

Finance and Resources Committee

Tuesday 20 June 2023

Workforce Deep Dive – Hard to Fill Roles

Item number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the information contained in the Workforce Deep Dive report in respect of hard to fill roles within the City of Edinburgh Council and the actions being taken to address this.
- 1.2 To request this 'workforce deep dive' report be submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee also be referred to GRBV Committee for scrutiny.

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Finance and Resources Committee

Workforce Dashboard

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report updates Committee on the current job roles which the City of Edinburgh Council deems 'hard to fill' and essentially proving a challenge to recruit to. The report also details the actions being taken to mitigate risks in relation to service delivery.
- 2.2 According to a recent CIPD survey, 57% of organisations currently have hard to fill vacancies, and two thirds of employers still expect to have hard to fill vacancies in the next 6 months. Reduced labour pool due in part to Brexit and Covid-19, immigration changes and changing working preferences are all considered to be contributing factors. Recruitment and retention is included as a key risk in the Council's Risk Register and ongoing efforts to address these challenges are being given high priority.
- 2.3 There are hard to fill roles across all directorates. This is due to a variety of factors including the buoyant employment market in Edinburgh, the impact of Brexit and in some cases, the level of salary we are offering compared to other industries or organisations. Other Scottish local authorities are also experiencing recruitment and retention challenges, as indeed are other sectors.
- 2.4 As we commence consideration of our next People Strategy and Strategic Workforce Plan for 2024-2027 areas such as workforce planning, resourcing, attraction, recruitment and retention are expected to be key themes. A strategic ambition and vision is vital to ensure that current works are enhanced and expanded across all services of demand, and the City of Edinburgh Council is recognised as an employer of choice.

3. Background

- 3.1 **Workforce deep dive**
Following discussion at Finance and Resources Committee on 25 April 2023 it was agreed to compile a deep dive report on hard to fill jobs within the Council and to update Committee on what actions are being taken to address this. Challenges in relation to recruitment and retention was also discussed in detail at the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee meeting on 2 May 2023 and it was requested that this deep dive report be submitted to the next GRBV committee.
- 3.2 The Workforce Deep Dive provides data and insight for the period date to date including:

- Current hard to fill roles; and
- actions the Council is currently taking locally and corporately to address these recruitment challenges.

4. Main Report - Dashboard

4.1 Directorate Summary

4.1.1 Children, Education and Justice Services

Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs), Teachers, and Early Years Professionals continue to be in the top 5 roles advertised by the Council, with a quarter of those onboarded coming through internal succession, be that through promotion, secondment or acting up. Nonetheless, the following roles within the Directorate have continued to prove challenging to recruit to over the past year. Actions are being taken at a local level to address these challenges.

Residential Care Officers

Following recent recruitment challenges a review of the recruitment process was undertaken with these being streamlined where possible, resulting in some improved outcomes. Unfortunately, on occasion, candidates have either withdrawn or accepted another role elsewhere during the onboarding process as this can prove lengthy due to rigorous pre-employment checks. However, efforts are made to ensure contact with candidates as they progress through the onboarding process, to minimise this risk. In addition salary has been cited as an issue due to comparable roles in other local authorities either paying more as an initial salary or placing candidates at the top of the scale. There has been more focus on this aspect as this is an area that we can manage based on individuals experience. Another factor that affects candidate attraction is the location of care homes where those which are easier to access from commuter towns being more successful.

Social Workers

Until recently Children's Services Social Work was operating with 40% vacancies. We now have only 5 social work vacancies across Children's Services. Children and Justice Services recently collaborated with Adult Social Care to host an Open Day to introduce roles across all areas and generate interest for newly qualified social workers. The intention is that this approach will continue and seek to raise the profile of the Council as an employer. On 3 May 2023 we held an open day for people looking for a career in Social Care; we targeted University Graduates and College leavers. The open day was extremely successful and numerous teams across Children and Justice Services were involved including Residential Childcare Services, the Disability Team, Children's Practice Teams, Justice Services, Family and Household Support Team and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Focus on the day was the benefits of joining the Council, offering career progression, attractive salary, pension scheme, excellent holidays, and commitment to regular, supportive professional supervision.

This event was a drop in event held in Waverly Court where around 50 visitors heard about the jobs available and could chat with people working in the roles. This will form part of an enhanced recruitment programme that we will be developing further across the sector. We continue to offer practice

placements to undergraduate students in the hope they will seek permanent employment once qualified. Children's Services is also introducing a 'grow your own model', utilising Scottish Government funding to offer 2 places on a postgraduate diploma in Social Work to internal colleagues. This work is ongoing.

Early Years

Part time contracts for support workers can be a challenge depending on the area e.g., the outskirts of the city can be difficult areas to recruit into. We have also been unable to recruit to some 'Head of Centre' vacancies with salary levels cited as a factor in comparison to other management roles. The Early Years service have initiated many good initiatives to help with recruitment and retention, specifically a 'grow your own' scheme and the Early Years and Childcare Academy that has clear career pathways. This work is ongoing.

Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs)

There are a mixture of posts across our education estate that are difficult to recruit to. One such example is PSAs in our Special School sector. Salary is cited as a factor for this and also the role within an Additional Support needs environment can be very challenging, depending on the needs of the child or young person.

Gaelic Medium Education

Recruiting Gaelic speakers to work within the Gaelic provision is difficult and we continue to try and recruit a vacant Head Teacher position. Following the last round of recruitment, there were no applicants. This isn't unique to Edinburgh and is a national issue.

Secondary

Some subjects in the secondary sector are more difficult to recruit to than others, specifically Computing, Business, Maths, Food and Textile Technology (FTT), and Craft, Design and Technology (CDT). Again, this is a national issue, not exclusive to Edinburgh. Using Supply Teachers helps to alleviate this challenge but we continue to look at ways to promote teaching in Edinburgh.

4.1.2 Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership (EHSCP)

The EHSCP has a number of hard to fill roles. This is particularly the case with front line care and Social Worker roles. The wider sector has recruitment and retention challenges. Whilst care as a career can undoubtedly be life changing work with the opportunity for significant job satisfaction, it is viewed as low paid compared to other sectors which offer comparable salaries for less physically and emotionally demanding work. There continues to be significant challenges including a lack of capacity within the system and a significant gap between levels of need and capacity to meet increased levels of complex care. Additionally, colleagues continue to leave the social care sector (a 14% vacancy rate for social workers) which puts increased pressure on the remaining workforce. To attempt to address these issue, the EHSCP has taken a number of positive actions as follows

Care Homes and Home Care

The EHSCP continues to look at ways to recruit more people to the care sector. The ongoing work with Capital City Partnership (CCP) to attract more people in Edinburgh to work in Social Care is beginning to see positive outcomes with a high number of notes of interest and an increasing number of applicants going through the recruitment process. Looking forward, the Partnership are looking to schedule similar community focused recruitment events on a bi-monthly basis. The Partnership have also worked with HR to try and establish ways to expedite the on-boarding process and are trialling a condensed Job Description for entry level positions. The CCP team are now well established with MyJobScotland as work continues to look at ways to strengthen the approach to recruitment. On 18-19 April 2023, the Partnership joined NHS Lothian and Edinburgh College at a recruitment event in the St James Quarter. Work continues to develop communications and advertising material featuring some of our front-line colleagues.

Social Workers

Adult Services joined Children and Justice Services for the Open Day on 3 May and will continue to work closely to promote Edinburgh Social Work as a positive career choice and work closely with universities, offering practice placements, thus building a pipeline for the future.

4.1.3 Place Directorate

Operational Services

The main hard to fill to roles are skilled road workers and engineer/senior engineer roles. Salary is cited as a factor for this as it is felt that the Council cannot compete with market rates in the private sector, particularly for highly technical professionally qualified roles. It should also be noted that there is increased competition for frontline roles posts with specifically the retail and hospitality sectors, which offer higher hourly rates for potentially less demanding work.

Facilities Management (FM)

The introduction of recruitment fairs targeted in local communities has been successful and the FM Service recently won an award for their work on 'Cleaner Recruitment'. This initiative focused on targeted recruitment campaigns with different forms of engagement, such as face to face open days, extensive social media and app communications as well as local promotion such as lamppost wraps and posters in community venues. This has been captured in a campaign toolkit which will allow this to be used across the Council. The outcome of this initiative led to the following of 64% of vacancies across all locations where this was previously around 10%.

Sustainable Development

The main hard to fill posts are Environmental Officers. Salary and opportunity for career progression is cited as the main reasons. Further work is being considered required to address this, including the positive work carried out across Planning and Building Standards through the introduction of their successful apprentice and graduate programme.

4.1.4. Corporate Services

Finance and Procurement

In both Finance and Procurement, the difficulty is in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Comparable salary with other public and private sector organisations is cited as an issue. Consideration is underway with regards to the introduction of apprenticeship / trainee roles as part of 'growing your own' and needs to be further developed, recognising, and considering potential risks post individuals becoming qualified.

Solicitors – Salary is a key contributor to these hard to fill roles and particularly with senior roles. Salaries within the private sector have accelerated and we have also saw staff moving to NHS and Scottish Government because of pay differential. In order to respond to this consideration is being given to “grow your own” schemes by recruiting graduate/junior colleagues. Although focus needs to be given to senior roles and types of duties and work around clarification and reprioritisation of tasks requires to be undertaken to ensure that these individuals are focused less on administrative tasks and maximising their professional input. This is also similar for Internal Auditors.

Committee clerks – this is an area with higher turnover with staff leaving for promoted posts. This is positive in terms of development of these individuals and consideration needs to be given to succession and development.

Customer and Digital

There are a number of recruitment interventions underway within this area, including recruitment open days and also 'Refer a Friend'. The following roles are proving hard to fill:

- Contact Centre – this is an area of high turnover given the nature of the entry level roles and salary. Agency staff are used to resource gaps and consideration needs to be given to overall establishment levels and ongoing succession, development and talent management.
- Cross Council, Data Analyst and Project Manager roles - due to the specialism of this skill set consideration needs to be given to wider graduate and apprenticeship types roles, along with succession and development.

5. Next Steps

5.1 As well as continuing to support directorates with local initiatives to address recruitment and retention challenges, the following corporate actions are being progressed/considered:

- Ensure that recruitment and retention a key priority in the development of the Council's new People Strategy and Strategic Workforce Plan, with the focus on the development of a Recruitment and Talent Attraction Strategy and Succession Framework.
- Support services with local workforce planning and help consider transformation of roles and services.

- Continue to work closely with our approved contracted employment agencies Pertemps, ASA etc to support our efforts to recruit to hard to fill roles and ensure maximum outputs against agreed contracts.
- Build on the Employee Value Proposition work commissioned in March 2023 as part of our broader attraction strategy.
- Continue to benchmark with other councils/sectors in relation to salary levels/recruitment and retention strategies.
- Continue to work with internal and external partners to support our recruitment and resourcing strategies, e.g. Capital City Partnership, NHS Lothian, 3rd Sector, Universities and Colleges, the Council's Business Growth and Inclusion Team and our schools.
- Make better use of modern and graduate apprenticeships/internships etc. to supplement our recruitment pipeline.
- Continue to monitor results of exit conversations to support interventions.
- Revisit the planned review of terms and conditions of employment that was put on hold during the pandemic – 'Your Total Reward'.
- Seek to continue to streamline our recruitment and onboarding processes, making it quicker and easier to for hiring managers so we don't lose candidates.
- Continue to offer flexible ways of working as part of our attraction, recruitment and retention strategies and Our Future Work Strategy.

5.2 Committee is asked to note the contents of this deep dive and refer to GRBV Committee for scrutiny.

6. Financial impact

6.1 To note the budgetary implications of workforce costs (both direct and indirect).

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 Initiatives involve stakeholder consultation and engagement, including colleagues, Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Management Teams, Trade Unions and Elected Members.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 [Workforce Deep Dive on Maximising Our Capability and Performance 25 April 2023](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 Not applicable