

News

Brexit pressure hitting work-life balance, say quarter of public sector staff

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By **Annie Makoff**

PPMA president warns continued austerity is intensifying employee workload

Public sector staff fear Brexit will increase workload and workplace pressures while having a negative impact on work-life balance, new research has found.

A quarter of the 920 public sector employees interviewed as part of collaborative research by Boundless and Public Sector Executive magazine said their work-life balance would be affected by the implications of Brexit. A further two in five said their work-life balance was worse now than it was in 2016.

Nearly a third of respondents said employee benefits and wellbeing packages were being “scaled back”, despite 30 per cent saying flexible working would be the “single one thing” to improve productivity levels.

Meanwhile, nine in 10 of those surveyed made the link between having an active lifestyle and increased productivity at work, and 60 per cent said those who led an active lifestyle were “more employable”. Four-fifths (80 per cent) called on employers to incentivise staff to lead healthier, more active lives.

Commenting on the findings, Carl Fillery, chief executive of Boundless, warned that public sector employers were feeling the “dual effect” of an increased workload caused by Brexit and other factors, along with a reduction in employee benefit and wellbeing programmes, which, if not addressed, would have a “significant effect” on productivity and wellbeing.

Tim Focas, director of financial services at Westminster think-tank Parliament Street, told People Management it was “laughable” that Brexit would affect work-life balance and accused public sector workers of hiding behind “endless” administrative processes and procedures.

But Sue Evans, president of the **Public Service People Managers' Association** (PPMA) and HR director at Warwickshire County Council, insisted that it was continued austerity – rather than Brexit – that was having the “greater impact” on increased workloads and work-life balance.

“Brexit is going to drive a bit of work for us in terms of how we manage workforces but, much more significantly, there is growing demand for our services despite huge sums of money being taken out of local government and absolutely no reduction in pressure,” said Evans.

“There’s constant pressure for us to be available 24/7 with clients wanting to talk during evenings and weekends.

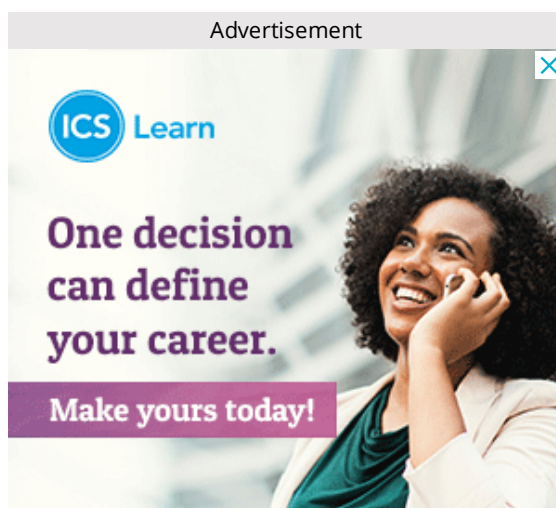
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Her warning follows the release of worrying new figures this week that reveal **the social care sector is on the brink of collapse**, because it lost more than 900 social care workers a day last year owing to workload pressures.

Earlier this month, Jonathan Portes, professor of economics and public policy at King's College London, told delegates at a CIPFA-hosted event that Brexit was already having a **"profound effect" on the recruitment and retention of public sector workers**. And, in March, two public sector unions warned that the civil service was "underprepared" for the added workload pressure Brexit would create.

Speaking at the time, Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS union, said: "The civil service is woefully understaffed and underprepared for Brexit. While we engage in the long, complex process of withdrawal from the EU, there will be no let-up in the demand for existing services. All cuts plans must be halted immediately to allow us to properly discuss the staffing and resources that are needed."



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