The age of uncertainty: Brexit and the public sector

Irrespective of whether we voted “remain” or “leave”, we would probably all agree that, following the outcome of the referendum on 23 June, we have entered a period of significant change and uncertainty. As the arguments over the nature and shape of any future Brexit “deal” rumble on, the constitutional, political, social, economic and employment implications continue to be debated and assessed. Whilst the effects of Brexit will be felt across all sectors of the UK economy, there will be particular implications and pressures for the public sector and the services it provides. These will range from resourcing and managing the negotiation process with other member states, planning and implementing the UK’s departure and the requirement for new systems and processes to manage any additional responsibilities currently undertaken by EU institutions. Although the precise impact on our economy and, in particular, the public finances, are not yet clear, there are likely to be additional fiscal pressures, leading to fears about further cuts and an extended period of austerity (the 2016 Autumn Statement and revised economic forecasts seemed to justify these fears). At the same time as managing these additional challenges and complexities, public sector organisations must continue with current reform programmes as they seek to maintain and deliver a diverse range of services, ensuring they are responsive to and meeting the changing needs of local communities and individual citizens in the best possible way.

These issues and considerations are the underlying theme of this year’s State of the State report from Deloitte LLP and Reform (an independent, public policy think-tank). Now in its fifth year, the report draws upon material from a wide range of public sources, interviews with public sector leaders and a survey conducted by IPSOS Mori exploring “the citizen perspective”. The report describes leaving the EU as an “era-defining task”, looking at the implications for Government through a “business lens”, including productivity and workforce issues, as well as assessing the economic/financial perspective. Public attitudes towards and expectations of the public sector are also considered, together with the views of public sector leaders on the challenges they and their organisations now face. But whilst there is no doubt about the additional pressures, the report also points out this is an opportunity to “rethink rather than replicate”, highlighting that the public sector has already responded “with commitment and innovation” to operating within a difficult financial climate, with sustained levels of public satisfaction demonstrating the “resilience and professionalism” it has displayed.

Deborah Moon, HR Consultant, summarises the main findings of the report and considers the issues raised by it, particularly from an employment and workforce perspective.

Background context

The report reflects that the UK Government has moved from “an era of challenge around one primary objective”, i.e. eliminating the budget deficit, to a more complex environment in which it will be required to “navigate” the UK’s departure from the EU, a task which will be no less easy as a result of the political pressures and intense media scrutiny which will undoubtedly be placed upon it. The capacity and capability of government departments to manage the negotiation process has already been the subject of much media debate – clearly, this will place additional resourcing requirements on the relevant services, with concerns expressed about the “level of distraction” this may create from existing and future transformation programmes.

The report provides a range of statistics to illustrate how the UK state is a “complex mosaic of organisations democratically accountable to 44.7 million electors and supporting a population of 65.1 million people.” These include the following:

- the UK public sector comprises more than 6,000 organisations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales;
• together these organisations employ 5.3 million people, or 16.8% of everyone in employment (the lowest percentage since current records began in 1999);
• there are six political parties in the national and devolved governments (plus an independent minister in the Northern Ireland Executive);
• at a national level there are 145 ministers, 947 elected representatives, along with 799 members of the House of Lords, responsible for political decision-making, legislation and scrutiny;
• 73 UK members serve within the European Parliament providing scrutiny of EU legislation that affects the UK (and, of course, much of the UK’s employment law derives from EU Directives and case law);
• this financial year the UK Government will raise £716 billion and spend £772 billion – the difference between these two figures (the deficit) is funded by borrowing;
• the cumulative effect of that borrowing over time means that Government debt has risen threefold since the financial crisis to £1.6 trillion in 2016;
• the UK Government has £1.46 trillion of assets and £3.56 trillion of liabilities (including public sector pensions).

The report then provides a more detailed analysis of the state of the public finances, reflecting that, since 2010, the Government’s ambition has been to deliver a public sector “that lives within its means”. Public sector HR professionals will be all too familiar with the consequences of that ambition and the resulting reductions and changes which have been required in service and workforce arrangements. It considers how, after the 2008 global financial crisis, the UK entered a period of recession, finally returning to its pre-crisis level in 2014. Uncertainty then followed the announcement in February 2016 of the June referendum, with business confidence at a three year low, and the Office for Budget Responsibility revising its growth forecasts downward.

There was, of course, much debate and disagreement in the run-up to the referendum about the potential impact of a “leave” vote on the UK economy. The report reflects that in the immediate aftermath economic indicators were “mixed”. It illustrates this by contrasting the level by which the pound fell against the dollar (and also against the Euro), compared with the rise in the FTSE 100 during that same period. Despite a fall in consumer confidence, figures from the Office for National Statistics suggested there was an improvement in UK economic growth in the three months leading up to June 2016. However, more recent forecasts indicate a slowdown in future economic growth, with predicted rising inflation and fall in real-term incomes squeezing family finances and restricting consumer spending.

Of course, as the report indicates, it is not only the UK economy that is affected by Brexit but those across Europe, as well as the wider global position, with concerns expressed about the added uncertainty that the referendum result creates (and more recently further exacerbated by the outcome of the US election).

The report considers the actions taken by the Bank of England following the referendum as it sought to steady market nerves, reassure businesses and consumers and stimulate spending. It then goes on to consider some key questions raised by the new Chancellor’s indication that the “deficit elimination timetable” set by his predecessor (the fiscal mandate) will not be met, i.e.

**Will the mandate or the objective change?** Changing circumstances as the Government prepares to leave the EU could lead to an extension of the timetable and/or the introduction of new fiscal policy goals;

**Will infrastructure spending replace austerity as the dominant fiscal theme?** The emphasis may shift from austerity to stimulus spending, as a means of boosting the economy in both the short, medium and longer term, e.g. in housing and transport (there were some elements of this in the recent Autumn Statement, see below);
Will Brexit compromise or support public sector transformation? As indicated earlier, there are concerns that Brexit will cause a level of “distraction” from other change programmes – there is a need to recognise the importance of continuing with these if public bodies are to maximise the effectiveness of limited resources against a background of changing and increasing demand;

For how long will the Government continue to run a deficit and increase its debt? The Government had previously set a target to reduce the UK’s deficit as a proportion of GDP but a shift in economic policy towards investment rather than austerity could change the forecast of when this will be achieved or even see the deficit deliberately increased.

More recently, the Autumn Statement has provided further indicators of the Government’s overall policy direction and forecasts for the UK economy. Whilst this brought announcements of increased housing and infrastructure investment, as well as measures to boost regional economic growth, concerns remain about the ability of the public sector to adequately fund key service areas such as social care and meet the costs arising from the increase in the National Living Wage which will take effect in April next year.

All of these issues and the direction taken will clearly have implications for the public sector and the size, nature and scope of its organisational, service delivery and workforce/employment arrangements.

Government through “business lenses”

Although, as the report recognises, Government is not a business, the report suggests that applying “business lenses” to its issues can provide “useful perspectives”. It therefore considers the public sector through the “lenses” of productivity, talent and the balance sheet, particularly in the light of Brexit and the resulting implications of this.

The productivity lens

As indicated previously, Brexit will create additional burdens on a number of government departments, not least the renegotiation process itself. In the longer term, the “repatriation” of activities currently undertaken at EU level may require new systems and processes or even create the need for new agencies to manage/deliver these. The report repeats its previous call for the Government to “rethink rather than recreate” so that any changed or new responsibilities are “as productive and effective as possible”.

The report then explores the productivity implications of Brexit by looking at ten of “the most exposed aspects of the public sector”:

The state of the public finances: this includes the impact on the deficit level, changes to exchange rates, e.g. an increase in the cost of goods and services arising from a fall in the value of the pound, changes to local economies, with recessionary pressures resulting in increased service demands;

Capacity, capability in trade negotiations and engagement with business: as indicated previously, questions have already been raised about the capacity of and capability within those central government departments who will have prime responsibility for negotiating the terms on which the UK will leave the EU and for the type of trade deals likely to be required (although this will be dependent on the basis of the UK’s departure, such as access to the single market and freedom of movement for EU and UK citizens). The typical timescales for reaching such agreements are also a further consideration, with the potential for protracted processes to have significant economic consequences;
**Tax systems and laws**: changes may be required to, for example, customs and excise duties and VAT arrangements, with the need to develop, manage and understand any new/different legal requirements, systems and processes;

**Regional and rural funding**: the report considers the level of EU funding received in 2015, such as that to support rural communities and farming and to help disadvantaged areas by boosting employment opportunities and developing local infrastructure. There have already been a number of calls from councils for the Government to protect such funding, with concerns expressed about the potential impact on the people and places who have benefitted from such arrangements if this is lost;

**Regulation**: the impact of EU Regulation spans a wide range of issues, with the public sector affected by both generic and sector-specific legislation. With almost a fifth of the UK’s workers employed within the public sector, EU employment regulation is clearly a significant factor in shaping the nature and terms of that relationship, for example, in relation to working time, maternity and parental leave, part-time and fixed-term workers, discrimination protections and TUPE. As has been widely acknowledged, the complexities of “disentangling” UK and EU legislation are likely to be significant – the nature and scope of future provision will have implications for the public sector as an employer and service provider and in fulfilling its regulatory and enforcement functions;

**Transport**: substantial elements of transport are covered by European legislation, in particular where it crosses national borders. This is another key area which will be determined by the nature of the “exit deal” and the extent to which this incorporates, or departs from, current arrangements;

**Immigration**: this was, of course, a major issue in the referendum debate and has been cited as one of the main reasons why many people voted to leave the EU. The extent of any future constraints or controls on immigration, both from within the EU and outside of it, and how those restrictions may be managed, are, as yet, unknown (although there has been much speculation). However, many employers, including those in the public sector, have expressed concerns about the potential impact on their ability to attract the type and number of overseas workers necessary to sustain their businesses and the services provided. Concerns have also been expressed about the position of EU workers already in this country and those who arrive between now and the eventual withdrawal date. Any new/enhanced controls are likely to place additional requirements on employers, e.g. in terms of the checks which may be required to be undertaken, and may also bring with them increased cost implications. There are a number of public services which are heavily dependent on EU and other immigrant workers, particularly in health and social care, and any changes could therefore have significant resourcing implications. Although the post-Brexit arrangements for the employment of EU nationals (and possibly other foreign workers) are still unknown, there is a need for early contingency planning in order to properly understand the nature and scope of those implications and consider potential options to address identified workforce gaps;

**Policing and border control**: as with many other areas, the terms of the Brexit deal will need to address issues surrounding cross-border cooperation and collaboration around key security areas such as terrorism and crime. Changes to border controls will also impact on a variety of government agencies and may increase the volume and complexity of areas to be managed;

**Workforce**: as indicated previously, the terms of the UK’s departure are likely to have significant implications for the health and social care workforce. The report indicates that about 55,000 EU nationals work for the NHS and a further 80,000 work in the adult social care sector. Employers are already struggling to recruit and retain staff in these service areas and the outcome of the referendum has brought understandable anxieties from both an employer and employee perspective. Although employers have sought to reassure EU nationals working in their services, the
report refers to research by the CIPD which found that 33% of public sector workers felt less secure in their jobs as a result of the referendum, compared to 22% of employees generally;

**Higher education:** the report refers to the particular “exposure” of the UK’s universities to Brexit issues, for example, in relation to the allocation of EU funding to support student mobility and for research purposes. This will be another area where public sector institutions will be looking to the UK government to assist in mitigating the impact of any negative effects.

**The talent lens**

The next section of the report considers the future for people in the public sector by applying a “talent lens”, providing a different perspective on potential future workforce issues. In particular, it looks at how technological advances could provide a number of “automation” possibilities, and how these could support cost reductions, boost employee productivity and “free up” employee time, as well as better meeting citizen expectations. In order to assess the potential scale of automation, it divides public sector occupations into **three different types of roles**.

1. **Administrative or operative roles**, i.e. those where activities are “mostly repetitive and predictable”, both “desk-based”, such as administrative jobs, or “more physical”, such as hospital porters. The report suggests that these types of roles are at “high probability” of automation over the next two decades. Estimates indicate that around a quarter of public sector workers are employed in these types of roles. The report provides an example of how automation could replace “human labour” in administrative roles, i.e. by providing a software alternative through Robotic Process Automation for the inputting of data into several different systems. This could be particularly beneficial in shared service arrangements, commonly now found in local government, where “legacy systems” of the partner authorities may not be interoperable.

2. **Interactive or frontline roles**, i.e. those where there is a high degree of personal interaction, such as teachers, social workers and care workers. The report suggests that these often have “case management layers” which could be supported by technology – although these types of jobs have a relatively low probability of being automated over the next 10-20 years, there is the potential to complement human capacity and minimise the more administrative aspects, thereby freeing up more professional time. It indicates that about half of public sector jobs are interactive and provides examples of how automation can assist, such as in care settings, including the home, where devices can be used to alert health professionals to client falls.

3. **Cognitive roles**, i.e. those which mostly require strategic thinking and complex reasoning, such as finance directors, chief executives and other senior professionals. Approximately one fifth of public sector workers are in these types of roles. The report suggests that whilst both these and frontline roles are “highly resistant” to complete automation, they could be enhanced by technologies in a similar way, enabling certain tasks to be completed more easily or enriched through automation. For example, utilising data analytics to inform decision-making and enable a better understanding of performance, future service demand and resource allocation.

Automation would not “displace employees overnight” but would have a more gradual impact - the report suggests that 861,000 public sector jobs could be lost by 2030, delivering a saving of £17billion in the paybill compared to that in 2015. In addition, as the report indicates, automation is not simply about “displacement” but also provides opportunities for the creation of new, higher-skilled jobs, as well as supporting workforce efficiencies and the delivery of new services, particularly relevant at a time of public sector funding constraints. In addition, there will always be roles where there is a need for human interaction and some “emotional connection”- the challenge will be to maximise the benefits of technological advances whilst still retaining these elements.
In addition, automation could help by releasing surplus real estate – for example, office space currently occupied by administrative roles could be released for sale, reducing revenue expenditure and generating capital receipts.

However, as the report points out, in order to realise the potential for automation, there is a need to develop and ensure the skills necessary to exploit this and to provide the software or other devices to make it happen. There may also be a need for adaptations to be made to accommodation. The report calls for Government to support the public sector in improving its collection and use of data, including ensuring it can be shared across the sector (with legislation if necessary), as well as funding investment in automation projects, with a sector-wide plan of costs and potential savings over the next two decades. Clearly, this type of “joined-up thinking” is key to maximising potential efficiencies and savings but can be difficult to achieve when a number of different stakeholder interests are involved. Overcoming any social, political and/or workforce resistance to automation may also need to be addressed.

The citizen and the state

As the report reflects, understanding public attitudes is a key issue for local government and the wider public sector, informing service organisation and design, planning and prioritisation and resource allocation in ways which seek to meet citizen needs and expectations. Ensuring such understanding is particularly important during a time of financial and spending constraints and ever-rising demands. For this year’s *State of the State*, Ipsos MORI were commissioned to undertake a survey into public attitudes and expectations on the state, with face-to-face interviews with more than 1,000 members of the public from across the UK. This resulted in seven “headline findings”:

**Dealing with Brexit is a high priority, but not nearly as high as the NHS.** Public services, the economy and immigration are high public priorities, with public transport and investment important local issues. The report also explains how different groups have different priority issues, e.g. women, those with children, younger people;

**More people expect public services to get worse because of Brexit.** Perhaps not surprisingly, those who voted to remain in the EU were more likely to have a pessimistic view of the future for public services, with those more likely to vote leave, taking a more positive view. Similarly, regional differences were apparent, with voters in London, Scotland and Northern Ireland (who were more likely to have voted to remain) having a more pessimistic view. Three in five people think taxes will rise as a result of Brexit but there is an even split on whether they think this will deliver higher public spending;

**Satisfaction with most public services remains high.** Drawing on data from the last 18 years, the survey found that, overall, more people believe public services are getting worse than in 1998. However, their own experience of individual services is largely positive and in some cases has improved, suggesting that public awareness about austerity has created a sense of worsening services, or reducing expectations, but that their actual experience remains good. These findings would appear to underlie the comments made earlier about the positive way the sector has responded to the financial constraints imposed upon it and the resilience, flexibility and innovation it has displayed in the reform and redesign of services and their delivery arrangements. HR professionals have played a key role in this, particularly in relation to the workforce implications of such organisational changes;

**Austerity’s impact has been felt most within certain groups** such as parents, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and people who rent their homes. The number of people saying they have been affected by cuts has risen in the past year. However, most people in the UK do not feel
they have been affected significantly, with people over 65 the least likely to have noticed cuts affecting them or their families;

**Support for tax rises to fund public spending has risen since austerity began**, but the public continues to expect the public sector to be cost effective and accountable. As with other responses, views on this varied between groups, e.g. between men and women, by age and income level;

**Citizens want the public sector to listen more and collaborate better.** Overall, the results of the survey show that the public sector “lags behind” the private sector in two main aspects, i.e. in listening to their preferences, and in offering a personalised experience. With regard to partnership working to deliver public services, the results suggest people see better joined-up working across the public sector as key to improving quality, maximising cost effectiveness and ensuring accountability to the public. Most people also believe that the public sector should work with businesses and charities to deliver public services. However, where businesses or charities alone deliver services, the public are less convinced that quality, cost effectiveness and accountability will be delivered to the same extent. Of course, as the report acknowledges, many public bodies already collaborate effectively with public sector organisations coming together to collectively manage services and resources/assets, including staff, in order to deliver savings, support better integration, and create more convenience for users;

**The public sector needs to bridge the digital divide.** The survey asked people to say which means of communication they prefer to use when contacting public services for a variety of different needs. Generally people prefer telephone contact if they need to engage with a public body beyond just finding out information (which they are generally happy to do online). However, perhaps not surprisingly, there were differences by age and social class, with a preference for online contact very high among people aged under 45 and more affluent people. These findings provide some important indicators for public bodies working on digital transformation and the use of digital channels for engaging with customers. As with the previous finding, there is a “very strong appetite” for digital interaction in the under 45s and among professionals, underlying its potential for the future but also highlighting the challenge of making sure that the methods used do not exclude certain other user groups.

These outcomes contain some key messages for HR professionals, e.g. in relation to workforce planning and development, reaffirming the importance of collaboration and partnership working across different agencies, developing different models of service delivery, including with the private and third sectors, and of the role of new technology and customer expectations relating to this.

**Public sector leaders**

The report then goes on to provide another perspective on the state of the state, the challenges faced and outlook for the future. It considers **six themes**, summarised below, which emerged from interviews with 40 leading public figures from across the UK, including council chief executives, as well as those from central government, the NHS, education, the police, fire and other bodies.

**Brexit brings uncertainty but public leaders are sanguine.** As indicated previously, the decision to leave the EU will have significant implications for the public sector, throwing “a huge spanner of uncertainty” into it and creating “an undefined period of instability”. Concerns are also expressed about the impact on public finances, the potential for further spending cuts and continued austerity. The most cited concern focuses on the workforce implications of Brexit, particularly in relation to the status of EU workers in services such as social care and health. Other identified concerns relate to EU funding for rural and farming communities and the impact in higher education for research funding.
Within local government, concerns were expressed in relation to the impact on local economies, including increased demand for services arising from the recession. However, potential opportunities arising from Brexit are also referred to, particularly ensuring that EU responsibilities are repatriated to the most appropriate constitutional level (a sentiment which is in keeping with the current devolution debate, with the Government being urged to drive forward the devolution of powers to regional and more local communities);

**The NHS needs continued transformation as well as funding.** The concerns about NHS funding and demands on the service are widely known and often debated – however, responses from interviewees indicate that whilst additional funding might provide “short-term fixes”, there is a need for transformation in order to put the service on a “sustainable footing”, with the reform process needing to accelerate. Particular concerns were expressed about the impact on the NHS of spending cuts in social care (an issue of particular relevance to local government), as well as the lack of progress in digital transformation and the need for greater collaboration across NHS bodies, echoing some of the themes already identified in the report. As well as better collaboration across the NHS, the relationship between health and local government services, particularly social care, continues to be a topic of much interest and debate;

**Digital transformation is struggling to meet ambition.** The report reflects on how exploiting digital has “far-reaching potential” for the public sector but then goes on to consider the frustrations expressed by public sector leaders on the lack of, and barriers to, progress, with the desire to see this accelerate. Concerns are also expressed about “digitising systems that weren’t fit for purpose” rather than rethinking these to “radically improve productivity”. The lack of skills/capability and need for culture change are also areas of concern, as well as “risk aversion and fear of failure”. The use of connected and mobile technologies to help manage service demands, to facilitate citizen interaction and to enable the better use of data/information management to inform decision-making are all identified as areas where technology is seen as a major contributor. But at the same time, there are concerns about “digital exclusion” and the potential to widen inequality if people cannot access services or support unless they are “on-line”;

**Demand management is part of a wider issue in the citizen-state relationship.** This theme focuses on the nature of that relationship and how this needs to change and evolve, particularly to “manage down” the demand on public services, encouraging personal responsibility and reducing reliance on state intervention. A number of examples are given to illustrate the ways in which service demand is rising, including the pressures placed on local government finances in relation to social care;

**The public sector’s future will be more collaboration and a more flexible workforce.** The report reflects on how budgetary pressures have driven significant organisational changes but that “headcount reductions have taken a toll on morale” (although it acknowledges that the impact of austerity has varied across the country). With regard to changes over the next five years, **two key areas** are identified: the **need for culture change** to enable more creativity and innovation and help staff “operate out of their comfort zone”, and the **need for greater collaboration** between services/departments and sectors and for learning from each other. “Parochialism” is identified as a significant barrier, meaning that organisational/structural reform can result in “fractured relationships” between the relevant parties;

**Leadership needs to be effective, high-profile, diverse and continually renewed.** The types of challenges which lay ahead will clearly need strong and effective leadership, with the ability to drive change forward and manage the resulting pressures. The ability to “connect with the public” or to
“lead wider organisational engagement” is identified as being of increasing importance, as well as leading in a “networked and collaborative environment”.

The difficulties of recruiting or developing “top talent” at a time of continuing austerity is identified, with smaller teams to draw upon and disrupted progression routes due to the management “delayering” which has taken place in many organisations. The particular difficulties for those public bodies operating in rural areas are also considered.

Another important consideration is securing greater diversity, both at leadership levels and in the wider workforce. Interestingly, one city council chief executive explained how the council had “got a more diverse workforce as an accident of downsizing” in circumstances where voluntary redundancy had led to the departure of a high number of long-serving employees.

Perhaps not surprisingly, pay is identified as another key issue, for both recruiting and retaining top talent. HR professionals will be only too familiar with the scrutiny and constraints placed on public sector pay in recent years, particularly at senior levels. Reference is made to the perceptions of elected members on this issue (an attractive reward package being described as “crazy money”), a need for greater flexibility in reward in order to compete with the private sector and considering salary rates in the context of “career risk” (if a chief executive “slips up”, they’ll “be shot”). Although not directly referred to in the report, the impending changes relating to caps on, and repayment of public sector exit payments, are also likely to be another limiting factor in this area.

All of these issues clearly have implications for the public sector’s approach to talent management and development and for other aspects of their employment arrangements, not least in terms of pay and other forms of reward.

The report also considers the particular position within each of the devolved administrations but this is not covered in this summary article.

Recommendations

The report concludes with five recommendations:

- **Government should maintain its focus on business as usual throughout Brexit – and that includes transformation.** The report refers to the need for this even if a “fiscal reset” leads to additional public spending, and for a “constructive and purposive vision to replace the cost-reduction narrative of austerity”;
- **Brexit is an opportunity to rethink rather than recreate.** This point has been referred to previously, and is reiterated here, including ensuring that technology is “fully exploited”;
- **Energise digital transformation by changing organisations one step at a time while maintaining momentum.** As indicated previously, there is frustration at the rate of progress on this issue. The report advises that public bodies should “hack away” at their organisations, albeit with “relentless momentum”, as they move toward a “wider digital vision”, at the same time ensuring this is not simply about digitising existing processes;
- **Public sector reform needs to focus on engaging the citizen.** Referring to the research outcomes which suggests that the public sector could do better at listening to citizens or personalising services, there is a need to “energise engagement programmes” and ensure that leadership is “outward-facing and high profile”;
- **Celebrate, value and support public leadership.** The need for effective public leadership has never been greater. Managing the additional complexities created by Brexit, alongside service and staffing pressures, financing reforms and changing citizen expectations are placing
significant demands on public sector leaders - roles which are undertaken under increasing scrutiny. As public sector salaries continue to struggle to compete in the war for talent, the report urges the Government to “ramp up” its capability and leadership development, as well as supporting leaders in taking the sector forward.

**Uncertainty brings opportunities**

The report will, no doubt, reaffirm many of the issues HR professionals are only too aware of and familiar with. But, as the report indicates, uncertainty also brings with it opportunities, as organisations seek to find ways in which to address the concerns and challenges which lie ahead. New constitutional arrangements, with the potential for greater local independence and autonomy, alongside technological advances and the potential for automation mean that the future world of work will be very different to that which many people have been used to. HR has a critical role in building capable, resilient and flexible workforces, encouraging people to think differently about how they work and what they do and in supporting organisations to manage the range of demands which will undoubtedly be placed upon them.


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