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The *Employment Studies* newsletter reports on IES research on labour market and employment policy and practice in the UK and abroad. It is aimed at those interested in research to inform the development and implementation of public policy. Two other publications, *Research Digest* and *HR Insight*, provide briefings on IES employer-related work.

Employment Studies

The IES public employment policy research newsletter

The impact of intra-EU mobility on UK public services

Arianna Tassinari, IES Research Fellow

The mobility of citizens and workers within the EU and its impact on public services and labour markets in receiving countries is currently one of the hottest topics in European public policy, and particularly so in the UK. As migration from the Central and Eastern European EU Member States (so-called EU10 countries) to the UK has grown since their accession in 2004 and 2007, the political debate has increasingly focused on the issue of 'welfare tourism'. Fears centre on a potential increase in the number of individuals moving to the UK, primarily to access better quality public services (largely free at the point of need), thus placing a burden on the UK public service system. In turn, this has resulted in an array of UK government policy initiatives aimed at restricting new migrants' access to benefits. This is featuring highly on political parties' agendas in the run-up to the UK general election, scheduled for May 2015.

But are these fears rooted in evidence? Contributing to this debate, IES carried out research in 2014 for Eurofound, Dublin, which used a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather further evidence on the impact of migration from EU10 countries on UK public services.

The policy context

Just before EU enlargement in 2004, the UK government changed the law regulating access to benefits for migrants, largely in response to 'benefit tourism' concerns. Since then,

new migrants from European Economic Area (EEA) countries have had to fulfil additional requirements to show that they have a 'right to reside' in the UK.

Accordingly, they need to either be in genuine and effective employment, be a student and/or have sufficient personal resources not to become a 'burden' on the UK social assistance system. Further restrictions were introduced in 2014, preventing new migrants from EEA countries claiming out-of-work benefits for the first three months of their residency, and introducing a minimum earnings threshold to qualify for benefits. In addition, since 1 April 2014, EEA migrants have been unable to claim housing benefit unless they are in work.

How do EU10 migrants access UK welfare services?

While current policy initiatives to curb migrants' access to benefits are rooted in fears of straining public services, existing research evidence indicates that the perception that EU10 migrants are a burden on public resources is largely unfounded, and that these groups, together with other EEA migrants, actually make a positive net fiscal contribution to the UK economy.¹ There is also a lack of robust data on EU citizens' use of welfare services in the UK as current government data collection systems do not capture information on welfare users' nationality.

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IES' research on this topic included analysis of the UK Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey data up to 2013 and qualitative interviews with stakeholders, policy makers and migrants themselves. Our aim was to: understand patterns of public service usage in the UK amongst citizens from the EU10; assess whether they are more or less likely to access various forms of public services than their UK counterparts; and understand the main issues surrounding EU10 migrants' public services access and use.

We found notable differences between EU10 citizens and UK nationals (and other nationality groups) with regard to the take-up of benefits. Overall, EU10 citizens are less likely to claim benefits than UK nationals, and tend to access different types of benefits. For example, only a very small proportion of EU10 citizens in the UK claim the state pension, and larger proportions of UK nationals claim unemployment benefits, income support and disability or sickness-related benefits than EU10 citizens. UK nationals are also more likely to use social housing (15 per cent) than EU10 citizens (13 per cent). However, a larger share of EU10 citizens claim tax credits (19 per cent) and child benefit (28 per cent) compared with UK nationals (12% and 18%, respectively).

Explaining the difference

How do we explain these differences? There are, of course, issues relating to migrants' lack of knowledge of the UK welfare system and language barriers. In addition, our econometric analysis suggests that some of the differences are due to different socio-demographic characteristics and labour market prospects. Citizens from EU10 countries living in the UK are, on average, considerably younger than the UK population, have more dependent children below the age of four and have higher employment rates (although predominantly in low-skilled occupations).

Overall, the difference in the take-up of benefits between UK nationals and EU10 migrants decreases from 6 to 4.4 percentage points once socio-demographic characteristics and employment status are controlled for. The difference in the access to state pension decreases from 10 percentage points to 1 percentage point once we account for differences in socio-demographic characteristics, as this is very strongly determined by age. Similarly, we found no

significant difference in the propensity to claim child benefit once we controlled for marital status and the number of dependent children. Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics also reduces the differential in term of access to tax credits, as eligibility is highly associated with the number of dependent children.

However, the difference in the take-up of unemployment benefits and income support cannot be solely attributed to differences in socio-demographic characteristics and employment status between the two groups, as controlling for those factors does not reduce the differential. The difference in use of social housing is also even larger once socio-demographic characteristics are controlled for. This suggests that, for given individual characteristics, the propensity to live in social housing accommodation or receive unemployment benefits or income support is lower for EU10 migrants than UK nationals – possibly a result of eligibility restrictions.

Combining age-related expenditure on public health services with the age profile of different groups, we also found that by virtue of their young demographic profile, the healthcare expenditure per capita for EU10 citizens is also lower than for UK citizens, and the same is true for education-related expenditure.

We also found that the difference in take-up of benefits and social housing between UK nationals and EU10 migrants decreases proportionally as the number of years since arrival in the UK increases. Indeed, the difference in probability of accessing benefits approaches zero over time: after seven years spent in the UK, EU10 migrants were found to have the same propensity to claim benefits as UK nationals.

Conclusions and implications for EU10 migrants

Our research suggests that EU10 migrants are less likely to access benefits than UK nationals because of their lack of awareness of the UK welfare system and the language barriers they may encounter, but also because their socio-demographic characteristics imply that they are currently inherently less prone to place demands on public services than the native UK population. Therefore, our findings largely discount the hypothesis of 'welfare tourism' as a central motivation for EU10 citizens'

migration to the UK, and concur with existing evidence in showing that the demands placed by these individuals on the UK welfare system tend to be low.

However, the growing disconnection between evidence and public perceptions around the issue of 'welfare tourism' can have potentially negative consequences for the social integration of EU10 citizens and their social rights.

Many of our interviewees suggested that, in the context of an increasingly heated public debate and an intensification of existing barriers to welfare entitlements, EU10 citizens – who already display little awareness of their entitlement to welfare services and experience great linguistic and bureaucratic barriers when accessing them – run the risk of increasing marginalisation and exclusion. There is even a risk of destitution if they find themselves in unforeseen situations, such as unexpected unemployment, and are unable to access social assistance.

The third sector has traditionally played an important role in providing targeted support and advice to EU10 migrants in difficulties. However, interviewees from various charities emphasised that there are severe limitations to the level of support that the voluntary sector is able to offer, due to current spending cuts.

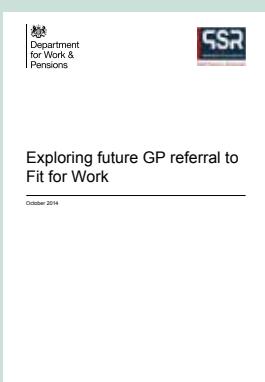
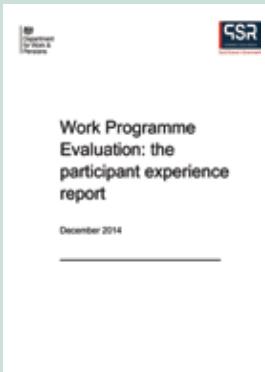
Our research therefore concluded by recommending that the public debate around 'welfare tourism' in the UK be informed by solid evidence to ensure that restrictions to welfare entitlements do not unfairly hit EU10 citizens in need of genuine social assistance. We also recommended that the capacity of public and voluntary sector service providers to provide support and advice to this group is not further undermined.

This research is due to be published by Eurofound in 2015, as *The social dimension of intra-EU mobility: Impact on public services – A country study on immigrants from the New Member States to the United Kingdom* (2015) Marangozov R, Nafilyan V, Tassinari A, Buzzo J.

1 Kirkup, J. (2014), *Immigration has a positive impact, says Office for Budget Responsibility head*, *The Telegraph* [Online] 14th January. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10570839/Immigration-has-a-positive-impact-says-Office-for-Budget-Responsibility-head.html> [Accessed 24th January 2014].

publications

Details of all published work by IES authors can be found on our website:
www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/



Work Programme Evaluation: the participant experience report

Meager N, Newton B, Sainsbury R, Corden A, Irvine A | Dec 2014 | Department for Work and Pensions

This report brings together and summarises the main evidence from the different strands of the Work Programme evaluation about the experience of participants. The evaluation tracks the Work Programme over several years from its introduction in 2011. This report notes changes in participants' experiences and perceptions of the Programme during this period.

The report was published alongside two others from the Work Programme evaluation:

- Work Programme Evaluation: Operation of the commissioning model, finance and programme delivery, Foster S, Metcalf H, Purvis A, Lanceley L, Foster R, Lane P, Tufekci L, Rolfe H, Newton B, Bertram C, Garlick M | Dec 2014 | Department for Work and Pensions
- Evaluation of Day One mandation of prison leavers to the Work Programme, George A, Metcalf H, Hunter G, Bertram C, Newton B, Skrine O, Turnbull P | Dec 2014 | Department for Work and Pensions

The Fourth Work-Life Balance Employer Survey (2013)

Dec 2014 | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

The work-life balance employer survey series, which began in 2000, explores the experiences of employers when managing and implementing requests from their employees for alternative working patterns. IES worked with IFF Research on the Fourth Work-Life Balance Employer Survey, commissioned by BIS. This survey, relating to 2013, provides a detailed and statistically representative picture of employers' policies and practice on flexible working and leave arrangements.

Exploring future GP referral to Fit for Work

Hillage J, Brown G, Shiels S, Gabbay M | Oct 2014 | Department for Work and Pensions

A new Fit for Work service (FFW, previously known as Health and Work Service) was established in 2014 to provide health and work advice and support for employees, employers and General Practitioners (GPs) to help people with a health condition to stay in or return to work. The aim of this study was to provide an estimate of the likely rate of referral by GPs to the assessment element of the new service, and identify the factors affecting referrals. One of the main ways in which employees will be able to contact the new service is by being referred by their GP.

Ex-post evaluation of the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2012-2013: Working Together for Risk Prevention

Final report

Broughton A, Ledermann S, Hinks R | Nov 2014 | European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

IES was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2012-2013. The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness and impact of the campaign and its activities at EU and national level. It provided conclusions and recommendations to help develop and further increase the effectiveness and impact of future campaigns.

Reasonable Accommodation and Sheltered Workshops for People with Disabilities

Costs and Returns of Investments

Mallender J, Liger Q, Tierney R, Beresford D, Eager J, Speckesser A, Nafilyan V | Jan 2015 | European Parliament

IES participated in this extensive study on costs and returns on investment in measures to improve the labour market situation of disabled people. Our particular focus was on estimating the impact of regulatory reform in the longer term, updating previous impact studies.

Flexible working remains a mainstay of the UK labour market

Andrea Broughton, IES Principal Research Fellow

Over the past decade, social and demographic changes, in addition to the rise of new technology, have meant that flexible working and work-life balance have become mainstream issues in the UK labour market. In particular, the internet has enabled employees to work remotely in order to better combine work and private life, including family life. This has especially enabled women to participate more fully in the labour market, allowing them to balance family and childcare commitments with work. Popular forms of flexible working include part-time working, flexibility in the organisation of working time, job-sharing and remote working.

The benefits of flexible working to the employee are clear. However, flexible working can also bring considerable business benefits for the employer, including increased loyalty from the workforce, improved productivity and motivation, and the flexibility needed to respond to customer needs, for example by providing longer opening hours. By enabling employees to work flexibly, employers are also able to attract and retain talented employees who would otherwise not be able to participate in the labour market.

The fourth work-life balance employer survey

The most recent UK survey of work-life balance, researched and written by IFF in collaboration with IES¹, gives an overview of the current state of play. It is the latest of four employer work-life balance surveys, with the others published in 2000, 2003 and 2007. The 2013 survey found that over the six years since the previous survey, there have not been significant increases in either take-up or availability of flexible working. It notes that this partly reflects the fact that flexible working is now very well established, with 97 per cent of workplaces offering at least one form of flexible working. The number of flexible working arrangements available increases with

establishment size, and public and third sector organisations tend to offer a larger number of flexible working arrangements than their private sector counterparts.

The survey found that there have been some changes in the types of flexible working practices used by employees. For example, the use of job-sharing fell from 59 per cent to 54 per cent between 2007 and 2013, but the

practice of reducing working time for a limited period and the use of flexitime have increased, the latter particularly in the public sector, where almost half of workplaces now have at least one employee working in this way.

The increased incidence of working-time reduction for a limited period may be a reaction to the economic climate of the past five years, with employers offering reductions in working time as an alternative to redundancy, in order to retain experienced staff.

The right to request flexible working

One of the main legislative changes in the area of flexible working in recent years has been the introduction of the statutory right to request flexible working. This is a right to request only and the employer is under no obligation to agree, although they must give



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well-founded reasons for a refusal. This right, originally offered to employees with children, was extended to all employees with 26 weeks' service in June 2014. According to the 2013 survey, 40 per cent of employers had received such requests from employees over the preceding 12 months, most often concerning a request for working reduced hours for a limited period. Only 9 per cent of employers receiving requests to work flexibly refused them.

Employers were asked whether they had a written policy that covered flexible working: just over half said that they had (covering 75 per cent of UK employees), with larger and public sector organisations, as well as those with a trade union presence, more likely to have a policy. However, almost 75 per cent of employers said that they did not have a written procedure covering submitting and assessing a request for flexible working, with most saying that they treated each case according to the circumstances.

In around one-third of organisations, the line manager or supervisor makes the decision about flexible working requests. In a further third, it is a person with HR responsibility; in the remaining third it depends on the circumstances. Around 55 per cent of organisations said that they had not given any training to managers on how to manage employees who were working flexibly.

Positive attitude towards flexible working

Employers appear to be increasingly positive towards flexible working and work-life balance, recognising the business benefits that flexible working can bring. The survey notes that, compared with the 2007 survey, 'there had been an increase in positive views concerning the impact of flexible working on the workforce and human resource management issues (such as employee motivation and commitment, employee relations, absence reduction, labour turnover, recruitment and productivity), suggesting that there may be growing acceptance of flexible working among both employers and the workforce as a whole'.

Overall, there is a strong link between a positive view of flexible working and the number of flexible working policies offered by the employer. However, it is, of course, difficult to know whether this is due to employers appreciating the positive impact of flexible working practices, having had greater direct

experience of them, or due to employers with positive attitudes towards flexible working practices being more likely to offer them.

A total of 56 per cent of employers said that the impact of flexible working arrangements was very or fairly positive on their business, compared with only 9 per cent who said that the impact was negative.

Working time

Working time is always a prominent issue in discussions about managing flexibility, particularly in light of recent debates about zero hours contracts and on-call working. The survey found that 17 per cent of employers used zero hours contracts, with a predominance in the third sector, hotels and restaurants, education, health and social work, and manufacturing industry.

One in 10 employers said that they had non-managerial employees who had worked more than 48 hours per week over a continuous four-month period or longer in the past 12 months. In half of these organisations, no non-managerial employees had signed an individual opt-out from the Working Time Regulations in relation to the 48-hour working week. However, given that there are some exemptions from the requirements of the Regulations, it is impossible to calculate the extent of non-compliance.

Just over 20 per cent of employers said that they had employees who were contractually required to engage in on-call working, and this type of working was more prevalent in the public sector. Finally, 45 per cent of employers using on-call working included on-call hours when calculating an employee's working time for the week.

Conclusions

This overview of the current availability and take-up of flexible working in UK workplaces shows that flexible working remains an important element of how work is organised. Despite the recent difficult economic times, it is clear that employees are benefiting from this flexibility and employers are happy to continue to offer it, mindful of the business benefits that it can bring. Given the increasing flexibility brought about by technology, flexible working, certainly in terms of location, is likely to develop further in the future.

1 (2014) Fourth work-life balance employer survey (2013). Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Research Paper No. 184.

The gender employment gap: challenges and solutions.

The project for Eurofound consists of two separate lots and is to be carried out in partnership with IRS (Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale).

Lot 1 will consist of an econometric analysis of statistical sources at the EU level (EU LFS, EU SILC and EWCS) to describe trends and patterns of female labour force participation in the EU28, and model the determinants of female labour market participation and non-participation.

Lot 2 will provide an overview and assessment of the effectiveness of policy measures aimed at fostering and supporting the labour market participation of women in six Member states (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, UK, Netherlands and France). For each country, selected policy measures in three areas (labour market policies, parental leave, and support in childcare and in adult care) will be reviewed and compared, and interviews conducted with policy makers and stakeholders to assess and compare determinants of policy effectiveness.

IES contact: Andrea Broughton and Kari Hadjivassiliou

Economic and Social Costs of Low Skilled Adults in the EU

The focus of this assignment for the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is on:

- (i) developing appropriate conceptual and methodological frameworks for both defining and measuring the magnitude of low-skilled population in the EU;
- (ii) describing and analysing the characteristics, causes and trends regarding the low-skilled across the EU;
- (iii) building robust scenarios about future supply and demand for low-skilled workers by analysing the implications for low-skilled adults of future long-term trends; and
- (iv) defining and implementing an operational approach for the estimation of the economic and social costs of low-skilled adults in the EU.

IES contact: Kari Hadjivassiliou

Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in further education

Rosa Marvell, IES Research Officer

Background

As public sector bodies, all colleges and training providers are required to ensure that students receive equitable provision of and access to services. In addition, under the public sector equality duty, they are also required to consciously consider: eliminating discrimination, harassment and violence; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relationships by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding¹.

However, in a time when further education (FE) faces public funding cuts, there are challenges for ventures aimed at expanding the sector's capacity to meet this duty. Nevertheless, the continued importance of this duty is underlined by the persistent marginalisation of certain groups. For example: apprenticeship gender segregation;² underrepresentation of ethnic minority groups³ or learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in apprenticeships;⁴ or stigmatisation around mental health.

The Skills Funding Agency and former Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) responded from 2009 onwards by co-funding annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) grants⁵, with an emphasis on innovation, sustainability and partnership working. Small grants of up to £5,000 and larger grants of up to £25,000 were offered, open to bids from organisations in England providing FE and training as a primary function, and to National Careers Service prime providers. Primarily, they were to enhance the capacity of the sector to

meet the equality duty (and not fund the direct delivery of education and training) concerning age, disability, gender, transgender identities, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation⁶.

IES research

In 2014, IES was commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to evaluate three rounds of these grants (2010-2013). This covered 87 projects delivered by a diverse range of providers, mostly general FE colleges but also charities, offender learning and skills providers, workplace learning providers, and membership organisations. The evaluation included a review of nearly 400 associated documents (prospectuses, applications, case studies, interim and final reports, and associated documentation), an online survey of lead staff and qualitative interviews with sector stakeholders and project leads. The objectives were to:

- assess value for money, sustainability, innovation, long-term impacts and 'reach' amongst projects;
- identify common success factors and risk indicators;
- identify outcomes and outputs for wider dissemination; and
- develop recommendations for the management of future similar funding.

An important source of funding

We found that this funding was crucial for many providers, especially in a financial climate where some may be tempted to cut back on EDI as an organisational or strategic priority. Interviews with project leads highlighted that without funding, the scope of projects would have been severely limited, if they took place at all. Additionally, in line with the emphasis on innovation, activities were funded which may not have otherwise been supported in the current economic climate, leading some organisations to break new ground. Not all approaches were successful, but project leads and stakeholders noted the importance of being able to trial and test new approaches.

One of the strongest messages was the grants' real value for 'newer' equality strands previously neglected in FE, for example sexual orientation or religion and belief. They were afforded greater profile and status, so providers struggling to see the pertinence of these themes to their work were supplied with evidence of their relevance in the sector.

Outcomes and impacts of the grants

Although a range of outcomes and impacts were reported, the most common by far was increased awareness or understanding of EDI, followed by stronger partnerships and a better grounding of EDI in delivery. This was not limited to organisational-level learning: it was additionally reported that FE learners had higher confidence, self-esteem and aspirations as a result of projects. Of note, our

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Mapping investment in adult skills – which individuals, in what learning, and with what returns?

This project for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has two elements. First, it will use publicly-available data to map funding in adult skills by government, employers and learners. Second, these findings will be analysed alongside evidence of the benefits and returns from adult skills, in order to assess which types of learning, for which types of learners, lead to the greatest economic returns in the labour market, learning progression and wider benefits such as health and wellbeing outcomes.

IES contact: Rosie Gloster

Qualitative Research of the Intensive Activity Programme

The Institute is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to evaluate the impact of a trial to provide intensive support for all Jobseeker's Allowance claimants during the first few weeks of their claim. DWP is running a randomised controlled trial which aims to test the Intensive Activity Programme model robustly (including measuring impact) and is conducting the quantitative analysis internally. IES researchers have been commissioned to develop a theory of change model of the intervention and undertake qualitative research with claimants to explore their attitudes, experiences and any behavioural change as a result of the intervention.

IES contact: Rosie Gloster

Understanding the Behavioural Drivers of Organisation Decision Making

A cross-government group led by the Department of Energy and Climate Change has appointed IES to lead a consortium (including researchers from Brook Lyndhurst and the University of Nottingham) to undertake a review of the evidence on behavioural factors which explain organisational behaviours and decision making, with the goal of producing an accessible guide based on insights found by the review. The aim is that Government policy workers and other stakeholders will be able to draw on these insights in considering the most effective ways to influence organisational decision making.

IES contact: Sally Wilson

documentary analysis (comparing applications to final reports) illustrated that much 'harder' outcomes such as training or employment were originally anticipated. It was unclear exactly why this had not been achieved, but some interviewees stated that engaging particularly hard-to-reach groups was more resource intensive than anticipated, which may be part of the explanation for this.

Nevertheless, stakeholders and project leads frequently emphasised the intrinsic value in improving understanding, awareness and attitudes towards EDI, which cannot be quantified as this implies a long-lasting change to the way people think and act.

Key recommendations

Although it had largely worked well, the monitoring and reporting system of the grants was heavily dependent on accurate self-reporting. In place of 1-10 scales, more open questions would encourage projects to better explain how far they had progressed and to provide evidence. A similar emphasis on participants' progression relative to their starting points would additionally enhance dissemination activities. Further, where project reports were of poor quality, additional support from the managing agent would encourage accountability amongst projects in terms of stated deliverables.

Secondly, although the emphasis on demonstrating innovation did bring value to the sector, we recommended that the Agency should consider giving more or equal emphasis to the need to embed, sustain and extend good practice across the sector as a whole. It was felt that this change in emphasis was likely to deliver greater value for money and improved equality outcomes in the long term, with indicative evidence present in our evaluation.

Sustaining, embedding and extending good practice

A number of projects were successfully integrated within a wider organisational infrastructure, protected from volatile changes such as staff turnover and the end of project funding. This took a variety of forms: changes to curriculum design, content or delivery, embedding EDI in staff training and action plans, or changes in governance structure such as learner representation on senior management teams and steering groups.

Many projects effectively sustained their impact, most commonly in the form of

outputs. For example, toolkits with links to expert advice needed just minor alterations to remain current. Other initiatives created social enterprises which continued to generate income after the end of project funding. Furthermore, partnership working was another core aspect of sustainability, with existing networks strengthened and new partnerships – trialled through the grants – going on to work together in future ventures.

However, whilst it was possible to identify some examples of projects successfully extending good practice and learning to other providers in the sector (although this was often not the original aim of projects), most could not demonstrate this. Despite growing emphasis on disseminating good practice in prospectuses, projects appeared to perceive 'innovative' or 'sustainable' projects to be a higher priority to the Agency, skewing the focus of the grants. Expanding successful equality work and sharing lessons learned with other providers will better improve the capacity of the sector to meet its obligations under the Equality Act.

Impact on policy

The Equality Challenge Unit took over as managing agent of the most recent round of grants (2014-2015), now named the Equality and Diversity Good Practice Fund. In light of our recommendations, the overriding emphasis of the new fund is on the embedding, sustaining and spreading of good practice in supporting learners to participate and achieve in FE, and developing the capacity of the sector to meet the public sector equality duty.

This research was published as

Marangozov R, Marvell R, Miller L, Newton B, Fletcher L (2014) Evaluation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Grants, Institute for Employment Studies. The full research report (including good practice case studies) and infographic are available from the IES website: www.employment-studies.co.uk/edi-grants

1 See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>.

2 Newton, B and Williams J (2013) *Under-representation by gender and race in Apprenticeships: Research Summary*, UnionLearn.

3 Ibid.

4 Little, P (2012) *Creating an inclusive Apprenticeship Offer*, Apprenticeship Unit.

5 Also known as Equality and Diversity Partnership Funds.

6 Marriage and civil partnerships, included in the Equality Act 2010, are not part of the public sector equality duty.

Assistant practitioners in the NHS

Linda Miller, IES Senior Research Fellow

Demand on the NHS is steadily increasing, with no sign that this will subside in the near future, if recent news items are anything to judge by: there have been reports that pressure on hospital A&E departments has led several to declare 'major incident' status. These pressures have led managers to consider potential ways in which services can be delivered more cost-effectively. One of the questions that managers have particularly considered is the nature of the tasks that require professionally-qualified staff – those at band 5 and above in the NHS 'Agenda for Change' grading and pay structure – to undertake them.

Demand is not the only factor prompting such considerations. In many areas, technology has changed the nature of the skills required. Tasks that previously needed highly-skilled individuals can now be undertaken by machines. In addition, the evolution of medical technology has changed the nature of the work itself and the nature of service provision. The current focus on joining up health and social care provision – the 'integrated care' initiative – too has served to change the types of employees and skills required.

These changes are in line with predictions made as part of work that IES undertook for Skills for Health (SfH), the Sector Skills Council for the health sector. That work¹, undertaken in 2010 and aimed at helping SfH to understand the likely shape of the future healthcare workforce, revealed that the profile of the workforce was likely to change significantly. Many of the new posts that would need to be filled over the next 10 years were expected to sit at band 4 in the employment hierarchy. New roles such as a Generic Community Worker, a Personal Health Navigator and a Remote Diagnostic Technician were identified – roles that were completely different from any previously seen in the health

sector, predicted on the basis of the large-scale changes to service delivery that have been seen in the NHS, alongside the increasingly sophisticated technologies available to healthcare workers.

Sitting at band 4 in the pay and grading structure, these posts fall into the 'senior support worker' category. Such posts – along with others at band 4 – constitute a career progression option for healthcare assistants and support workers, the majority of whom are employed on bands 2 and 3. Most often these posts are referred to as 'Assistant (or Associate) Practitioners'.

Since 2010, there has been significant growth in the number of these jobs. That said, however, developments have been patchy: while some areas have seen increased use of these roles, other areas lag behind. Given SfH's remit to support workforce development in the health sector, it was of interest to explore the nature of the barriers to development of these roles, and the types of support employers need in introducing such changes to workforce profile. SfH therefore commissioned IES to undertake two studies, the first of which examined the situation in Wales², while the second examined factors affecting the

introduction of assistant practitioners in England³.

Both projects revealed that assistant practitioners are helping with service delivery in a range of clinical, community and laboratory situations. The work identified examples of their use in radiography and screening services, in cellular pathology laboratories, in smoking cessation clinics, learning disability services, neuro-rehabilitation services, pre-operative assessment, pulmonary resuscitation, stroke rehabilitation, ophthalmology and emergency admission units, as well as in wards. There is growing recognition of the value of these posts, and stakeholders across the sector identified many positive examples of how the Assistant Practitioner role is contributing to improvements in quality, productivity and efficiency. Importantly, in the context of the drive to provide more integrated care, they are increasingly seen in roles that cross health and social care and professional boundaries, with re-ablement officers already being employed by at least one local authority (in partnership with the NHS) in a role that combines health and social care competences to improve support in the community for people with long-term conditions.

The research also shows that Assistant Practitioner posts are more likely to be successfully introduced where their development is part of workforce planning. Assistant Practitioner posts succeed where their introduction within a team meets a clearly identified need and where the new roles and responsibilities – both of the Assistant Practitioner and of the wider team – are clear and understood. Staff engagement with the implementation process, and ensuring that all grades of staff benefit from the changes, are central to success.

However, the introduction of Assistant Practitioner posts often appears to be prompted by the appearance of funding rather than planning. The research also found a lack of consensus regarding the clinical areas in which they are able to practice, with variations seen both between Trusts and between departments within a Trust. There remain, too, concerns around delegation and supervision and the lack of registration and regulation, although there are notable differences between occupational groups on these points. Some organisations have started to make steps to address these issues, with a great deal of success. These potentially provide a model for future developments and examples are given in both reports of the approaches adopted by employers and professional bodies.

The Francis⁴ and Cavendish⁵ reviews have led employers to be wary of providing training that might be challenged as being of insufficient quality or rigour. Given the wide range of education and training routes available (including but not limited to foundation degrees, apprenticeships, HE Certificates and Diplomas and NVQs), it is unsurprising that employers seeking to introduce Assistant Practitioner roles would value information about the education routes chosen by other employers.

Both reports conclude with recommendations for a range of ways in which Skills for Health can help employers in the sector to further embed the Assistant Practitioner role and expand its use in the future. There is likely to be an increasing need for support in future: while the focus of developments to date have largely been in acute settings, the changes planned for how healthcare is delivered will mean that there is likely to be an increasing focus on the need for Assistant Practitioner posts in primary and community care in future.



The report *Assistant Practitioners in the NHS in England*, by Miller L, Williams M, Marvell R and Tassinari A, will be published shortly by Skills for Health and will be available as a free download from its website: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk.

The earlier report *Assistant Practitioner roles in the Welsh Health Sector: Enhancing the potential for future development* (2014) Miller L, Williams M, Edwards H, is available from: <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/ap-roles-wales>

- 1 Miller L, Fairhurst P, Hurley P (2010) 'Uncertain Futures: Scenario Building for Skills for Health'. Bristol: Skills for Health. Available as a download from: http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/component/docman/doc_view/344-rehearsing-uncertain-futures.html.
- 2 Miller L, Williams J, Edwards H (2014) *Assistant Practitioner roles in the Welsh Health Sector: Enhancing the potential for future development* Skills for Health.
- 3 Miller, L, Williams, J, Marvell, R and Tassinari, A (2015) *Assistant Practitioners in the NHS in England*. Skills for Health.
- 4 The review following on from the reports of ill-treatment and increase mortality rate of patients at Mid Staffordshire Trust.
- 5 Review of preparation and training given to health care support workers.

Working together to prevent risk

Andrea Broughton, IES Principal Research Fellow

The responsibility to manage work-related risks at an early stage lies mainly with employers, but the active involvement of workers is also crucial. Overall, involving workers in the management of occupational health and safety is recognised as a key enabler in terms of identifying and reducing risk: through effectively working together on risk prevention, workers and managers can identify joint solutions and ensure full cooperation for workplace safety, health and wellbeing. It is acknowledged that this can have a real impact on accident and injury rates. Research¹ analysing the relationship between worker representation and industrial injuries in UK manufacturing found that employers who had trade union health and safety committees had half the injury rate of those employers who managed safety without unions or joint arrangements.



IES research in the UK

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has devoted considerable resources to promoting worker involvement in health and safety. In 2012, IES undertook a large-scale research project looking at worker involvement in a range of UK workplaces², following HSE-funded worker involvement training. The research examined in particular its impact on health and safety in organisations over a period of 12 months, finding that there had been a considerable and lasting impact. The types of impacts detected included the development of soft skills such as awareness of health and safety; confidence of health and safety representatives; improved communication; better influencing and negotiating skills; and improvements in relationships and joint working between managers and representatives.

Organisations also reported changes to a wide range of health and safety practices and processes, such as risk assessments, near-miss recording, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and identification and elimination of hazards. These impacts continued to be felt after six months, with continuing improvements in both soft skills and processes and procedures and a move towards more formalisation of processes. After

12 months, the changes were becoming more embedded, with lasting improvements to soft skills and the relationship between managers and representatives, with some participants still referring to material from the courses. There was also evidence of a move towards more informality in terms of meetings, as issues were being dealt with promptly as they arose, thus rendering more regular meetings unnecessary. Some organisations spoke of cultural change.

The importance of worker involvement at EU level

At European level, the prevention of risk plays a crucial role in all of the European Union's health and safety-related activities and projects. According to statistics from Eurostat and the International Labour Organisation, more than 5,500 fatal work-related accidents take place in the EU each year. A further 159,500 workers die each year from occupational diseases and millions of people are injured or seriously harmed in the workplace³.

Given the importance of risk prevention and worker involvement in health and safety, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) has made this a priority in recent years. EU-OSHA coordinates bi-annual

Healthy Workplaces Campaigns (HWCs) and most specifically, its HWC 2012-2013, was entitled 'Working together for risk prevention'. This is a decentralised campaign, meaning that Member States, partner organisations and individual workplaces have the opportunity to tailor it to their needs. Leadership and worker participation were the key themes of the 2012-13 campaign, which promoted the idea that work-related accidents and illnesses can be better managed when employers, workers and their representatives work together in partnership. The campaign emphasised the importance of leadership from top management as well as workers' participation in the prevention of occupational accidents and illnesses.

Evaluation of EU-OSHA worker involvement campaign

IES led the ex-post evaluation of this campaign, publishing our findings in late 2014⁴. The main target audiences of the campaign were employers and employers' organisations as well as workers, safety and workers' representatives, and trade unions. While a special emphasis was placed on SMEs and micro-enterprises, intermediaries



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The Institute has over 40 staff and associates, skilled in the full range of social research methodologies for data collection and analysis. Techniques employed include: quantitative surveys (using face-to-face, telephone and postal methods); expert and informant interviews; case studies; qualitative interviews; and focus groups.

Clients include major public agencies involved in the development, design and delivery of public employment policy at local, sectoral, regional, national and international level.

Key contacts

UK labour market and employment policy: Jim Hillage, Annette Cox

International labour market and employment policy: Nigel Meager, Andrea Broughton



Our new addresses:

Institute for Employment Studies
City Gate, 185 Dyke Road
Brighton BN3 1TL, UK
T +44 (0) 1273 763 400
F +44 (0) 1273 763 401
E askies@employment-studies.co.uk

Also at our London office:
CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road
London N1 6AH, UK
T (0) 20 7930 8748
F (0) 20 7104 2088
The articles from this newsletter are also posted on our website:
www.employment-studies.co.uk

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were another important target audience for campaign activities. These included policy-makers at EU and national level, the Agency's national focal points and their networks, European institutions and their networks and non-governmental organisations. The campaign consisted of a wide range of activities, including formal conferences and seminars, funding to help run events in individual countries, and a partnership scheme whereby organisations could apply to become official campaign partners. It also included a good-practice award scheme, and a range of materials on offer to participating organisations to help them to promote the issue of worker involvement in health and safety.

We found that the campaign had fulfilled its objectives of engaging stakeholders, raising awareness, improving access to information and resources, promoting relevant activities at the workplace and identifying and disseminating good practice in the area of worker involvement in health and safety. One of the single most successful elements of the campaign was a benchmarking initiative, which showcased good practice among campaign partners. One of our key recommendations for

the next campaign is that this initiative should be continued and broadened.

While it is difficult to measure the impact of the campaign in terms of improvements in health and safety in workplaces around the EU, we did find that it was likely to have raised awareness of the issue of worker involvement in health and safety, reaching many thousands of workplaces during its two years of operation. It is vital to keep raising the profile of worker involvement in health and safety, as great improvements can be made if employers and employees work together to reduce risk, and this campaign did much to further this cause.

- 1 Reilly, Pierella P, Holl P (1995) 'Unions, Safety Committees and Workplace Injuries', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 33 No. 2, 275-288.
- 2 Broughton A; Wilson S; Newton B (2012), *Evaluation of the HSE Worker Involvement Training Courses: Final Report*, Health and Safety Executive.
- 3 Eurostat (2010), *Health and safety at work in Europe (1999-2007) – a statistical portrait*, Eurostat.
- 4 Broughton A, Ledermann S, Hinks R (2014) *Ex-post evaluation of the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2012-2013. Working together for risk prevention*. EU-OSHA.



The UK labour market after recession and austerity: normal business resumed?

As the general election approaches, it's a good time to ask whether the labour market has emerged in good shape, eight years after the financial crisis and five years after the implementation of macro-economic 'austerity'. Many themes pertinent to this question have been explored in previous issues of this newsletter. Among them are:

■ **A strong employment performance.**

Employment held up surprisingly well in the recession and recovered remarkably fast thereafter – it fell by little more than 2 per cent during the recession, was back to pre-recession levels by mid-2012, and the current employment rate (73.2 per cent) is as high as ever. *So far, so good.*

■ **Job quality,** which remains a serious cause for concern. Much jobs growth during this period has been 'under-employment'. This includes surging self-employment (which hit 4.5 million, over 15 per cent of the employed workforce), which was as likely to be part-time freelancers and 'odd jobbers' keeping a toehold in the labour market as dynamic entrepreneurs setting up sustainable businesses. Among employees, part-time work grew strongly, with record numbers doing this not through choice but in the absence of full-time alternatives. Arguably, if this under-employment was a temporary phenomenon keeping people in some form of work during the downturn, it may not have been a disaster. The jury is out, but it's interesting that the past few months have seen falls in self-employment and involuntary part-time work as full-time jobs and job vacancies grew strongly. It is to be hoped that this is an early sign of 'normalisation' in the labour market, and an erosion of under-employment as the economic recovery continues. *So far, possibly not too bad.*

■ **Concerns about labour productivity.**

Following a period when UK productivity was catching up with international competitors, the recession saw a major slump in output per hour (partly because employment held up so much better than GDP). What's more concerning is that the productivity stagnation has continued long

after the recession, and GDP per hour remains below its 2008 level. As noted in my Viewpoint article in Employment Studies issue 20, the 'productivity puzzle', and whether the slump represents a structural shift to a lower-productivity labour market or a recessionary 'blip', remain subjects of debate. What's clear, however, is that the longer a productivity upturn takes to begin, the greater the gap with other countries, and the bigger the impact on the UK's longer-term competitiveness. *So far, so worrying.*

■ **Unemployment** which, despite recent falls, remains a concern. It didn't increase as much as feared in the recession (peaking at 2.7 million, still quite a lot) and it has now fallen back to around 1.8m (still a way to go to reach pre-recession levels). Despite the recovery, concerns remain about those trapped in long-term unemployment, and large numbers of school leavers whose first labour market experience has been an unsuccessful struggle to find work. These groups are likely to remain targets of government policy intervention in the labour market for the foreseeable future. *So far, so familiar.*

■ **Skills shortage and mismatch** in the labour market may be re-emerging. Although unemployment has fallen, it is not down by as much as we'd expect, given the upturn in labour demand. Put another way, job vacancies are currently up to around 700,000, similar to early 2008. However, unemployment remains several hundred thousand higher than in early 2008. There is now an average of 'only' 2.6 people chasing each available job, compared with over five two years ago. In the economist's jargon, the 'Beveridge curve' has shifted outwards, and the labour market is less efficient at matching unemployed workers to employers' vacancies. There could be several reasons for this, but one possibility is that not enough of the unemployed have the skills and attributes needed by employers, and anecdotal evidence does suggest an upturn in skill shortages. Skills, and the UK's tendency to underinvest in

them, are also part of the story behind the productivity puzzle, and a long-standing concern of policy-makers. *So far, so very familiar.*

■ **Falling real wages and squeezed living standards** have been a persistent leitmotif throughout the recession and recovery, and those in work experienced the longest fall in real wages in living memory. While the pay squeeze arguably helped retain jobs in the early stages of the downturn, this rationale is hard to sustain as the economy recovers. One concern is that the squeeze is itself deflationary (resulting in lower tax receipts, in turn a factor behind public spending constraints). Equally concerning, however, are its links to productivity: it may both result from low productivity in some parts of the economy (where employers cannot afford higher wages), and contribute to the causes of low productivity in other parts (where low wage employers lack incentives to make productivity-enhancing investments). *So far, so depressing.*

In conclusion, the new government in May 2015 inherits a labour market which has been resilient during, and is recovering well from, the recent downturn. Beneath the surface, however, it faces range of concerns, some familiar and some (like wages and living standards) more novel. At this stage in the economic cycle it seems that many of the policy concerns are qualitative rather than quantitative. With some targeted exceptions, the challenge is less to do with the number of jobs available in the economy, and more to do with the quality of the jobs and how much they pay, and with the skills and productivity of the people doing them. The exceptions relate to those groups in the labour force for whom the labour market and government policy have persistently failed to find sustainable employment – some groups of young people, the long-term unemployed, and people with health conditions and disabilities. This area of public policy is crying out for innovative approaches, and efforts to generate and innovation (e.g. through involvement of the private sector in public employment services) have not so far been a notable triumph.