



# Tipping point

A UNISON survey of  
environmental health staff

November 2018

The logo for UNISON Scotland, featuring the word "UNISON" in a bold, sans-serif font with a stylized wave graphic above it, and the word "Scotland" in a smaller, italicized font below it.

**UNISON**  
*Scotland*



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# Introduction

This survey is part of UNISON Scotland's Damage series: a programme of surveys looking at the impact of the age of austerity on services and those who deliver them. *Tipping Point* takes a closer look at the issues affecting staff in local authority environmental health teams.

## What is environmental health?

Local authority environmental health teams protect the public from harm. They work in a range of areas:

- Food standards
- Food safety
- Occupational health and safety
- Public health
- Waste management
- Built environment
- Pollution control

Their roles are varied and challenging: acting as advisors, educators and enforcers. Staff carry out site visits to advise on how to meet legislation and keep people safe from harm. They also have the powers to take enforcement actions to protect us all from those who either don't know, or wilfully avoid following, the rules. This service also protects businesses who do follow the rules, preventing unscrupulous competitors from undercutting them.

## Key issues

- 67% of those who responded stated that there had been cuts or severe cuts in their service this year. When asked about the last five years 95% stated there had been cuts or severe cuts. We undertook a freedom of information request to get more detail on budget cuts. Responses showed that budgets have been cut by 14% compared to 2012/13 and 12% 2016/7.
- There are five per cent fewer environmental health officers and 21% fewer people in other roles in the teams than 2012/3. These are small teams so these cuts are having a huge impact on their ability to protect the public. It's no surprise then that satisfaction with Scottish public services is at an all time low.
- Three quarters stated that morale in their teams was low only 8% expected this to get better in the next few years. The cuts and concerns about further cuts caused made their working lives very difficult and added stress by adding pressure and overwork. Members also indicated that the lack of a pay rise impacted on their finances causing extra stress alongside concerns about cuts to come and so threats to their own job security
- Austerity is deeply impacting on the ability of public services to meet the needs of our citizens. This report lays out impact of cuts to environmental health team budgets leaving staff overworked, underpaid and stressed. This means that citizens and the wider environment are at a high risk of harm. There is a better way to do this. We need to end austerity, invest in public services focusing on service like environmental health with prevent harm. Spending in this way will save money to a range of other public services in both the short and longer term.

# Summary

The current debate around public sector finance and the level of cuts to local government has become very confusing; with claim and counter claim around levels of cuts and job losses. Lots of complex high numbers are bandied about. Different starting points are used, capital and revenue spend are mixed or separated and there is a lot more heat than light. The Damage series allow us to hear directly from public service workers about funding levels for their services and the impact of the budget cuts on staff numbers and their ability to deliver a high quality public service.

This time we surveyed members working in environmental health teams. The survey took place in June 2018. The responses from members are telling us that they are under enormous pressure. They are working long hours trying to maintain a quality service which should protect us all from serious harm.

## **Budget cuts**

67% of those who responded stated that there had been cuts or severe cuts in their service this year. When asked about the last five years 95% stated that there had been cuts or severe cuts. We undertook a freedom of information request to get more detail on budget cuts. Responses showed that budgets have been cut by 14% compared to 2012/13 and by 12% since 2016/7.

## **Job cuts**

There are five per cent fewer environmental health officers and 21% fewer people in other roles in the teams than 2012/3. These are small teams so these cuts are having a huge impact on their ability to protect the public. It's no surprise then that satisfaction with Scottish public services is at an all time low. While budgets have been cut work has not been reduced. If anything, Scotland's growing events sector, increasing numbers of cafes/food trucks/restaurants and bars means that demand is even higher. The same is true of challenges with slum landlords leading to problems round waste management and growing vermin populations. Environmental health teams are squeezed between reduced resources and growing demand.

The environmental health workforce is ageing, almost half are aged between 46 and 55. Another fifth are due to retire over the next ten years. Many have already taken the packages offered and have gone. Workload pressures are about more than the job numbers that have been lost. This is a huge loss of experience which is vital in such complex protective service. Teams are now reacting to complaints rather than focusing on working to prevent things going wrong. They now only inspect high risk premises. Areas of work have been completely cut back on. For example pest control, noise complaints, tackling litter and dog fouling and smoking ban enforcement. Responses also indicated that cuts to training and staff shortages mean that there is little time to develop specialist knowledge instead they are all generalists. This is storing up risks for the future when upcoming retirement will mean a huge loss of knowledge. There are also fewer new staff being taken on to develop for the future.

This work not being done increases risk of accidents, food poisoning, contaminated land and vermin infestation. Not only does this put people in danger it also pushes costs onto other public bodies costing more money than investing in a high quality environmental health service. The most obvious cost is to the health service from food poisoning, accidents or diseases spread by vermin. The police also end up having to deal with noise complaints and the fallout from neighbours falling out over noise. The local authority bears the costs of clearing litter and fly-tipping and we all pay a price for living in a polluted environment. Members are struggling under the sheer volume of work: 90% indicated that their workload is higher than five years ago. Cuts to staff, and loss of wider administrative support alongside new IT and reporting systems have also added tasks which keep members away from getting out and inspecting premises and enforcing safety rules.

Across a range of questions members raise the stress they are under caused by overwork and worrying about the things that may go wrong because they don't have the resources to go out and find them. Two thirds told us that they are working late and skipping breaks and lunch to try and get more work done. Working long hours also adds to stress. Only 18% believed that their teams had adequate resources to deliver an adequate service to the public.

Work is being pushed down to less experienced staff including managerial work. On top of that new databases, legislation and reporting systems have increased workload.

Three quarters stated that morale in their teams was low only 8% expected this to get better in the next few years. The cuts and concerns about further cuts caused made their working lives very difficult and added stress by adding pressure and overwork. Members also indicated that the lack of a pay rise impacted on their finances causing extra stress alongside concerns about cuts to come and so threats to their own job security.

Austerity is deeply impacting on the ability of public services to meet the needs of our citizens. This report lays out impact of cuts to environmental health team budgets leaving staff are overworked, underpaid and stressed. This means that citizens and the wider environment are at a high risk of harm. There is a better way to do this. We need to end austerity, invest in public services focusing on service like environmental health which prevent harm. Spending in this way will save money to a range of other public services in both the short and longer term.



# The survey

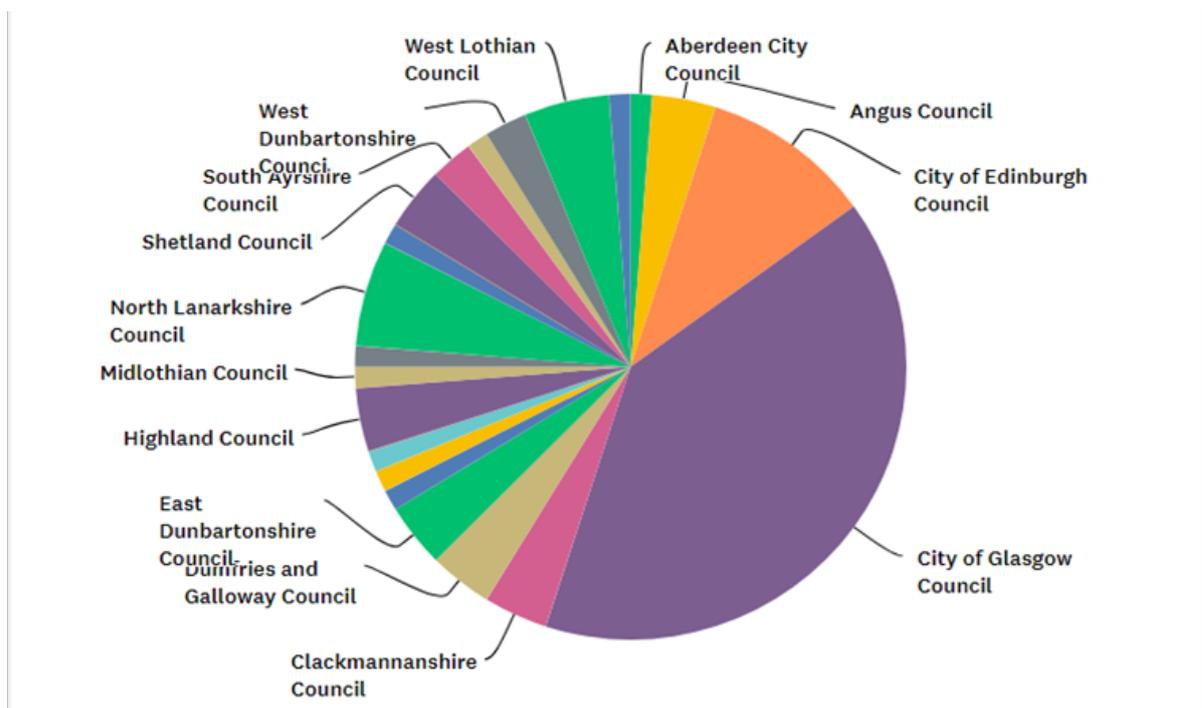
Our survey asked members a range of questions regarding their working lives, The current debate around public sector finance and the level of cuts to local government has become very confusing; with claim and counter claim round levels of cuts and job losses. Lots of complex high numbers are bandied about. Different starting points are used, capital and revenue spend are mixed or separated and there is a lot more heat than light. The Damage series allow us to hear directly from public sector workers about funding levels for their services and the impact of the budget on staff numbers and their ability to deliver a high quality public service.

What members are telling us is that they are under enormous pressure. They are working long hours trying to maintain a quality service which should protect us all from serious harm. We conducted this survey of members using Survey Monkey in June 2018. We asked a serious of questions and encouraged respondents to leave comments to expand on their chosen answer. We also made a freedom of information request to all local authorities to ensure that we had up to date information on environmental health team budgets and staff numbers in those teams.

## Survey respondents

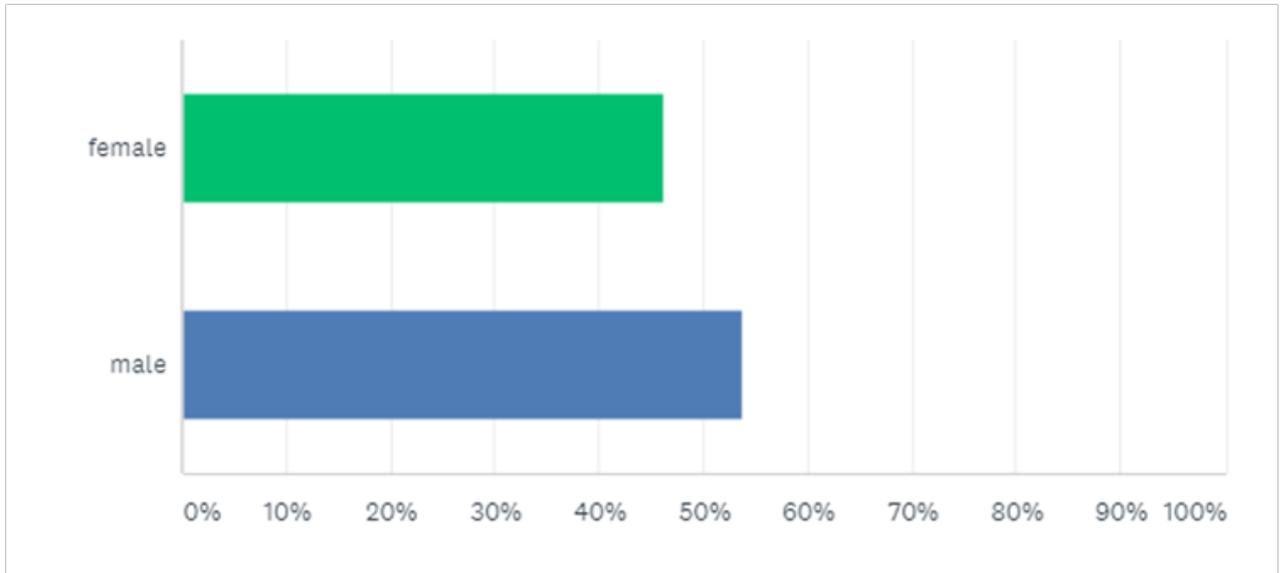
The respondents to our survey covered a range of roles in environmental health teams. Fifty-five percent were Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), including senior and assistant EHOs, another twenty four percent technical offices. Ten percent were team leaders, the remainder worked in administrative roles or were service coordinators, service leads or ate enforcement officers. Members responded from 21 local authorities, the biggest group was Glasgow City Council which is unsurprising as this is the largest authority.

Environmental health teams have highly qualified staff with arrange of specialist knowledge for example in food hygiene and health and safety. Members have degrees and post graduate qualifications alongside professional qualification specific to their roles. Their roles require keeping up to date with legislations and with the range of problems which can occur in environmental health. This includes scams and criminal behaviour. This is essential to keep the public safe from accidents, businesses cutting corners to save money as well as outright criminal behaviour which could again endanger citizens.

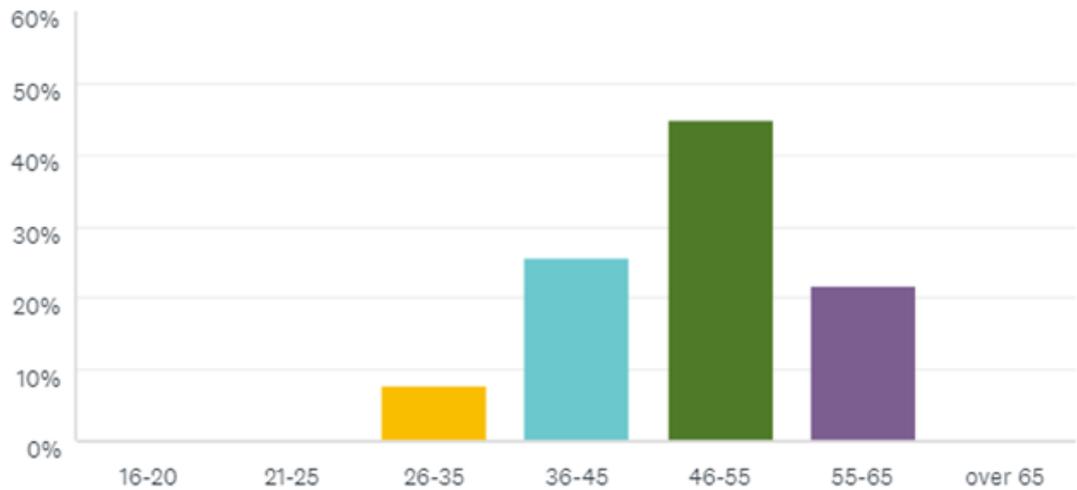


# Gender

Respondents were 54% male and 46% female.

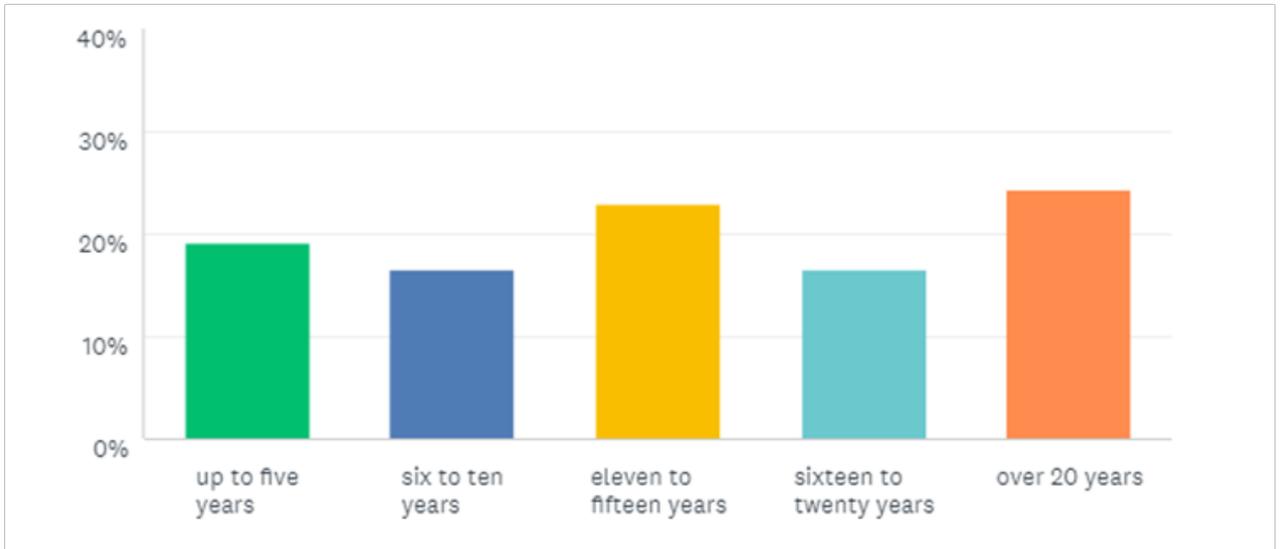


# Age group



Almost half (45%) of respondents were aged between 46 and 55, a further 36% 36-45 and 22% 55-65 and only 8% 26-30. This is an ageing workforce with almost a fifth due to retire within the next ten years. Teams are therefore facing a substantial loss in expertise. There were no respondents under 24 meaning that there are fewer young people coming in to gain that expertise to replace those retiring.

## Length of time in profession



The chart above also shows the length of time that respondents have been working in environmental health with well over half having more than 10 years experience including over 20% with over 20 years. This is a job where experience matters, where building up knowledge of how the areas you are responsible operate. This is how staff are able to recognise potential problems, to deal with people effectively and to spot those actively indulging in risky practices and those who need help to understand their responsibilities. There are huge risks involved in not bringing in people now so that they gain the experience to replace those staff who will soon be retiring.

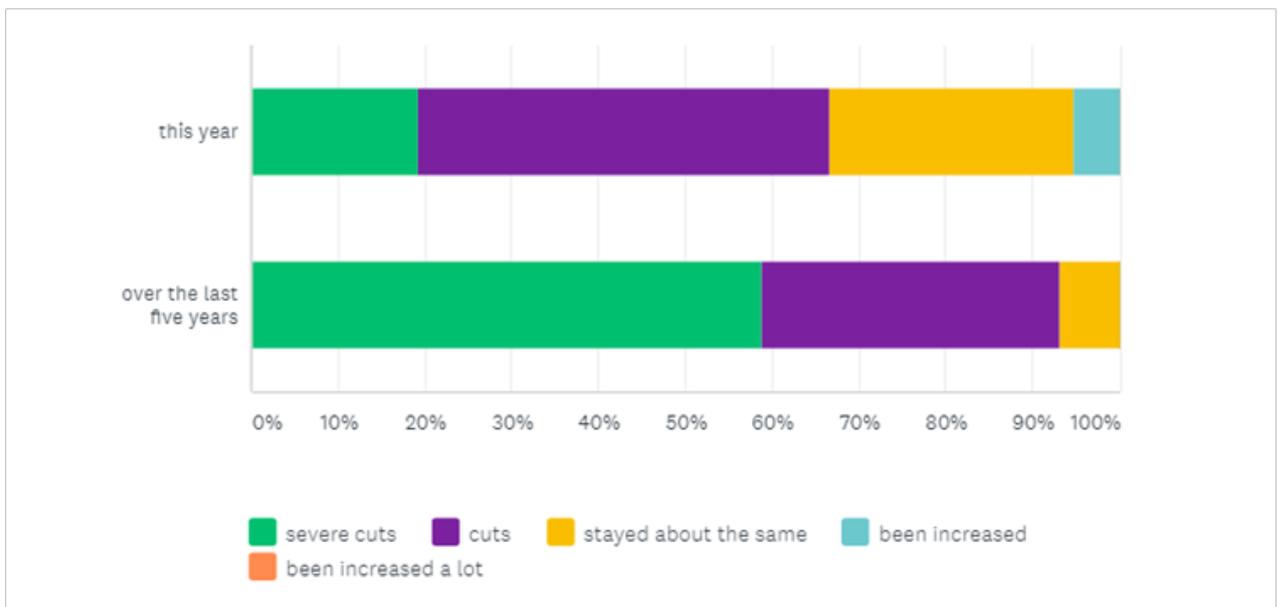
## Does your local authority work in partnership with other authorities?

There appears to be limited joint working between authorities with respondents from Glasgow, and East Dunbartonshire indicating there was project based partnership working. Others indicated that there were liaison groups in place and regular contact to ensure consistency. There are also networks for example contaminated land officers which support staff in their professional practice and development.

# Cuts

## Has your team's budget been cut?

When asked about budget cuts this year 67% of respondents indicated that there had been cuts or severe cuts this year and 28% stating that the budget had stayed about the same. When asked about budget cuts over the last five years and overwhelming 95% stated that there has been cuts including 59% stating that those cuts were severe.



In order to get more detail on the levels of budget cuts we submitted Freedom of Information Act requests to all 32 local authorities about their environmental health team budgets in 2012/13, 2016/17 and 2017/18. The answers revealed substantial cuts.

Not all councils supplied figures for the three years we requested but for those who did reply:

- Budgets in 2016/17 were 2% lower than 2012/13
- The 2017/18 budget was 14% less than 2012/13,
- The 2017/18 budget was 12% less than 2016/7.

Response to our survey do therefore accurately reflected the reality of life in environmental health teams. There have been substantial budgets cuts and that these are severely impacting on the service they are able to provide.

The comments from respondents indicated that these cuts mean that jobs have been cut leaving remaining staff struggle with extremely high workload. They are concerned about their ability to protect the public and those businesses who do follow the rules, The night time service has been severely reduced. Cuts to the training budget make it difficult for staff to keep on top of changes and to continue their professional development. The other key issues are linked: Unsurprisingly it is those with the longest service who get the most attractive packages and so volunteer to go. The workplace pressure due to cuts also makes those who would, in difference times, carry on working chose to retire. This means that teams lose substantial expertise, which again puts more pressure on remaining staff whether they are experienced, and are therefore called on more for that expertise or have less experience and have fewer staff to ask for support. Staff shortages are also increased by the decision to delay the filling of posts or not fill posts at all when staff leave.

Alongside the loss of experience training budgets have been cut making it difficult for remaining staff to gain the knowledge that has been lost.

## What the staff say

- *Less personnel , greater impact on workload , holiday provision*
- *vastly reduced staff numbers. Temporary staff and trainees not being kept on when their contracts came to an end.*
- *Between 2010 and 2013 all staff over 50 were given incentives to leave and this resulted in a big reduction in knowledge and staffing levels*
- *Staff lost and not replaced when a freeze was placed on recruitment. This put pressure on existing staff which now feels persistent and never ending.*
- *Not filling vacancies , using temporary contracts .*
- *A voluntary redundancy meant the service had to be reduced withdrawing the non statutory pest control work*
- *Fewer staff doing more work*
- *Too much work, Not enough people to do it, leading to a poorer service and more stress for the staff.*
- *Loss of experience and knowledge at last round of early retirement. Food Safety and Public Health seem to take priority when new staff are recruited.*

## Have there been job cuts in your team over the last few years?

Our freedom of information request indicated that there are five percent fewer Environmental Health Officers(EHOS) in 2017/8 than there were in 2012/3 and eight percent less than in 2016/17. EHOs aren't the only staff delivering environmental so as well as cuts to EHOs there are 21% fewer other staff such as technical officers, pest control officers and administrative staff, than in 2012/13 and 15% fewer that 2016/17.

These are the raw numbers in terms of who is available to keep us safe. The comments from members show just how much damage is being done by these cuts. These are small teams the numbers of staff losing their jobs doesn't make the same headlines as a factory or service closing but the impact on those workers is the same and the long period of salami slicing our services has a huge impact on the quality of our services and on the lives of those people who rely on them.

Unsurprisingly the answers here follow similar themes to the comments on budget cuts: less staff leading to heavy workload, loss of experienced staff, work load is growing but there are less staff to undertake that work. The loss of more experienced staff means that work is now being done by lower grade staff and/or those with less experience. That adds stress to their working lives as they worry about making mistakes and the consequences of any mistakes. There is more detail in the impact in this section. Respondents indicate that the type of work that teams can undertake is now changing because of cuts.

For some there is a narrowing down of the focus of the team leading to more repetitive work and preventing staff from expanding their skills and experience. There is a focus on high risk areas but this means that there is less preventative work and of course areas which aren't focused on can very quickly end up as a problem because the spotlight is no longer there and people think they can get away with it.

Respondents frequently indicate that they are "spread too thin" that they just can't get things done to a high standard. Having fewer staff is also making it difficult for staff to take leave, which impacts on their health and wellbeing and which can then impact on their ability to do their job. There seems to be little planning about the staffing mix in teams: it's just who hasn't retired, moved onto a new job or taken redundancy.

# Job cuts

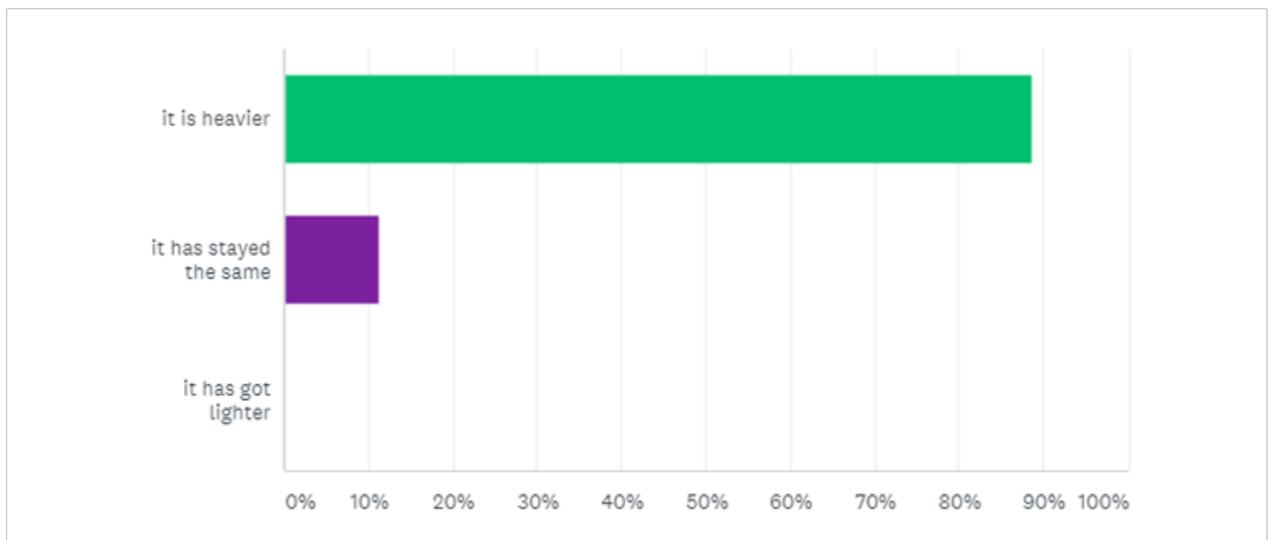
## What the staff say

- *Personnel leaving and not replaced, workload remains the same if not greater*
- *Yes, the fewer numbers of staff impacts on the stress levels of officers. Many experienced staff left who were replaced with younger less experienced people. A much poorer service is being given now and the public have high expectations - it's difficult managing the high expectations of the public and the management.*
- *The job losses have resulted in a loss of expertise and a loss in public service. The service is unable to meet the statutory inspection targets required by the Scottish Government and the level of stress within the workforce has increased.*
- *Some tasks have been farmed out to try and alleviate the workload on the department. There has been a reduction in the variety of work reducing interest and making the job more repetitive. Programmed inspection are the highest priority so the main focus is there.*
- *Not replacing staff that have left. Trainee Environmental Health Staff were not taken on after a full year's worth of specialist training. This is a waste of money as the current staff have to take time to train staff and pay for the trainees. This valuable experience is lost to another authority.*
- *the work has been cut back so that priority areas are covered. In food safety we are required to comply fully with a Scottish food law code of practice. This is not possible e.g 28 day visit for a new premises and inspection of A-D risk premises. This has meant only A-C premises and some new premises are inspected when possibly - full details can be viewed on the FSA LAEMS returns. The reduction in proactive inspections has led to increased enforcement work due to reduced standards of food premises.*
- *Less people with same or more to do*
- *Increased levels of stress for all members of staff. Reprioritisation of work, dropping of some work streams.*
- *Over the last 10 years have lost 6 posts - this is a lot for a small team Impact is that only reactive work done and resources are constantly shifted to meet demand Also is difficult in a multidisciplinary team to have enough time and money for training to maintain competence in all areas of work without damaging service delivery*
- *There are less staff doing more. We have examined the service we provide and have targeted our resources. e.g focus on higher risk food businesses, inability to comply with Food Law Code of Practice, an inability to respond to complaints in the way we would wish, some pest control services no longer provided. Job cuts have had an impact on remaining staff and many staff find themselves doing more, causing stress in a small number of staff.*
- *When staff move on, often they are not replaced or are eventually replaced by staff at a much lower grade. These new staff are often given the same tasks previously done by higher grade but not getting the same rate of pay.*
- *There are just fewer of us. It makes taking time off more of a challenge and people can get stressed trying to cover more jobs or have a wider area to cover.*
- *In the last year alone we have had 2 EH managers be offered voluntary redundancy, 2 EHO posts and 2 Pest Control Officer posts. 1 further manager and 2 EHO posts transferred to Housing Dept to become part of a new team*
- *Two posts have been deleted*
- *Yes - I only see that my colleagues are increasingly stressed and are all dealing with large workloads. Food Safety is king so tough if your main function is dealing with the other issues such as nuisance or a specialist function*
- *Yes, several colleagues have left and recruitment has been very slow as there was a Council wide freeze. Not enough appropriate candidates. Recruitment takes months and Council is very poor at communicating with new appointees. Those recruited need extensive mentoring/ training in some cases. There have been several vacancies for years.*

# Workload

## Has your workload changed in the last few years?

When asked how their workload had changes not a single respondent indicated that their workload had got lighter over the last few years. Almost ninety percent indicated that their workload was heavier. Members comments give us a more in depth picture of a workforce that is under enormous pressure, struggle to maintain a vital protective service with too few people and not enough resources.



Members indicate that workloads are growing substantially and job losses mean that there are too few people to do the work. Leaving citizens with a restricted and lower quality service. Environmental health is not something that's nice to have: it's a vital protective service. Cuts in environmental health not only harm people but they push costs onto other public services due to increased ill health and accidents. Anti social behaviour complaints are pushed onto the police. Local authorities also have to pick up the cost of dealing with fly-tipping, dog fouling and litter.

The key themes that emerge from members' comments are that:

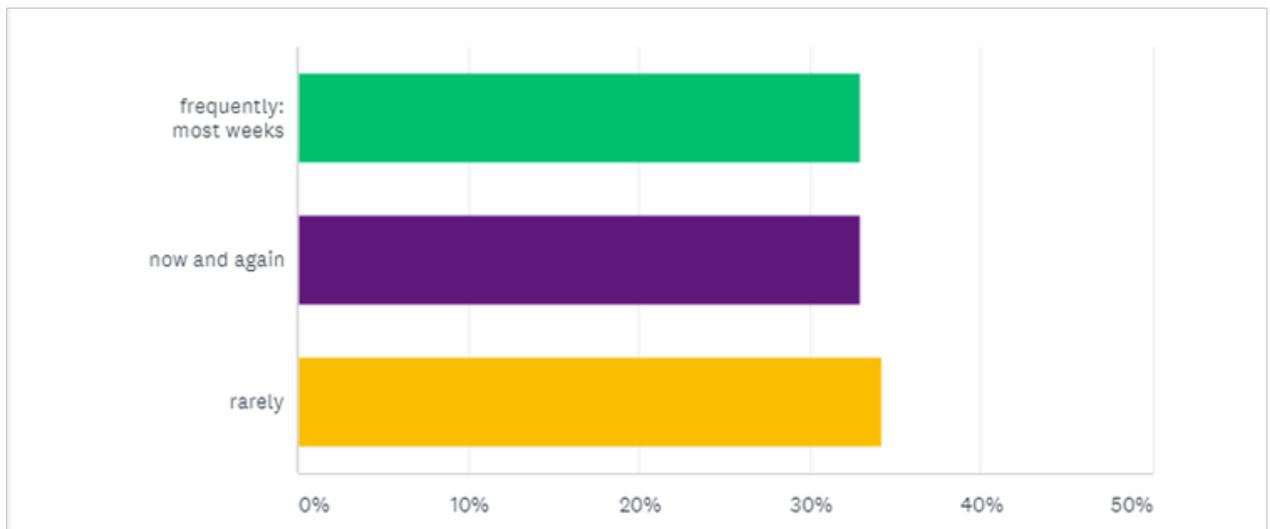
- The sheer volume of work/demand for services is just too high and there are not enough people. The growth in food premises, a growing nighttime economy, more events all increases workloads. This means that in many places the teams have to prioritise and that some areas of work are just no longer done.
- The despite cuts changes to legislation, for example food inspections/food standards, mean that there is more work for environmental health teams
- Those who have left tend to be higher grades/most experienced staff and as they are not replaced that work now falls onto lower paid staff.
- Cuts to administrative staff and new IT systems have also pushed more work onto EHO teams keeping them away from their core roles.
- Cuts and staff shortages mean that teams are left reacting to things that have gone wrong rather than being able to work on prevention.
- Members report high stress levels.

## What the staff say

- *I have inherited the management of the whole EH function - having formerly managed one third of the function - on the same salary*
- *More work, less staff.*
- *I have had to take on the responsibilities of several people who left during the 2010-2013 trawl.*
- *Workload has been heavy and persistent over the last 10 years. Work allocation does not reduce when you have holidays booked which I disagree with. This means you have to do the same work with compressed hours and is not fair.*
- *Complaints from the members of the public and the amount of inspections and the administration times for eat inspection have all increased.*
- *Taking on the role of another team*
- *more managerial role with more responsibilities looking after other staff members , however, paid the same as other EHO's with no managerial responsibilities.*
- *I have been transferred and moved around and at the moment my workload is overwhelming.*
- *There has been an increase in the number of licensed premises year on year and a more significant increase in the number of medium to large scale events (music concerts/pop up food festivals etc). The team work variable shifts to accommodate the events inc day/late and night shifts which cover weekends too.*
- *service demands from food standards Scotland - use of numerous databases to maintain records. the service is business facing and so we are required to maintain a good customer service and respond quickly when requested by business.*
- *Do more with fewer resources.*
- *Increased functions to cover due to reduction in staff*
- *Reduced staffing, addition of admin duties, additional legislative burdens, increased number of complaints, increased number of FOI requests. More demanding public, less tolerance in general.*
- *A third less staff with eh same if not more work. Amalgamation of teams and no time / resources to adequately train / refresh people on new work they are taking on, so ad hoc "learning on the job"*
- *I am doing the work that 3 people used to share*
- *I have had to absorb work from officers that have left and feel I sometimes cannot give the work required my fullest attention due to current level of workload.*
- *Only because they have now separated us into 2 teams each carrying out different functions.*
- *As well as an increase in the type of premises I would have inspected there is now minimum admin support so I am now carrying out much more administrative work and with little IT skills this takes up 40% extra time.*
- *As work demands increase for the EHO's technical officers are being asked to do more.*
- *Merging of the Noise Team and Public Health Teams means that Officers are now dealing with not only noise complaints but also planning applications, contaminated land enquiries and public health nuisance complaints*
- *The workload is unsustainable*
- *I used to line manage one team - I now have to manage three.*
- *As indicated previously the service has been given new duties without additional resources. I personally cover work that was carried out by four staff. Basically we have reduced the tasks to minimum input, or we don't provide some services at all.*
- *There are changes to the way food inspections are done and how frequently that mean we have had to complete extra training and change how we work. This has an impact. We are doing less proactive work and more reactive work. We have less staff to deal with problems.*

# Unpaid work

## Do you regularly work unpaid hours to get jobs done (for example skip breaks, miss lunch)



Two thirds of respondents stated that they were working extra hours to get jobs done. There was an even split with one third doing so frequently, one third now and again and one third rarely. Where respondents indicate that they don't skip breaks and work late they often indicate in the comments that they have made a conscious choice to stop this. They refer to sticking to hours to cut down on stress. Or that no matter how much they try and do there's still more so they just try and focus on what they can do.

The rest of the comments indicate a highly stressed workforce, skipping breaks taking work home in the evening. While "flexi-time" should help with busy/quite cycles many are losing the time they have built up as there is too much work to be done.

Many respondents to this question highlight the stress they experience because of their workloads. Many aren't able to sleep and despite working long hours they still cannot get on top of their workloads. Doing work that was previously done by higher grade staff also adds to stress due to the nature of that work but also the unfairness of not being paid properly for the work they are doing.

### What the staff say

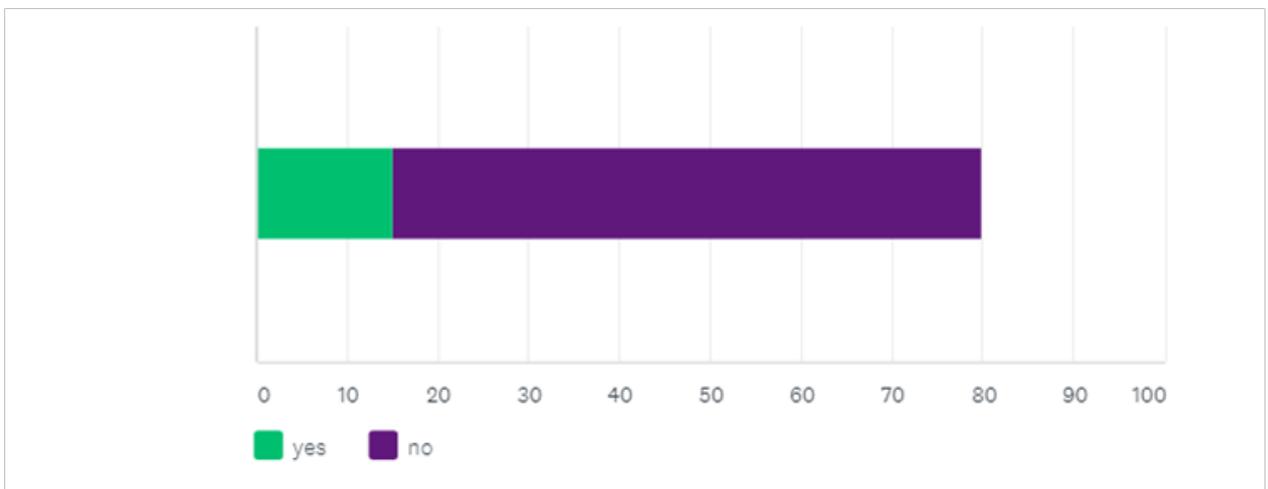
- *I feel that I am constantly cutting corners and taking shortcuts to ensure I stay on top of my workload.*
- *I rarely break for lunch and often work late. I always feel that my workload is out of control and overwhelming.*
- *I miss spending the time assisting businesses rather than just regulatory work. Now requests and complaints just feel rushed and you have to cram them in.*
- *after many years have decide that I can only do what I can do.*
- *Too much and overwhelming in the subject matter I am to understand.*
- *The local EH management (which is not at a very senior level these days(I am old enough to recall each LA having a Director of EH!) and the Clerk to the Licensing Board recognise that my team and I are very busy and that there is little or no spare capacity.*
- *I do not work unpaid hours. I do, however work early and finish late regularly and cut my lunch breaks but make a point of managing my flexi time to ensure that I don't work unpaid hours. I encourage others to ensure they also do this.*

- some of it may be self imposed as I am attempting to maintain a credible standard of work whilst there is less time. as the number of staff has decreased the number of food businesses has increased.
- As the economy stalls so businesses are slow to invest so we find more problems to deal with and fewer available staff to deal with it.
- Sometimes the stress leads to lack of sleep
- Also I keep extra hours within flexi leave limits.
- work through lunch on occasions, I have no problem with this though and use the available flexible working hours to start and finish in accordance with the amount of work needing done.
- Mostly miss lunch
- we don't have the time to properly investigate issues like fly tipping for example.
- less likely to work extra or through lunch breaks due to the pressure exercised by Management to reduce flexi leave
- Workload keeps getting heavier and expectations from the public are still demanding.
- Flexi time is useful however I have gone over by the permitted number of hours which can be carried over to the next month several times each year.
- Yes often bring work home
- No remuneration for managerial duties, on same pay scale as staff being managed.
- The ability to line manage effectively has reduced as the workload has increased - I am "firefighting" the more serious/urgent matters and routine line management is either missed (such as monitoring the work of the team, Checking KPI's, updating procedures, implementing new policies, etc.) or significantly delayed.
- I come in early every day to get a start before staff come in. I often get stressed as I am trying to do several things at one time. Most days i fail to complete the tasks I set out to do. I often do work myself rather than delegate it as i know how busy my team are. I usually wake up thinking about work and rush to get in to work in the morning to try and catch up.
- Any work I do outwith my core hours is credited as flexi time, so technically not 'unpaid', but having a flexi balance then means taking time off work to use the credit. If I take time off I can't get all my work done so sometimes I don't use my flexi and then lose it.
- It's hard to manage, I'm stressed
- I often miss having a lunch break and accumulate alot of extra hours in order to try to get on top of the workload
- Public health team have been passed to housing dept
- I do feel supported in this
- time is taken in toil/flexi
- I don't feel anything will be gained by complaining.
- The workload is unsustainable and is causing increased stress.

# Resources

## Does the environmental health team in your authority have adequate resources to cover the whole environmental health remit?

Only 18% of those who took part in our survey believed that their environmental health team had adequate resources to cover the entire remit.



## If no what work is no longer being done?

A huge range of work is being left undone. Examples include enforcing the smoking ban, lower risks inspections, noise complaints, licensing enforcements and pest control. Issues like dog fouling and litter which people consistently indicate in surveys are key issues that want dealt with are also not being dealt with. One respondent mentioned that reports are no longer being sent to the procurator fiscal as there is no time. This means that people will soon realise that they is very little serious enforcement if you do not follow the rules and so will be more likely to continue to cut corners putting us all at risk.

Preventative work seems to be bearing the brunt of the cuts. This is results in a failure to protect citizens form a range of injuries and health problems. Teams are reacting to things that go wrong rather than working to prevent harm in the first place, Dog fouling, litter and noise complaints blight our communities.

Anti social behaviour regular tops the lists of local priorities when the police survey people. On top of affecting people directly these cuts also push costs on to other public service bodies. The NHS in particular picks up the costs of injuries, food poisoning and injuries. Employers and other workers suffer when staff are off sick. It's not just the NHS, the police have to pick up issues like noise complaints, SEPA when the environment gets polluted. Its local authorities than have to clear up litter, dog poo and fly tipping. If vermin get out of hand again it's the council that has to step in and deal with the problem. It's better to be able to offer a less costly service when there is one rat than let the problem grow to a full rat colony.

## What the staff say

- *Huge volume of food safety work, health and safety work (proactive and reactive), smoking ban, public health work - especially dealing with matters proactively and being totally occupied with reactive work with no control over prioritisation.*
- *smoking ban*
- *Lower risk inspections, non statutory functions, no CookSafe folders being provided to businesses by the local authority*
- *less high risk food businesses are no longer being routinely inspected.*
- *We are unable to inspect any of our E and D risk premises and many our due C risk. Our numbers of missed C Risk is increasing and we don't get round to many of our new premises.*
- *Lower risk premises are not inspected*
- *Food Hygiene inspections. Admin work needed to record work suffers.*
- *Food safety is at risk due to a shortage in staff*
- *enhanced project work to analysis causes of refuse problems within the city with a view to proactive approach instead of reactive.*
- *Not as much proactive visits to premises. This has meant that when we do visit as a result of a complaint or an accident we are finding standards have slipped due to complacency. This impacts in the overall safety of workers in the city and the public who use these premises.*
- *I've answered yes within reason here. We don't proactively enforce smoking ban but will react to complaints. We don't do food safety alternative enforcement. We could do a lot more in various areas e.g. H&S, however we are generally providing the full remit.*
- *reports to the Procurator Fiscal are less likely due to time constraints*
- *But resources are stretched and are not getting such a proactive approach.*
- *Educational element for food/schools Public health message Dog fouling enforcement Housing & Licensing enforcement Animal Health Lower risk food hygiene & standards inspections Air quality Private Water Supply education & checks (new Regs)*
- *Smoking ban , pest control, dog warden, control of dogs Most works are limited now to basic service*
- *update and reveiw of contaminated land, livestock transport and welfare inspections on a regular basis*
- *Private Sector Housing is reactive only Food hygiene figures inspections are not being completed as per CoP*
- *investigation and enforcement is suffering*
- *There is no general policy of not dealing with any particular tyep of compalint or area of work. However there is a reduction in the amount of resources we are able to put into any one complaint and Officers are left to try and prioritise their work loads.*
- *We no longer deal with antisocial noise complaints .This remit has gone to the Community Safety teams in Housing.*
- *Air qulaity reporting, pro active pollution work, responding to planning consultations, noise complaints (ASB cut)*

## Work pressure

### Do you feel under pressure to take on work for which you are not qualified/experienced to do to a high standards?

Many respondents felt under pressure to undertake work that they weren't qualified or experienced enough to do to a high standard. This included animal welfare, noise complaints. Shortages of staff and the loss of more experienced were among the reasons given for work falling onto less experienced staff. Many stated that the sheer volume of work was more of a problem than the content of work itself. Respondents also indicated that cuts to training budgets and lack of time for training were adding to the issue as staff didn't have the opportunity to get the training they need. This was also an issue in terms of trying to keep up with changes in legislation where there is little access to training or time to keep on top of changes.

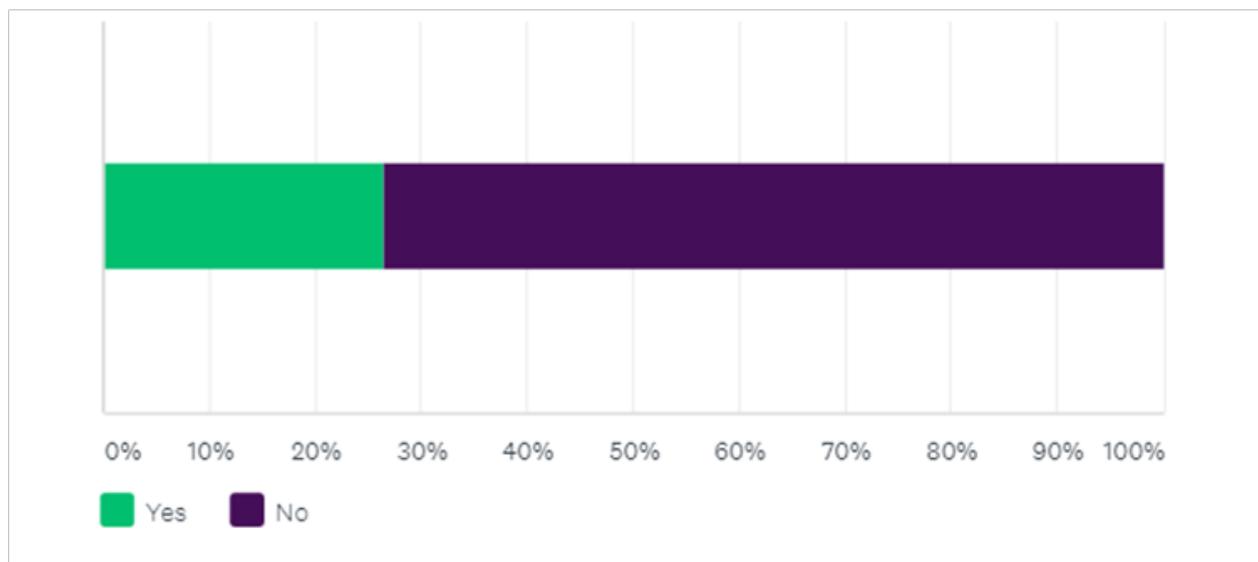
Another issue that was raised consistently were the extra management, reporting or ICT systems that were increasingly part of people's workload without the training or time to get properly familiarise themselves with systems. The new GDPR regulations have also created additional responsibilities for some staff.

### What the staff say

- *I have HR responsibilities such as absence management and return to work interviews for which I have no experience. I have had to take on responsibilities for GDPR and the writing of Privacy Statements. I have responsibilities for the food database and for maintenance and testing of upgrades to it.*
- *Yes Food Standards inspections*
- *After March 2019 (reality October 2018) a newly qualified team of food safety officers will be qualified in Food Standards and let loose to carry out unsupervised/assisted inspections. management mentality (Just qualified then you know most) It took me 3 years after qualifying in food safety before I felt comfortable to do my job well) That is why we have a pay increments within a job profile, I call it an apprenticeship)*
- *Yes, recently have taken Animal Health and Welfare with no prior knowledge/experience. Fortunately we have a very experienced AH officer however he will retire next month and although there is agreement to replace the post, we may be unable to recruit an experienced officer.*
- *inexperienced in non food areas so sometimes*
- *Yes, don't want to share details as will identify me.*
- *Yes many areas were added to my remit without any training*
- *Inspecting higher risk premises which in the past would never have been allocated to TO's.*
- *.*
- *Sometimes you are asked to do jobs that you are unfamiliar with or put in situations where training has not been provided.*
- *I feel we are asked to do a lot of stuff for which we are not qualified or properly trained to do.*
- *Yes- food standards*
- *Yes which means I have to study in my own time to gain knowledge*
- *.*
- *Dog Control Notices*
- *Fatal accident investigation*
- *Lack of training due to cuts has had this impact.*
- *I'm basically managing a team without the pay grade*
- *Yes, you're expected to get on with the work and ask a colleague for assistance when required.*
- *Yes. Contaminated land. Increased workload with limited specialist resources so officers trying to cover faps.*
- *Recently took over responsibility for the Trading Standards Service - no TS qualification so completely reliant on supporting officers.*

## Value in workplace

### Do you feel that senior managers and elected officials in your authority understand and value the role of environmental health teams?



Almost three quarters of respondents felt that senior managers and elected officials did not understand and value the role of environmental health. Council structures often mean that senior management have very little direct experience of the service they deliver. Many elected councillors are now “first timers” and so have less experience of the detail of services like environmental health. Respondents feel that there is only interest in their service when something goes wrong. If a service isn’t understood and valued by decision makers then it can be seen as an easy target for budget cuts.

There has been a lot of talk about preventative spend in Scotland but there has been very little done to invest in services like environmental health to facilitate preventative work. Instead we are still responding to food poisoning outbreaks and accidents.

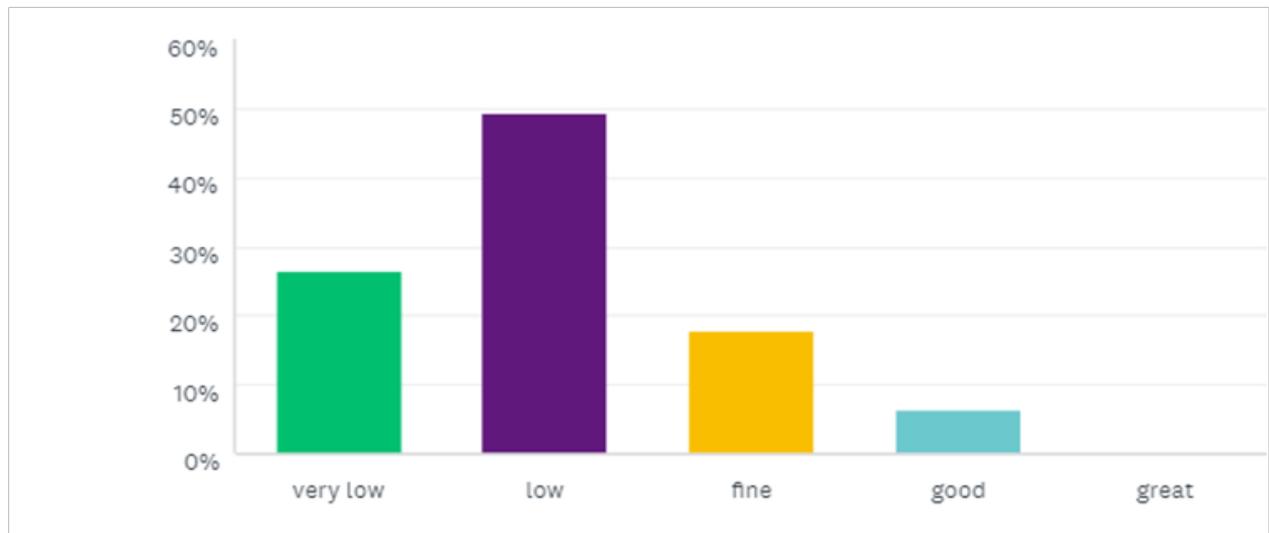
### What the staff say

- *EH has reduced in profile within the Service (which is very large) and the Council. The Council seems to have very little public health oversight - with the strands relating to wellbeing, place, environment, activity etc being separate.*
- *A lot of the work we do maintains the standards in food businesses, it is not until there is a food poisoning outbreak or food crime is committed which receives publicity that our role is highlighted.*
- *It is only when there is a serious food safety issue arises that the importance of our role as enforcement and education is realised.*
- *Councillors are more interested in getting votes and do not fully understand the limitations of the legislation and do not want to be seen saying they cant help a constituent. Senior managers are from different divisions and again do not fully understand what we do.*
- *Some do understand and appreciate our role however the majority have no idea what we do never mind appreciate what we do. There is a lack of understanding of the legislative framework in which we work and the vastness of our remit.*
- *There is limited interest from elected members and officials. There is assumption that we are continuing to work in the background whilst we have attempted to raise the issue of lack of resources.*



# Morale

## How would you describe morale in your team?



Unsurprisingly given the responses earlier in our survey over three quarters of respondents stated that morale was low or very low in their teams. Only six percent stated that morale was good and a further 18% that morale was fine. Where staff were positive about morale in their workplace comments indicated that this was down to teamwork or a good manager.

While some may think staff morale doesn't matter, it is actually the key to delivering a high quality service and retaining skilled and experienced staff within a service.

The key reasons given for such low morale were:

- Workload
- Cuts
- Stress/pressure
- Teamwork
- Bad managers
- Not feeling valued
- Lack of a pay rise
- Lack of job security

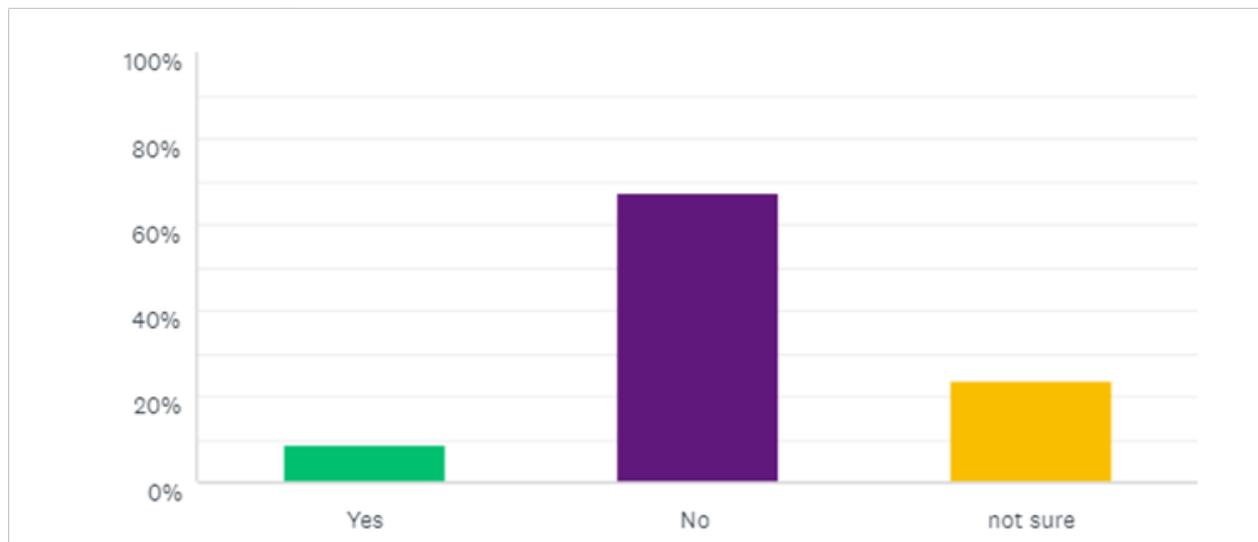
## What the staff say

- *Staff feel it is not as good a place to work as it was in the past.*
- *The workload is too great, but the job still has to be done. Most staff realise this is because the service is being underfunded, however it becomes demotivating constantly complaining and therefore staff just try to do the best they can under the circumstances.*
- *Colleagues are a bit jaded as we have seen negative changes over the years*
- *Staff off long term sick, stress related illness*
- *lack of understanding from senior management, not enough staff.*
- *My morale is terrible because of the pressure that I am under. The teams moral and those around me are OK.*
- *There are very few of us which puts unrealistic demands on us. We rarely get together as a team. The work is never ending. We are all aware of the importance of the work that we do but get frustrated at the lack of resources that we have to tackle all the health and safety problems that occur within a large city like Glasgow. The increase in the amount of Events within the city requiring a Health and Safety input also puts pressure on the team - meaning other work does not get done.*

- *The team is well motivated to do a good job and works pretty well together. We do recognise that our resources limit our ability to do everything we would like to be able to do.*
- *We have experienced officers who take a pride in their role. They are generally supportive of each other and there is an open communication with line managers. When concentrating on their roles, morale is higher. The current financial situation and ongoing reviews have reduced morale. An operational review is to be carried out in the future and this is going to be a difficult time for officers to keep their focus when their jobs may be at stake.*
- *High level management appear more driven by numbers and costs than by staff needs*
- *Constant pressure of workload is causing officers to be under stress about achieving response times and as such affects morale.*
- *exceptional group of dedicated people who bend over backwards to provide a safe place for residents and businesses to live and work, but undervalued in greater scheme of Council and no recognition of the severity of impact that a major incident will bring*
- *People are constantly stressed and struggling to find time to do the work. We are left to explain the lack of resources to clients so we get the abuse etc.*
- *workload and a lack of appreciation for work carried out*
- *Work pressure and future development in funding and management structure together with pressure to meet current scheduled inspections and produce followup reports have impacted on morale of staff*
- *All pay rises recently don't exceed inflation or cost of living, less staff more work, continuous changes.*
- *We have a good manager who supports the staff*
- *Morale is the worst I have experienced in 25 years. Our successful team has been broken up for financial reasons.*
- *lack of leadership, lack of direction, lack of clarity.*
- *Very heavy workload*
- *Terms and conditions being slowly chipped away, managers who do not back their staff, managers who have no idea how to manage a workforce, managers who have been promoted above their ability and who are nothing more than 'yes men', health and safety for staff members not a priority.*
- *Poor prospects for increasing pay. Continuing lack of resources*
- *Cutting services has a negative impact on employees, especially where the level of expectation from members of the public and elected members is unchanged and the expectation for us to provide the same level of service with less staff*
- *I enjoy being out of the EH team as their constantly seems to be an issue with someone or something*
- *A well established team that work well together*
- *High stress levels. Unreasonable expectations*
- *Staff cuts and constant team shuffling to reflect political interests or to deal with a 4 yr backlog in Food Safety inspections has resulted in rock bottom moral*
- *No confidence in management. Bullying by management incompetent management*
- *Too much work, no trust from management and the inability to adopt flexible working. Managers do not understand the EHO work.*
- *Work wise it is low but our team works well on a personal level for support.*
- *effects of cuts, lack of support and focus by senior managers.*
- *Although workload has increased and the pressure is very much on, they are a very good team of hard working & dedicated officers who manage to provide an excellent service.*
- *One colleague has been made redundant from Falkirk and Darlington local authorities in recent years and therefore lives in fear of losing his job again. It's awful. Everyone is under pressure in terms of the amount of work they have to do and therefore taking the time to talk to each other and be respectful is sometimes missing. This doesn't create a great working environment. Too much is expected of individuals by management.*
- *We get on well, the team are all good individually and that keeps our morale higher than many other teams in our service.*
- *the managers above are being pushed and therefore there is no support for the team being provided, work is not evenly distributed and some members of staff are being asked to take on more work than others, when this is brought up management shrug shoulders and walk away*
- *Due to the changes as a result of transforming the council it has been a hard place to work seeing others worried about their job security. It also feels that no matter how hard you work the work does not decrease*

## Future morale

### Do you expect morale to improve in the next few years?



The ongoing cuts to local government budgets and the poor pay offer this year mean that staff feel that there is unlikely to be any improvement in morale in the next few years. Only nine percent felt that morale would improve. Comments indicated that those respondents had been told that there would be new staff joining their teams so they expected workload to improve.

In this section like the others members expressed concerns about high workload, job cuts and overall budget cuts and the pressure they were under trying to keep the public safe under these circumstances.

### What the staff say

- *Staff Additional staff which have been promised will enable a loosening of restrictions on the work officers carry out*
- *lack of communication/ from managers*
- *Depends if we are allocated extra staff.*
- *Not enough resources are being put into local government, NHS, Policing etc seem to be the priority.*
- *There is too much pressure on local authorities to cut their spending*
- *We have been informed that extra posts will be created - although not all areas of Environmental Health will get the extra posts this year.*
- *if workload keeps on increasing strains will inevitably show*
- *Constant threat of cuts and shared services with reduced staff numbers and resources, and the same performance standards*
- *No more money or staff*
- *XXX showing no consideration of staff.*
- *Local Authorities are under more and more pressure - I expect more cuts to come or changes to our working arrangements.*
- *As a "hidden" service we will be ripe for further cuts*
- *As I'm over 60 I've taken flexible retirement and there is no one presently internally who wants my role*
- *With staff shortages and low pay it is unlikely.*
- *With more cuts, job re-evaluation and same management it's impossible for it to improve*
- *Further cuts expected*
- *Cuts will continue and management is very poor*
- *More and more cuts so things will only get worse*
- *I think morale will go down if there are more job cuts and more duties piled onto us.*
- *Continued financial constraints and recruitment freeze*
- *Ongoing austerity, local authority funding cuts, health and safety not a priority*



## Conclusion

UNISON surveyed members working in environmental health teams in June 2018. We asked them a range of questions about the impact of public sector budget cuts on themselves and the work that they do. This report analyses their responses and allows you to hear directly from the workforce about what it's like trying to deliver high quality public services under austerity. The report reveals a dedicated workforce working hard to protect citizens from financial and physical harm.

Yet again our survey of members shows a workforce under enormous stress. Years of austerity mean that budgets cuts are biting deep. Services cannot be maintained with current funding levels. There is no more scope for efficiencies. Fewer resources mean that work just isn't being done. Staff are working hard, they skip breaks and work late to try and maintain the service but they are stressed and exhausted. They worry about the inspections they don't have time to make. They worry about the accidents that can happen, the people who may get food poisoning, the effect on communities of fly tipping and litter when the culprits see they can get away with it and keep on dumping.

Investing in a quality environmental health service not only protects communities it saves money across a range of budgets. Instead the cuts are pushing costs onto expensive emergency services now and storing up lots of costs for the future. Austerity is ruining lives and it needs to end. We need to invest in public services.



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