

Public Services Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Designing a public services workforce fit for the future

Wednesday 18 May 2022

3 pm

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (The Chair); Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth; Lord Davies of Gower; Lord Filkin; Baroness Pinnock; Baroness Pitkeathley; Baroness Sater and Lord Willis of Knaresborough.

Evidence Session No. 13

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Questions 107 - 111

Witnesses

[I](#): Richard Lee, Member, Women's Business Council, and Chief People Officer at Willmott Dixon Holdings Limited; James Darley, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Transform Society; Stephen Isherwood, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Student Employers.

Examination of witnesses

Richard Lee, James Darley and Stephen Isherwood.

Q107 **The Chair:** I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Public Services Committee in the House of Lords. We are looking at the future workforce for the public services and whether we can say anything useful in thinking and planning for the future. We have three people with us today, all of whom are currently working in the private sector. From your CVs, I see that a couple of you have had significant experience in the public sector, which is very helpful, and we are really grateful to you for coming along. I will ask the first question, but in responding I would like you first to say a little about who you are and what your background is, for the people watching; I have your CVs in front of me, but the rest of the world does not.

When we are thinking about what can be achieved by focusing on the workforce, are there creative solutions we should be thinking about to meet an increasing demand on public services without a corresponding increase in staff or costs, particularly given what we know today? What advice would you have for us on this?

Richard Lee: Thank you for the invitation to be with you today. I would just like to introduce my colleague, Charlotte Crawley, who is sitting behind me. She works in our people team.

I am the chief people officer at Willmott Dixon. I have spent 34 years working in HR. I started my career in Shell. I worked in the Middle East for four years and then took up HR director roles at the University of Nottingham—so public sector, sort of—and QA plc. I have been at Willmott Dixon for 16 years, and I joined Willmott Dixon because I felt that I would be treated like a human being and not a human resource. Willmott Dixon is one of the largest private construction companies in the country. We employ over 3,000 people and we have a supply chain of 40,000 people.

There are three things I would like to touch on as to how public sector organisations can respond to an increase in demand without increasing costs or people: first, get the people involved in delivering the service to develop and implement solutions to improve it; secondly, implement smart and humane systems; and, thirdly, maintain the human touch—people need people.

I genuinely think that we have some of the best public servants in the world. They are not corrupt, they are honest and fair-minded, and they want to do their best and make a difference in society. However, for any organisation and the people who work for them, things can always be improved, and that is true for us as an organisation. Our people strategy is to attract, retain, develop and promote the best people, and I am sure public service organisations would want to do the same.

We have two measures that check how we are doing. The first is what our people tell us through our people or staff satisfaction survey, and how many of them leave us. This brings me on to the point about efficiency; we ask our people how they think we can do things more efficiently and how we can serve our customers better. We have a 90% response rate. We take their feedback, we take their ideas, we get the right people in teams—people who are passionate about change and people who are influential with their peers; hierarchy is not important—and we equip them to improve efficiency in the current level of resource.

The second key measure is how we retain people. Our people turnover is 6%; we try to call them people rather than staff, as we think “staff” is pejorative. Our people feel valued and trusted, and they feel trusted because we empower them. We give them autonomy to take local decisions to improve efficiency and to serve our customers better. That empowerment is about creating the right balance between freedom and control. Too much freedom and you get anarchy and unnecessary risk. Too much control and you get people feeling tightly squeezed and too many rules. Risk-averse, tightly controlled organisations are slow at making decisions and responding to changing needs.

So we empower our people, and we equip them. We give them the right systems to improve efficiency, and this is my second point: they are not

what are called cutting-edge systems that have never been tried before and are all new. We take off-the-shelf systems that we know work, because they are quicker and more effective. To me, you have to balance smart systems with a humane service. People need people, so we centralise as much as possible the stuff that people do not see or touch, but for the stuff that we think needs people to be available to talk to people, we have as much resource available locally as we can. That may require resource redeployment and some investment, but, for public services, I think the public will stomach that if they get a better service.

So, to wrap up, for me it is about getting the right people involved in delivering the service to change public services from within, not to force change from without or top-down, because no one likes having change forced on them or being told they are part of the problem and not the solution.

James Darley: I am from Transform Society. Thank you very much for inviting me today. My background has been in graduate recruitment for 25 years for FMCG companies and a couple of the big global investment banks, but the majority of my work has been in the public sector recruiting graduates into teaching, prison officer roles, social work roles and policing roles.

One of the things that I reflected on, because this is a really difficult problem and we cannot keep throwing money and resources at it, is how we deal with the more complicated needs and requirements of public service as it develops over the coming years. One of the things that I definitely feel I have learned from the programmes I have been a part of is that there needs to be a focus on leadership. I am not sure that we necessarily focus enough on leadership, because better leaders will deliver better results. They are the ones who will need to evolve and adapt the way we deliver our public services so that they meet the demands of the public requirements at the moment.

Certainly in the programmes I have been involved with, when you focus on leadership and expect great results today but believe that things can change in the future, and that does not get beaten out of you in your early years and you can see that your ideas and your innovation are changing things, that is when you start to see phenomenal results. The people in the programmes I have been involved with are becoming the leaders now. Most of the programmes have been going for between five or 15 years, and we are starting to see head teachers, heads of industry and heads of social enterprises, and because they shared that experience in those early days and there was a focus on leadership through the training and support, and we then empowered them to be those leaders, we have seen a real difference.

It is also about empowering staff, which Rick mentioned. Certainly in our experience, if you are role modelling, the innovation is good and creativity and cross-sector working are encouraged. It needs that role modelling from middle management, who are usually the most resistant to change. The more we can do, the better, whether that is simple ways

of telling stories, building case studies, building this into appraisals, doing something where we are actually encouraging and rewarding innovation, cross-sector working and different ways of thinking. That could be of use.

Finally, I have always looked across the world for best practice. I do not know if we are doing enough benchmarking and looking at different sectors in public service and seeing what is happening around the world that is truly innovative which we then learn from.

Stephen Isherwood: I am chief executive of the Institute of Student Employers. Thank you again for having us this afternoon. The ISE is a trade association with a pretty broad membership, but we predominantly exist for employers. We represent the larger employers of what I will call early talent—starting in their careers. We also have as members 90 universities, 140 schools and about 120 suppliers to the industry. I have been doing this job for nine years. Before this, I used to run student recruitment at EY—Ernst and Young—UK and Ireland. Before that I was at PWC, like James.

I have been in the early talent space for 25 years. I say early talent, because the landscape has changed over the last decade. If I was here 10 years ago, I would be talking about an organisation called the AGR, the Association of Graduate Recruiters, which is what we used to be called. My previous roles used to be largely focused on graduates, but that landscape has changed.

That is relevant to this first question, because employers think about early careers, and that is my specialism—I will not get into other areas of the labour market—in a more diverse way than they used to. Things like school leaver programmes, apprentice programmes and being part of a talent resource for organisations are much more common now than they used to be. No doubt the apprenticeship levy has fuelled some of that, but it was happening anyway. Employers were starting to think about whether it is just about graduates or whether we should be looking at other talent pools and different entry points into our organisations and whether there are different talent streams that we should be taking advantage of. That has happened. That is partly why we changed our name: because the word “graduate” just did not translate to what we did. You will hear most employers talking about early talent now rather than just graduates or school leavers.

We tend to operate at the more skilled end of the spectrum, so not the tradecraft-type apprenticeships. One of the problems that we have in this kind of setting is that we generalise about a labour market, but it is not generalised; it is a series of very different, distinct labour markets and sectors. However, for brevity I will generalise. In that skilled landscape, roughly two-thirds of vacancies are at graduate level and one-third are either school leaver or apprenticeship-type levels, so it is not a total shift.

I will try not to go into territory that will be covered in other questions, but that landscape is quite interesting, because the employers we work with are now recruiting more people than they were pre-pandemic. Given

technology change, the way businesses and organisations operate, onshoring, offshoring, and all the forces at a global or a national level, the volume of early talent at the skilled level that employers hire at is not decreasing. My background is the big four, the big professional services firms. I look at their graduate programmes and they are easily hiring probably double the number they were 10 years ago, despite all that technology change. So I think the impact of technology on services might mean more emphasis placed on who you hire into your organisations and how you train them, which is what we may discuss in the following questions.

Baroness Pitkeathley: Richard, you talked about involving your people. Do you also involve the people who receive the services, the service users, and if so, how?

Richard Lee: It is a very good question. Yes, we do. We run a number of community-based activities and services. On our sites, for example, we have lots of Portacabins for site offices. We often put an extra one of those on our sites so that the community can come in and learn skills, and tell us how they would like to see the project being developed and serve the community they work in. We are very keen to do that.

Q108 Baroness Pinnock: Our focus so far, as Baroness Pitkeathley said, has been about service users and how they influence provision. Given that, from the figures out yesterday it seems that we have the lowest unemployment rate for as long as most of us can remember. As well as being here, I am a councillor in a big metropolitan authority where the council is struggling to recruit and retain senior qualified people in planning, highways and all those roles. Could you give us some thoughts on how the public sector, in this very tight employment market, gets ahead of the game in a way that does not involve paying much more than anybody else, which is a critical factor?

James Darley: Certainly for me, the public sector has a huge brand awareness and brand appeal issue. I got Teach First to become one of the most popular employers, beating all the corporates, by us focusing very much on brand profile and brand appeal. If you did brand perception research at the moment, I do not think you would necessarily get lots of people, particularly at that senior level, saying, "Yes, that's the sector I want to move into". I am also on the board of Now Teach, which is about getting those later in life to teach in challenging schools.

We found that we need to reposition what the public sector is and can offer, and we need to do a lot more hand-holding and take people through a journey, answering their questions and concerns about the barriers they have to joining the public sector. Particularly at that senior level, whatever they are worried about—a drop in salary or whatever it might be—we found that listening to those concerns on a much more personal level can help. That does not have to be expensive, because technology can help us to deliver these things at scale.

So certainly at the senior level we found that brand awareness and brand appeal are low, and that we are not doing enough to, if you like, hand-hold individuals away from the corporate sector. A lot of people will make different choices at different stages of their lives, and they will get to particular stages of their life when they say, "Actually, I don't want to be doing that. I'd love to be doing something else".

It is also impossible in the public sector to find all the opportunities. If you said to someone, "I want to work in public service or the public sector", where would you go? You might have seen an advert for a trust, a foundation or an individual role, but actually going somewhere and understanding what is on offer and how you then progress in some of those roles is virtually impossible. That is one way in which we can make it more attractive; we have to think about how we articulate the collective and the singular message to get talent in.

Baroness Pinnock: That is very helpful. Thank you.

Baroness Sater: What are the retention figures like for Teach First and the organisations you work with in the public sector, and do you analyse how successful each of those are, or are there different data anomalies around the country? Basically, how do you evaluate afterwards?

James Darley: Without a doubt, the big picture for all these programmes is how we can ensure that the leaders of the future have experienced inequity at the grass-roots level and then care about it and do something about it, regardless of whether they are in or out of the sector.

To answer your question directly, between 67% and 85%, depending on the programme, have stayed for ever. It is as interesting to look at those who have left. In the corporate world, for example, one of the ambassadors has just become head of Lewis Hamilton's Mission 44 to work out how those millions should be spent. These are individual roles where they will be able to make a difference on the wider public sector, although they are not necessarily staying in the particular role. Good numbers stay. Those who do not stay still care about the issue and are doing something about it in their roles.

The Chair: Thank you. Lord Bourne, we have begun to delve into a bit of your question, but it is still worth following it up.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Yes, indeed. Following on from Baroness Pinnock's question, and perhaps Stephen and Rick could come in on this as well, clearly the issue of brand is important here. I appreciate that. The NHS has a strong brand, and perhaps fast-track Civil Service does. What can the Government do to make careers in public service more attractive? It probably has not helped announcing a cull of Civil Service numbers. Other than not doing that, what do you think would help promote public service? I am guessing that, in your experience, strong leaders and high-flyers are coming in and they are not necessarily thinking about the public service first. How do we change that?

Richard Lee: That is a good question, and it is one we have been thinking about in the construction industry. We employ about one in 10 of the UK workforce. We are a male-dominated industry. The overall perception of the industry, particularly among women and girls, is negative; it is not an attractive industry. What are we doing about that? We are making much more use of social media—TikTok and so on—and maybe the public services could do the same. I know that social media is a cleft stick, but we do know that 88% of teenage girls and 66% of teenage boys use some form of social media as their prime form of communication and disseminating information. The young people are from all walks of life and are as diverse as possible, so we are using that media. We are using a TikTok video by a female bricklayer who works in Norfolk, and it is very popular. Her first video had 9 million hits.

Secondly, we are influencing the influencers. Who influences young people, students, to make career choices? It is careers advisers, teachers, parents. So we get careers advisers to our sites and offices and we show them the broad range of opportunities in construction. It blows their socks off and they go back and tell their young people. We knew 44% of careers advisers in the past have actively discouraged children from going into construction, and that has now dramatically changed. It has dropped to something like 20%.

Third is STEM ambassadors; I have more, but I will let others come in. The STEM ambassadors have access to 95% of secondary schools in this country. They are welcome to come in and give assembly talks. A lot of the public services have STEM-related careers and opportunities. Could they piggyback? Could they become STEM ambassadors? Could they get into secondary schools and talk about the one thing perhaps that the public services have over and above the private sector: the sense of putting something back and making a difference. That appeals to young people.

Stephen Isherwood: Going back to some of the earlier points, it is also worth recognising that, at this stage in the labour market, everybody has problems. If we were here with an investment bank, they would be saying, "D'you know what, we're having trouble hiring, retaining, *et cetera*. It's a competitive market". There is also a particular challenge for the public sector in that in recessionary times the public sector programmes tend to do better because there is a flight to safety and recruitment is more stable. As the commercial sector bounces back, the public sector suffers, particularly at the moment when it comes to salary. So the first thing to say is that that makes it a more difficult landscape.

Over the last 10 years, the corporate sector has focused much more on schools, with ambassadors going in ever earlier in the programme. The engineering, tech and construction sectors do this: they do not just talk to sixth formers about jobs they might take next year but go back to possibly the end of primary school and start to talk about careers. The public sector has some Rolls-Royce programmes. The Civil Service fast stream makes them the number one brand for graduate employers.

James's programmes have done very well in mimicking some of what the corporate sector has done traditionally.

One thing that is quite different about the UK markets compared to almost anywhere else in the world is that most employers do not really care what somebody studied. You may look at me like I am being a bit weird, but think about it. In the UK, you can be a lawyer and it does not matter what degree you have done. In Germany, you cannot. If you have not done a law degree, they tell you to go away. In fact, you would not even ask the question. That also makes it a more consumerist market. We joke about the 90,000, but that is the employer brand of the public sector. You need to be cognisant of that.

I know that part of the remit today is talking about how not to spend quite so much money. Our members are made up of organisations similar to the ones James has worked with, so they tend to spend a bit more than most other public sector recruiters, but they still spend on average £1,500 less per hire just on the recruitment process alone for selection and attraction. There is something about investing in the right way, building those employer brands but getting in at an earlier level, and starting to form those opinions at school level. We still have a long way to go to make the policy and strategies on careers education in schools work as effectively as they do at the university level, but doing that will help. My overall message is to go in earlier and invest earlier. Look at some of the private sector's best practice and get in earlier.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Thanks very much. That is really helpful. How could we go about getting to parts of the population that are not usually responsive to a strong message about the public sector, such as certain schools and certain communities? For example, middle-class kids will be told to be lawyers, medics, perhaps accountants, but they will not think of the public sector beyond that.

James Darley: It is not broken. There is a lot of good practice happening in different parts of the country, with different public sector employers doing some interesting things, but we have to attract differently and position it around the issues. I always used to sell the problem, not the profession: if you sell rehabilitation, it is prison officers; if you sell addressing educational equity, it is teachers. By selling the problem, not the profession, we did very well.

We also need to position it around leadership. Recent research by some of my organisations has shown young people do want to develop their leadership, but they are not looking at the public sector as a way to do that. We need to be positioning ourselves and saying, "This is the perfect place for you to be developing your leadership skills, and it is a wonderful place for you to start doing that". We have to attract differently.

We also have to recruit differently and look at all the different ways of recruiting—internships, work experience, apprenticeships, and direct hire. To give you an example, the top 100 companies recruiting graduates for the investment banks get 76% of their cohort through internships and

work experience that they have offered young people. In the public sector, it is 9%. We are just not there yet in being able to offer interesting internships, work experience, and opportunities so that young people can say, "I loved that. Can I actually do that for a living?" "Yes, you can".

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: That is just so true on internships. Hilary, Jill and others will have experience of being a junior Minister and trying to get somebody in as an intern. It is extremely difficult, and you are right: when they come, it makes a big difference. But it was not easy.

James Darley: That means that that level of talent is being taken out of the graduate pool in the second year, the penultimate year. They are not having their eyes opened up to other opportunities, because someone has got them, offered them a paid internship during a nice summer and locked them into a job before they go to their final year. So there is definitely more we could be doing there.

There is also something about training. Certainly the programmes I have been involved with have proved that you can do training differently. Sometimes it is not necessarily loved, and there are a number of people who do not believe you can make training shorter or do it in a different way, but we may need to challenge ourselves to do training in the public sector in a different way that actually meets the needs of this generation rather than the way it has always been done.

There are experiential experiences and things like that in the training. There is something about supporting people differently. This generation wants instant feedback. They want to know that they are doing a good job and know where they are progressing. So having buddies, coaches, mentors, whatever it may be, is hugely important, as is encouraging movement across different sectors: in many of the programmes I have been involved with, if they try to do a project with a different area of the public sector, no one is letting them do it. They want to work with their colleagues in different areas of the public sector, but it is not encouraged, and it is not supported in the way it could be.

Finally, there is the focus on leadership and actually empowering young people. With tech firms and other big corporate firms, if someone is good, they promote them quickly and give them the opportunity and empower them to do roles. In a lot of areas, the public sector is still very stuck in its view that you must do this number of years before you can get to these positions.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: That is very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: It seems to me that the perceived culture of the organisation is very important. James, I notice that you were also a trustee of Frontline, which in a sense came out of the thinking of Teach First, but with a very different public perception, I suspect, and much more anxiety about going there. Is that what you found? How did you tackle that in Frontline?

James Darley: Yes, it was. With Frontline, we listened to our target market, tried to understand what it wanted in a leadership programme and then delivered that back to it in a way that was structured around children's social work. We gave them early responsibility. We gave them early connections with customers and clients and more professional qualifications. There is lots of research out there to say what this generation want in their first job, so in a way you just repackage yourself and design your programmes so that when someone says, "Look, I want leadership, I want responsibility" and so on, you can go tick, tick, tick and do it that way. You are absolutely right that moving from teaching to social work was a very different proposition, but I still believe that you can position yourself in the right way to inspire a generation towards public service.

Richard Lee: There are three things that could help to make the public sector more attractive and help people to get used to its culture quite quickly. The first is the job application process. This is sometimes the very first touchpoint that people have if they want to work in the public sector. In Willmott Dixon, if you want to apply for a job with us, it takes two minutes and 17 seconds. The partner of one of my team recently applied for a job in public service and it took her three evenings to go through 18 pages of documentation. So the process could be a bit slimmer.

Secondly, it is very important, particularly if people are coming in from the private sector, or even from a public service organisation with one culture to another, not only to help them with any technical competence but to support them with a cultural induction programme. I wish that when I worked in the public sector I had a cultural buddy who could show me where the landmines were before I stepped on them.

Thirdly, to pick up on a point James was making, for me it is not Teach First but teach last. We have an ageing workforce. In our company, as people get close to the time they are thinking about retirement, we allow them increasingly to work part-time. That is a tremendous opportunity to offer them the opportunity to work in public service and to bring the two things together—the private sector and public services working together.

Baroness Pinnock: Are there any examples of what you just described: employees in the private sector going part-time and linking over to use their skills in the public sector.

Richard Lee: In my organisation, we have people who, as they are approaching retirement, have gone to be governors for schools, people who are doing paid work in the NHS, and some who are doing voluntary work. We have people who have gone back into the Armed Forces as reservists to offer their experience and their knowledge.

Q109 **Baroness Sater:** You have touched on developing skills when people are in the system and getting them to transfer those skills into different jobs in different organisations. Obviously we have a recruitment problem, so we do not have the people to do that, and we have resource and financial

problems. You have talked practically about some of the areas that you could work with on this, but can you give me some idea of how you would start to approach it, given some of the constraints we have in developing those skills and developing the people in the public services to enable them to transfer into different public service sectors?

James Darley: Role modelling can definitely play a part here. As soon as you start to see those middle managers and senior managers telling stories such as, "I've spent 10% of my time working in a different sector", these are things that allow the rest of the staff to go, "Actually, I can potentially progress in slightly different ways".

There is also a communications and marketing element of being able to collect those case studies. In Teach First and other organisations I have been a part of, we have built into people's appraisals extra rewards, extra credits and extra "Thank you"s—for example, if you have done something cross-sectional or supported a member of your team to be promoted into a different area. Rather than your being rewarded for keeping your team locked in a little silo, you are actually encouraged, supported and appraised in relation to a broader remit. Those are some very simple ways of doing it, and storytelling is one.

Allowing it is also important. A lot of the Teach First-ers who are now in interesting positions of leadership in the public sector are still saying that they are coming across barriers when they want to work cross-sectionally through the public sector. So there is the practical issue here of how we remove barriers to working across different sectors.

Richard Lee: I support James on those points. Again, it is about how public sector organisations can engage their own people to be part of the solution and not be identified as being part of the problem. I am sure there are a number of people out there who, given the right encouragement, stimulus and support, could do that without bringing in outside experts or spending lots of money.

Stephen Isherwood: My observation would include things like rotation programmes, which the Civil Service fast track does very well. I have taken secondees into our organisation over the last four years, and they have been amazing. As ambassadors for a programme, they are really good. I can also see the learning they are taking back into their organisation. Again, the private sector does that very well. Giving people different experiences as part of their development programme is very good.

Echoing what Rick and James said about the culture internally, I can think of organisations that reward people for doing the people stuff right. You get recognition for going into schools and being an ambassador, and for helping your people move on. Some organisations can put barriers in front of people's promotion if they do not do this right. You can drive it into the culture. Rotations and getting it in the culture are important things in an organisation.

Baroness Sater: How beneficial do you think the digital world we are now living in will be in the development of how we use technology in training and upskilling?

James Darley: It is key. If you look at recruitment now, particularly in the graduate area, gamification, video interviews on your phone that are marked by artificial intelligence, and situational judgment tests, it is all here; it is happening. Covid meant that all the programmes I have been involved with had to move to a 100% online way of training. That is crazy when they are police officers and social workers, because they need to be in front of people, but they have managed to find a way of doing it. Now that we are back, they are not just going back to 100% face to face; they are creating a hybrid model.

We should embrace and utilise technology but never lose the human element. Whether it is for recruitment, training or development, you have to map out that candidate journey and work out where the human element needs to be. But so much can be done online that is much more efficient nowadays, whether that is getting information, providing information for appraisals or whatever it may be. There is definitely some good practice out there which I am sure the corporate world is doing.

Richard Lee: Absolutely. For us as an industry we need to embrace digital tools and smarter use of data. For example, we need to use the digital tools that we have—virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence—to develop manufactured kits of parts offsite. You bring them to site and bolt them together, job done. It is much quicker. It is much more efficient. To help us to do that, we have introduced a new apprenticeship called a digital and data apprenticeship to help us do that. We have 16 people who are now qualified. It is not exclusively for young people. They are already making a difference. We are making bite-sized learning available to our people. To be honest, the private sector is probably a step behind what is happening in society. For example, you go to YouTube for how to fix a banging washing machine or, in my case, how to jumpstart a car. People have been doing that for quite some time now. That is how people learn, and organisations, public and private, need to follow suit.

Stephen Isherwood: We track what people are training on and how they are training. One of the shifts over the last decade has been less emphasis on what you need to know and more emphasis on how you self-direct your learning and grow your self-awareness. One tech company I know said that it does not really do presentation skills training anymore with new hires. It shows people that those skills are important to the job, but it equips them with some online tools. Basically, it says, "Find somebody who's bloody good at the job and learn from them". That way of helping people to drive their own development is one of the shifts, and technology enables that. It can be more readily available, more bite-sized, and provide a greater diversity of sources, rather than the old model with one trainer in a classroom.

Baroness Pincock: How prevalent are those quite significant changes in

training and development in the public sector?

James Darley: I am not seeing much of it. I see little pockets of it, but I am afraid it is not widespread. I still see a very traditional belief in how individuals need to be trained and supported. Sorry.

Baroness Pinnock: That is why I asked the question.

Stephen Isherwood: I will check our data and see whether I can break it down and come back to you, because I might have some data on it.

The Chair: That would be very helpful.

Q110 **Lord Willis of Knaresborough:** It has been a fascinating conversation this afternoon, but I think you are skirting around one of the central problems that we have in the public sector. If you look at the big areas like the National Health Service, which is obviously the largest employer, parts of education, the business service, and other areas of public service, we have a system that says basically that you need a qualification to match a role, and that role becomes cemented in a silo in the organisation. Moving out of those silos is very difficult indeed. We spend seven years training a medic, but if they want to do some medical research as part and parcel of ensuring that we can give patients better treatment, it is the devil's own job moving across in that direction. I wonder how much you think this business of traditional roles, matched by qualifications and by silos, is really the big preventer of us moving forward with a much more exciting and inclusive public service.

James Darley: It is a key part of the complicated jigsaw to solve. You are absolutely right that it is not encouraged and not supported, but actually it is worse than that. As you have said, you are locked in a silo, and that is where you are supposed to stay. These days, the average graduate spends only two and a half years in their first job, and that is in all sectors and all industries. It is not just in the public sector, but in all corporates and businesses. Graduates are coming into a portfolio career world. I completely agree that the public sector needs to be supportive of a portfolio career world. Be open to the fact that people might leave, but, you know what, they come back.

On the point about retention, a couple of years ago there were more Teach First-ers teaching in 2003 than there were in 2005. Many of them had gone away, done some corporate work and had a family, but they were coming back. There needs to be more fluidity in the public sector.

The Chair: That is very interesting.

Baroness Pitkeathley: To what extent do the regulators of professions in public services contribute to the silos that Lord Willis mentioned—for example, you have to do such and such a qualification in order to be registered as a particular profession?

James Darley: If the bodies believe that those qualifications are required to do the role, who am I to say that they should not have them?

Should there be more openness about the fact that, once you have done that for a few years and you want to move, what you have is transferrable? That is the key here: that qualifications, experience and knowledge are not being seen as transferrable to other areas of public service.

Stephen Isherwood: We talked about employer brand earlier. Often, people think that employer brand is just about the website or the recruitment brochure. Actually, when you look at a lot of practice in the private sector, employer brand is about the culture of the organisation. It is about what it means to work and stay, or not, in the organisation. One of the changes over recent years is the shift away from, "Join us. This is the best career choice you will make", to the smarter idea of, "Join us. This is the best career decision you will make". You can see it out there, where the proposition is, "You might come and work for us for a few years, but then you might go off and work for a client and come back", or, "You might go away and become a client", and that is being sold at the point of entry. Again, that is where we make the point about employer brand: that it is not just a branding marketing message. The corporate culture has to change to reflect that.

Yes, you have some technical roles, and if you are going to be an accountant, you need to keep your professional accreditation and so on, but if you are going to become a business leader in that professional services firm, that is where you may stop being an accountant and instead become a business leader, and that is when you can start to move over. That is the importance of having an organisational culture and the attractive message, "Come and join us, even if you're saying that, actually, you probably won't be with us for life. You might have a relationship with us for life". That is quite powerful.

Q111 **Lord Davies of Gower:** Good afternoon to you. I want to return to a point raised earlier by Baroness Pitkeathley. One of our concerns is that public service delivery should consider the broad and varied needs of service users and their families. What changes to workforce structure or workforce planning would you make to accommodate that? Richard, you talked about community activities and so on. Would you like to continue from there?

Richard Lee: Just a couple of quick points from me. I think a better way of changing organisations is changing them from the inside rather than driving down from the top, because the average tenure of a CEO in the private sector is three to four years, the average tenure of a Minister may or may not be shorter, and you end up with people going from the left to the right and so on. If you change from within, it is more likely to last longer. If organisations are to keep change going, they need to change their structures. Public services could bring people from the communities into their decision-making structures at all levels, not just non-execs on boards but into management teams, front-line supervision teams and call centres to help to manage that service and decide how it can best be set up. That is the first thing: engage communities in the decision-making structure.

Then, for us, it is about making sure that our workforce—we have 150 sites around the country—reflects the demography of the local community which it operates in in its full range of diversity. To be honest, for us in London, that is more of a challenge, but we are working on that.

Lord Davies of Gower: I was going to raise the London issue. My background is in policing. At one point, the Metropolitan Police spoke about recruiting just from London—Londoners. It never worked out. It is a difficult one.

Richard Lee: It is. I touched earlier on construction being a male-dominated industry. In our communities, we know that it is 48.6% men to just over 50% women. That is the national demographic, so we know that half of whatever community we work in are women. We have set ourselves a goal that by 2030 half of our workforce from the board down will be women, and half of our decision-makers at board level will reflect the gender make-up of the communities they operate in.

The key way we are bringing that change about is to get our men on board with that change, because 48.6% of the workforce are women and 16% of the construction workforce are women, so most of the decision-makers will be men, and it is probably the same in the police force. In order to affect that sort of change, you have to get your key decision-makers on board. For us, it is our men, and they are helping us to transform the culture from within. If decision-making structures in public services were half internal, half people from the community, it would be interesting to see if that would make a difference.

James Darley: I completely agree. I have written down governance and workforce. You have to have representation, whether that is on steering groups or advisory boards, and to create things so that you get to the voice. If the structure does not lend itself to that, create something. We have done a lot of this with the organisations I have been a part of, so you can ensure that you get that voice. The workforce has to be more representative, and maybe, controversially, we have to start recording, naming and shaming. As soon as we started to record the gender pay gap, we saw loads of things happening. I wonder if it is time to do something similar with lived experience, diversity in all its glory and other areas, because as soon as you can see that it is not very good, someone then does something about it.

Stephen Isherwood: My observation is exactly the same, really. Where I come from, it is both the recruitment and the retention of a workforce that represents the communities. We could have a whole other session on that, because it is a lot easier said than done, because you are trying to effect long-term cultural change in an organisation and change to legacy hierarchies. There are some interesting practices. Things like reverse mentoring, hiring differently, getting those people to stay and giving those people a voice internally so they can influence senior stakeholders who are open to that could be quite powerful, too.

The Chair: We have had a fascinating afternoon. Thank you very much.

We are grateful to you. You have sparked a number of ideas. You have also reinforced some of the things we have been hearing from people inside and outside the public sector, but it is really interesting that, coming from mainly the private sector, you are saying the same things. I hope that is something we can use. Thank you very much indeed.