

# The public health workforce: Burnt out... but still delivering

The public health workforce faces unparalleled challenges in their working lives. They are tired and struggling.

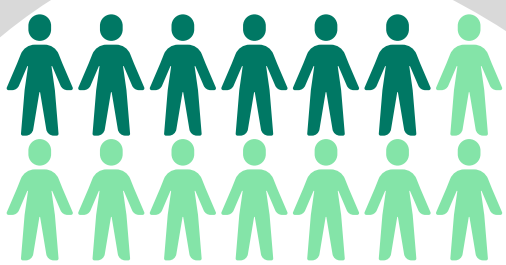
We asked our members\*, school nurses to food safety experts, about the challenges they face. They shared how being under-valued and stressed has impacted both their work and personal lives. The public health system was under extreme pressure pre-pandemic, and COVID-19 has added additional stress to their workload and lives. Here are some problems they face, but also suggested solutions that would support them.

## Factors driving the public health workforce to consider leaving their jobs

### Stress

"Stress caused by work is having an impact on personal life, every year I am financially worse off and with rising cost of living work feels less and less worthwhile and I'm feeling less and less valued."

55%



43%

### Lack of work-life balance

"Better work life balance, thus more staff is needed, this is a systemic issue as there needs to be staff available."

### Burn out

"Burn out is an issue, after having worked 12 hour-days as the norm for the last 18 months/2 years."

42%

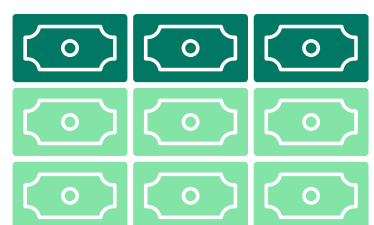
### Working long hours

"I was at the forefront of COVID-19 with interventions and (...) still expected to do my routine job on top. I am burned out, by working a normal week, then weekends during the pandemic."

43%

### Inadequate compensation for their work

"We need additional funding and increased wages for this workforce. High responsibility and low wages."



34%

# Despite these pressures...

The public health workforce have suggested approaches and actions that are vital to improve their working conditions, wellbeing and development to enable them to deliver services that matter.

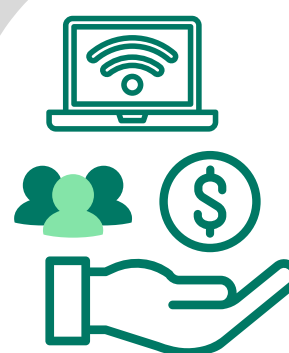


## 1) Increase funding for the workforce

The workforce must be adequately compensated for the hard work they do. Austerity cuts have had a huge impact on local public health services, and public sector earnings have fallen in real terms by 4.3% in the past 14 years.

## 2) Adequate funding and capacity for service delivery

The right funding and levels of staffing are necessary to enable delivery of services to support communities to the highest standard and increase quality of life.



## 3) Wellbeing and work-life balance

Wellbeing and support are crucial in order to have a happy, engaged and effective workforce.

**" Make wellbeing a central focus of every workplace, invest more time and money into resources and allow everyone to thrive at work."**

## 4) Opportunities for learning and career development

The PHW must have fair opportunities for professional development and career progression so they can have fulfilling and impactful careers.



## 5) Flexible working

COVID-19 has changed the way we all work. Open conversations around ways of working are needed in order to support the workforce to deliver services, whilst improving their work-life balance and wellbeing.

## Are you part of the public health workforce?

We would like to hear about your experiences - you can do this by emailing [policy@rsph.org.uk](mailto:policy@rsph.org.uk). If you are interested in becoming a RSPH member, you can find out more on our website or by emailing [membership@rsph.org.uk](mailto:membership@rsph.org.uk)

Information in this briefing is drawn from an RSPH survey of its members, who are all part of the wider public health workforce and represent a range of professions. The survey was conducted in January 2022 with 413 responses from across the 4 nations.