choices via schools, colleges, region-wide action etc, and take action to make public sector jobs more attractive, undertake joint recruitment, take action to attract more diverse talent
- Set up cross-organisation trainees, regional and sub-regional skills pathways, shared talent pools and joint talent development (to share costs, minimise competition and offer those being developed experience of a number of different organisations)
- Influence Further Education and vocational trainers to provide 'pipeline' of future workers including new skills like 'customer management'; work with Sector Skills Councils and professional associations to develop new entry points and qualification routes
- Improve career structure to reduce attrition rate of talent

Pay and Rewards

- Undertake comparative work between sectors locally on remuneration, conditions of service etc, integrate and rationalise core terms and conditions

Your shared priorities for action by national bodies (with their partners)

General:

- Pilot innovative work, undertake demonstration projects and research then disseminate
- Provide a library of good practice, share success stories and effective solutions (less about showcasing more about encouraging dialogue, sharing experiences)
- Establish communities of practice nationally and regionally (taking account of the difference between counties, districts, mets etc, and need for bespoke solutions)
- Provide model frameworks that authorities can adapt, e.g. for HR policies, for workforce planning
- Offer incentives, pump priming funds
- Provide regular information on the national picture
- Act as a resource for workforce data (e.g. pay rates by profession/job size/region; skill gaps), analyse supply trends and highlight issues to inform negotiations and planning
- Provide advocacy on pay and workforce issues on behalf of local government to central government

Organisational Development:

- Encourage shared service arrangement via case studies, conferences, etc

Recruitment and Retention:

- Co-ordinate the promotion of the sector (and support authorities doing this), secure funds for doing this, set up initiatives e.g. apprenticeships, education to employment programmes (and develop capacity to supervise them)
- Address skill shortages (including lobbying for funds to support authorities in addressing these issues, e.g. bursaries)

Pay and Rewards:

- Provide an enabling, not too restrictive, national pay framework

Comments on the vision

The vision received an overwhelming endorsement, but a number of respondents commented that it could be shorter and sharper.

Several authorities said that the challenge is turning vision into practical reality given resources, skills and capacity restraints, boundaries and cultural complications.