

Public Services Committee

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

Wednesday 9 March 2022

4 pm

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Members present: Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (The Chair); Lord Bichard; Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth; Lord Davies of Gower; Lord Hogan-Howe; Baroness Pinnock; Baroness Pitkeathley; Lord Porter of Spalding; Baroness Sater; Lord Willis of Knaresborough.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 18 - 32

Witnesses

I: Matthew Lewis, UK and Ireland Director for Hays Public Services, Hays Recruitment; Steven Littlewood, Assistant General Secretary, First Division Association (FDA); Sarah McClinton, Vice-President, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), Director of Health and Adult Services and Deputy CEO, Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Examination of witnesses

Matthew Lewis, Steven Littlewood and Sarah McClinton.

Q18 The Chair: Welcome. My name is Hilary Armstrong. I chair the Public Services Committee. We all have labels. If you are like me, you are struggling to make sure that you can see them from a distance. This is our first meeting for two years where we have all been in the room together. We know the virus is not finished but it is none the less good to all be in the room. Thank you very much for coming. We had been due to have an earlier session but one of our witnesses is ill with Covid, so we postponed that session. It inevitably was the health representative from the GMC, but that is the way it goes.

We are trying to think our way through what we can usefully say about the nature of the workforce that is required in the public sector over the next period of time. Everybody is talking about shortages, but we are not concentrating on that. We are not trying to hold people to account for what they have or have not done so far. We are trying to get good ideas,

if not plans, about how the different sectors in the public sector see the future, knowing that there will be a limit on the numbers of people that they can recruit for all sorts of reasons, but also knowing that this committee, for example, is trying to look at things across the board and not just in silos. Much of the talk about the public sector is how services co-operate more effectively. Sometimes training, recruitment and so on jar against working across with other organisations, other services and people who come from a different professional background. We are interested in that and what the future could look like if we got on top of the sort of workforce that would deliver for the public most effectively in public services.

As I say, we are looking for your ideas and we are not going to shoot you down if you say something that we do not agree with. You have seen the primary questions, but I will encourage members to come in if they have supplementaries at the end of you answering their initial question. If you feel that someone else has answered a question and you do not want to say anything, that is fine. We are pleased that you have come and we want to hear from you. When you are answering the first question, if you could say a little bit about who you are and your role that would help members enormously.

This is being broadcast; what the audience is like I do not know. I just say that to remind you.

The chair for once does not have the first question. The first question is from Baroness Sater.

Q19 Baroness Sater: Given the significant staffing shortfall in the social care sector, what steps can be taken to boost the recruitment and retention of social care staff? Also, what steps would offer better career progression for staff in this sector? Could you share any examples of good practice? Matthew, would you like to start?

Matthew Lewis: I would be delighted to, although the committee might find that Sarah is better positioned than I am. Would you like to start?

Sarah McClinton: I am happy for you to kick off.

Matthew Lewis: I am the UK and Ireland director for Hays Specialist Recruitment, and within that I run our Hays Public Services portfolio of customers. We supply thousands of organisations with all role types, from qualified social workers through to local authorities, central government, charities, not-for-profits and so on.

First, on qualified social work, retention is probably the number one issue because, clearly, if we were able to retain more people we would not have the same attraction challenge that we have today. As I understand it, we unfortunately have more people leaving the sector than coming in, which obviously is creating this erosion of the workforce and the challenge that we face.

For me, a lot of it is around the quality of life that qualified social workers experience, in so far as they are under intense pressure with significant case loads and sometimes struggle with the governance and support structures that exist around them to take away some of the pressure and stress in managing the case load more effectively. Part of the challenge is clearly that not enough people are coming into the sector, so we have a perception issue around attraction and bringing people in to undertake the role. Of course, the entry route is significant in the investment of time and money by the time you have gone through university and spent a year in gaining experience before you become a fully fledged qualified social worker.

Within that we need to think about how we can create opportunity to support QSWs better. That might be with different entry routes for different levels of people—early intervention, family support and care leavers themselves, who obviously have terrific experience to bring to the sector with their understanding of the environment. Therefore, without having to go through the full qualification process, we can help support qualified social workers to focus on the casework and work with them on early intervention and family support around that initial structure.

Sarah McClinton: I am here as the vice-president of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, representing directors of adult services across England. In my day job I am the director for health and care services in Greenwich in London.

I agree with Matthew that retention is the biggest issue. You have talked quite a lot about social workers and some of those professional elements of the social care workforce. I do not disagree with any of that. I will add that we have some particular challenges in our mental health services. We have seen a growing demand for mental health services and approved mental health social workers is one of the areas that we struggle with most in adult services, but we are seeing increasing vacancy rates and increased turnover for adult social workers and similar issues across children services.

The social care sector encompasses a broad range of roles: working with older people but also people with learning disabilities and a huge range of roles from direct care support through to the more professional and leadership roles. A lot of our conversation in adult care tends to focus on the direct care workforce, which is largely a workforce that has been outsourced over the last 20, 30 years, as we have moved to a mixed economy of social care. The Competition and Markets Authority has evidenced that social care is a poorly functioning market. The low pay and poor terms and conditions of direct care staff are very much part of that picture.

Our workforce is mainly female and tends to be older. About 10% of people working in social care are below the age of 25 and many of them will not continue to work in the sector. We have relatively high representation from black and minority ethnic communities. I think that is about 24% nationally and in London it is over half of our workforce.

Direct care staff are mostly on the minimum wage. I think 50% of our home-care workforce are on zero-hours contracts.

We need to make it a much more attractive sector to work in, and ADASS has called for a new deal for care staff as part of our submission to the spending review. The first thing we need is a proper workforce strategy that is informed by the care that we want. Thinking about your opening remarks about what do we need in the future, it is about how we all want to be cared for in the future and, therefore, what is the plan for how we might resource that with staffing, different roles and the kind of skills mix that we need.

I have touched on pay already, but that is a huge issue and ADASS has called for a minimum care wage of £11.50 an hour. That is equivalent to NHS band 3 rate. One of the biggest challenges we face is competition with the NHS, although we clearly work very closely together with our NHS partners. There is that issue of parity. If you are working on a dementia ward in a community hospital, for example, it is very similar to working in a nursing home with people with dementia and very complex needs, yet the pay and conditions, and security, are very different in those jobs. That is one issue.

If we look the other way, we face huge competition in the social care sector, as a minimum wage sector, with retail, hospitality and logistics. It used to be the case that social care paid more than those sorts of industries, but that has now changed and we have seen huge competition for staff. As we are coming out of Covid, retail and hospitality are opening up again. We see Amazon offering golden hellos of £3,000 to people and higher hourly rates. That is a big challenge for us. If we do not address those fundamental issues around pay we will continue to struggle to attract and retain staff. We also need to enhance training and development, and opportunities to progress.

Finally, there is valuing social care staff. Our staff have shown huge commitment and compassion. They do very skilled jobs that support people to live the lives that they want to lead in crisis and in the longer term, but that is not always recognised. I came through London Bridge station last night, where there is a huge rainbow and a huge thank you to NHS staff, but care staff often feel they are forgotten, undervalued and not always recognised. I can see nods, so you recognise that.

The issues with how compulsory vaccination was introduced in care and policy have now been reversed. That has further undermined trust in the sector. I can pause there.

The Chair: Does the FDA want to say anything about leadership in this area?

Steven Littlewood: Yes. I am assistant general secretary with the FDA trade union, so I am part of the senior management team of the union. We represent 19,000 members across the Civil Service and we have members who are managers in the NHS.

I am probably the least qualified to speak on this specific question, but I have something to add on training and leadership. As you will have seen from our written submission, there is a big problem with training across the public sector being fragmented, especially in leadership positions and the training for being in senior roles. I agree that it would be good to see career path training to carry people through into senior roles from lower-graded roles, because that is a good recruitment and retention tool.

There is a problem that the training you get to be a senior civil servant does not necessarily equip you to move across into the police force, the London mayor's office, the NHS or social care. If there was a more joined-up approach that allowed the way that those skills are assessed to be more transferable, that would allow broader career paths for people to be able to move and take those skills and different experiences across the public sector. You would be able to retain and, ideally, recruit people as well with this career path as an inducement. You might lose them from social care but you might gain them in the NHS, then they might come back to social care with an extra set of experiences and a different perspective. Joining up the training offer is crucial.

Q20 Lord Davies of Gower: I want to ask Sarah about zero-hours contracts. Is there a percentage of people who prefer to have zero-hours contracts?

Sarah McClinton: There is probably a minority of staff who want to have that casual employment and that may well suit them. If I think about my niece, for example, when she was studying she was working in a home for people with learning disabilities at weekends. That was obviously a zero-hours contract. But I think the bulk of the workforce, who we rely on to support people in their homes with vital tasks, day in, day out, would not choose to be on a zero-hours contract.

Q21 Baroness Pinnock: This has been an interesting introduction to the challenges you face. You said at the end, Sarah, that you compared those who are looking after somebody with dementia at home and somebody working on an NHS ward doing a similar job. What is the crossover, if any, between those two roles? If there is not a crossover, why not? Is it because of training or qualifications? What is the barrier there? It would meet one of our inquiries about getting roles to be less focused and more diverse.

Sarah McClinton: I agree with Steven about having more flexibility and people being able to move around the system. The integration White Paper, for example, provides some opportunities for us to develop more of that thinking as long as that leads to more parity in the health and social care sector. As I have described, one of the issues is that people in social care will not get that job security and that level of pay if they are working, for example, as a healthcare assistant on a ward.

As an example, in Greenwich during Covid, when we were at the height of the pandemic and our local hospital was struggling to cover shifts on the wards, we deployed some of our home care staff on to the wards to support the nurses, which helped the system stay afloat but it also gave

those people more experience. It was a good opportunity for them. Some of them went on to get permanent jobs in the NHS. That is great for them, but that means they are a loss to the social care sector. It would be good to find a way to offer people those opportunities, but it also depends on social care having parity of esteem so that we can retain staff and encourage people to stay in the social care sector, whether in more senior caring roles as registered nurses in homes or with a path to professional qualifications.

Another example is that yesterday I was talking to my head of occupational therapy, who has been doing some work with allied health professionals, the local acute trust and our community services provider. They were reflecting that, in Covid, they had passports where nurses could move around organisations nurses, but there was nothing that enabled allied health professionals to move between health and social care in a similar way. She was looking at how we might make that happen.

Q22 Lord Bichard: I was going to ask the question Baroness Pinnock asked, but I will follow it up because it is an important point. We have had for more than a year a Department of Health and Social Care, so one might expect that this issue would have been grasped by now. How confident is ADASS that work is going on to address the very issue that Baroness Pinnock asked about, which is the mobility of staff across the two parts of the system? Do you think that this is an urgent issue for the DHSC?

Sarah McClinton: Various initiatives have come out of the DHSC. For example, we have had workforce recruitment and retention funding over the winter. That is short-term funding over winter, which is very welcome but makes it difficult to plan how you might use that and make some of these more strategic changes. There is £500 million set aside for training and development as part of the reform programme from the Department of Health and Social Care.

What is missing is a long-term strategy for what we will need in 10 years and how we get from where we are now: what is the bridge to what needs to happen for us to be in a different position where we are clear about the roles that we need? ADASS supports a future view on new models of care that are much more home and community based. That enables you to recruit people from your communities who are able to work in the sector locally, as well as work more closely with the NHS and have more of a joined-up, properly integrated way of working.

Lord Bichard: I have a follow-up on the follow-up. Your point about recruiting in the local communities into social care is an important one that has not been followed up at all. We all would expect that the £500 million that is now on the table for training might pave the way towards more multiskilling and transfers between health and social care. Would we not expect to see some of that money going on this very issue?

Sarah McClinton: I am not party to exactly how it is planned to be spent but yes.

Lord Bichard: What would you like it to be spent on?

Sarah McClinton: We would like it to be spent on training and development that enables people to develop their skills and to have more opportunities for progression.

Q23 **Lord Hogan-Howe:** Something that Steven said interested me. On the idea of portability of skills—there are other portabilities from pensions and so on—for the people you represent, are people given mandatory training that is accredited and tested for every new leadership role, or is it an ad hoc arrangement?

Steven Littlewood: Not for every leadership role that I am aware of. A lot of the training we provide will give people the skills to get to those positions. If you want to get to a senior Civil Service position you have to pass an assessment. We are training people around the competency framework that is used to assess whether people are at SCS level, but the problem is that that is a completely different framework from what is used in other parts of the public sector. We would like a more consistent assessment. Training could then be more consistent across the piece and you would be able to transfer skills across a lot more easily.

Lord Hogan-Howe: I get that and I support it. I am trying to get to the bottom of the likelihood, if I am a leader in the Civil Service—we can talk about other sectors as well—of me being trained for the roles that I am about to adopt.

Steven Littlewood: It will depend on the role, but there is not an automatic training for the specific role you are about to go on. Part of the thinking behind the senior Civil Service is that people have a transferable skillset and they can be posted to different roles. The assessment of whether you are at SCS grade is more about those skills rather than the job description of a particular position. Some may have extra training for that position but it is not automatic.

The Chair: We have another couple of people who want to come in. I suspect that Lord Bourne and Lord Porter can come in after the next question. I have Lord Willis who is champing at the bit.

Q24 **Lord Willis of Knaresborough:** “Champing at the bit” is too strong because I do not have much of a bit to champ on. Thank you all very much for your initial comments. It is enormously helpful that you have an understanding of the situation and have expressed it so clearly.

Sarah, your four-point advice to the committee gives us the basis of what we should be looking at. We would all agree with the issue of a long-term strategy. The problem for me—I hope you might agree—is that it has to be an integrated strategy. The trouble is that we constantly have strategies for individual silos rather than the whole place.

I wrote a report on the shape of caring called *Raising the Bar* on the integration of health and social care workers. We launched a nursing associate role; there are now 5,500 registered and 8,000 a year are going into training. It is a clear example of people who can work in both

healthcare and social care on the same pay scales and can swap across. I cannot tell you how hard it was to fight for that and to get it through. Who were their biggest opposition? Your fourth point, Sarah, was about valuing. Senior personnel within the organisation—particularly senior nurses within health—objected strongly that this was a government conspiracy to get people in on cheaper wages to do the job. There is a job of work that needs to be done by all three of you on this report.

My specific question is about training. You quite rightly said that we have now outsourced a lot of health and social care to private organisations; Hays is clearly one of the beneficiaries—or providers, I should say, because you do not make any profit. We have accepted that without one of the biggest challenges that goes with it: how you train those people and provide them with the sort of training that allows them to do their job better and to move up.

I would like each of you to say how we could have an integrated training programme that goes across all people, irrespective of whether they work for a private, local authority, government or NHS organisation, that they receive a common training at entry levels, funded by central government, perhaps, or local government—I do not know. At the moment it falls between two stools. Social care staff are trained by local government—you are an example of that—but you spend virtually nothing on their training at all. The levy goes only to bigger employers; 2% of it goes in and over £1 billion was not spent last year. The whole thing is a mess. I would like you to tell us the answer to that. How do we get this unified training that gives everybody a real start on that ladder for us to move forward? Sorry, that was long-winded, but I feel quite passionately about this.

Sarah McClinton: I can tell. To comment on your first point, given that the demands are increasing and the jobs are getting harder—we are seeing people with high levels of need and complexity, certainly in social care—we need to look at where we use specialist clinical skills and how we increase the skills of the whole workforce. I am not sure whether I have an answer to your question. I am not sure it is possible to have training that goes across all public services. It may be and I might not have the imagination to think about that.

Lord Willis of Knaresborough: I am talking about health and social care.

Sarah McClinton: I think that is possible for health and social care. In lots of international systems a task would not be split in the particular way that we do at the moment. Sorry, I thought you were talking about the whole of public services; my brain is slightly frying. I think that is possible and it would be useful.

There is sometimes a risk that, when we talk about health and social care together, people think about older people—I am not suggesting you are. Some of the support workers and roles in social care are quite a long way from nursing, if I can put it like that. As long as we get the model right,

we have the right value base and we promote the social model rather than medicalising social care, that would be very beneficial.

In Greenwich, for example, we have invested in some apprenticeships for occupational therapists and social workers because I think that we need to support our own staff to be able to qualify and to move into those professional careers as well. But that is fairly small scale. If we could broaden that more systematically, that would also be useful.

Matthew Lewis: As a recruiting expert, I do not necessarily have the same detailed insight on the delivery of the service as an operator, but I have a view on your point about the apprentice levy.

There is a terrific opportunity to redeploy the apprentice levy to those areas in the economy that need it most, and to focus on the sectors of the talent pools that are not currently engaged in these kind of roles and are not attracted into this environment: the underrepresented, the disadvantaged, the people who need an opportunity to get into the workplace. If we can direct the apprentice levy into the sectors that require them, where there is acute skill scarcity, and attract people who need an opportunity to get into the workplace, get a leg up and begin to acquire skills, then that for me is one of the single largest opportunities we have. On your point earlier, a significant amount of money is not spent that could be spent in this manner that would be highly effective in addressing many of the key issues we face.

Steven Littlewood: One of the things we have asked for is a centralised public body that would commission and oversee training across the public sector. That would probably address some of the issues you have raised. It would not necessarily be a single provider. There is a benefit in having multiple providers in training, but fragmentation can make that inefficient and expensive. If there is a central body overseeing and commissioning that, it could ensure that there is quality training. It could make sure that people, wherever they work, are receiving the training that is necessary, whether they are in the private or the public sector. I know that goes a bit wider than the remit of your question, but that would deliver what you asked about.

Q25 Lord Porter of Spalding: Lord Bichard asked the supplementary question I wanted to ask, but the last answer you gave takes me off on a whole new route of not liking that answer particularly, on the basis that there is not anything we do in this country centrally that works well—apart from war if you have to do it, and most of us choose not to. I am not aware of any other public service that is better because it is national. If you have an example of something where my brain can be put back into a more neutral manner, I would be more than happy to hear where you think centralisation of anything has worked well.

Steven Littlewood: That is a wide remit for me to think of a specific example, but the model at the moment, which is the complete opposite of that, is not working well. We provide so much training, doing things like working with the LGA to speak to students from more diverse

backgrounds to encourage them into public service and providing training for our members to help them progress their careers. You might ask, "Why is the trade union doing that; is that not the employer's job?" The answer is that the provision by the employer, as it stands, is not up to scratch, so we are stepping in and providing that.

On whether that could be done better centrally, our view is that it could not be provided worse than it is at the moment. You might say, cynically, that it is quite a good opportunity for us to fill that void, but I am not sure that is necessarily our role. We are happy to do it because it helps our members, but a centralised body would help rationalise some of those contracts, which could be used better, and taxpayers' money could be used better. If I think of a specific example I will come back to you.

Q26 Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Thank you for the presentation; it is fascinating. I will go right back to the start, when we talked about one of the prime issues being retention. When we set off looking at this area we were aware that there would be a massive understandable pressure. Given how hard people, who are already deprived in many ways, were having to work, often for very low wages, there was likely to be a considerable cost to this. Nothing has changed my mind on that. I cannot see any way of cracking this without spending a lot of money. The more you spoke about people in social care that became even more evident. I cannot help feeling that that is the case.

Is there anything else that we are missing—any obvious tricks at the margins we can do, or things on training, which are worth doing anyway? The people working in the system feel undervalued—justifiably in many cases and for understandable reasons. Is there any way of cracking that without lots of money? As you can imagine, it will be very difficult in the present circumstances to get any Government to listen to a plea for lots of extra money. Sorry, that is putting it very bluntly.

Matthew Lewis: It is about the perception of the sector, the roles and the duties that individuals carry out, particularly in the realms of social care. If you think broadly, from the outside looking in, about what social care means, it often means looking after elderly people at the end of their life, whereas it can be a rich and varied career, looking after all sorts of different service users and groups where there are learning disabilities, physical disabilities, injury rehabilitation, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's—there are so many different routes to specialise in. The problem is that we do not have the perception of the individuals who carry out those roles and the value attributed to that. That is key to their self-worth.

Aligned to that perception of the role, I do not think that a progression route for a vocational, professional career path exists. You go in and you are at a level and it is often seen as a transitory role that you do while you think about doing something else, perhaps.

There are other challenges around training, development, leadership—we have already addressed pay. Happy people do not leave jobs; happy people stay in jobs because they love it and enjoy it. The quality of the

leadership, the culture and the environment is key to that. Alongside that is well-being and the work/life balance that people have. Unfortunately, it is often very challenging in that environment. We recently carried out a survey of social care providers and their recruitment and retention trends. We found that a lot of organisations are losing individuals because there is a lack of support in a very stressful environment and well-being support around them, which is curious in an environment where it is all about people and looking after people.

For me, it is about perception of the environment, the role and creating a vocational pathway within that, raising its profile and taking back control of the narrative. It is not just about looking after elderly people; it is a rich and varied career that is rewarding, allows you to use your emotional intelligence and investment in that to deliver a valuable service to society. That, for me, is the absolute key.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: I do not doubt any of that and you make a very good pitch, but it is hard to see that being done without doing something substantial on pay, is it not?

Matthew Lewis: Yes. I am taking the view that pay is the elephant in the room. It is almost off the table. It is not something that we can fix today; therefore, what else can we do creatively to try to address it?

The Chair: We are moving into Lord Bichard's questions, so I am going to come to him.

Q27 Lord Bichard: I want to say that looking after older people towards the end of their lives is a valuable purpose. You suggested, I think, that that was one of the problems. I think a lot of people get a huge amount of self-worth from doing that. We just need to be careful of the language we use because that is one of the things that stops people coming in.

My question follows on from this discussion. How we can ensure that more people who would not normally come into public services, or have not in the past, come in and stay in the public service? Matthew, do you think recruitment agencies do enough to enable or encourage people to move into different sectors, or can recruitment consultancies sometimes be part of the problem in always taking a rather stereotypical view of people and what jobs they are able to do?

Steven, you rightly talked about leadership because good leadership retains people and bad leadership sends them away. Your members make up most of the leaders within the Civil Service, so it is not an unfair question to ask what you are doing as a trade union to change the tone of leadership, which I know from experience can be quite off-putting for people coming into the Civil Service.

Sarah, could you say a little bit more about what you began to talk about on local communities? As a committee, we have been quite interested in lived experience and the fact that we need more of it. You are likely to get lived experience if you can get more local people to work in these professions. If you have any advice for us or any ideas or thoughts about

that, that would be helpful.

Recruitment agencies: you are part of the problem, are you not?

Matthew Lewis: I will answer that in a moment. My apologies if it came across that I was insulting about looking after the elderly. I am trying to say that it is a very multidimensional environment where there are lots of different opportunities to get involved. That is what I was trying to get at.

Lord Bichard: Yes, I know, but sometimes we use language loosely and other people pick it up and think, "Well, even they think it is a poor career option".

The Chair: Looking around the room, we all have our self-interests.

Matthew Lewis: Understood, and my apologies. What I am railing against is perception, but I also reinforced that with what I said, so my apologies.

Are recruitment agencies part of the problem? I can speak only on behalf of Hays. I have worked for Hays for 27 years and had a varied and rewarding career throughout, the last 10 of which have been specifically recruiting into the world of public services. I represent a very large-scale multinational business, but within the UK we have a dedicated public services business that supports organisations across the breadth of the sector, from central government, local government, NHS, all the way through to charity and not-for-profit. We have individuals who recruit exclusively into those environments. Therefore, their job is to support customers who are experiencing exactly these issues of talent attraction. Our role is to get creative around how we find new talent pools to attract people into the world of public services in the face of a difficult climate with private sector competition.

A starting point for this is if you think about some of the statistics. The Office for National Statistics reports that there are 1.3 million job vacancies across the UK today—all walks of life, all locations, all role types. Some 200,000 are in health and social care, 100,000 are in manufacturing and a significant number are in retail. You could argue that you are competing against those environments to attract people into care. As Sarah said, Amazon is paying up to £3,000 in golden hellos to go and work in a warehouse, which is an honourable profession and so on, but in the face of that competition it is very difficult to attract people into, for example, social care.

The role here for recruitment agencies is to find a means by which to reach into talent pools and present the opportunity at hand as a rewarding career choice to get into that environment. For me, that is as much around social purpose, the contribution that people make and the job satisfaction that one gets from working in those environments. Yes, there is an issue with pay. We cannot resolve that as recruiters but we can present the opportunity at hand, the contribution that people make and the purpose of those organisations as an attractive proposition and environment in which to work to encourage people in. We have to be very

creative around trying to find untapped talent pools of people who are not necessarily considering that as a career path to meet the demand of our customer groups, which is, as you can imagine, significant and very difficult to fulfil at the kind of volumes required.

Lord Bichard: I agree with that. Can you give us some specific examples where you have tried to get people to move from one talent pool into another—particularly into this talent pool? What are your methods for doing that?

Matthew Lewis: For example, we are representing an organisation in Warrington that has a significant demand of 50 to 60 people to work in exactly this social care environment. We use all sorts of tools to reach and directly target different community groups to present to them the opportunity they would not have otherwise thought of. Forgive me: public service organisations typically are not very good at using modernised tools for reaching, engaging and finding people. The NHS tends to have a fairly single-dimensional approach: you put a job on NHS Jobs and hope to get a response. The Civil Service is the same. You need a multichannel approach to candidate engagement—video content, social media, constant noise in the background around creating a brand and employer value proposition that candidates can buy into.

That is what we do. We identify different target groups with transferable skills. For example, a chef might make a great person to transition into a domiciliary care environment because cooking is part of the role, alongside other aspects. We identify different candidate groups, skills and sectors with transferable skills to encourage them. That is the only way we can meet demand.

Lord Bichard: Steven, you have most of the leaders who are the problem.

Steven Littlewood: I would not characterise it that way. As a union, we are acutely aware that the senior Civil Service and the Civil Service itself needs to reflect the public it serves. That is extra important at the senior level. It has become more diverse in recent years. We have pushed a lot of work on that but we need to do more. You will have seen recent figures on the fast stream graduate scheme, which is an accelerated route into senior roles. We represent people on that. It is still not diverse enough. We are holding the employer to account on that and pushing it as hard as we can.

On our training, we offer work with diversity networks, staff networks within the Civil Service, and the people that take up our training offer, which is all around career development and bringing people into leadership roles, to disproportionately BAME, the disabled and people from underrepresented groups, partly because the offer from the Civil Service is deemed to be quite poor and often is a tick-box exercise of doing online training. Ours is much more interactive and supports people from groups that have previously been less reflected in senior levels into those roles. We have made real efforts to reach out with those networks.

That is what we are doing to try to address the problem of making sure that leadership is more diverse.

On the leadership that puts people off pursuing a career in the Civil Service, in my view it is not the Civil Service leadership that is the main part of the problem; it is the political leadership, or lack of. When people see attacks on civil servants coming from Ministers, does that particularly make you want to become a civil servant if you know that you will get attacked in the media and you have not necessarily got a way to respond to that—other than through your trade union, of course? A more supportive approach from Ministers towards their civil servants in their leadership roles would also be helpful with that.

Lord Bichard: You might think I am the only person who will agree with you, and I do not, because I do not think it is a political problem. As much as anything, it is an official problem. You are right about the senior leadership not yet reflecting people with protected characteristics in the way that it should. I am interested that you think that the FDA could do more itself, perhaps, rather than just comment on what the most senior Civil Service leadership is doing. You said you were doing things; that is the sort of thing I had in mind. I cannot agree with you that it is politicians—certainly not with this group around me. Sarah, is local lived experience a real source of solution for the problem?

Sarah McClinton: I am not sure that it is a panacea, but I think that care ought to be rooted in our local communities. ADASS very much supports a shift to models that are much more home-based and based in local communities. Everything that we are trying to do as directors is enabling people to be connected and be part of their local communities.

There is a lot of talk of anchor institutions in lots of White Papers. As local authorities, we have responsibility for economic development locally and I think there are opportunities. I am always arguing for health and care as a big part of our local economy. It is a growing sector, as you are aware, so it is focusing some efforts and energy on how we can support people within our communities into those roles.

A lot of our care service staff are local people. There are some differences in geography and regional variation in that. If I was the director in Kensington and Chelsea I would be sitting here saying, "No, my staff come from Greenwich because they cannot afford to live in Kensington and Chelsea." For many of us, the people who are working in care are part of the local community. For example, if I think about the vaccination programmes that we worked on locally, we did lots of deep engagement with our local communities to try to understand why people were reluctant to take up the vaccination. At the same time, we were doing lots of work to ensure that social care staff were vaccinated. They were often very much the same people. There is more opportunity, as I said, to build up local skills and enable people with lived experience to contribute.

The Chair: I am very lax in the chairing and we are running late.

Q28 Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: This has been a fascinating session. I appreciate this question is perhaps a little binary: to what extent can the public services benefit from private sector experience in recruitment and retention? I recognise that that is not really the way we live; it is much more fluid than that suggests. In your experience, and given what you said about the fact that perhaps we are approaching things in a traditional way on recruitment, are we missing some tricks?

Matthew Lewis: Absolutely. The key for recruiters in public services is to recognise the competitive market that one is operating in. Going back to my point about 1.3 million jobs being available, it is a hugely competitive environment. There is pay disparity as well, so you are disadvantaged there and competing on an uneven playing field. As recruiters in public services, we need to be incredibly efficient and slick in our engagement with our target candidate groups to get them on board quickly and effectively in the face of competition in the private sector, which can move in a much more agile fashion.

A public sector recruitment process is very linear in its approach: an advert is placed, a closing date is made, an application form often is completed, a review is carried out, a shortlist is made, an invitation to interview is given. That will take a number of weeks, by which time all the best people who might have been interested in applying are long gone because a private sector organisation will look at a CV or whatever and say, "Yes, let's go". There are considerations around efficiency of process and modernising to make it proportionate and appropriate for the kind of recruitment process one follows.

Similarly, in my experience screening and onboarding can take six months for some central government departments, from the point of application to onboarding. It is entirely appropriate and correct that there is strict governance around robust screening and vetting based on personnel security standards, NHS appointment checks, and so on, but we are still locked into some fairly archaic techniques whereby, for example, individuals have to provide a utility bill on paper as proof of their address. Nobody has these things anymore so it is almost impossible to deliver. We need to modernise that aspect. In short, it is about being much slicker, quicker and faster in a competitive marketplace to secure the individuals that you want to onboard and who have the luxury of many choices at present as to where they go to work.

I appreciate we are pressed for time, but I have one other point on the attraction techniques that one uses in the world of public service. As I mentioned, if you are in the NHS you will put a job posting on NHS Jobs; if you are in the Civil Service you will post on Civil Service Jobs. It is a very one-dimensional attraction process. People typically are in work, often very happy in their workplace and not actively looking at those particular job boards. Therefore, you will only capture people who are probably already working in the NHS or in the Civil Service and understand how to access those environments. You are missing out on a huge talent pool.

You need to be able to reach into different communities and talent groups with different channels to market to access a much broader audience—I mentioned a wider variety of job boards, generalists and specialists, video content, careers portals, social media and so forth. That in turn obviously has an impact on your diversity of attraction of candidates, which is important, as we know, because we want to represent the communities we serve. Sorry, there was quite a lot in there.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: You could say that we have an analogue system for a digital age.

Matthew Lewis: Exactly right.

- Q29 **Baroness Pitkeathley:** Thinking of Sarah's experience at the tube station and the thanks to the NHS, is there something intrinsic about the NHS—the health service itself—that makes it a more attractive place to work than any form of social care? Is that what our real problem is: that even doing the lowest grade health job is always seen as somehow superior, more valued and more recognised than jobs in social care?

Sarah McClinton: I think that the NHS has a strong national brand and it is close to the hearts of the British people. Care is a very disparate set of services run by many different companies, as well as the commissioning functions local authorities have. We do not have quite the sort of strength of brand. However, we can do more to shift perception and raise awareness. To some degree, Covid has definitely raised the profile for very sad reasons. In ADASS, we have always promoted the need for a national conversation about social care. More of that has happened, but I still think we need better understanding and a sense of what the opportunities might be in social care. The issue of parity of esteem with the NHS is not just about perception. It is also about how systems operate and how social care needs to be a voice around the table.

- Q30 **Baroness Sater:** You have both talked quite strongly about perception. Matthew, particularly for you from the private sector, if you had free rein to do anything you wanted, what would be the first thing you would do to try to change that perception?

Matthew Lewis: The perception of social care as an environment to work in?

Baroness Sater: Yes.

Matthew Lewis: It would be the professionalisation of the role and the vocation, and the reward associated with it—notwithstanding pay, but also the value and worth associated with social care.

- Q31 **Lord Hogan-Howe:** Can I challenge one thing? I agree that pay is vital. You have to get it right. As Lord Bourne said, it is clear that that is not there at the moment. Equally, some really good employers are prepared to be flexible with things that cost nothing, so you have massive bargaining power to get cheaper cars, insurance or mortgages. It seems

that the public service sometimes does not do that. You have access to further education opportunities, for which the employer could provide time, as well as more opportunity. It may involve some costs. That is one of the challenges: are we, in the public service, creative enough? The things I have listed are things that some good public service employers do, but we seem to flick immediately to cost—high pay. You need both. I do not think that we will ever compete with Amazon in the long term. Where does that happen and why do we not do more of it?

Sarah McClinton: If I think about my own experience, I have always worked in the public sector and there are benefits as well of it being a vocation. I have had opportunities to do things that I might not have had if I had worked in the private sector. When we are talking about care services that are commissioned externally, local authorities have been under huge financial pressure, so the way those services have been commissioned is to reduce price. The sorts of benefits that you might get in another part of the private sector, for example, are not there predominantly in the care sector.

Lord Hogan-Howe: If you look at things like payday loans, people are going to other people to make huge profits on interest, but employers can do that: they can give people payday loans; they can give them their own money early. It does not stop that. I just give an example of things that cost nothing but, to that early point, we do not seem to be flexible enough to go in that area.

Matthew Lewis: I have a view on that too, specifically around flexibility as well as benefits. For a lot of organisations flexible working is often part-time, when actually flexible working is the ability to choose when you work so that you can fit your work in around your own care commitments and other aspects of your life. There needs to be a much better understanding of what flexible working means and the talent pool that will open up as a result of having flexibility around it. Again, it is the diversity aspect around that too. That is number one.

There is some work to be done in the sector around technology, shift rotas, that kind of work. When you talk about the NHS with thousands of people in a hospital, trying to create that flexibility is difficult unless you have the technological means by which to do it.

On the benefits, I completely agree that a lot of things that people now require were not necessarily historically offered by some employers. For example, my employer offers me the ability to access a GP online very quickly. Therefore, I do not have to go through the trouble of trying to get an appointment two or three weeks hence. I can get an online appointment tonight if that is what I require. That is a valuable, flexible benefit that I can utilise.

Going back to an earlier point around what the private sector is doing, it is having much more sophisticated discussions with its workforce around what they require as benefits today. A lot of mental health and well-being support, which I referenced earlier, was not available in the private

sector, which is in demand in the social care environment but is not offered. A much more comprehensive package would be helpful.

The Chair: Our final question is from Lord Davies. I do not want to miss this one.

Q32 **Lord Davies of Gower:** Given the conversation that we have had about the availability of money as a reward incentive or whatever, what one other intervention by government would you recommend to make the public sector a more attractive employer?

Steven Littlewood: You have taken pay off the table, which is my top priority.

Lord Davies of Gower: I think we have accepted that that is a difficult one.

Steven Littlewood: It is a difficult one. It is absolutely necessary. I agree that some of those non-paid benefits could be done better, but pay is the central piece in all this. Frankly, you will not fix these things without pay.

However, accepting the premise of the question and taking pay off the table, there is embracing some of the flexibilities in flexible work. For us, a lot of that means embracing the benefits of hybrid working and remote working, rather than forcing people to go back to a system of presenteeism. A lot of opportunities there were available before the pandemic, but the level of change management involved in getting people on board with that would have been quite huge. It has effectively been done for us now. There are opportunities there that we could seize.

Flexible working does not just mean working from home or working remotely either. As Matthew said, it is about different shift patterns, allowing more of a work/life balance, things like that. It can be stigmatised as applying only to part-time workers and it becomes quite gendered. If we open that up to more people as much as we can that would be a huge benefit for people.

Matthew Lewis: The single thing that government should do to improve the public sector as an employer is get back in control of the narrative around the roles that people carry out, and the social purpose and the contribution that individuals make within that. For example, every Civil Service government department is different and unique for a reason, because they carry out a fundamentally different role. Being able to articulate that to a target candidate group, getting them invested in that social purpose with the contribution to that purpose that they can make within that role, becomes a valuable piece of information for recruiters when trying to entice people into environments.

I did say one thing, but a second is your point about analogue and digital: change the way you engage with your target markets and make it much more accessible to candidates trying to get into the world of public services. At the moment, we tend to restrict ourselves to the people who

understand how to navigate those processes, which are quite arduous and difficult.

Sarah McClinton: From a social care perspective, it is hard to get away from the issue of pay. Pay is a reflection of value. There are other things that you can do to value and recognise the work that goes on.

Aside from pay, it is conditions of employment. Gwynedd, for example, is employing people to work eight hours a day. Some of that is contact time, some of that is time for added value, and so on. It is more than just pay; it is also terms and conditions.

Aside from that, one thing that would be helpful is a workforce strategy that sets out our vision for the future and how we will be able to support it, given that we currently have half a million people waiting for social care services, either for assessments or for care and support to be put in place. These pressures are just going to increase further. We need a longer-term strategy that tackles some of those fundamental and systemic issues.

Lord Davies of Gower: We need to provide some certainty.

Sarah McClinton: Indeed.

The Chair: I know that we could go on for a lot longer, but we have overstretched our time. This is an issue that will be very important for the whole of the public sector for some time to come. If there is anything that you think of that you have not said this afternoon, or that we have not asked you but you think we should be thinking about, we would be grateful for you dropping us a note. Thank you enormously for your contribution and for being prepared to come and share your ideas with us. We are grateful.