

Public Sector employment in Scotland

Inevitably interest focusses on the recent trends in public sector employment; however once again, the themes of cuts, capacity and targets are indicative of more significant current and medium term issues affecting the public sector.

Public sector employment (based on headcount and excluding public sector financial institutions) rose between 1999 and 2006, but since 2006 has declined by 48,000. Although the movement of local authority staff both in and out of arm's length organizations, typically charities, continues to make comparisons slightly harder.

Public sector employment in Scotland continues to decline, although at a slower rate than previously (see Table 1). The latest data at the time of writing this section (Q4 2012) indicates that there were 580,400 (551,700 excluding public sector financial institutions) employed in the public sector in Scotland, a decrease of 10,300 (1.7%) over the year. Employment in the devolved public sector declined by 4,500 (0.9%) to 489,700, due mainly to declines local government employment (5,100) and further education (down 800).

A comparison between headcount and full-time equivalent data suggests that since 2009 the devolved public sector in Scotland has been shedding more part-time than full-time jobs, between Q4 2009 and Q4 2012 headcount (devolved public sector) employment declined by 43,600, whilst the full time equivalent declined by 31,900.

Table 1 Number of people employed in Scotland (headcount)

		Total Employment	Private Sector		Public Sector		Public Sector Excluding public sector financial institutions	
		Level	Level	Percentage	Level	Percentage	Level	Percentage
Q4	2006	2,524,000	1,924,400	76.2%	599,700	23.8%	599,700	23.8%
Q4	2007	2,541,000	1,941,800	76.4%	598,900	23.6%	598,900	23.6%
Q4	2008	2,532,000	1,885,400	74.4%	647,000	25.6%	604,400	23.9%
Q4	2009	2,464,000	1,829,400	74.2%	634,700	25.8%	599,000	24.3%
Q4	2010	2,480,000	1,864,300	75.2%	615,700	24.8%	582,200	23.5%
Q4	2011	2,464,000	1,872,900	76.0%	590,700	24.0%	559,300	22.7%
Q4	2012	2,468,000	1,888,100	76.5%	580,400	23.5%	551,700	22.3%

Source: Quarterly Public Sector Employment series, Scottish Government, Office for National Statistics

Notes

- 1 Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred. Total employment has been rounded to the nearest thousand.
- 2 Public sector financial institutions include Northern Rock (classified to the public sector from Q4 2007), Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc and Lloyds Banking Group plc (both classified to the public sector from Q4 2008).

Table 2 indicates the changing levels of employment (headcount) at the broad category level. Over the past year the largest declines in headcount have been in local government (down 5,100), public sector financial institutions (down 2,700) and the civil service (down 1,700). In percentage terms the largest declines have been in public sector financial institutions (down 8.7%) and further education colleges (down 5%).

Table 2 Public Sector employment by National Accounts classification (headcount) all Q4 2012 figures

	Total Public Sector	Civil Service	Other Public Bodies	NHS	Armed Forces	Further Education Colleges	Total Central Gov.	Local Gov.	Public Corp	Public Sector Financial Insts
2006	599,700	52,100	19,200	150,300	12,800	16,700	251,100	320,700	27,900	
2007	598,900	49,800	22,600	154,500	12,200	16,900	255,900	316,000	26,900	
2008	647,000	49,800	23,400	157,400	12,000	16,900	259,500	313,600	31,300	42,600
2009	634,700	51,100	22,900	160,800	11,900	16,000	262,700	305,800	30,500	35,700
2010	615,700	48,700	22,700	158,000	12,300	16,800	258,400	295,500	28,300	33,500
2011	590,700	47,100	21,500	154,400	11,600	15,000	249,700	282,800	26,700	31,400
2012	580,400	45,400	21,400	155,800	10,900	14,200	247,700	277,700	26,200	28,700

Source: Public Sector Employment in Scotland Statistics Quarterly Public Sector Employment series.

Notes

- 1 Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred. Total employment has been rounded to the nearest thousand.
- 2 Public sector financial institutions include Northern Rock (classified to the public sector from Q4 2007), Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc. and Lloyds Banking Group plc. (Both classified to the public sector from Q4 2008).
- 3 Local Government category revised to include SPT.
- 4 A number of local government staff have transferred to arm's length organisations which are part of the private sector. This largely explains the decrease in local government employment between 2008 and 2009.
- 5 Information for further education colleges is based on actual information from Q4 2010.

Education

Within the education sector the numbers employed in Scottish Further education colleges had declined by 800 over the year to Q4 2012 to 14,200, and by 2,700 since Q4 2008 and further reductions are likely. Merging colleges continues to pose a number of issues. Criticism was voiced in an internal review at James Watt College of management sanctioning bonus payments to senior staff for work associated with the setting up of the new merged college in Ayrshire and (Herald 27th April 2013).

Transport

Some of the weaknesses in the policy of outsourcing individual or small groups of ferry routes were made evident with the breakdown of Serco Northlink's Hamnavoe which operates between Scrabster and Stromness and the difficulties the contractor found in supplying a substitute ferry.

Subsidised transport for older citizens continues to be an issue, limitations on the use of transport cards and increased charges on rail routes have featured as well the consequences of the funding shortfall for Scottish Government's free bus scheme.

Local Government

Table 3 indicates the changes in headcount by local authority and indicates both a decline in Local Authority employment of 5,100 (1.8%) over the year. The majority of authorities have now published budgets with proposals for further employment reductions, increased charges for services and reductions in the range and depth of services. Developments in English local authorities continue to highlight the increasing use of outsourcing, accounting for some 60% of the value of all public sector outsourcing contracts. As we noted in the previous Commentary it is estimated that 50% of council waste management services and 23% of HR, IT and payroll functions are now outsourced.

Table 3 Local Government employment by local authority (headcount) Q4 2006 – Q3 2012 (Not seasonally adjusted)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Annual Change Headcount	Annual Change %
Local Authority / Joint Board									
Aberdeen City	11,600	11,600	11,400	9,800	8,800	8,800	8,700	-100	-1.2%
Aberdeenshire	13,900	13,300	14,200	14,800	14,400	14,000	13,600	-400	-2.7%
Angus	5,700	5,700	5,800	5,700	5,500	5,500	5,400	-100	-1.1%
Argyll & Bute	5,600	5,700	5,500	5,500	5,300	4,900	4,800	0	-1.0%
Clackmannanshire	2,800	2,900	2,900	2,800	2,700	2,500	2,700	200	6.4%
Dumfries & Galloway	8,400	8,400	8,200	8,400	8,300	7,800	7,700	-100	-1.4%
Dundee City	8,400	8,400	8,000	8,200	7,900	7,200	7,300	100	1.2%
East Ayrshire	6,900	6,800	6,800	6,700	6,600	6,400	6,200	-200	-3.0%
East Dunbartonshire	4,600	4,900	5,100	5,000	4,800	4,500	4,300	-100	-2.8%
East Lothian	4,900	5,000	5,000	4,900	4,700	4,800	4,700	-100	-2.2%
East Renfrewshire	4,600	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,500	4,500	4,400	0	-0.2%
Edinburgh, City of	20,600	20,800	19,400	19,200	18,500	17,700	17,800	100	0.6%
Eilean Siar	2,500	2,600	2,600	2,600	2,500	2,500	2,400	-100	-4.9%
Falkirk	7,700	7,900	8,100	8,100	7,900	7,400	7,600	100	1.8%
Fife	24,000	23,400	22,500	23,200	22,300	21,300	19,700	-1,700	-7.9%
Glasgow City	35,800	32,300	31,800	23,500	22,100	21,400	19,400	-2,000	-9.4%
Highland	12,800	12,800	12,700	12,800	12,600	11,200	10,200	-1,000	-9.1%
Inverclyde	5,100	5,000	4,900	4,700	4,600	4,300	4,300	100	1.4%
Midlothian	4,700	4,800	4,800	4,800	4,600	4,500	4,700	100	2.6%
Moray	4,800	5,100	5,200	5,200	5,000	4,900	5,000	100	1.2%
North Ayrshire	7,400	7,500	7,400	7,300	7,000	6,700	6,700	0	0.7%
North Lanarkshire	18,100	18,000	18,000	17,800	16,800	16,200	16,100	-100	-0.8%
Orkney Islands	2,200	2,100	2,500	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	0	0.0%
Perth & Kinross	5,900	6,100	6,100	6,300	6,000	6,000	6,000	100	0.9%
Renfrewshire	9,200	9,000	8,800	8,700	8,400	7,500	7,800	300	4.0%
Scottish Borders	5,700	5,800	5,700	5,700	5,700	5,600	5,500	-100	-1.2%
Shetland Islands	3,700	3,800	3,900	4,200	4,200	4,000	3,800	-200	-5.1%
South Ayrshire	6,000	5,700	5,600	5,500	5,800	5,200	5,200	0	0.6%
South Lanarkshire	16,300	16,000	15,600	15,700	14,800	14,600	14,800	200	1.4%
Stirling	4,600	4,600	4,500	4,500	4,400	4,200	4,200	0	0.5%
West Dunbartonshire	6,000	6,300	6,400	6,600	6,300	5,900	5,600	-300	-5.5%
West Lothian	8,300	8,400	8,400	8,400	8,300	7,900	8,000	200	2.1%
Total Fire Joint Boards	5,800	5,800	5,800	5,900	5,600	5,600	5,600	100	0.9%
Total Police Joint Boards	24,600	23,600	23,900	24,800	24,500	23,900	23,900	100	0.2%
Total Valuation Joint Boards	700	700	700	600	600	600	600	0	-1.8%
SPT	700	700	700	700	600	600	600	0	-6.2%
SCOTLAND	320,700	316,000	313,600	305,800	295,500	282,800	277,700	-5,100	-1.8%

Source: Joint Staffing Watch Survey, Scottish Government

Notes: 1. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

2. Totals may not add up to the sum of the parts due to rounding

3. Figures for fire service staff exclude volunteer and retained fire-fighters

4. Police and Fire Service staff in Dumfries and Galloway and Fife, who are not covered by Joint Boards, are included within the figures for Joint Boards for consistency.

Health

Pressures on the NHS from increasing costs, rising expectations and increasing demand and changes to policies were again evident in waiting figures. The BMA expressed concerns that Scottish health boards should be more closely monitored to ensure they are not disadvantaging patients and 'skewing clinical priorities to meet targets'. The BMA Scottish council chair noted: "waiting times targets were first established to support patients in their treatment journey. However, as Audit Scotland reports, the systems are inadequate and have been open to manipulation. This is not in the best interests of patients and is largely the result of the drive for political point scoring in our NHS. Clinical need and patient care must be at the centre of any waiting times management system. It is essential that targets are based on clinical evidence, not simply political imperative."

The Audit Scotland report noted a rise in the use of unavailability codes rocketed from 11 per cent of patients in 2008, to 30 per cent in 2011. The report indicated that similar patterns were found across Scotland, but says the reasons for this are not clear because of the limitations of waiting list management systems and lack of evidence in patient records.

Emergency Services

Interest has inevitably focussed on the integration of the Scottish police and the integration of IT and related services. Less attention has been paid to the Scottish fire and rescue service which been created by the merger of eight brigades into three regions – north, west and east. In common with English fire services the emphasis, given budget constraints, will have to move more to fire prevention and risk analysis. In common with other emergency services managing more effective working and sustaining the current levels of retained and voluntary staffs will be problematic. The Scottish ambulance service likewise is having to plan substantial changes to cope with funding at or below the inflation rate.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for public employees who raise concerns as to wrongdoing that they are aware of through their work (see Audit Scotland's guide for employees). However, a study of the experiences of 1000 whistleblowers (Public Concern at Work 2013) found that 60% of those contacting Public Concern at Work did not receive any response from their management as to their concerns. The most concern response was formal action short of dismissal. The report concluded that 'speaking up in the workplace may seem futile or dangerous to many individuals'

References

Audit Scotland (2013) Management of patients on waiting lists.
BMA (2013) News.
Public Concern at work (2013).Whistleblowing: the inside story.
Scottish Ambulance Service (2012). Workforce plan 2012 – 2013.

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