



Gyrfa Cymru
Careers Wales

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Public Services in Wales





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1. Key Data for Wales



452,000
or nearly **30%**
of the workforce
in Wales, work in
Public Services

1 in 9
people work
in Local
Authorities
across Wales



Over **28,000**
online vacancies in
the education sector



The NHS in
Wales employs
over
90,000
staff

Over
31,000
online vacancy
postings in
Healthcare in
2023



Top Jobs:

Nurses
34,126



Care Workers
18,034



Administrators
12,839



Teachers
28,215



Medical
12,785



Police
6,715



2. Introduction

Public Services in Wales are at the cornerstone of the nation's social fabric, reflecting a commitment to collective social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being.

Public bodies include Healthcare, Education, Local Government, and various Government Administrations, these services help communities, and the needs the public.

While legislative control over some of these areas is reserved to the UK government, the Welsh Government has responsibility over its own civil servants, Education, NHS Wales and funding for local authorities.

Wales has a substantial portion of its workforce engaged in public sector occupations. Historically with the decline of traditional industries during the 20th Century, the National Health Service (NHS) and local government emerged as increasingly significant employers for the nation. This shift was paralleled by the strategic relocation of several prominent UK government agencies to Wales, such as the DVLA in Swansea, the ONS in Newport, and Companies House in Cardiff.

The focus of this feature is an overview of the Public Services in Wales, how many people it employs, the job groups, salaries and trends in job postings.



3. Overview of Public Services in Wales

How many people work in Public Services in Wales today?

This data provides a snapshot of the diverse employment landscape within the Public Sector here in Wales. It showcases the importance and reliance of Healthcare, Education and Government Administration to sustain the local workforce.

In 2023, 452,000, or nearly 30% of the workforce in Wales, worked in Public Services, compared to 24% of the workforce in the UK. This is an increase since 2018, when 26% of the Welsh workforce were employed in the Public Sector. [Employment in the public and private sectors by Welsh local authority and status \(gov.wales\)](#)

In Wales, opportunities in public services sector span various areas, offering diverse career paths and roles. Some key opportunities include:

- **Healthcare:** Positions in hospitals, clinics, and community healthcare settings, ranging from doctors and nurses to administrative staff and healthcare assistants.
- **Education:** Teaching positions in schools, colleges, and universities, along with roles in administration, special education, counselling, and educational leadership.
- **Local Government:** Opportunities in local councils and authorities, including roles in social services, planning, housing, environmental services, and community development.
- **Civil Service:** Positions in Welsh Government departments and agencies, covering areas like policy development, administration, finance, science and public affairs.
- **Emergency Services:** Jobs in the police, fire, and ambulance services, including roles as police officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency call handlers, and support staff.
- **Social Services:** Careers in social work, supporting vulnerable individuals and families, along with roles in child protection, adult care, mental health support, and youth services.
- **Public Administration:** Opportunities in administrative roles within various public sector organisations, handling finance, human resources, IT, communications, and project management.
- **Environmental and Conservation Work:** Roles focused on environmental conservation, sustainability, science and natural resource management within governmental departments or conservation organisations.
- **Legal and Justice Services:** Positions in the legal sector, including solicitors, barristers, legal advisors, and roles within the justice system, such as court clerks or probation officers.
- **Public Health and Policy Development:** Opportunities in public health initiatives, policy development, and research aimed at improving community health and well-being.

These opportunities offer a wide range of career paths at different entry points with accredited training, qualifications and progression for individuals interested in contributing to public services and making a positive impact on communities in Wales.



4. Employment in Public Service by local authorities in Wales

The graph below shows that from 2019 to 2023 Public Sector employment in local authorities generally decreased except for Anglesey, Torfaen and Powys which saw small increases of staff. There were larger decreases in areas such as Cardiff and Swansea, both reduced by over 10,000 each. Caerphilly reduced by over 11,000, Wrexham, over 6000, and 3,000 in Ceredigion.

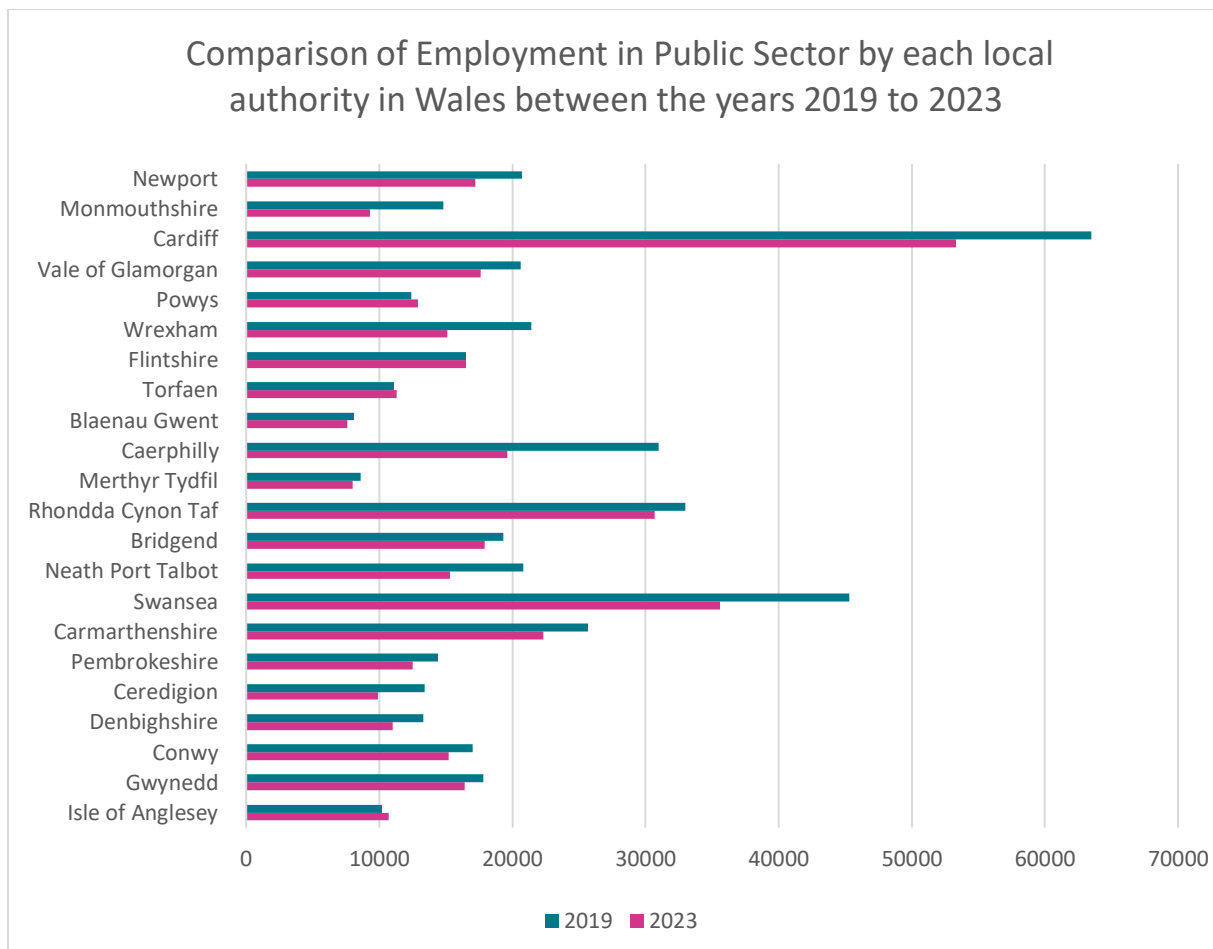
These reductions are most likely a response to public spending cuts as local authorities are working on reduced budgets. This results in restructuring initiatives to reduce workforce and balance budgets or outsourcing certain services as a cost saving measure.

The impact of COVID-19 further strained local authority finances and the additional cost of associated services within the pandemic response. Potentially this led to further workforce reductions.

Changes in population demographics, such as an aging population, less young people in some schools or migration trends, can impact on the demands for local government services.

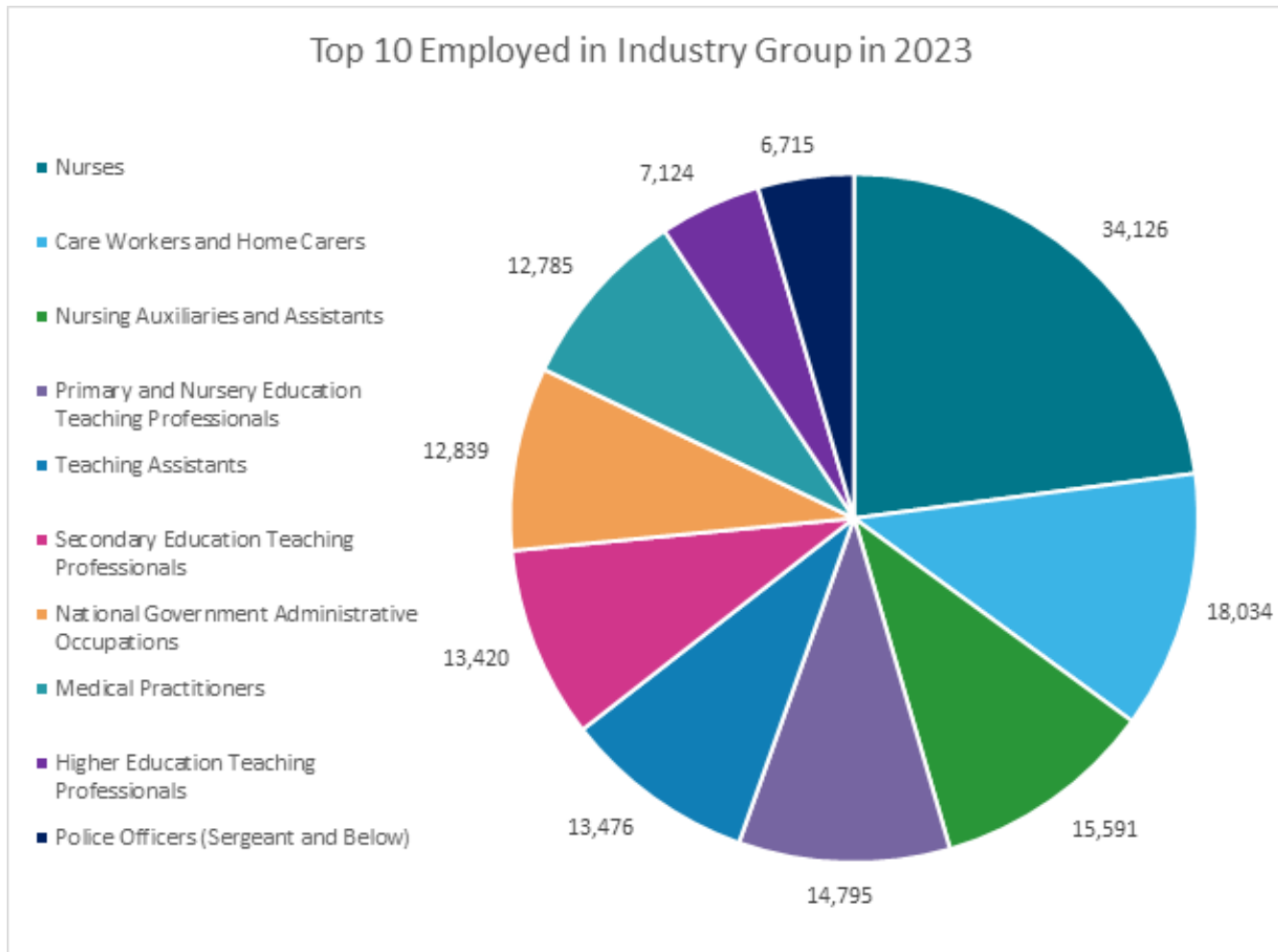
Public services have seen technological advancements and digital solutions, improving efficiency and productivity; particularly accelerated since the Pandemic, resulting in a more streamlined and automated workforce and more responsive and accessible service.

The decline over the last 5 years is a complex issue influenced by a combination of economic, political and social factors, as well as changes in the delivery of public services.



Source: [Employment in the public and private sectors by Welsh local authority and status \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

5. Top 10 Employed in Industry Group in 2023



Source: Lightcast™ Analytics 2024

The Pie chart reflects the distribution of job groups within public the broad range of public services.

Here are some key observations and insights based on the given figures:

Dominance of Healthcare Professions: Nurses, Nursing Auxiliaries, and Care workers collectively represent a substantial portion of the workforce, 45.5%, indicating the significance of healthcare services to Wales. This is also represented in the high demand for healthcare roles in monthly job vacancy postings. In Wales there are 7 Local Health Boards and 80 hospitals.

Education Sector Significance: Teaching professionals in both nursery, primary and secondary education, along with teaching assistants represent 28% of the workforce, highlighting the importance of the education sector here in Wales. There are approximately 1,473 local authority maintained schools in Wales. Consisting of approximately, 9 Nursery schools, 1,219 Primary, 23 Middle, 182 Secondary and 40 Special schools.

Support Roles in Care: Care Workers also play crucial supportive roles in healthcare underlining the need for a diverse range of skills to complement professionals in these sectors.



Administrative Roles in Government: National Government administrative occupations represent a sizable portion of the workforce, indicating the presence of government infrastructure and administrative services.

Police: The number of Police Officers (Sergeant and Below) suggests a notable presence of police personnel, emphasising the importance of public safety and security. In Wales there are four Police Forces who between them employ approximately 6,715 Police Officers.

Higher Education Professionals: The presence of Higher Education Teaching Professionals signifies the existence of academic institutions, contributing to Wales's educational landscape. The nine universities in Wales employ approximately 7,124 staff as academic level.

There is also a clear link between the largest two sectors of Healthcare and Education and the industries employing the highest number of graduates, as reported in our previous LMI Bulletin Feature on [Graduate Opportunities in Wales](#).



6. Annual income for Top 10 Public Service job groups

Bar graph below shows the approximate annual income for the top 10 public service job groups.



Source: Lightcast™ Analytics 2024

We can see that Medical Practitioners earn the highest annual salary, with Higher Education Teaching Professionals coming second, these are approximate salaries and can be even higher depending on experience, skills and specific role.

Police Officers, Primary and Secondary teachers' earnings are fairly level on approximately £42,000 a year, which is above the Welsh average annual salary of £32,000.

Teaching Assistants and Care and Home workers earn the lowest annual salary. Teaching assistants' salary is often affected by working part time and term time and most care roles are minimum or living wage allowance.



7. Online Job postings for Public Service roles

Online job posting data suggests that the following 3 areas have the highest demand across public service opportunities in Wales and employers finding them hard to fill:

- Healthcare vacancy online postings were the highest at over 31,000 for the year, mainly consisting of Nurses and Auxiliary Nurses.
- Education had over 28,000 online vacancies, mainly for Primary and Secondary teacher roles.
- Support workers and Administration roles were in demand in Local and National Welsh Government, over 11,000 vacancies posted in the last 12 months.

The table below provides headline data relating to job vacancies, numbers employed and skills in demand across key public service job groups in Wales over the last 12 months.

Healthcare: Positions in hospitals, clinics, and community healthcare settings, ranging from doctors and nurses to IT, finance, administrative staff and healthcare assistants.			
Online Job postings in last 12 months across Wales Source: Lightcast™	Highest numbers employed Source: Lightcast™	Specialist skills in demand Source:Lightcast™	Did you know...?
<p>Over 31,200 job postings in the last 12 months.</p> <p>Highest demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurses • Health Services Managers • Nursing Auxiliaries and Assistants • Occupational Therapists 	<p>Nurses 34,126</p> <p>Nursing Auxiliaries 15,591</p> <p>Doctors 12,272</p> <p>Laboratory Technicians 3,311</p> <p>Medical Secretaries 3,248</p>	<p>Nursing</p> <p>Midwifery</p> <p>Mental Health</p> <p>Auditing</p> <p>Social Work</p> <p>Primary Care</p> <p>Clinical</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>Surgery</p> <p>Psychology</p>	<p>The NHS in Wales employs over 90,000 staff.</p> <p>There are over 350 careers opportunities in the NHS.</p> <p>Careersville is a dedicated website to explore NHS careers.</p>
Education: Teaching positions in schools, colleges, and universities, along with roles in research, administration, special education, counselling, and educational leadership.			
Online Job postings in last 12 months across Wales Source: Lightcast™	Highest numbers employed Source: Lightcast™	Specialist skills in demand Source:Lightcast™	Did you know...?
<p>Over 28,500 job postings in the last 12 months.</p> <p>Highest demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Assistants • Learning Support Assistants • Primary Teachers • SEN Teaching Assistants 	<p>Primary Teachers 14,795</p> <p>Secondary Teachers 13,420</p> <p>Government Administration 14,341</p> <p>Teaching Assistants 13,476</p> <p>Higher Education teaching 7,124</p>	<p>Working with Children</p> <p>Learning Support</p> <p>External Auditing</p> <p>Autism Spectrum Disorders</p> <p>Classroom Management</p> <p>Due Diligence</p> <p>Numeracy</p>	<p>33% of teachers are fluent in the Welsh language.</p> <p>1.9% of teachers are Physics specialists.</p> <p>54% of IT teachers are trained in another subject.</p>



Local and National Welsh Government: Opportunities in local councils and authorities, including roles in social services, planning, housing, environmental services, and community development.

Online Job postings in last 12 months across Wales Source: Lightcast™	Highest numbers employed Source: Lightcast™	Specialist skills in demand Source:Lightcast™	Did you know...?
<p>Over 11,700 job postings in the last 12 months</p> <p>Highest demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Workers • Administration • Health and Safety • Town Planners 	<p>National Government Admin 12,839</p> <p>Local Government Admin 8,018</p> <p>Welfare services, family and housing 7,653</p> <p>Managers and Supervising Professionals 5,278</p>	<p>Risk Analysis</p> <p>Auditing</p> <p>Environmental Health and Safety</p> <p>Mental Health</p> <p>Personal Care</p> <p>Patrolling</p> <p>Numeracy</p> <p>Machine Learning (IT)</p>	<p>30%, or 451,200 people are employed in the public sector in Wales.</p> <p>1 in 9 people work for Local Authorities across Wales.</p> <p>Wales has a higher % of public sector workers than the UK average.</p> <p>Over 6,000 people work for Welsh Government.</p>

Emergency Services: Jobs in police, fire, and ambulance services, including roles such as police officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency call handlers, and support staff.

Online Job postings in last 12 months across Wales Source: Lightcast™	Highest numbers employed Source: Lightcast™	Specialist skills in demand Source:Lightcast™	Did you know...?
<p>Over 650 job postings in the last 12 months</p> <p>Highest demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Officers • Senior Officers in emergency services • Paramedics • Ambulance staff 	<p>Police Officers 6,715</p> <p>Fire Service Officers 2,572</p> <p>Paramedics 1,406</p> <p>PCSO 642</p>	<p>Information Privacy</p> <p>Law Enforcement</p> <p>Booking</p> <p>Triage</p> <p>KPIs</p> <p>Baseline Personnel Security Standards</p>	<p>Over 20,000 people are employed in the emergency services.</p> <p>30% are female.</p> <p>The first cohort of Professional Policing Degree students in Wales graduated in 2023.</p>



Social Services: Careers in social work, supporting vulnerable individuals and families, along with roles in child protection, social care, mental health support.

Online Job postings in last 12 months across Wales Source: Lightcast™	Highest numbers employed Source: Lightcast™	Specialist skills in demand Source: Lightcast™	Did you know...?
Over 20,000 job postings in the last 12 months Highest demand for: Support Workers Health Care Assistants Residential Support Workers Children's service worker Social Worker	Care Workers and Home Carers 18,034 Social Workers 4,524 Senior Care Workers 3,495 Social Services Managers and Directors 2,226	Personal Care Social Work Mental Health Learning Disabilities Companionship	Over 84,000 people are employed in social care activities – 37% work in local authorities. 82% of the workforce are female. Over 4,100 registered Social Workers work in the public sector.



8. Skills Shortages within Public Services

A current challenge for public services, and many employers, is finding candidates with the correct skills needed for the roles.

What causes skill shortages?

- Wales (like many other countries) is exposed to changes and influences in the global economy, e.g. technology, Artificial Intelligence, Net Zero. As a result, the number of job vacancies and opportunities will naturally increase or decrease.
- Skilled personnel may be in short supply in a particular region for particular roles. This can be due to population numbers, school leavers, ageing workforce or new qualifications or training required.
- Jobs with a high number of mature workers could create a skills gap as they retire.
- There may be a low number of qualified workers with specialised skills.
- New technology or changes to the structure of the economy can lead to rapid changes in the demand for an occupation. This will create a sudden oversupply or shortfall of qualified people. This is particular significance now with the demand for a number of roles required to meet the Net Zero targets, e.g. planning, IT roles, science and research, construction.

According to analysis from the [CIPD](#), more than a third (35%) of all job vacancies in Wales were hard to fill in 2022 due to the quality of applicants and skills shortages, affecting 10% of all businesses.

It shows that over the course of six years, skills shortages have now more than doubled in Wales from 9,000 in 2017 to 20,600 in 2022, and employers are spending 20% less on training per trainee. This comes at the same time as the Welsh Government announces cuts - due to lack of demand - of £17.5 million to apprenticeship funding from 2024.

Research shows that these skills shortages are in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with recent post-Brexit immigration changes, which exacerbated skills and labour gaps in Wales. Shortages can hinder economic growth by limiting Wales's ability to meet the demands of industries and sectors, leading to inefficiencies, missed economic opportunities and decreased productivity.

Skills and labour shortages continue to be a real problem across the UK and all sectors of the economy including Public Services.

A skill-shortage vacancy is a vacancy that is hard to fill due to a lack of skills, qualifications or experience among applicants. A skills gap is where an employee is judged by their employer to lack full proficiency. In 2022, 15% of employers had at least one member of staff who was not fully proficient (i.e. a skills gap), slightly higher than in 2017 (13%). There are significant efforts in public policy and initiatives to promote re-skilling and up-skilling the current workforce to plug the skills gap, such as the introduction of [Personal Learning Accounts](#).

The Welsh Government has introduced a number of reforms and policies over the years to try and tackle some of these shortages, which includes changes to the post-16 education and skills system and the recent introduction of the [Plan for Employability and Skills](#), which aims to help people upskill, access fair work and thrive.



Also, across Wales the 4 [Regional Skills Partnerships](#) are in place to drive investment in skills by developing and influencing a more regional approach to skills and employment planning and delivery based on local needs with employers, education and training providers.

The 2022 Employer Skills Survey showed that around a quarter (23%) of all employers in the UK had a vacancy at the time of the survey and one in ten (10%) had a skill-shortage vacancy. This represents an increase since 2017, when one in five (20%) employers had a vacancy and 6% had a skill-shortage vacancy.

Over the past two decades, the Welsh economy has seen an industrial shift away from production industries towards service industries. The largest increases were seen in Public Services roles such as Human Health and Social Work activities, and financial and insurance activities. There are several opportunities and skills needed in Public Service roles as the nation moves towards a net-zero economy, such as Transport, Health, Education and Care, two of the largest sectors within the Public Sector as reported by the [Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#).

9. The Welsh Language in Public Services

Public sector bodies in Wales have responsibility for the practical aspects of, and ensuring conformity with, local standards of public service delivery, including any set out in their respective Welsh Language Schemes and Welsh Language Standards. Current legislation has provided a framework to ensure that government funded bodies that are subject to Welsh Language Standards provide bilingual customer-facing services.

'As the main employer of front-line public services in Wales, increasing the use of Welsh within the workplaces of local government and the health and social care sector will be very important in this regard.' [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#)

This means that there is a requirement by all public sector bodies to be able to provide customers with the option to receive Welsh or English language correspondence, web site information, telephone calls, reports, meetings, forms, signs etc and for both languages to be of equal status and value. The Welsh Language Act 1993 and the subsequent standards that have to be met by public service bodies in Wales has created both opportunities and challenges in terms of skills and employment in recruiting bilingual staff.

The [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) vision and strategy places particular emphasis for achieving this goal on transforming education and the new curriculum, along with ambitions to increase the number of teachers who can teach in Welsh, thus increasing the demand for more bilingual teachers in Wales.

In the [Welsh Language Commissioner's report 2023](#), 72% of Welsh speakers stated in a survey that Welsh-medium public services are improving. They aim to encourage organisations to offer more Welsh language services so that the people of Wales can live their lives through the medium of Welsh.



10. Challenges and Opportunities in the Public Sector

The two areas where national and global change is affecting most roles across Public Services, as well as the wider economy of Wales are:

- Digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence
- Achieving Net Zero

The [TUC](#), note some key challenges ahead across all industries within the sector relating to the increased use of AI and digital technologies in public services. Some of these relate to accessibility, equality, training, budget constraints, rurality and public expectations.

Green and digital skills are the most cross cutting required skills in the coming years, yet many employers are still unsure of what specific skills relating to Net Zero are needed, making it difficult for education and training providers, as well as career planners. As the Welsh Government aims to achieve a collective carbon neutral public sector by 2030, a number of skills gaps need to be addressed.

Wales needs to develop skills to adapt to the impacts of climate change and the skills needed to do that. [Net Zero Skills](#) highlights the need to make changes to buildings to cope with extreme heat, changes to flood defences, infrastructure projects such as roads and rail will have to take account of extreme weather. All of this will need existing professionals to be upskilled and also require new trainees to understand the impacts of climate change.

The Welsh Government's [Net Zero Skills Action Plan](#) was published in 2022 with insight on the specific skills that Wales will require from the [Wales Centre for Public Policy Insights Report](#). These include :

- Retrofitting housing project roles such as plumbers and heating engineers
- Project management across various areas
- Sustainable land and forestry management
- Building management and carbon literacy
- Data analytics, software engineering and computer aided design

However, specialised green skill mentions in job postings over the past 2 years are rare. Evidence suggests that there are a number of existing roles which require new green skills can be acquired through reskilling and up-skilling the current workforce, rather than a significant increase in new 'green' jobs, which would displace the existing jobs.

Wales is struggling to ensure it can not only retain its current workforce, but also facing challenges to retain graduate talent. [Darogan Talent](#) revealed the 4 Local Authorities in Wales where over 50% of students chose to leave Wales to study, suggesting a 'talent brain drain' to higher paid roles in England or beyond. However, data from [HESA](#) shows that a high number of graduates then choose to stay or return to work in Wales after graduating as their first destination in 2021. Attracting and retaining the talent and fresh insights from recent graduates is key to ensure Wales can be competitive, innovative and thrive.

According to [The South West Regional Learning and Skills Partnership](#), digital skills seem to be affected the most by the talent brain drain. Specialist digital roles can potentially be a significant influencer for the Public Sector to help deliver Net Zero and digital transformation ambitions, however, employers report that digital skills remain a challenge to work readiness when recruiting.

It is also clear from online vacancy analysis that care roles for the elderly and disabled people are consistently in high demand as seen in all LMI Bulletins published by Careers Wales over the years. This skills shortage is further fuelling the current 'crisis' in Social and Health Care as noted by the [Wales Centre for Public Policy](#).



11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this feature on Welsh Public Services shows a dynamic landscape shaped by a diverse range of occupations catering to the multifaceted needs of the Welsh population. The data underscores the pivotal role played by Healthcare professionals, Educators, and Government administrators in sustaining the fabric of Welsh society.

The prominence of Healthcare professions, including Nurses and Medical practitioners, reflects the prioritisation of public health and well-being and the importance they provided through the recent Pandemic. Educators in Primary and Secondary education, along with Higher education professionals, emphasises the commitment to supporting a knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

Support roles, such as Care workers, Nursing auxiliaries, and Teaching assistants, contribute significantly to the effectiveness of essential services, as we have seen throughout this feature, they are the largest representation of the workforce within the Public Sector. Furthermore, the prevalence of National Government Administrative Occupations emphasises the importance of administrative structures in facilitating efficient governance.

[The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#) notes that ultimately, the collaborative efforts of individuals in various roles underscore the resilience and adaptability of Welsh public services, paving the way for a future where citizens can benefit from accessible, high-quality services that enhance their quality of life.



12. Further Reading

[Public Services- Careers Wales Job Information](#)

[Average Public Sector salary in Wales](#)

[Working in NHS Wales - HEIW](#)

[Education Workforce Council](#)

[Joint Working Between Emergency Services](#)

[Picture of Public Services](#)

[The Public Sector in Wales](#)

[Local government in Wales](#)

[Civil Service Statistics: 2023](#)

[Welsh Public Sector Net Zero](#)

Explore more regional trends in Public Services across Wales in our new [Future Jobs Wales](#) page on the Careers Wales web site!