

**Information below – as provided by the CIEH – regarding:**  
**Environmental health workforce survey report: local authorities in England**

Link: <https://www.cieh.org/media/5249/cieh-workforce-survey-report-for-england.pdf>

**Key findings:**

- There are between 3,240 and 3,360 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) fully qualified Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) working for local authorities in England to deliver environmental health services at district or unitary level - around 10.1 FTEs per LA.
- In total, there are around 7,600-7,870 FTE professionals working to deliver environmental health services across England's local authorities – around 23.7 FTEs per LA.
- Most EHPs in local authorities tend to specialise in food safety (33%), followed by private sector housing (25%) and environmental protection (19%).
- The vast majority - 4 out of 5 local authorities - reported that they use agency staff to deliver environmental health services. We estimate there were around 510 FTE agency staff used across England in 2019/20 - an average of 1.6 FTE per LA.
- 9 out of 10 (87%) local authorities told us that agency staff were used because of shortages in resources or delays in recruitment. By contrast, only 30% used agency staff because of an unprecedented demand for services and 23% due to specialist knowledge not being available in-house.
- 56% of local authorities reported that they had vacancies in their environmental health teams that were left unfilled for 6 months or more. We estimate that there were approximately 375 FTE posts left unfilled in 2019/20 for 6 months or more across England – around 1.2 FTEs per LA. The top reasons for the vacancies point to a lack of available EHPs who are fully qualified and experienced.
- Whilst the biggest proportion of environmental health departments and services seems to be unchanged (45%) during the past 6 years, 31% reported that some services have been stopped, including discretionary activities such as advice and guidance provision to businesses and any non-statutory functions. 11% of local authorities also reported that some services were outsourced, and 21% part-outsourced, in the last 6 years.
- Whilst budgets remained unchanged in around half of all local authorities (51%), more EH departments reported decreases (24%) in their budgets than increases (17%) in 2020/21, suggesting that budgets are continuing to shrink.
- Nearly a third (31%) of respondents told us that, in their opinion, the delivery of some statutory environmental health duties was at risk, due to resourcing issues
- Looking ahead to 2021/22, 34% of respondents expect their authority's budget for environmental health services to decrease, whilst 20% expect it to increase and 36% expect it to stay the same.
- Overall, around 8 out of 10 EHPs working for local authorities were redeployed last year in response to the pandemic. The most common activities for EHPs included: enforcing business restrictions (98%), advising businesses on trading safely (97%), developing COVID related policies and procedures (95%), managing local outbreaks (78%), emergency planning (69%) and contact tracing (59%).
- A majority of local authorities are not supporting the training of a new generation of EHPs. In 2019/20, 52% of LAs did not have a single apprentice or trainee.

- Not having any budget (66%) and not having capacity to mentor (52%) were the primary reasons given for not taking on any trainees. Only 20% said that no trainees were taken because there was no demand from students.
- Whilst the use of EH apprenticeships is increasing, the number of LAs using apprenticeships is still in the minority. 70% of local authorities did not take on any apprentices in environmental health.
- 52% of LAs said there were barriers to training and development for Environmental Health Practitioners in their authority. Barriers cited included lack of capacity to undertake training (58%) and inadequate training budget (57%).

### **A selection of recommendations contained in the report**

We ask central Government to:

- Provide funding for LAs to support regulatory and public health work, including a ring-fenced fund to pay for the salaries of EH apprentices
- Deliver the recommendations of the cross-Government working groups in full
- Establish of a new role in England of a Chief Environmental Health Officer, to sit alongside the Chief Medical Officer, and work with the newly set up UK Health Security Agency, which will seek to prevent future pandemics.

We ask local authorities to:

- Support EH managers in recruiting EH apprentices and trainees, ensuring these roles are not replacing existing roles
- Provide safe and effective staffing levels and training budgets for EH teams

Last but not least, we will take on a number of actions as a result of this work. CIEH will:

- Continue to raise awareness of the profession through careers fairs, provision of clear and accessible information on the CIEH website and its work with the media
- Review the route to qualification and registration to make this more accessible for aspiring EHPs and their employers
- Work with employers to develop the next stage of the #ChooseEH campaign, with a focus on Level 6 Environmental Health Apprenticeships