

***Workforce planning in the ACT  
Care and Protection system:  
Issues Paper***

Institute of Child Protection Studies  
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system: Issues Paper***

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The performance of the care and protection system in meeting the needs of children and their families depends critically on the availability of a sufficient body of skilled, dedicated and experienced staff. Workforce planning is one of the key strategies available for assuring that future staffing needs will be met.

Workforce planning has been part of good management practice in government and non government human services for many years with recent renewed attention particularly in the health, disability and child care sectors. However, workforce planning in the care and protection system for children and families has not had the attention from governments and non government organisations that it requires, and there are lessons to be learned from other sectors.

This paper explores workforce planning issues and opportunities for the care and protection system. The paper reports three main bodies of work:

- a literature review both of generic workforce planning principles, frameworks and issues across sectors, and of the more limited literature on the care and protection sector, in order to establish the main direction workforce planning could take in the ACT care and protection system.
- consultations with some government and non government organisations in NSW and ACT on the subject of workforce planning to inform an analysis of key workforce issues for the ACT care and protection system.
- selection of a methodology which is recommended for mapping the current care and protection workforce in the ACT.

Although workforce planning alone cannot be expected to balance out the economic, political and social forces at play in workforce supply and demand it is an important practice. (Sinclair & Robinson, 2003) It is important for example, for the sector to know who comprises the care and protection workforce at a number of levels, to understand the

emerging demographic and demand trends in the area, as well as the key practice and other issues that impact specifically on the care and protection workforce.

It is desirable that workforce planning in the area of care and protection not only addresses the resource issues of supply and demand of the workforce for now and the future, but also considers implications for workforce experience and performance over time. It is important for example, as a specific workforce planning issue for the sector, to recognise that there are human factors that strongly impact on the nature, retention and quality of the care and protection workforce. Successful workforce planning for the whole system will require a full understanding of these pressures and human factors and their implications for recruitment, retention and workforce development. This requires organisations to raise their efforts in planning capability and activity.

Workforce planning can be undertaken at a range of levels. For the present study, the primary concern is workforce planning at the level of the overall care and protection system in the ACT. However, workforce planning can be undertaken at other levels. In particular, key organisations within the system will benefit from their own comprehensive plans. At a broader, national level, well co-ordinated and integrated strategies such as the Australian National Health Workforce Strategy can link national and local planning issues and activities and decision making. For the care and protection sector however, an important step toward a national approach similar to the health initiative would depend on developing national communities of interest that would share a commitment to the key priorities and needs in this area.

Workforce planning by organisations is most effective when it is integrated into a robust corporate governance framework and considered as an integral part of the broader business and strategic planning cycle of organisations within a system. It is about linking the management of people with building organisational capability and with strategies for delivering the desired organisational outcomes. Analogous needs arise for planning at the system and national levels.

Workforce planning is important at a system level. It requires the identification and engagement of key agencies and stakeholders. A commitment to common goals, building trust and expertise would be required for effective system level workforce planning. The interdependency of the care and protection system means that any major issue that is being experienced by one organisation will be felt across the system influencing its sustainability and therefore the outcomes for children and families.

*“Decisions are made whether or not they are planned, but even rudimentary planning will improve the quality of the decisions made” (Bramham, 1988)*

## **1. Introduction**

One issue faced across all Australian jurisdictions and internationally is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in the care and protection system. Not having a full quota of skilled and experienced workers stretches the system so that children and their families may not receive the support and protection they need. The Vardon Report identified access to an appropriately skilled and available workforce as essential to the delivery of effective human services (Vardon, 2004 p 165). One of the strategies designed to address this need is workforce planning.

Workforce planning models involve an analysis of the present workforce; a process for identifying competencies needed in the future; a comparison of the present workforce to future requirements; the preparation of plans for building and retaining the workforce needed in the future; and an evaluation process to assure that the workforce model remains relevant. The effectiveness of these models depends on a comprehensive analysis of an organisation’s or system’s work, workforce, and strategic direction. Particularly at the system level, including both government and non-government agencies, the involvement of key stakeholders also is critical for a coordinated approach to ensure, for example, creation and replenishment of a pool of appropriately trained workers.

There are a number of important questions that underpin appropriate workforce planning. The first is what are the most appropriate knowledge and skills for workers to have – thereby ensuring ‘quality services’ for children and their families; secondly, assuming there are workers available, how best to recruit appropriate staff into the child welfare sector; finally how to retain workers ensuring their skills and knowledge remain up to date.

**This report:**

- **Provides a literature review including** a review of the existing national and international research. The review identifies a range of models of workforce planning including issues of recruitment and retention in the care and protection sector and family support at the secondary and tertiary levels. The literature accessed incorporates reviews of both published and unpublished literature such as research papers, published literature, and reports produced through State and Commonwealth departments and other relevant bodies.
- **Presents findings from a survey of issues identified by a sample of key organisations** – government, non government, peak bodies and unions to identify critical issues in workforce management and planning, identification of existing planning processes, current workforce gaps and future projections of need.
- **Identifies a methodology** for a comprehensive mapping of the current care and protection workforce including family support at the secondary and tertiary levels in the ACT.

## **2. The scope of the care and protection system in the ACT**

Workforce planning has been part of good management practice in government and non government human services for many years with recent renewed attention particularly within the health, disability and child care sectors. However, workforce planning in the care and protection system for children and families has not had the attention from governments and non government organisations that it requires, and there are lessons that can be learned from other sectors. For this reason this paper will explore through a literature review generic workforce planning principles, frameworks and issues across sectors in order to establish the main directions workforce planning could take in the care and protection system.

The care and protection sector like other human services areas requires a skilled, high performing workforce with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to deliver efficient and effective services to children, young people and families. The problem of attracting and

retaining experienced and highly skilled child protection workers has been recognised for some time both nationally and internationally. The literature reveals that this problem is ‘chronic, complex and multifaceted’ (Gibbs, 2001) and that solutions are not easy. The emphasis is placed mostly on the characteristics of child protection work and their impact on the workers. One key issue that has been recognised for some time is the need to make the job less stressful and more manageable for the worker as it is recognised that the nature of child protection work produces stress which accumulates over time contributing to decisions to leave (Markiewicz, 1996; Stanley et al., 1993s cited in Gibbs, 2001; Gibbs, 2001).

The literature points to a clear association between high attrition rates and low job satisfaction and high levels of stress experienced particularly by front line child protection workers (Drake et al., 1996 cited in Gibbs, 2001). Pecora et al identified that human resource management must be a primary concern for all those in the field of child protection and stated that “front line workers represent the organisation’s most precious resource” Pecora et al, 1992). It is recognised also that unless models of support and supervision of staff take into account the emotionally charged nature of child protection and its impact on workers then human resource planning will not be successful (Gibbs, 2001).

Addressing care and protection workforce issues contributes also to the outcomes of safety and protection of children and young people by improving the quality of care and protection services they receive. It is therefore desirable that workforce planning in the area of child protection addresses not only the resource management perspective but also implications for workforce experience and performance over time. This necessitates an understanding of the impact of emotions that are generated in the individual by the nature of the work, and the role of an organisation in managing this impact. For example, effective planning requires paying attention to the defence mechanisms adopted by individuals to relieve their stress and anxiety (Woodhouse & Pengelly, 1991; Goddard et al., 1999 cited in Gibbs, 2001). The analysis of the impact of child protection work on the workforce is beyond the scope of this paper, but what is important here is to recognise that these human factors strongly impact on the nature, retention and quality of the child protection system’s workforce. Successful

workforce planning for the care and protection system will require a full understanding of these human factors and their implications for recruitment, retention and other dimensions of workforce management and performance.

For the purpose of this report the “care and protection system” in the ACT will include government and non-government organisations (both community based and voluntary) that deliver secondary and tertiary level services to children and their families in the care and protection sector. These services, including family support, have as their client and potential client group, children, young people and families who are identified as being at risk of poor outcomes. Services include those that aim to prevent abuse or neglect and build family capacity and wellbeing, as well as those delivered when tertiary level agencies identify children in need of direct care and protection.

The system also includes the specialist tertiary agencies including the statutory government agency for care and protection (ACT Office for Children, Youth and Family Support), the Child At Risk Assessment Unit (CARAU) and the Sexual Assault Assessment service (SACAT). The role of tertiary level agencies is to assess the level of risk to children and young people in their current environments and, when children are considered in need of care and protection, to address these risks through the provision of a case management service, including statutory action under the ACT Children and Young People Act.(1999)

Although it is acknowledged that a wider view of the system could include child abuse primary prevention programs such as primary health care, early childhood services, education and community support services, these services have many other goals and purposes and so will be excluded from the scope of this paper. It is, however, critical in the context of strategic and workforce planning for consideration to be given to developments in these primary service sectors in forming a whole of system issues perspective.

### **3. What is workforce planning?**

Workforce planning is one of several planning processes which aim to improve the management of service delivery over future time frames. However, to do this successfully requires integration of all planning processes. It also requires that organisations (or groups of organisations) think through the changes that occur in the fundamental relationship between the organisation and its workforce. (Zeffane & Mayo, 1994; O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2001)

Workforce planning is a management strategy to plan for future workforce change. It provides organisations and managers with a framework for making staffing and other workforce decisions based on other elements of the planning framework, such as statements of mission, strategic plans, budgetary resources and required competency assessments. It provides a framework for “getting the right number of people with the right competencies in the right jobs at the right time” and is a “process in which an organization attempts to estimate the demand for labour and evaluate the size, nature and sources of supply which will be required to meet that demand. (Reilly, 1996, cited in Sinclair & Robinson, 2003) This description emphasises the contribution that workforce planning can make to workforce-related decision making processes. Workforce planning ideally contributes to a continuous process for shaping the workforce and is a crucial element in planning how to get from where things stand now to where they need to be in the future (Queensland Disability, 2001, Australian National Audit Office, 2001).

Workforce planning can be undertaken on a range of levels. The most common level is that of the individual organisation (or sometimes, in large organisations, divisions of organisations). At this level, workforce planning can be closely integrated with other strategic planning activities and with operational policies.

Planning can also be undertaken at a system level, involving cooperative effort by a network of organisations sharing a common interest. At this wider level, integration with other plans may be more difficult (not least because they may be absent or less well developed). On the other hand, system level planning can more readily allow a wider range of strategic factors to be brought into consideration, such as system-wide qualification requirements, education and training pathways and so on. At an even broader level, workforce planning can be attempted at a national level (bringing together a group of systems) or even at an international level. At these levels, further new issues such as immigration and exchanges may be considered. While planning at these levels can be distant from operational links to organisations, they can provide a valuable overall framework for other levels of planning.

The appropriate level and focus will depend on the nature and the extent of the community of interest. For the present study, workforce planning at the system level would seem to be the primary concern, with the system being the care and protection system in the ACT. However, this is not to suggest that workforce planning should not be undertaken at other levels within the care and protection sector. In particular, key organisations within the system will benefit from their own comprehensive plans. Where planning occurs at several levels, it becomes critically important to ensure that there is consistency and coordination between the different levels.

An example of a multilevel approach to workforce planning is the National Health Workforce Framework initiative. The Framework endorsed by all Australian Health Ministers in 2004, is well coordinated and integrated and links national health workforce organizations with jurisdictional and system level workforce planning. The Jurisdictional Health Workforce Planners' Group is part of this framework and provides a forum for Commonwealth and State/Territories health departments workforce planners to discuss workforce issues, strategies, information and joint projects (AHMAC, 2004). ACT Health is represented on this committee and the ACT Health's workforce plan of 2004 is aligned with the national framework (ACT Health, 2005). One example of multi level cooperation for workforce planning purposes was provided to us by Jenelle Reading, Executive Director, ACT Community Health who described how the States and Territories working together has

assisted local dental services where there are critical shortages. Through states working together strategies have been developed to ensure pay equity and to encourage movement of qualified staff across state/territory borders. This has had a significant impact on the reduction of staff shortages in this sector (phone consultation, 1 July, 2005).

Much of the literature deals with workforce planning on the assumption that the level of planning is that of the individual organisation. While the primary elements of workforce planning will be much the same at all levels, as noted above the level may affect the particular variables which can be focused on in the planning process, and the balance between strategic and operational issues.

At all levels, future workforce prediction requires an *understanding* of the makeup of the current workforce and its feeder groups, an *investigation* of future service needs and an *analysis* of the type and size of workforce required to meet them. Workforce planning is an approach to people management that aims to maximise options and minimise risks both now and in the future. (PM&C, WA, 2000) The WA Premier's Department sees organisations' responsibilities in workforce planning "to develop a *structured process* to consider the future in terms of the supply and demand of labour with the intention of planning a specific course of action" ( emphasis added) (PM&C,WA, 2000 ).

#### **4. Why is workforce planning necessary?**

In this section we discuss the rationale and priority for workplace planning from two perspectives. First, a range of generic issues are discussed which drive the broader case for workforce planning in all or most organisations and systems. Second, some specific issues facing the care and protection sector are noted.

At the generic level, societal developments have heightened the need for systems to align workforce practices with their mission and goals. Changes in population, technology, the economy, worker characteristics and public perception have not only altered the way that work is done but have also created difficult challenges in attracting, retaining and developing

a competent workforce. Workforce planning as part of an organisation's (or wider system's) strategic planning, can respond to these challenges and build and shape their workforce to achieve the system's strategic objectives (GMS, 2001). "Too often we seek to match our staff to what we do now without thinking enough about our workforce needs in three or four years from now" ( Australian National Audit Office, 2001).

High rates of attrition in a workforce can increase expenditure and significantly reduce capacity to provide services. Turnover costs are an important resource consideration for organisations. "... (A)s a conservative rule of thumb, turnover costs are between 0.75% and 1.5% times an employee's salary." (Mercer et al., cited in Australian National Audit Office, 2001). Other priority drivers of a generic kind for workforce planning include:

- The importance of matching staff to current client and service needs and to forecast future needs;
- Continuing experience with staff shortages;
- New technologies and service systems that change the relationship between the organisation and the workforce and have an impact on the skills and knowledge requirements. "*One important challenge is the need to maintain a focus on building and enhancing workforce capabilities in an changing environment which brings with it new technological management and customer service challenges*"; (Australian National Audit Office, 2001)
- Discontinuity caused potentially by contractual arrangements that do not consider long term needs;
- Community expectations for 'whole of government and system' approaches to service delivery;
- An ageing workforce and tighter labour markets in some sectors (ABS, 2001). The public sector is no longer a closed labour market and is influenced by external factors as much as internal policy decisions.
- As the generalisability of skills and adaptiveness grows, so does the competitiveness within and between systems (Australian National Audit Office, 2001).

- Successful organisations (or systems) position themselves so that they always have access to people with the necessary skills and knowledge.

We now turn to the care and protection system itself, and some specific factors facing the sector which drive the urgency for more effective workplace planning.

Without exception all states and territories in Australia have reported increases in notifications for suspected child abuse and for whatever the reasons, which is beyond the scope of this paper to explore, this has been followed by a need to find solutions to the type and size of the workforce requirements to meet stated objectives. WA, the only state that does not have mandatory reporting of child abuse cases, also has reported a doubling of cases since 1996. The Gordon inquiry into family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities, released in 2002, predicted that strategies that are put in place to encourage reporting may increase workloads and will often lead to increased workforce numbers. The CPSU submission to this inquiry reported that workers were always operating on crisis mode as a result of staff shortages. (Gordon Inquiry cited in Evatt Foundation, 2004)

Similarly, the Vardon Report (Vardon, 2004) made strong recommendations that have influenced the care and protection workforce in the ACT's statutory authority as well as in other agencies in the system. One outcome has been a dramatic increase in the scale of the organisation's workforce. Issues that impact so quickly on a system such as a high increase in resources over a short period of time bring into question the critical importance of workforce planning for a complex and uncertain system. Workforce planning at a system level is particularly important where the system relies heavily on an integrated and co coordinated approach to service provision to clients.

In the case of the health system, service provision is on a continuum based on strategies that focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce costs and improve outcomes. (National Health Workforce Strategy, 2004) Similarly, the care and protection system relies on a continuum of care and protection interventions and on government and non government

services working together to reduce costs and to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. Efficiency in use of resources and in the effectiveness of interventions requires a whole of system approach. Where this does not occur, the medium to long term benefits of workforce planning are reduced. In the ACT, the post Vardon reforms have necessitated a significant increase in staff numbers for the care and protection statutory authority. This has resulted in increasing the robustness of the workforce in that part of the system while at the same time it has the potential of reducing the capacity of the non government sector in the ACT. The Office for Children, Young People and Family support has successfully decreased its attrition rate from 42% to 11% while the NGO sector is experiencing severe shortages of qualified staff (personal communication, 1.7.05)

Planning for accurate and comprehensive data for the ACT would require involvement of the whole system. It is interesting to note that workforce planning is a requirement under the Merit System Reform Law that mandates workforce planning reports to be submitted by organisations at the state level .in some American states (GMS, 2001). It is uncertain whether this practice is widespread internationally though as an example it contrasts significantly with the lack of discipline demonstrated in local data and community wide accountability requirements.

Currently, there is a lack of data for the sector despite the large number of child protection reports following reviews, produced in recent years (Forde Commission of Inquiry, 1999; NSW Parliament, 2002 cited in Evatt Foundation, 2004; Vardon Report, 2004). It is therefore a gap in the care and protection system that needs to be addressed. Identification of care and protection workforce by sub sector in the ACT and achieving commitment of all stakeholders towards collaborative and effective workforce planning would be highly beneficial for continuous improvement and system reform leading to better child, family and community outcomes.

**5. The overarching principles of effective workforce planning.**

The WA Premier's Department is interested in whole of government activity in workforce planning and has launched its *Workforce Beyond 2000* project providing a comprehensive look at principles, frameworks and practice of workforce planning. Other recent state and national government projects on workforce planning such as the NSW Premier's Department's guide to workforce planning (2001) and Australian National Audit Office's Planning for the Workforce of the future (2001) have included principles and frameworks for workforce planning practice.

There are also many international examples of centralized government activity in workforce planning that have developed a set of principles and frameworks for practice. For example, the UK government has developed a national strategy to co ordinate workforce planning activity across local government as a whole. The UK's direction is to ensure that nationally, a partnership of key organisations will focus on the issues that are best dealt with collectively, such as ensuring leadership development, improving the image as a whole of the sector to energise recruitment and retention. The key priority areas of this initiative include the development of capacity and quality of the individual organisations through workforce planning practice (Sinclair & Robinson, 2004). The UK Department of Health's Primary Care Workforce Planning Framework has been developed through workforce development confederations that include government (NHS, 2002) and non government member organisations which need to work particularly closely with the new Strategic Health Authorities to deliver on workforce issues in the context of the NHS Plan. (Department of Health, 2002)

The following is a summary of the principles (or core elements for effective planning) that underpin these and other workforce strategies:

- Sound corporate governance framework;
- Clear organisational vision and values;

- Knowledge of current workforce;
- Identification and addressing of workforce issues;
- Provision of a sound basis for effective implementation e.g. integration of agency direction;
- Monitoring and evaluation of workforce planning as a continuous process;
- Understanding and including the broader context in planning for achieving outputs and outcomes; and
- Incorporating effective and efficient use of existing resources, technology, more appropriate organisational structures and use of better management approaches.

## **6. Workforce planning in human services sectors**

The NZ Ministry for Social Development established a workforce development group in 2002 under their Care and Protection Blueprint to identify and prioritise care and protection issues that need to be addressed by the sector. Their vision for this strategy is specific to the care and protection sector yet is generically similar to other human services sectors strategies (Ministry for Social Development, 2003). It aims to have:

enough professional and competent people working collaboratively for the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families; supported by strong leadership, effective management, sufficient resources and professional development (Ministry for Social Development, 2004).

It is worthwhile summarising their conclusions:

- Retention is about supporting, valuing and developing people already in the workforce.
- When turnover is higher than is optimal it limits an organisation's capability – through loss of knowledge, increased resources requirements for training and development and impact on continuity of care.
- Low rates of retention mean a high turnover of staff which has a number of disadvantages for clients, employers and the workforce itself.

- The same factors that lead to excellence in the workforce contribute to the retention of skilled people.
- Some level of turnover however is not necessarily a bad thing as people extend their range and scope of practice contributing to building connections between agencies in the system. (Ministry of Social Development, 2004)

Human services sectors in Australia such as health, disability and child care are currently reviewing their commitment to workforce planning and are enabling organisations within their sector to use as effectively as possible, the tools and techniques of workforce planning. For example, the health sector has recognised a growing need to promote and assist health systems to plan for the future workforces resulting in significant activity in Australia and internationally on health workforce planning. ACT Health has recently released its Workforce Plan 2005- 2010 *“Building a sustainable health workforce for the people of Canberra.”* (2005)

The National Health workforce framework through the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC) has a vision:

Australia will have a sustainable health workforce that is knowledgeable, skilled and adaptable. The workforce will be distributed to achieve equitable health outcomes, suitably trained and competent. The workforce will be valued and able to work within a supportive environment and culture. It will provide safe, quality, preventative, curative and supportive care that is population and health consumer focused and capable of meeting the health needs of the Australian community (AHMAC, 2004).

There is no equivalent national community services workforce framework that could provide a similar vision for the care and protection workforce in Australia. This national goal for the health workforce has both general and specific applicability.

Although the health system is possibly more easily identifiable as a system than the care and protection system it faces similar issues relating to:

- Broader societal challenges,
- Internal and external population pressures and mix of services.
- Changing trends that place more emphasis on preventive and early interventionist approaches to care and treatment. This has meant a change of direction towards a greater emphasis on primary and secondary community based approaches to service delivery.
- There is no longer a certainty about discipline specific domains to deliver specific client services. This leads to complexity in decision making relating to competencies and skill mix.

There is no current workforce strategic plan for the care and protection system or a broader community services framework that is equivalent to the national health framework. However the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council of Australia (CSMAC) has recently set up a National Children's Services Workforce Project which aims to achieve a high quality workforce and high retention rates by addressing the following issues:

- The recruitment and retention of child care staff and particularly critical shortages of qualified staff
- The absence of data on children's services.
- Professional development and training that includes new apprenticeships, recognition, assessment processes, Australian qualifications framework and migration processes.
- To improve the standing and status of those who work in children's services by increasing the recognition of the value and importance of working with children.  
(Martin, 2005)

The CSMAC task force conducted a survey of 100,000 participants in the sector in Australia late in 2004 to:

- Develop a profile of the current workforce
- Forecast expected supply and demand for staffing and identify potential shortages

- Identify employment and career issues of importance to the sector
- Identify strategies to promote working in the sector. (Martin, 2005)

The taskforce has identified the low status attached to work in children's services and acknowledged the need to improve the status and standing of those workers. They suggest this could be done by linking their work with evidence about how important the early years are to outcomes for present and future life. The taskforce has collated a range of strategies for the sector that includes community awareness campaigns, industry awards, study grants and scholarships, early childhood education and care curriculum frameworks.

At the conclusion of the National Children's Services Workforce project, it is expected that by providing a detailed understanding of the sector workforce challenges across Australia jurisdictions can better address these issues. It is envisaged that a national picture of workforce issues for early childhood education and care services will be developed (Martin, 2005).

This project points to some possibilities for the care and protection sector, if that sector can engage at a national level of planning. First, it provides a framework for mapping and identifying key workforce issues on a wide scale that could be utilised in the care and protection system. A similar mapping of the sector could be a useful step in successful workforce planning for the respective state/territory systems. For the care and protection sector however, an important step toward a national approach similar to the health initiative, would depend on developing national communities of interest that would share a commitment to key priorities and needs in this area.

## **7. What are the characteristics of workforce planning and how is it done?**

As previously stated, workforce planning by organisations is most effective when it is integrated into a sound corporate governance framework and considered as an integral part of the broader business and strategic planning cycle of an organisation. It is about linking the management of people with building organisational capability and with strategies for

delivering the desired organisational outcomes. Analogous needs arise for planning at the system or national levels. Being clear about, and balancing, different time frames are also important in this.

It is generally acknowledged that (at least for planning at the organisation level):

Planners need to balance the certainty of short range planning against the need to plan for long term objectives. Longer time periods may provide more flexibility in workforce planning but will also require ongoing modifications and constant validation of underlying assumptions. Shorter intervals run the risk of requiring more drastic workforce changes and missing upcoming issues by not looking far enough into the future. A three to five year frame for workforce planning will generally provide a reasonable balance between these two extremes (PM&C, WA 2000).

It is possible that time frames for system and national plans will sometimes extend to longer periods.

Effective workforce planning needs to be goal directed and ideally form part of a vision for the whole system from the commencement of specific organisational activity. However, if workforce planning has not been formally developed at the outset, developing a plan does not require starting from scratch. Because strategic planning and human resources management are key processes of organisations the data they generate can provide an initial data base and assist in the identification of significant issues (such as high turnover, high recruitment delays or costs or staff satisfaction problems). These already existing data sources can then inform a more structured process. Most government and non government organizations operate a Human Resource electronic data base that provides the organization with information on their current workforce. Data is collected on workforce characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, qualifications, date of commencement, separation details e.g. retirement, resignation, some work history details, citizenship and nationality.

### **Workforce mix, size and prediction in workforce planning**

The number and mix of staffing for any organisation or system will be determined by a complex array of factors including broader societal decisions about the level of commitment of resources for that particular sector, the organisation of delivery and funding and the mix of services.

These are issues that have been identified for the health sector but have relevance and importance for all others. The World Health Organisation has defined integrated health human resource planning as determining the numbers, mix and distribution of health providers that will be required to meet population needs at some identified future point in time (WHO, 2001). Workforce planning is often based on aggregated workforce data. The level of complexity of this data depends upon the original purpose and desired outcomes. It is usually a requirement of effective planning to get an overall picture through data that is quantitative on occupation, level, age, sex and qualitative profiles such as quality of supply skills. In specific circumstances, where there are specific additional workforce related goals, other characteristics may also be required (eg data on the indigenous workforce numbers, disability and so on)

### **The workforce planning process**

There is no single, definitive, generally accepted workforce planning process. However, there is agreement in the literature that workforce planning should follow some key steps. The WA framework is a clear and comprehensive 4-step model which is reasonably typical of the approaches taken. It is described in detail in the appendix – which also provides an outline of a mainstream 5-step US model for comparison .

### **The use of service focused models in workforce planning.**

In addition to the processes that have been outlined already, the health sector is being challenged to look at *service* focused models for determining workforce needs. A *service* focused model is one that has been evaluated against best practice measures from the point

of view of consumer outcomes. This provides important information for forecasting the required workforce requirements (AHMAC, 2002, cited in Ramsay, 2004).

This is just as relevant to the care and protection sector. If the sector, for example, was planning a new Family Decision Making *service* focused model it would start from an evidence base to better understand the needs of the client group. This would involve an explicit attempt to understand what service users regard as skilful interventions leading to better outcomes. The evidence base would most likely demonstrate the importance of skills such as mediation, group facilitation and other participatory approaches. This knowledge would then be used to identify in more detail the future workforce requirements for this service.

#### **8. What outcomes can workforce planning help to deliver for an organisation and a system?**

When it is part of strategic system planning workforce planning can strengthen organisational capacity to support the achievement of goals now and in the future. The organisation and system cannot meet its objectives if it cannot successfully recruit and retain highly performing people with the required skills and expertise. (ABS, 2001)

Workforce planning can encourage an understanding of critical organisational and managerial capability needs (and developments likely to influence these in the future) and should be supported by continuing monitoring and meaningful analysis of the workforce profile based on data. Without this understanding an agency's HR strategies for example will be less effective in improving staff and agency capability and performance. Planning can facilitate rapid and strategic responses to change. This in turn has an impact on productivity, workforce and community confidence in the agency and the system. 'Knee jerk' responses to critical organisational issues, such as the workforce, are unsustainable and often ineffective even in the short term. Workforce planning can facilitate the identification and management of people with the knowledge critical for effective and efficient operations. The loss of knowledge is significant and can impact on quality efficiency and effectiveness of services and programs. The planning can also provide a mechanism to link the staff budget

and costs of turnover, replacement and retraining with staff and agency outcomes. (Australian National Audit Office, 2001)

**9. Key issues in workforce planning that affect the care and protection system in the ACT.**

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt a full discussion of specific issues that may arise in a system level workforce plan for the care and protection sector. There are, however, some issues that have been raised in both the literature and in a survey of service providers conducted as part of this project, that point to important directions for further work.

The Australian welfare state is undergoing significant restructure and the impact of the ‘new human services marketplace’ workforce trends is also a key issue and challenge facing human services (Healy, 2004). Market reform and a crisis of public confidence in some sections of the industry are two key challenges that face workforce planners and reformers. Healy states that these crises are particularly relevant to institutions engaged in the provision of substitute care for children and juveniles and statutory child protection workers.

It will be particularly important to consider major trends in care and protection policy and practice. Tomison and Poole predicted significant changes in direction for the system that *should* focus increasingly on enhancing social capital and investing in communities. This evidence based trend also includes enhancement of child and family health and well being, early intervention in the early years and secondary child and family support programs as part of a shift to a ‘family support’ model approach to child protection (Tomison & Poole, 2000). Over the past five years this trend has already had an impact on the structure and nature of the workforce and on care and protection resources. However, it is in its infancy in terms of the potential impact that it could have on workforce and indeed strategic planning for the *whole* system.

The interdependency of the care and protection system means that any major issue that is being experienced by one organization will be felt across the system. This is particularly so when the statutory authority experiences significant issues such as high staff turnover. Staff

turnover which in some jurisdictions is estimated at between 30 – 40% (with an average duration of less than two years) may have an ongoing impact on uncovered caseloads, discontinuity of service to families, and increased administrative costs (Winefield & Barlow, 1994). It is also detrimental to staff morale and discourages potential workers from joining the field.

The system may well identify through exit interviews and retrospective data some of the qualitative factors that influence this trend but it is equally important to examine the current workforce and reasons *for* continuity of service. There are some studies that have been done in this area that can make useful benchmarks. Staff, for example have identified a range of key determinants of whether or not they will stay, including: commitment to children (Cicero- Reese et al, 1998) adequate supervision, (Gibbs, 2001) stress levels, (Anderson, 2000) hiring and induction practices (Graef et al., 2001) and burnout (Anderson, 2000)..

In the US, where the annual turnover of child welfare workers has been estimated at between 30% and 40% (Reagh, 1994 cited in Cicero-Reese & Clark, 1998), one study has offered some insights about job stability among child welfare workers. The data provided a profile of ‘stayers’ as mature women (mean over 42 years of age) with children of their own and with an educational background in social work or a social work related discipline. This study concluded that there was an association between job continuity and worker commitment to the agency mission. It pointed to the value of in-service training programs in promoting job performance, peer and supervision support and in the importance of creating a caring work environment. These factors also appear to reduce job stress (Cicero-Reese & Clark, 1998).

Enormous responsibility is placed in the hands of frontline workers in particular as they are expected to perform difficult interventions and make skilled judgments that potentially may shift the direction of a child and family’s life. It is critical that these expectations be in line with the preparation and training of the workforce. This has also been identified as a key issue in transforming the children’s mental health workforce in the US (Huang, et al., 2004). Two main issues that arose in that case have clear parallels in the care and protection

workforce in Australia. The first is the critical shortage of practitioners in child related disciplines. The second is the need to understand the causes, and to develop solutions for, potential mismatches between training and preparation and actual practice and service delivery.

Any workforce planning activity for the care and protection workforce at a system or organisational level would also need to include linkages to training and development frameworks. The national industry training framework for the whole of the community and health services sector, (ITAB) includes children's services and family services workforce in its scope and aims to provide a framework setting key strategies for training and sustainable workforce. (Scowcroft, 2004) An international model from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in the UK, illustrates this planning integration and is included in Appendix 1.

Understanding more about how child protection workers cope in the workplace and what may reduce the likelihood of 'burnout' are also important considerations. These elements are just as important in the context of the duty of care of an organisation to its staff and will also impact on workforce training and development policies. Research has been conducted in the US to examine the relationship between coping strategies and levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and sense of reduced personal accomplishment in front line child protection workers (Anderson, 2000). Although workers were taught active and avoidant coping strategies as part of the research, the results showed that neither type of strategy in dealing with stress protected workers from the emotional content and context of their work. This area of research has identified a number of other stressors that affect child protection workers including:

- the risk of compassion fatigue from first hand experience and from cumulative effects of vicarious experiences of trauma.
- the threat of legal liability
- administrative overload
- the negative public perception of their role (Figley, 1999, cited in Anderson, 2000)

In Australia, the high worker turnover in child protection is often reported in the media and is the subject of child protection literature (Goddard, et al., 1999 cited in Gibbs, 2001). A study in Victoria on how to lower high attrition rates among child protection workers found that a refocusing of supervision is required. This study established that the current model of supervision gives insufficient attention to the emotional intrusiveness of the work and to building resilience in workers. This study, though similar to Anderson's research, has identified the role of supervision more specifically as a key strategy in retention of staff and quality of staff performance (Gibbs, 2001). The researchers concluded that it is critical for supervision to address the emotional content and impact of the work and that "it is professionally and personally dangerous if supervision does not meet the empathic-containing function" (Gibbs, 2001). An even greater risk to good outcomes for children and families is the reluctance by the public and other agencies to report to statutory authorities when workers appear to be too overloaded to make sound judgments (Anderson, 2000).

Research suggests that effective recruitment and selection is essential to achieving successful training outcomes, high performance *and* increased retention. In turn this requires effective use of the process of job analysis, where the job tasks are dissected and inform the organisation about the knowledge, skills and abilities required as a basis for selection (Graef et al., 2001).

An informal survey of 53 child protection agencies in the US conducted by the Child Welfare League of America regarding hiring and firing practices suggests that many jurisdictions made a very minimal investment in the recruitment and selection of new staff. The expectation instead is to invest in training and development to achieve high staff performance.

**10. Summary of key points from consultations conducted of a sample of government and non government agencies in NSW and ACT.**

Telephone consultations were conducted with representatives from a sample of government and non government agencies in NSW and the ACT to identify workforce planning issues and needs. Agencies contacted included the Office for Children, Youth & Family Support and Disability Services of the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services; Community Health Division, ACT Health. In the non government sector, agencies consulted included Marymead; Burnside, NSW; CPSU and the Australian Services Union.

These organisations have varying degrees of involvement in the care and protection system in NSW and ACT. The size and composition of the workforces of these organisations range from approximately 90 people to 4,000.

. The following questions were asked of the respondents:

- What is the size and composition of your workforce?
- How do you plan for your workforce needs?
- What are some of the workforce issues for your organisation now and in the future?
- Has your organisation been involved in any workforce planning initiatives that try to tackle the wider problems for your sector? E.g university training courses to fill gaps, workforce planning models, etc.

Below is a summary of the interviewees' responses on key workforce issues.

**Current workforce planning activity.**

- There is little formal workforce planning in both the government and non government sectors in the ACT that follows an *explicit* framework and processes. One exception is the Health sector. ACT Health has developed a draft Workforce Plan that is linked to the National Health Workforce Strategy. ACT Health is

currently undergoing a consultation process on its Workforce plan for 2005-10. However, community services and disability sectors have recently established workforce committees in the ACT and are linking through representation with CSMAC and the National Disability Advisory Council.

- There is ongoing involvement by organisations such as the CPSU in forums to progress strategies to develop employment sectors. These forums are at the workplace, departmental and whole of government level and cover all aspects of workforce planning including the development of planning tools, retention and recruitment initiatives and professional development opportunities.
  
- Most organisations considered that workforce planning *should* be part of their business, people, and strategic planning. Some current strategies include:
  - Marketing and new recruitment strategies
  - Promotion activity to advertise the agency as a good place to work
  - Recruitment of child protection workers from overseas.
  - Changes in pay and conditions for professional staff to increase recruitment capacity.
  - Continuing enhancement of training and development for staff through partnerships e.g Support for Practice courses as part of a retention strategy; post graduate courses for child protection workers at the ACU in partnership with the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support.
  - Special projects looking at broader industry issues and at workforce reform.e.g's AASW, Allied Health, Disability Workers.
  - Introduction of work/life balance initiatives such as Family Friendly workplaces and more flexibility of working hours.
  - Organisational diversity that increases career opportunities for staff both in government and non government agencies.

- Establishment of dedicated agency training units to meet the needs of a diverse range of staff including volunteers in non government agencies.
- New induction policies that include more specialised induction courses depending on where the staff will work in the organisation in addition to more generic induction practices.
- Tackling issues related to transient workforces- focusing on increasing career pathways.
- A *dedicated* workforce planning unit locally in Health is looking at longer term needs outside the Human Resource function of the organisation.

### **Critical staff shortages**

- Organisations have experienced critical shortages of appropriately qualified staff in some key areas in human services including, health, disability workers and care and protection. Some key issues that were identified:
- There is currently a world wide shortage in some disciplines. The most major shortage is the lack of Allied Health professional staff available to support the sector.
- The proposed Industrial Relations changes will have an impact on this issue for example, due to further casualisation of the workforce.
- Main issues for the non government sector are about attracting and retaining staff as government positions often have better pay, superannuation and are able to contribute towards study and HECS fees.
- In care and protection there is a gap in the availability of qualified workers and also a low availability of graduates generally. This has resulted in an international recruitment initiative to bring resources into the ACT for work in the statutory

authority. Effective planning should reduce the likelihood of the need to recruitment from overseas.

- The health sector has experienced critical staff shortages for some time. Some key examples, are nursing, rural GP's, dentists, specialists. In the ACT a central dedicated resource for workforce planning has been established which is linked to planning processes at the state/territory and national level for workforce planning. As an example, key strategies for the dental workforce have been identified in the National Oral Health Plan. This has resulted in removing some barriers to recruitment through special agreements to ensure the availability of dentists in the ACT. Allied Health is another case in point. There is a lot of activity at present in the ACT Health in this area. Focusing on future directions and identifying key shortages and workforce strategies.
- There is a low availability of graduates for taking up positions in care and protection work. There are not enough people being trained to be able to cover the needs of both government and non government agencies in care and protection.

#### **System wide issues in workforce planning.**

- A robust whole service system is needed that is interdependent and plans together.
- Building trust across the system is critical to the success of system wide workforce planning.
- There is significant work being done in the Disability sector. A workforce planning group has been established to focus on the whole system in the ACT. It is working on how to best to address all workforce issues including the development of more explicit strategies to increase the staff pool for the whole system.

- Currently, a characteristic of most key sectors consulted is that one part of the system dips into the resources of another without increasing the total pool.
- There is significant interest in looking at workforce planning from an industry perspective which would mean looking at the broader educational and skills needs of the whole sector.
- Broad consultation with all stakeholders is essential to workforce planning and particularly in the care and protection sector. Agencies need to focus on the needs of both the provider and the receiver and develop strategies that complement each other.
- HR data is used to inform decisions about the workforce but there are significant gaps in what we need for workforce planning. There is a gap in data with regard to academic and skills profiles. The unions have issues around skills profiles and so it is not an easy issue to address. This is very important for best practice as it is critical to have a quality and qualified workforce.
- In the care and protection system forecasting is limited and also mostly limited to planning in the short term.
- From a government perspective the issue is about staff shortages *and* skills shortages.
- There is now a stronger retention rate in the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support. There has been a significant reduction in the rate of staff leaving but this has impacted unfavourably on the resource pool of the non government part of the system.

- Workforce planning needs to be put in the context of business and strategic planning and for departments this means that resources that are currently available need to be taken into account so that services can be delivered balanced with the capacity of the organisations. Attempts to deliver services beyond capacity can create extra workload issues which in turn impact on staff turnover and workplace related injury.
- Main issues for non government agencies are about attracting and retaining staff as government positions often have better pay, superannuation and are able to contribute towards study and HECS fees.
- Organisationally it is important that there is participation and a team approach to implementation of any workforce strategies. There is a need to work closely with managers and front line staff, HR and central policy areas to progress the issues.

**11. A methodology for the mapping of the care and protection workforce (including family support) at the secondary and tertiary levels in the ACT.**

The mapping of an existing workforce provides a critical point of reference for workforce planning activity and is an integral part of any workforce planning strategy. The workforce planning literature review and the consultations with government and non government organizations have provided an overview of the process of workforce planning activity and have identified key issues in workforce planning for the care and protection sector. The purpose of this section is to identify a methodology for workforce *mapping* and its role as a next step in workforce planning for the care and protection system.

**What is workforce mapping?**

The main objectives of workforce mapping are to obtain data and information about the current workforce as a prerequisite for understanding development needs and forecasting future needs. Having a good picture of the workforce is important for improving recruitment and retention and to build workforce capacity. . It also provides a basis for productive discussion and debate, future research, analysis and dynamic planning for organizations and the system as a whole (Tasmanian Government, 2004). Workforce

mapping also provides a mechanism by which to practice the integration of human resource management, workforce planning and strategic planning.

Specific care and protection workforce information beyond staff information that is gathered through HR data is difficult to find. The ABS provides statistics and trend analysis for the whole health and community services workforce in Australia on a state by state basis. This has been analysed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in its Labour Force series (AIHW, 2001) Although very useful to workforce planning practice, this major source of population and industry based information does not breakdown the occupational and industry groups to the extent that would be useful for workforce mapping at a local level.

A mapping model should include the following processes for:

- An industry analysis: the type of services that form the service system.
- A labour analysis: the types of work that is carried out in the services.
- An occupational analysis: the types of occupations that currently make up the services.
- A training analysis: what training and development is provided to the current workforce.
- A skills analysis: the skills and experience that workers possess.

In addition to data and information on industry, labour and occupation groups there is also a need to analyse training and skills (Professions Australia, 2005) at the national, systems and organizational level . The objective of skills mapping should be to identify the professional resource issues, challenges and opportunities facing the particular sector. Conducting a whole of system mapping activity can raise and (answer) important questions such as “ what are the pools of workers that (the system) draws on?” as well as looking at the degree of similarity between parts of the system- that is, between organizations and agencies doing similar work within and outside the defined care and protection workforce.

This potentially broader analysis reflects the common issues across human services employment sectors and the interface between them when planning for future workforce needs. These include the roles and responsibilities of different occupations and the relationships between care and protection, health and education in achieving good outcomes for children and families (Simon, et al., 2003).

While there is evidence of significant mapping of training and skills at the national level, in the child care and health sectors (CSMAC child care workforce project, 2005 and AHMAC Health Workforce Planning project, 2004) our enquiries have failed to identify a co-ordinated mapping project for the care and protection sector.

As previously stated above workforce planning can be conducted, at national, system and organizational levels. To develop a picture of the workforce in the whole system it is necessary to form *partnerships* to facilitate the identification of future workforce issues and potential strategies that impact on the education, recruitment and retention of staff for the *whole system*. A framework therefore that aims to capture this information will require a cross- sectoral commitment and participation in the mapping process (NSW Health, 2004).

### **Key steps in mapping**

Mapping of the workforce would require the following:

1. Establishment of a workforce review team with representatives from across the care and protection service system and including representation from relevant unions and associations
2. Identification of all agencies and service providers within the system by geographical area, type of service, client target groups, government/non government /voluntary.
3. A survey of care and protection agencies, staff profiles from HR from all sources analyse workforce data including:
  - Current workforce numbers and current FTE's
  - Type of tenure and length
  - Discipline & level
  - Types of work

- Education & qualifications
  - Age, gender, ethnicity.
4. Demographic analysis (Australian and ACT populations) for trends in population characteristics.
  5. Completion of a report that provides a comprehensive profile of the ACT care and protection workforce and a broad analysis of the content.( NSW Health, 2003)

The mapping process can give the whole care and protection sector the necessary information to develop a profile of the current workforce. It can provide whole of system quantitative and qualitative information that when analysed can assist in building the capacity of a well structured workforce and mechanisms that will facilitate measures for the appropriate recruitment, retention, supply and support of the workforce (AHMAC,2004).

## 12. Appendix 1 Illustrative Workforce Planning Models

Note: These models are selected for illustrative purposes only and are designed to describe organisation-level workforce planning. The broad structure and approach is likely to translate effectively to a system level planning exercise, but some of the specific data, analyses and other elements are likely to differ, perhaps appreciably in some cases. The choices made about these specific elements represent core tasks for any such planning process (whether at organisation or system level), and would need to be informed by an effective governance and consultation strategy for the exercise.

### Example 1 A: Western Australia 4 Step Model

#### Step 1

##### Analysing

The direction of the organisation, environmental factors, internal labour and external labour.

Develop scenarios for future activity in accordance with sector/organisation strategic plans and relevant external information.

**Workforce analysis** can be applied to problems of varying scope:

- *Full scale* agency planning which can be a subset of corporate or strategic planning.
- *Single issue* planning, which may deal with issues such as losing corporate knowledge or introduction of a new service requiring new skill requirements.
- *A thumbnail sketch* which would involve a scoping exercise using the basic workforce planning steps determine priority areas for further action or whether to make a more in depth assessment. (NSW Premier's, 2002)

Each is dependent on detail and accuracy of information. Practitioners need to recognise the current strengths and weaknesses of their organisation and identify factors which will influence future demand for services as well as internal and external supply of labour.

Strategic planning is long range planning based on environmental and organisational capabilities (social and attitudinal change, labour demographics, technology, public sector employment compliance e.g wages policy, governance and redeployment policy). Workforce and strategic planning needs to be integrated to ensure that policies and programs are not out of step with the strategic direction of the organisation. People management needs to be an integral part of strategy. This is done by environmental scanning to identify all information trends assumptions and conditions that might affect the organisation's future focus.

**Analysing labour supply.**

Much of the labour for future work will be provided by those currently employed within the organisation. Therefore it is useful to assess what current strengths and weaknesses exist in the workforce. This information is then able to be used in forecasting to identify potential areas of concern such as an ageing workforce, retirement numbers etc.

Generally there are two types of workforce data used for Workforce planning, namely census and trend data.

The census data include: occupation, level, sex, age, length of service, location, employee type, status award agreement and Equal Employment Opportunity factors. These are usually available through the organisation's human resources records. These provide the baselines for workforce planning to begin.

Trend data provide a historical picture of the workforce of the organisation. The data include:

- Employee separation and acquisition
- Vacancies
- Retirement patterns
- Promotions
- Workloads.
- Female participation
- Casual employment
- Salary fluctuations over time.

This information is often more difficult to access and to analyse, but provides the building blocks for forecasting in workforce planning. These data is also critical in providing information when addressing specific related issues that will be explored below. One example is the change in care and protection policy such as mandatory reporting and its impact on workloads for care and protection staff. It can be prudent to concentrate on specific areas such as this one first, identifying areas that are most crucial to the effectiveness of the organisation and/or actually have existing problems.

Although past 'behaviour' of an organisation can be useful in predicting future behaviour it does have limitations. The accuracy of prediction relies upon the circumstances surrounding the behaviour remaining constant. The rapid rate of change faced by many organizations may challenge this underlying assumption. Therefore it is essential to consider environmental factors and organizational direction when developing a forecasting model or building a specific workforce scenario." ( PM&C, WA, 2000) Most discussions of workforce planning process emphasise the need for clarity about assumptions made and clarity about the period of time to the planning horizon and that the organisation should look to a *variety* of future scenarios rather than the 'right ' forecast ( PM&C, WA 2000).

### **Analysing demand.**

The WA framework provides a checklist of factors that should be taken into account when analysing labour demand for any organization. Similarly these checklists are available for analysis of internal and external labour supply (PM&C, WA, 2000). Some factors, by no means a comprehensive list, to take into account for an analysis of labour demand include:

- Industrial agreements
- Budget and forward estimates
- Plans for new technology
- Employee satisfaction surveys
- Client survey information
- Internal service agreements.

### **Step 2**

#### Forecasting.

Estimating the *demand* for number and type of employees for each scenario (how many and what sort of people will we need?) Making workforce *supply* forecasts on the basis of internal and external workforce data (how many and what kind of people will we *have*?)

Forecasting involves the identification of future changes and developments that may result in a demand/supply gap. Assumptions are then made once these issues are identified. These assumptions form the basis of forecasting and can be modified to reflect different real life scenarios. One of the major advantages of forecasting is that potential problems facing an organisation can be identified. This process can show where vulnerabilities lie and where inefficiencies could occur. The aim is to obtain the necessary human resources in order to optimise the future position of the organisation.

There is no shortage of available forecasting tools

**Activity**

Demand			Supply	
Future activity /services based on scenario	Minimum skills /competencies required	Best practice benchmark	Existing internal skills/competencies	External skills/competencies

**Step 3**

Planning

This stage includes human resources, staff development, financial and logistical planning.

This involves developing strategies to bridge any demand-supply gaps. By formulating scenarios with tools such as the above, initial outlines leading to specific plans can be developed. This can improve the organisation’s ability to anticipate problems.

This phase requires a coherent approach to future people management. While forecasts are passive views of the future, flexible plans are dynamic intentions of where the organisation wishes to be and with strategies of how to achieve this direction. This framework provides check lists to assist the planning phase and includes:

- Human resource management
- Staff development
- Financial and logistical planning

The following is an example of the factors that are included in the planning checklist:

## WORKFORCE PLANNING IN THE CARE AND PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE ACT

Example of planning tool

E.g's	Gap	Surplus	Attraction	Retention
Succession management			x	
Specialised targeted recruitment	x			
Alternative work arrangements-part time	x		x	x
Retraining	x			x
Outsourcing contract work	x			
Salary incentives and allowances	x		x	x
Redeployment		x		

### Step 4

#### Implementation of strategic, policy and operational changes.

Decisions are required here at the strategic, process and operational levels. Strategic changes concern long term management of resources and organisation's response to the working environment. Process changes include procedural changes which impact on the workforce e.g recruitment and retention procedures leave management succession planning etc. Operational changes involve changes to the way work is done. E.g introduction of new systems.

Forecasting tools and techniques are to assist organisations both government and non government with workforce planning. (Australian National Audit Office, 2001: Queensland Government, 2000; ACT health, 2005, and Strategic Workforce planning system software such as the Australian CAPTure (Aruspex, retrieved 12/5/05). Before a comprehensive forecasting process can occur a comprehensive analysis of the

demand and supply issues is required and then this information is fed into the forecasting process.

Workforce planning process outlines and forecasting tools are available from a variety of state and national departments and companies as cited above. The Queensland Department of Industrial Relations Workforce Planning Toolkit Resource doc 6 is available on line ([www.psier.qld.gov.au/toolkit/kitforms](http://www.psier.qld.gov.au/toolkit/kitforms)). This includes a SWOT analysis format, development of scenarios, and undertaking a gap analysis for workforce planning.

The following table is an example of a gap analysis tool based on a number of scenario activities. Once this information has been detailed a gap analysis can be undertaken to determine if any imbalance is due to a skills gap, skills surplus, recruitment, attraction or retention issues. The preferred scenario determines the future labour demand and current labour supply.

<b>Gap analysis ( tick appropriate boxes)</b>			
<b>Skills gap</b>	<b>Skills surplus</b>	<b>Recruitment/attraction issue</b>	<b>Retention issue *</b>

To implement changes that have been identified through the workforce planning process will require decisions made at the strategic, process and operational levels.

This will require a comprehensive understanding of the policy context both internal and external to the organisation and good practice models for the implementation of changes that have been identified during the workforce planning process. A listing of the key documents and models for the organisation and the system in each area of planning and operations and an analysis of these will assist the organisation in making the necessary changes. There are many examples of these in the area of human

services both in Australia and internationally. A significant list is provided in the WA overview (PM&C, 2000).

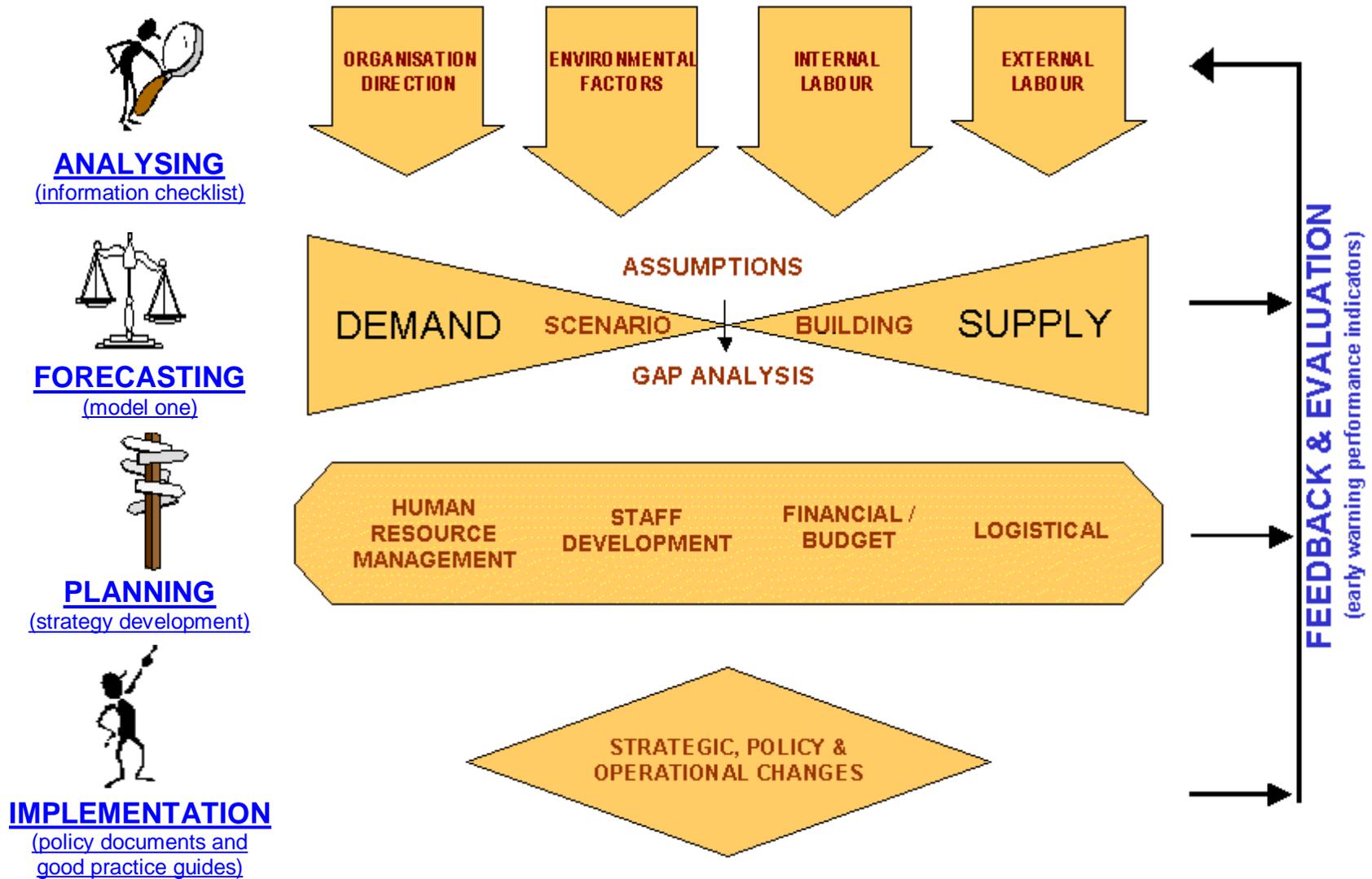
### **Feedback and evaluation**

Workforce planning is a circular dynamic process that requires evaluation and subsequent feedback. There is a need to continually review planned workforce changes and assumptions upon which these are based (PM&C,WA, 2000). It is therefore not a one off activity but an ongoing process of refinement.

Lack of information can limit forecasts and make prediction difficult. Workforce planning predictions or forecasting cannot fully rely on mathematical models as these are unrealistic and oversimplified. As the above framework demonstrates there needs to be an analysis of non readily measured factors such as attitudes to work, quality of work /life issues, social expectations, and the acceptance of change. Assessment of these factors is vital to good workforce planning. The quality of the data is critical rather than any forecasting model building by itself. Part of effective workforce planning therefore lies in the ability to identify and extract the significant parts of the system and incorporate these into the plan. Good judgment is therefore also paramount in effective workforce planning.

**Framework for Workforce Planning Western Australia 4 step model**

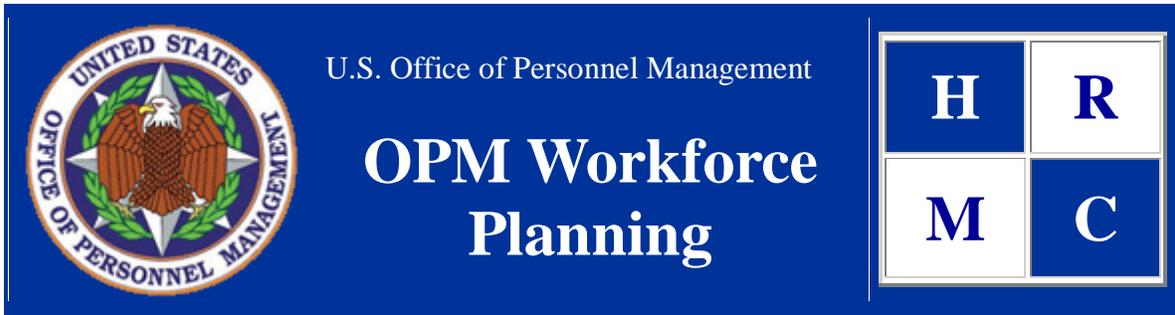
(process outline)



**Example 2. The US Office of Personnel Management Workforce Planning**

**5 step workforce planning model.**

This is a similar model to the WA model. The addition of an initial step in setting the strategic direction, reinforces the need to integration of broader strategic and business planning as part of workforce planning practice. This model was retrieved from [www.opm.gov/workforceplanning/wfpmodel](http://www.opm.gov/workforceplanning/wfpmodel).



**5 STEP WORKFORCE PLANNING MODEL**



**STEP 1: SET STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

- Introduction
- An Outline for Setting a Strategic Direction
- Organize and Mobilize Strategic Partners
- Set Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives
- Review Organizational Structure

- Conduct Business Process Reengineering
- Set Measures for Organizational Performance
- Position HR to be an Active Partner
- Questions Your Strategic Direction Plan Needs to Answer
- Where to go for Help
- References and Resources

**STEP 2: ANALYZE WORKFORCE, IDENTIFY SKILL GAPS AND CONDUCT WORKFORCE ANALYSIS**

- Introduction
- The Central Personnel Data File
- Current Population Survey Information
- IPEDS Fall Enrollment Data
- U.S. Census Data

**STEP 3: DEVELOP ACTION PLAN**

- Introduction
- An Outline for Developing a Workforce Action Plan
- Design a Workforce Plan
- Identify Your Stakeholders
- Develop Ways to Address Skill Gaps
- Develop a Project Plan
- Set Specific Goals
- Develop Your Communications Strategy
- Evaluate Your Progress
- Where to go for Help

**STEP 4: IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN**

- Introduction
- An Outline for Implementing the Action Plan
- Communicating the Action Plan
- Marketing
- Targeting and Recruiting
- Conduct Recruiting and Training
- Implement Retention Strategies
- Conduct Organizational Assessments

STEP 5: MONITOR, EVALUATE & REVISE

- Introduction
- An Outline for Monitoring, Evaluating & Revising
- Monitor: Assess Effectiveness
- Evaluate: Adjust Plan as Needed

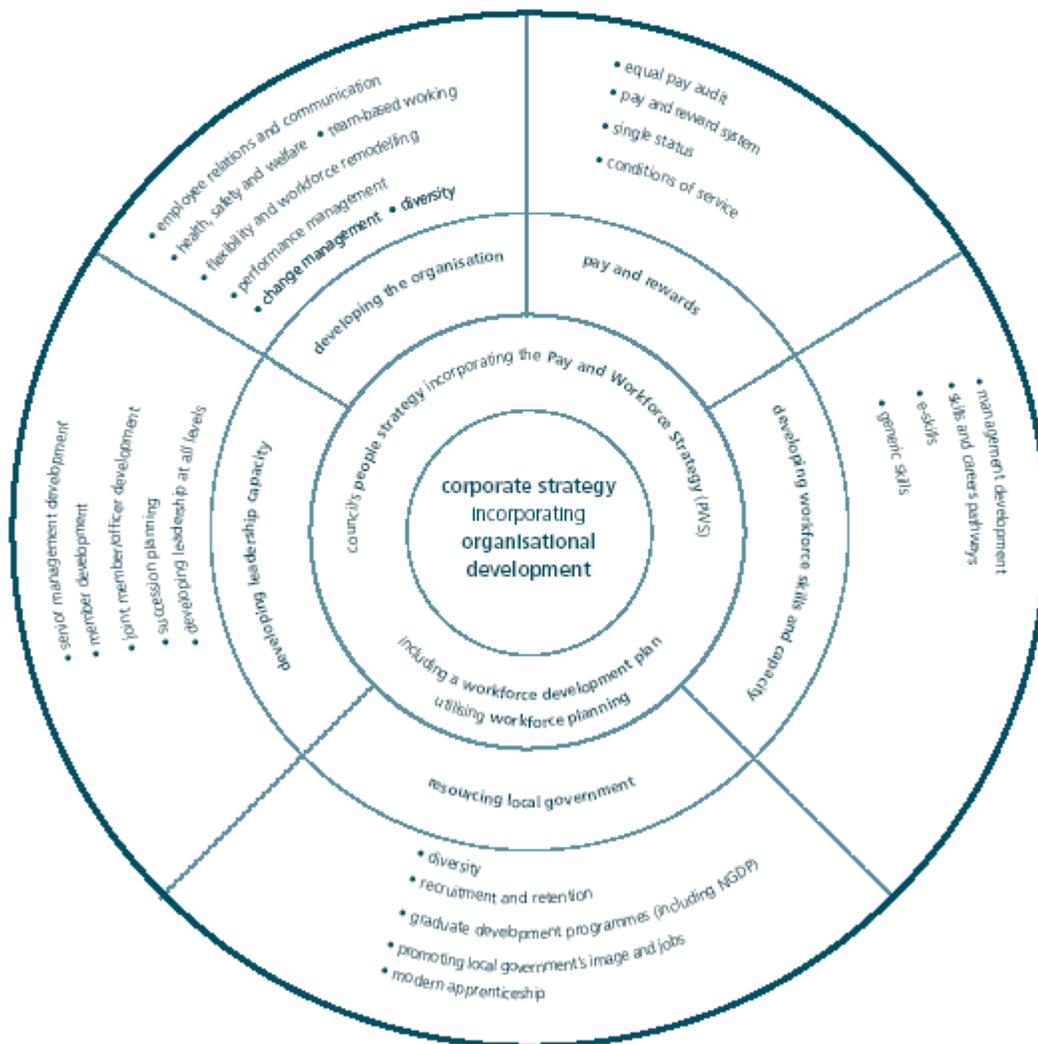
Revise: Address New Workforce and Organizational Issues

**Example 3. The UK model. The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy  
Version 2 (2005)**

The workforce planning process provides the basis for also producing a workforce development plan that sets out how at an organisational and/or system level planning activity can be focused on recruitment, support, retention *and* development of employees for now and in the future. The UK example is from the UK Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy as part of their initiative to encourage all local authorities in the UK to be active in workforce planning ([www.lg-employers.gov/recruit/workforce](http://www.lg-employers.gov/recruit/workforce)). This is an example of a framework from a public service strategy but has broader application as it is comprehensive and wide in scope. It identifies main ‘challenges’ as 5 key priority areas for workforce planning across the local government system of responsibility and activity:

- Developing leadership capacity
- Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce at all levels
- Developing the organisation, including equality and diversity issues
- Resourcing local government through better recruitment and retention
- Pay and rewards.

**figure 2: the workforce development plan and other organisational strategies and how they link with the PWS**



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