Appendix 2

21st Century Public Sector Worker Research Project
NYCC Graduate Focus Group: Tuesday 1st March 2016
Report

Background

This focus group forms part of a wider research project. In 2014, Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan conducted an investigation into potential roles, skills, identities and characteristics that could be required of the 21st Century public sector workers of the future. The subjects who took part in this focus group represented a range of directorates within a local authority, in order to gain a broad organisational view.

Abstract

A self-report survey was produced to gather data. The most important skills for the future 21st century public sector worker identified by the graduate subjects were: social intelligence, novel & adaptive thinking, New Media Literacy and Transdisciplinarity. The three most relevant roles in current day jobs were deemed by graduate subjects to be Networker, Resource Worker, and Muncipal Entrepreneur. Yet the top five prioritised roles in terms of their importance were Resource Worker, Muncipal Entrepreneur, Storyteller, Broker and Navigator; Networker was deemed the overall least important. The feedback received was varied and demonstrated that the perceptions of the young public sector worker are changing.

Method

Sample

The subjects consisted of 9 (3 male, 6 female) employees of North Yorkshire County Council, the majority of whom were affiliated with the 2013 and 2014 cohorts of the NYCC Graduate Scheme, fulfilling the role of Project Officer. The subjects represented a range of directorates within the council. As the majority of subjects were recent graduates from an educational institution, the age range was predominantly 21 – 29 years, except one subject who represented a more experienced age category. The focus group was co-ordinated by two of the participating graduates, who upon becoming involved with the project identified the NYCC Graduate Scheme as a potential target population, therefore the sampling method adopted was opportunity sampling.

Design

The investigation adopted the self-report mechanism for gathering information; a survey was created for this particular focus group, adapted from the aims and content of the overriding research by Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan. Each subject completed an identical survey. The investigation adopted both a 'between subjects' and 'within subjects' approach as the focus group aimed to observe graduate responses in comparison with each other for each respective task, and comparisons between personal responses across each task. As the research method was a self-report, there was no independent variable. The dependent variable was the self-reported responses from the subjects for each task. Potential extraneous variables include boredom effects, time limitations and social desirability. The self-report consisted of rating scales, likert scales and open-ended questions, therefore the data collected was a mix of qualitative and quantitative.

Materials

The co-ordinators of the focus group designed a survey adapted from the overriding research, tailored to meet the aims of the investigation (see appendix 1). This hand-out consisted of a background to the overriding research and a range of different tasks based on the skills, identities and roles discussed in the research. Flipchart paper and post-it notes were distributed in the session to form other means of collecting information from the subjects. Pens were made available to subjects. A3 sheets displaying the 8 'key roles' embedded in the research were placed onto the tables before the session; these sheets displayed the same visual design as displayed in the overriding research paper. A cake was baked and brought to the session as a reward for the subjects for participating. This cake also displayed the 8 'key roles' mentioned, to act as an additional tool to maximise subject engagement. A laptop, extension cable and television screen were required for the introductory presentation.

Procedure

The focus group took place at County Hall in Northallerton, during a two-hour session led by two co-ordinators on the afternoon of Tuesday 1st April. The following equipment was brought to the session by the co-ordinators: pens, A3 sheets (specified in the materials

section), flipchart paper, post-it notes, a laptop, copies of the survey booklet and the cake. Prior to subjects arriving, materials were spread out across tables. Upon arrival of all subjects, the co-ordinators distributed copies of the survey and presented a brief introduction via a Powerpoint presentation, detailing the overriding research paper (with which the subjects were already familiar). At the end of the introduction, the co-ordinators explained that subjects were welcome to use their copies of the survey to write responses, and also the flipchart paper and post-it notes for other notes or useful information. The co-ordinators then took the subjects through the survey collectively and step by step, opening each task for group discussion and facilitating these discussions – however, subjects were encouraged to complete the survey individually. After each subject had completed each task, focus was directed to the next task. At the end of the session, subjects were offered a slice of cake as a token of appreciation for taking part in the focus group, and were informed that the findings would be made available to them.

Some subjects could not attend the session, therefore a copy of the survey was emailed to the volunteers who were not available to attend; these subjects completed the survey in their own time and responses were fed back electronically.

In addition to the responses from the survey, the co-ordinators also took notes from the content of the group discussions.

Findings

- *"What attracted you to work in the public sector?"*

Numerous reasons were identified for choosing to work in the public sector and for applying to join the Graduate Scheme at NYCC. From the group discussions and survey responses, co-ordinators reported that the following were deemed as significantly influential when choosing to join the local authority:

- Having a **voice,** or being able to help with improving the quality of services delivered to the public during times of austerity was of importance to the majority of the group.

- Being able to **make a difference to the community**

- **Trust** and the **reputation of the local authority**

- The majority of the graduates who completed the survey fed back that the placement or job role had met their objectives for **developing skills**

- Getting access to **public sector work experience**.

  The picture painted of future roles or careers within the organisation was one where flexibility and the ability to adapt is essential. A number of the graduates advised that they thought they may not stay in the initial role that they had been working in but would be looking at different departments within the organisation.

The group were particularly focussed on identifying the needs of the future public sector organisation, identifying that they…

Need to be:

More fluid
Supportive
Flexible/adaptable (public sector workers shifting between different roles)

Need not to be:

Siloe'd
Controlling

Appendix 2

- *"What attracted you to work at North Yorkshire County Council?"*

"Job security- family live in the area, other vacancies become available. Progression, and the amount of opportunities available."

"Transferable skills, opportunity to use skills/tasks related to degree, being able to work in a community focussed role, but second choice behind 'frontline' role of sorts, different career choices of counselling/police."

"Applied for middle manager programme as I want to be a manager in the future, and applied to public sector because I wanted the ethos of helping others rather than private where the focus could conflict with personal values."

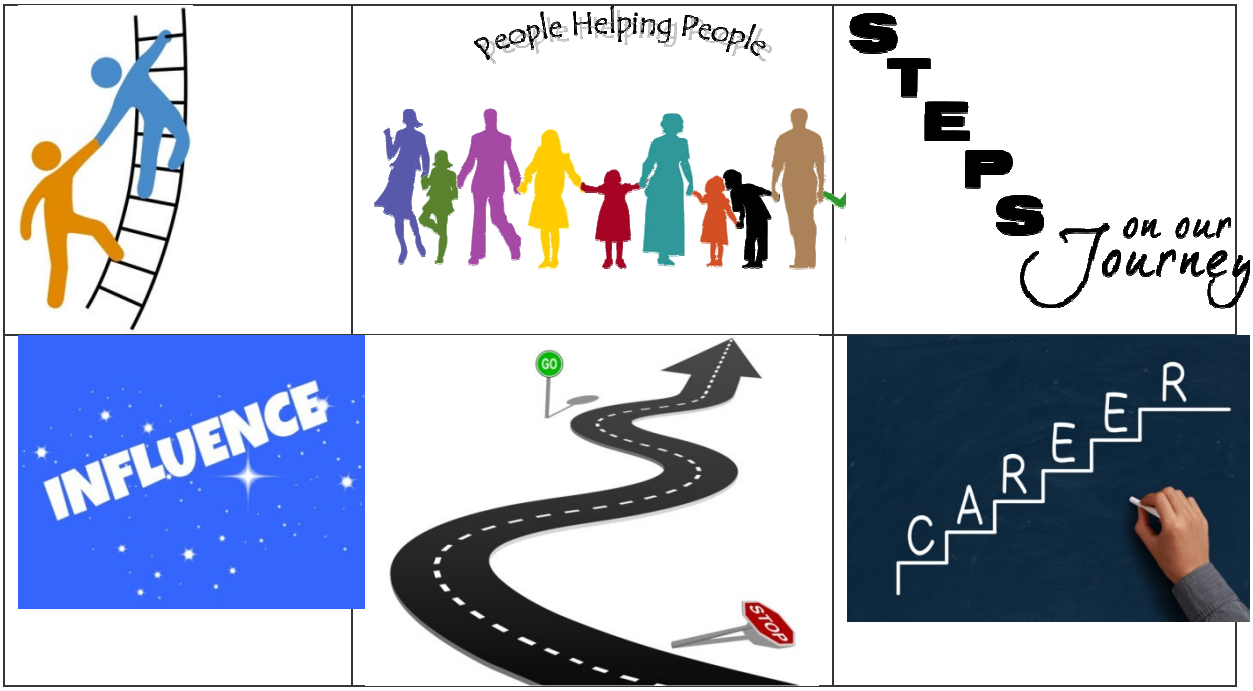
"North Yorkshire is where I have lived and worked previously so I can relate the things I do to the people I know, in terms of staying with public sector, I would stay or go private depending on if the opportunities meet what I want from a job"

"Trusted organisation, family previously worked in local government, chance to help communities, opportunity for career progression."

"Security of job roles, does not see self-staying in one singular role or department, will move between them"

In the focus group, the reasons for applying to join a Graduate Scheme in the public sector were discussed. A number of people in the group emphasised that an important factor for them in applying for the scheme was the potential to gain **exposure to politics and government**, and to learn more about governance arrangements in the public sector in a setting outside of London. Another key factor in applying was the potential to **have an impact on the community**, in helping to make a difference *locally*.

Longevity and **job security**/permanence of the employer was also identified as a factor that was important to the group as a reason for wanting to stay. Being able to access flexi time and **different work patterns** was also identified as being important and in the discussion that followed a number of people in the group advised that they wanted to work in the public sector because of the **friendly environment** and **helpful colleagues**. Others indicated that local public perceptions of the council were important along with having the **opportunity to influence change**, and make a difference.



It was noted that a positive experience is desired, but the opportunity to move away and bring knowledge back into the organisation was mentioned. There was discussion in the group of the impact of the local community and being passionate about local services being delivered well and to a high standard of quality. This was a strong motivation for applying. Some of this is related to individual perceptions, and what stage in life one is at with regards to a career; opinions varied depending on these differences.

It was clear that having access to opportunities for progression and a variety of roles and experiences was important to the group.

Others in the group had previously worked in public sector roles so had experience of working with the public and explained how this had significantly changed their perception of working for the public sector, stating that they were more likely to continue to apply for roles within the public sector in the future.

Appendix 2

A summary of the key points raised and comments made by the focus group attendees and other graduates who completed the survey is below:

Transferable skills Skills/tasks related to degree Community focus But second choice behind frontline role of sorts, different career choices of counselling/police Yes- fulfilled aims I came for, looking to move on
job security- family live in area, other vacancies become available. Progression, and level of opportunities available.
applied for a middle manager programme as I want to be a manager in the future.
public sector because I want the ethos of helping others rather than private where the focus could conflict with personal values
North Yorkshire is where I have lived previously, so I can relate the things I do to the people I know.
In terms of staying with public sector, I would stay or go private depending on if the opportunities meet what I want from a job
Helpful and friendly colleagues - part time opportunities and access to flexi time
to make a difference
used to work in public sector previously, and like being able to help others would like to help improve it for others, help improve customer experience and access to resources and support in the community.
varied range of roles
known organisation
local employer
opportunities to learn transferable schemes, grad scheme relating to government/politics outside of london
trusted long lasting organisation
chance to help communities
family worked in local government
opportunity for career progression
how have reasons changed?
no but role disconnected from communities/democratic process so would consider elsewhere as would be in same position there
job for life, places to go within the council, access to progression opportunities
security of being treated well/equally as protocols are followed because they have to be
reasons stayed the same, for wanting to stay, only difference is whereas before would have looked at alternative roles outside NYCC now looks at NYCC specific roles, and wants to stay in the organisation. Does not see self-staying in one singular role or department, will move between them
working for local community rather than for profit, reasons have not changed
"I initially applied for the NYCC Graduate Scheme as it offered a rare opportunity to pursue a graduate-entry career in the public sector. I was attracted by the prospect of making a difference to the people who use NYCC services, which is something which is missing from a lot of other graduate schemes. I was interested in working in government more generally because of my background (and degree) in politics. I don't think these views have changed, although I have become more aware of the business-focused aspects of NYCC as I have progressed through various roles."
job experience and opportunities
no evening or weekend working
within reasonable travelling distance
it seemed like a good extension of my degree and skill set
I wanted to apply for the role because the salary was good. I was also motivated by the flexi-time system and the availability of training and learning opportunities.

Activity 1

The purpose of activity 1 was to find out how relevant or irrelevant the graduates thought the new identities and characteristics (detailed in the overriding research) are, according to their current roles. Subjects were asked to rate the relevance of the roles and identify the roles, identities or characteristics that they considered to be the most relevant to the future of the public sector.

Many of the subjects found definitions of the characteristics and roles confusing, brought to light by the use of vocabulary and that the definitions were written for a highly educated academic audience beyond ordinary language.

The graduates worked in a variety of different departments so it was useful to see a snapshot of how relevant or irrelevant the roles/identities are to their team or specific job role. Directorate representation included Technology & Change, HR, and Health & Adult Services.

Systems Architect	Compiling support for the public, using private, public and third sector resources to provide services.
Commissioner	More commercial, better value for money trained and skilled commissioners who can commission service which delivered above.
Storyteller	Ensuring people internal and external understand what is happening (or changing) when and why in an engaging and understanding way. - communication paramount to new ways of working
Broker	Working with service users to make sure they are offered the support they need with increased focus on the needs of individuals
Municipal Entrepreuner	in the future you will need to be a municipal entrepreneur, a steward of scarce public resources - think outside of the box thinking
Networker	Personable people quick learners analysing data to understand customer needs and how best to provide it relationship manager
Navigator	Helping the customer to find what they need
Resource worker	The ability to make creative use of existing resources regardless of their intended/original use; weaving together miscellaneous and disparate materials to generate something new and useful for service users and citizen "weaver", making creative use of existing resources to generate something new and useful for service users and citizens

NB* there could be links between these profiles and Myers Briggs or Belbin's team roles

make the definitions clearer, can we link these to myers briggs for example.
storyteller - communication paramount to new ways of working; municipal entrepreuner - think outside of the box thinking, networker - relationship manager, navigator - similar to the role of networker, all roles are linked
a bit of everything is used in dailly roles, none are completely relevent to current roles, a lot of jargon is used in the definitions which makes it difficult to define what the roles mean.

Other comments about the future public sector roles identified included the following:

physical, practical (not reinventing the wheel), consistent key messages, coworker
challenge, organisation needs to be flexible and more agile
creative use of resources, this role means the most to me as we are often given as a council objectives or scenarios to respond to but have a restrictions in income
is supported by the other roles and is the main purpose of the authority
all of them, you need all of them in some way to make a big organisation if you only foucs on one area than the other areas will not be developed.
none - the roles need more clarity/defining
For my particular role (HR Adviser), networker or storyteller, as HR roles require strong relationship building and the ability to present a narrative. In general – municipal entrepreneur – due to the scarcity of budgets and need to 'do more with less'
Networker - local government is ultimately a people business. Its about engaging and understanding the local community in order to deliver the right services to meet their needs. Because of the potential nature of local government and the spending of public money you need people who can convince and carry citezens and staff on the journey of service transformation.
I think that the most important role is for me is that of resource worker and entrepreneur. However, as I do not work directly with citizens/customers as my role is purely strategic, it is hard to relate to any of these roles really.
resource workers make up the core of the workforce, all the other roles are required in some way to deliver the services to the public, all the other roles would be specialist roles
Networkers will be required – as we are entering a challenging phase and need to make sure that we are flexible and agile.

- We then asked: "*which role was the most important and why*?"

When we asked people to rate which role was the most important, it was clear that no singular role on its own was rated as the most important; the group agreed that for one role to be successful the person would need to work with someone else in the organisation that has the other skills in order to accomplish the tasks or projects. Flexibility and the ability to adapt/respond positively to change were identified as being the most important values. A number of the graduates believed that the role of story teller would be important as improving communication both to internal colleagues and to the community would become important in the future.

- *"What do you think the organisation needs to do to attract people with these skills and behaviours?"*

There was a variety of suggestions provided regarding how public sector could help to attract and recruit young people into the organisation and these included a variety of findings:

1. outside North Yorkshire - target group needs, to attract them to apply, marketing right, only 'right' people applying
2. Advertise its flexibility when posting job roles. Headhunt and autonomy, recommend a friend schemes
3. identify what we want to build a character profile - marketing it its right then the right people will apply. Advertise flexibility and autonomy of job roles - use our pen portraits to promote our future workforce, i.e. talk to us - have question and answer sessions using linkedin or facebook where prospective candidates can find out more about roles or talk to a council employee to find out more. consideration of values and integrity matching with the council,
4. be willing to change, be encouraging and supportive of staff, good self prom,otion and self explanation, ability to build good working relationships with wide range of other organisations.
5. more publicity within universities, more advertisements of apprenticeships at local schools - when initially looking for work apprenticeships where not emphasised as being offered at local council. For example there was emphasis on gender specific roles of bricklayer or mechanic.
6. other benefits other than financial, attracting non-financially driven people
7. - Competitive pay structure - Vibrant, 'can do' culture - Perception of reduced bureaucracy - Become a flexible, modern organisation (flexible working practices, up to date technology and offices)
8. offer a competitive salary and career progresion to match or surpass that of the private sector. Appeal to the core and compassionate side - market local government as helping others and the community etc.
9. The business needs to create more jobs that are flexible in a strategic role. They need to create more opportunities for people to try out roles short term to ensure best fit in the business. The business needs to invest in staff in order to develop and promote them not only up, but also sideways, as it would cost less to do this than to lose the talent altogether.

In the interviews, the way young people progress in their career and career opportunities that are provided were discussed, as at North Yorkshire County Council there is less emphasis on the type of qualification/further education route that a young person has chosen. John Lewis and Asda where mentioned along with the practices used by Timpson's as examples of companies that attract young people into roles well/have clearly identifiable talent management programmes. The group emphasised that avoiding re-inventing the wheel and making sure resources are used to their full potential would be key to the future of the public sector workforce.

Characteristics of the 21st Century Public Sector worker

The top three characteristics that were identified as being important in the focus group where the following:

1. is a municipal entrepreneur, undertaking a wide range of roles
2. needs organisations which are fluid and supportive rather than silo-ed and controlling
3. rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading

is a municipal entrepreneur, undertaking a wide range of roles	3
engages with citizens in a way that expresses their shared humanity and pooled expertise	1
is recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise	1
builds a career which is fluid across sectors and services	1
combines an ethos of publicness with an understanding of commerciality	2
is rethinking public services to enable them to survive an era of permaausterity	2
needs organisations which are fluid and supportive rather than silo-ed and controlling	3
rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading	3
is rooted in a locality which frames a sense of loyalty and identity	2
reflects on practice and learns from that of others	2

Skills

- *"What skills do you think will be the most important for the future in the public sector and why?"*

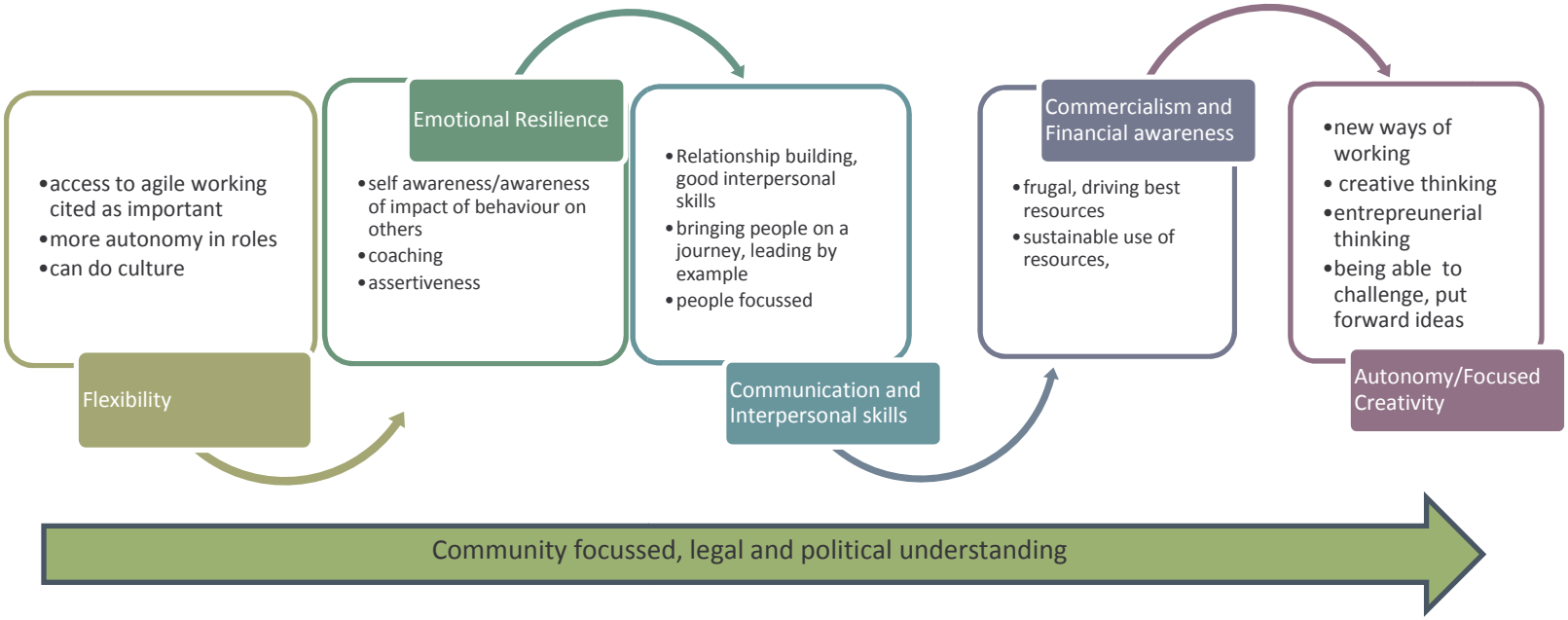
The group identified a variety of different skills that would be required in the future which has been summarised in the table below.

communication and resilience (ideas)
interpersonal
leadership
coaching
time
flexibility
confidence
assertiveness/positivity
emotional intelligience
self awareness
Flexibility, and agile working
flexibility, agile working, positivity
innovation, mentoring, coaching skills, being able to be resilient
entrepreunerial thinking
being able to challenge, put ideas forward
quality individual 'v' role, pros and cons of being resilient
emotional intelligience (can this be learnt or taught or is it part of personality)
organisational skills and time management
bring people on a journey, leading people by example
creative thinking
commerciality
communication
legal/political understanding
flexibility, because of constant change such as cuts to funding,
new ways to make things work, people focussed.
adaptability/flexibility
Relationship building, good interpersonal skills and commercialism (management of costs and developing new business links). This is because the majority of roles will involve working with customers or other stakeholders where strong relationship building would be beneficial. Most roles will directly or indirectly impact on costs so it is important that the future workforce has this in mind and is able to be sufficiently commercial to manage costs and seek out new opportunities.
Innovation, interpersonal skills, willing to help and support others, frugal and driving best value resources
For me the most important role is that of the innovators and the creative people as it is only through innovation and efficiency improvements that the business can be sustainable.

It was highlighted that being more flexible, adaptive in approaches to work would be of particular importance, along with being more resilient, being able to build relationships with

the community, being more commercially minded and financially aware. In the focus group discussions emphasis was placed on increasing autonomy and work focussed creativity in the workforce, as it was identified that sometimes bureaucratic processes get in the way of bring creative solutions into being within public sector organisations. There was particular emphasis on linking autonomy in roles and more creative approaches to work with more frugal use of resources and encouraging new ways of working that are sustainable and make best use of resources available to employees. Flexibility and agile working were identified as being of particular importance to the group and this may be due to changes that are being introduced to the use of property within the public sector, as the number of properties reduces and teams are encourages to take up more home working or change the way that hours are worked. The skills identified have been grouped into themes on the following page, with some of the key points/quotes received from the research.

Appendix 2


•access to agile working cited as important
•more autonomy in roles
•can do culture
Flexibility
Emotional Resilience
•self awareness/awareness of impact of behaviour on others
•coaching
•assertiveness
•Relationship building, good interpersonal skills
•bringing people on a journey, leading by example
•people focussed
Communication and Interpersonal skills
Commercialism and Financial awareness
•frugal, driving best resources
•sustainable use of resources,
•new ways of working
• creative thinking
•entrepreuneurial thinking
•being able to challenge, put forward ideas
Autonomy/Focused Creativity
Community focussed, legal and political understanding

Top Skills identified

Subjects were then requested that the group choose the top 3 most important skills from the 10 skillsets below for the future of the public sector with 1 being the most important and 3 being the least important (of the chosen three). The majority of the skills received atleast one score, but it should be noted that Sense-making and Computational thinking received no overall score from the group suggesting that these skills are not as important.

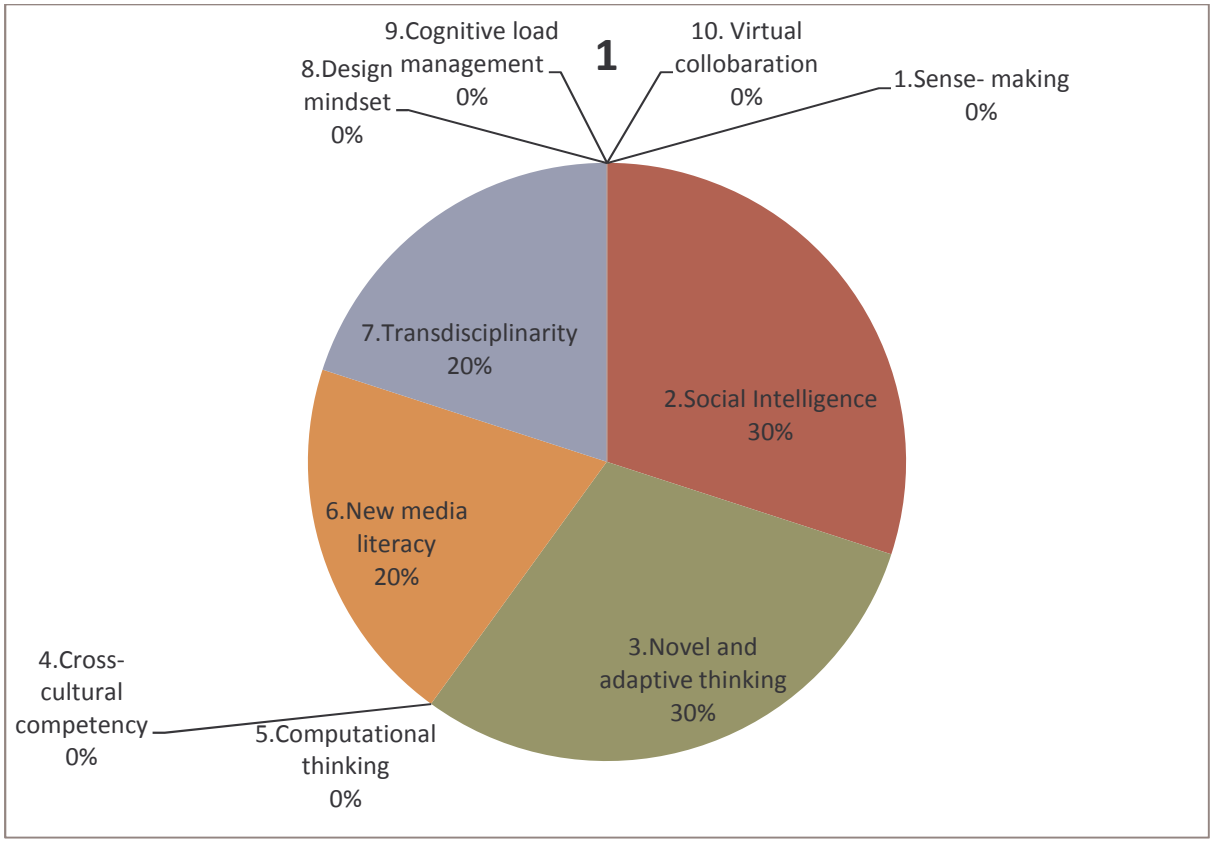
Skills	**Total No. of times chosen**	**1**	**2**	**3**
1.Sense- making (ability to determine significance of what is being expressed)	0	0	0	0
2.Social Intelligence (ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way)	5	3	2	0
3.Novel and adaptive thinking (proficiency at coming up with non-rule based solutions)	4	3	1	0
4.Cross-cultural competency (ability to operate in different cultural settings)	1	0	0	1
5.Computational thinking (ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts)	0	0	0	0
6.New media literacy (ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media.)	3	2	0	1
7.Transdisciplinarity (ability to understand concepts across disciplines)	5	2	1	2
8.Design mindset (ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes)	4	0	3	1
9.Cognitive load management (ability to discriminate and filter information for importance)	1	0	0	1
10. Virtual collobaration (ability to work productively, drive engagement and have presence as a member of a virtual team)	5	0	1	4

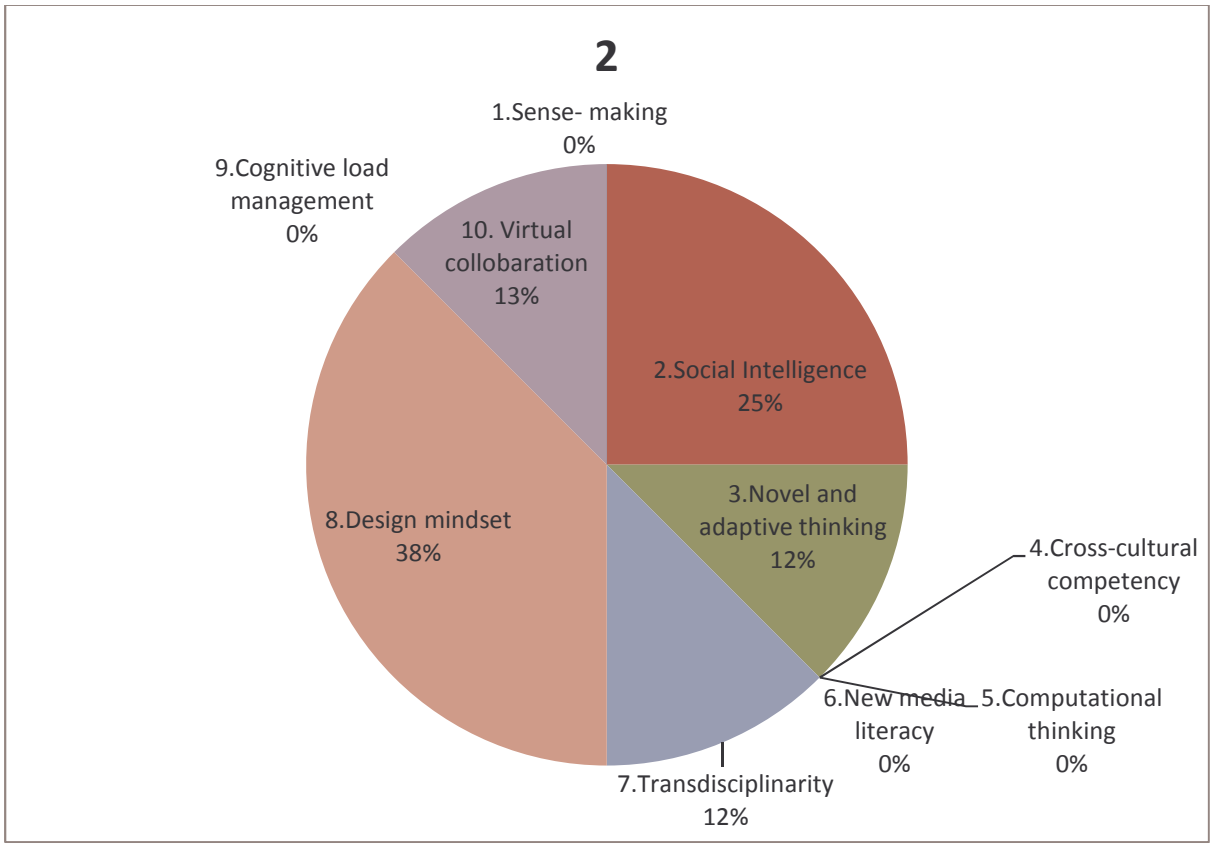
The Top 4 skills identified/rated as being important for the public sector organisation in the future included the following:

1. **Social Intelligience**
2. **Novel and adaptive thinking**
3. **New Media Literacy**
4. **Transdisciplinarity**

This is demonstrated in the pie chart below, in that these skills received ratings for the top skill identified by the group

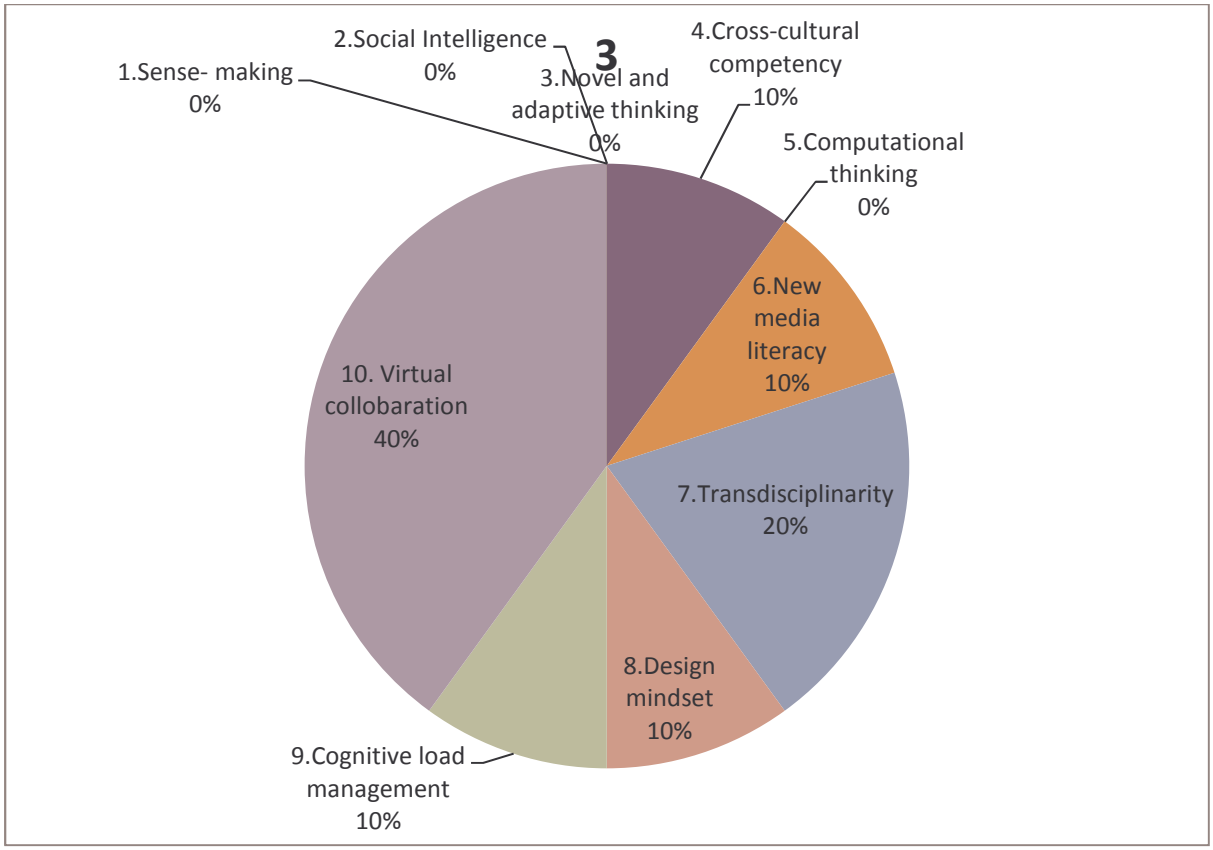
Appendix 2





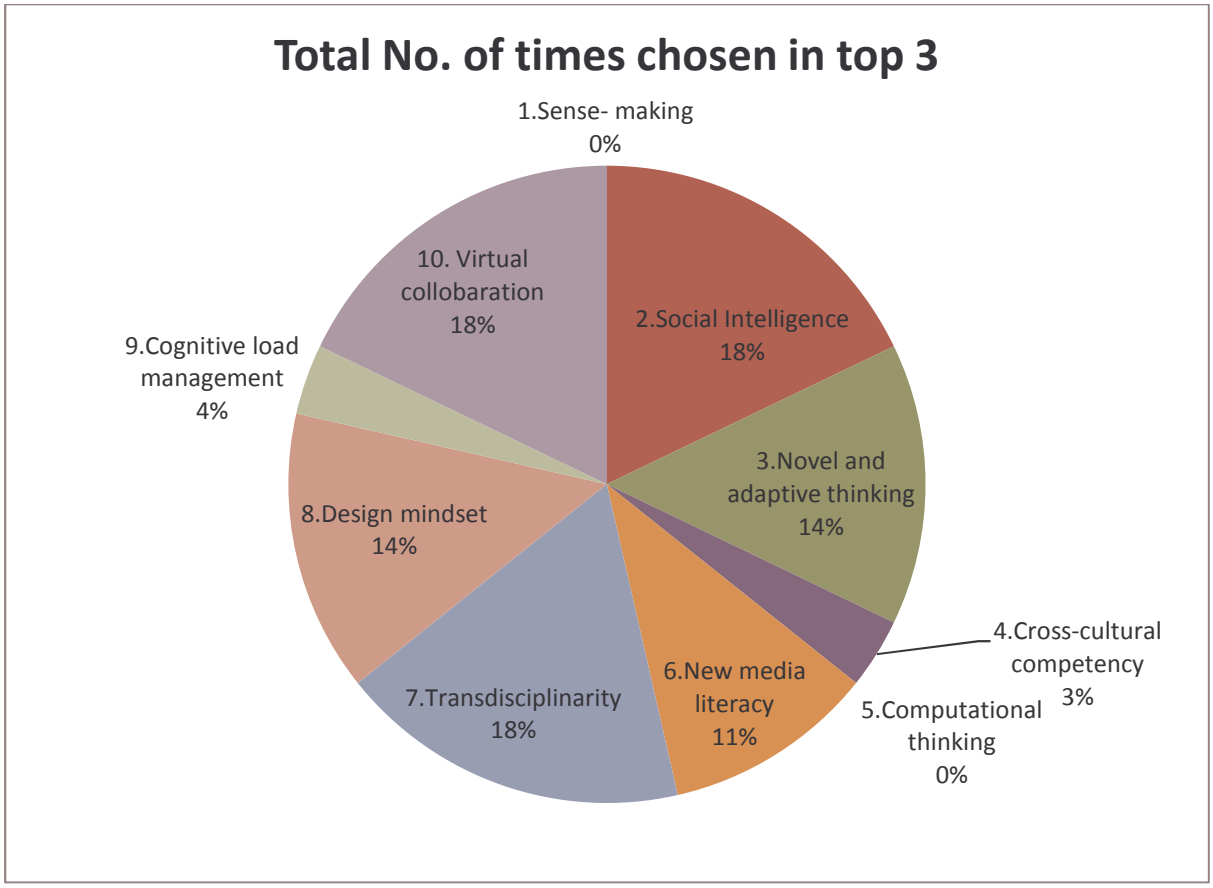
A variety of different skills were identified as the second most important skill set by the group including, Design mindset (38%), Social Intelligence (25%), Virtual Collaboration

(13%),followed closely by Novel and adaptive thinking and transcdisciplinarity with (12%). This would suggest that a variety of skills are deemed as important for the future public sector workforce and demonstrated that it is difficult to reduce this to 3 main skills as with the findings looked at so far regarding the types of roles and identities that will be required due to the need to be more adaptive in the future, the requirement for using a variety of skillsets will be of particular importance to young people in the public sector.



A similar set of skills have been identified as part of the third most important skills by the group which was particularly interesting as this demonstrates that some of the skillsets are more important than others.

Appendix 2



When we looked at the data in terms of how many times a skill was rated as part of the top 3 it would follow that the following 4 skills sets would be important for the future public sector worker:

1. **Social Intelligence**
2. **Transdisciplinarity**
3. **Novel and adaptive thinking**
4. **Design mindset**

This was interesting as with the exception of Design mindset the same 3 skill sets of social intelligence (18%), transdisciplinarity (18%) and novel and adaptive thinking (14%) appear as the most important skills identified by the group.

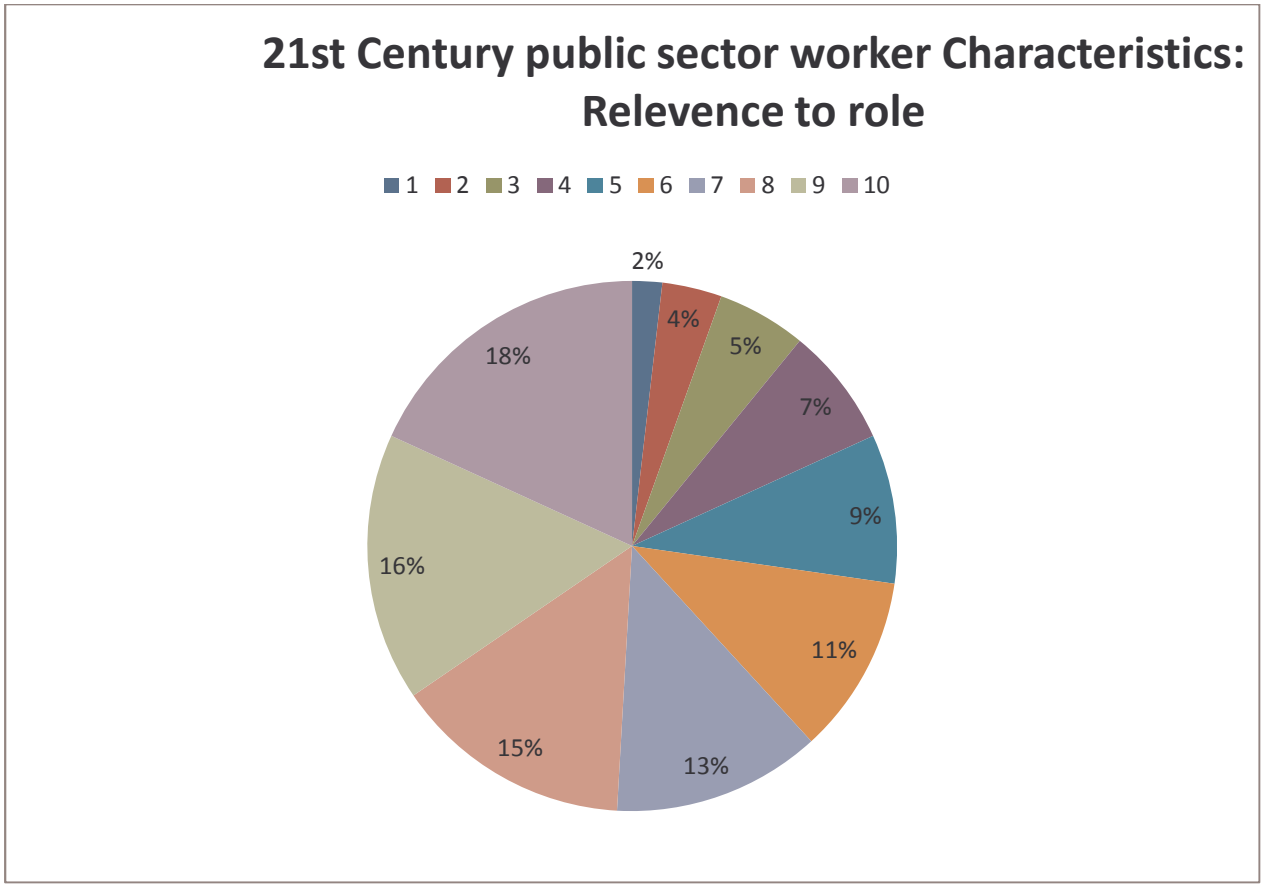
Appendix 2

Skills	**Skills identified**
1.Sense- making (ability to determine significance of what is being expressed)	self awareness positivity
2.Social Intelligence (ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way)	emotional intelligience (can this be learnt or taught or is it part of personality) assertiveness/positivity bring people on a journey, leading people by example
3.Novel and adaptive thinking (proficiency at coming up with non-rule based solutions)	new ways to make things work, people focussed.
4.Cross-cultural competency (ability to operate in different cultural settings)	
5.Computational thinking (ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts)	
6.New media literacy (ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media.)	
7.Transdisciplinarity (ability to understand concepts across disciplines)	Relationship building, good interpersonal skills and commercialism (management of costs and developing new business links). This is because the majority of roles will involve working with customers or other stakeholders where strong relationship building would be beneficial. Most roles will directly or indirectly impact on costs so it is important that the future workforce has this in mind and is able to be sufficiently commercial to manage costs and seek out new opportunities.
8.Design mindset (ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes)	creative thinking adaptability/flexibility Innovation, interpersonal skills, willing to help and support others, frugal and driving best value resources For me the most important role is that of the innovators and the creative people as it is only through innovation and efficiency improvements that the business can be sustainable. being able to challenge, put ideas forward entrepreunerial thinking
9.Cognitive load management (ability to discriminate and filter information for importance)	
10. Virtual collobaration (ability to work productively, drive engagement and have presence as a member of a virtual team)	

Relevance of Characteristics

is a municipal entrepreneur,undertaking a wide range of roles	44
is a municipal entrepreneur, undertaking a wide range of roles	36
engages with citizens in a way that expresses their shared humanity and pooled expertise	54
is recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise	43
builds a career which is fluid across sectors and services	53
combines an ethos of publicness with an understanding of commerciality	54
is rethinking public services to enable them to survive an era of permaausterity	46
needs organisations which are fluid and supportive rather than silo-ed and controlling	54
rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading	39
is rooted in a locality which frames a sense of loyalty and identity	58
reflects on practice and learns from that of others	

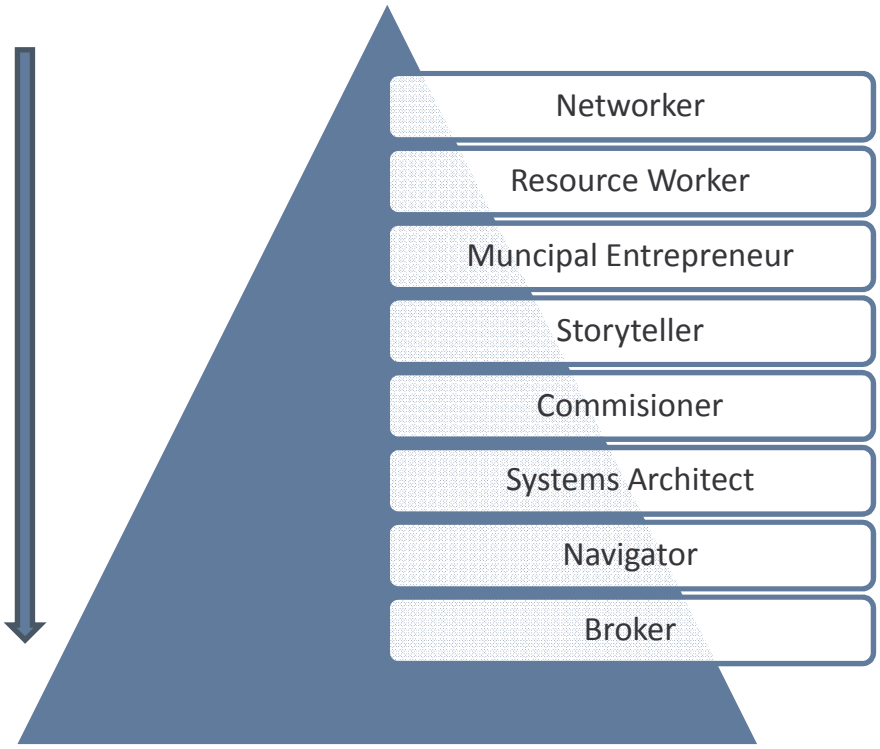
Appendix 2

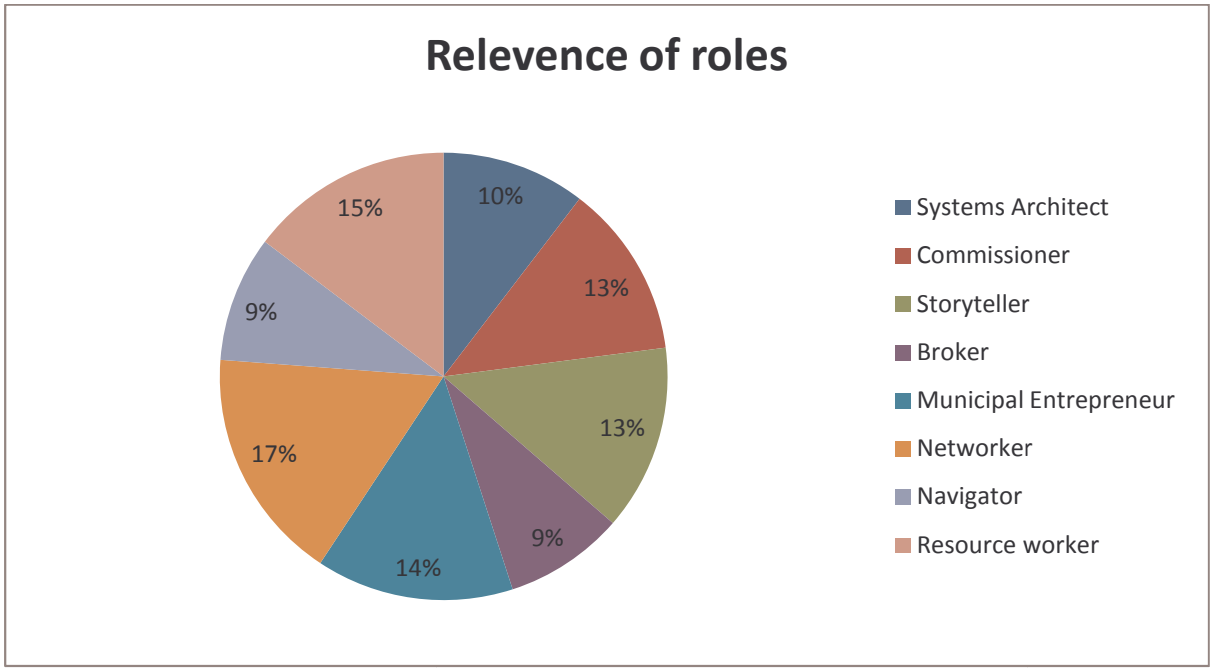

21st Century public sector worker Characteristics: Relevence to role
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
2%
4%
5%
7%
9%
11%
13%
15%
16%
18%

Appendix 2

Relevance to role

Systems Architect	Commissioner	Storyteller	Broker	Municipal Entrepreneur	Networker	Navigator	Resource worker
24	29	31	20	33	39	21	34





	Systems Architect	Commissioner	Storyteller	Broker	Municipal Entrepreneur	Networker	Navigator	Resource worker
Grad 1	2	6	8	4	6	8	7	7
Grad 2	not sure	3	2	2	6	7	1	4
Grad 3	6	8	6	6	4	7	1	8
Grad 4	5	7	5	3	5	2	7	6
Grad 5	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	4
Grad 6	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Grad 7	2	0	6	1	6	7	1	1
Grad 8	6	4	2	3	5	6	3	3
total	24	29	31	20	33	39	21	34

8 graduates answered this question and the top 3 roles identified as being the most relevant to the roles being carried out by the graduates where:

1. **Networker,**
2. Resource Worker,
3. Municipal Entrepreneur.

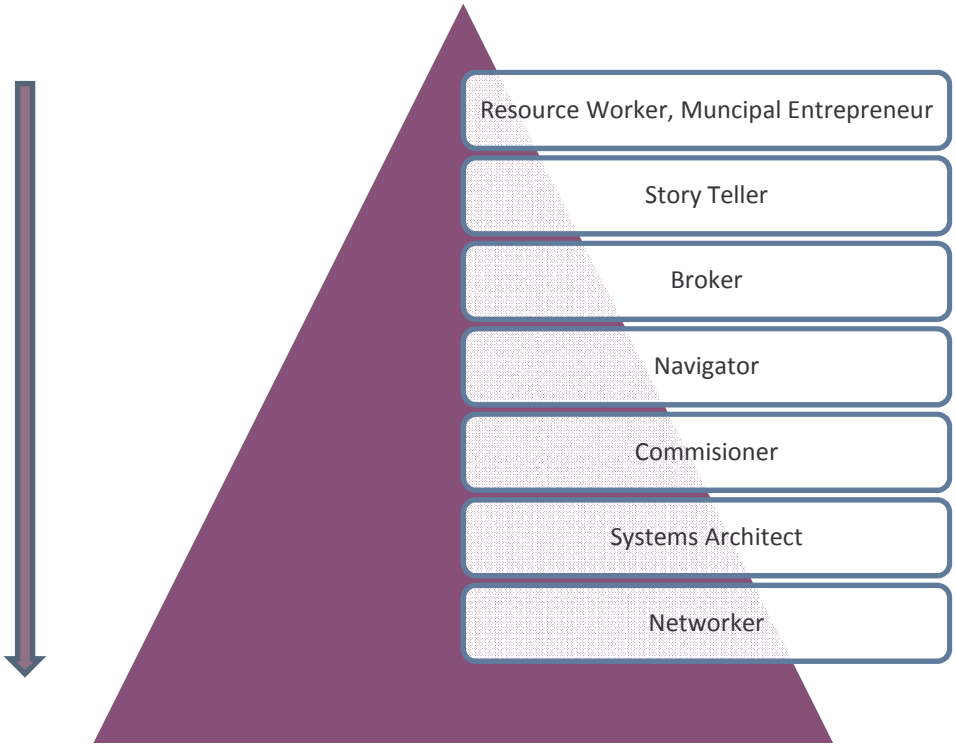
Some of this information was surprising as the role of networker was prioritised as the least important by the group in the next question where subjects were asked to prioritise the roles out of 8 according to how important they were perceived to be for either future of the council or how their teams currently work.

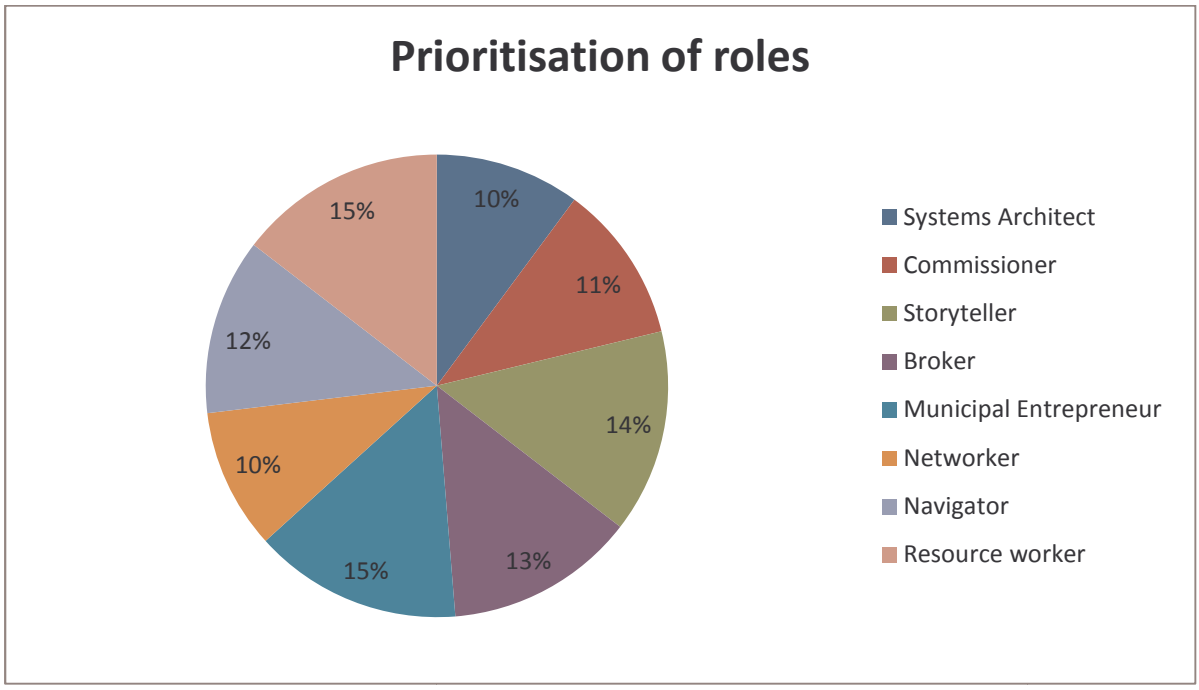
However when you look at the figures they have all broadly stayed within the same range of either scores over 30 or scores over 40 which demonstrates that all of the roles had some relevance. In the discussions this was reflected as the graduates acknowledged that all the roles would be required in a team or the employee would need to be flexible and able to adapt/utilise all of the roles depending on the situation.

Appendix 2

Prioritisation of roles

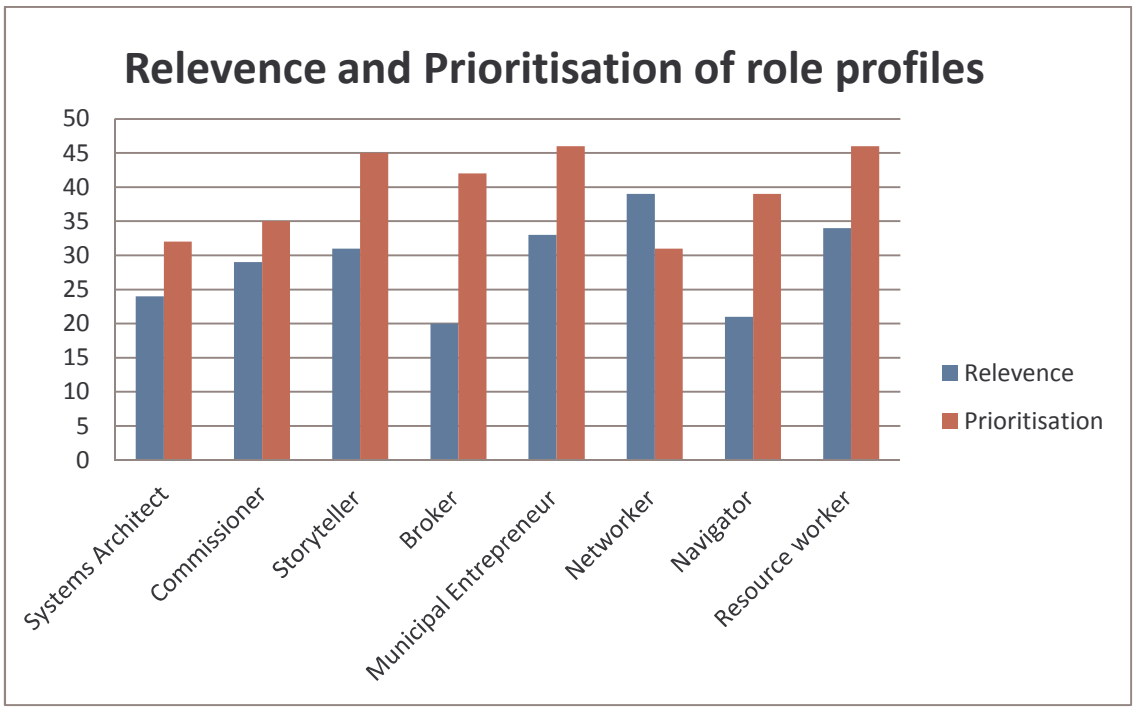
Systems Architect	Commissioner	Storyteller	Broker	Municipal Entrepreneur	Networker	Navigator	Resource worker
32	35	45	42	46	31	39	46





Appendix 2

	Systems Architect	Commissioner	Storyteller	Broker	Municipal Entrepreneur	Networker	Navigator	Resource worker
Grad 1	8	5	2	7	6	1	4	3
Grad 2	0	4	5	6	2	1	7	3
Grad 3	3	5	4	2	6	7	1	8
Grad 4	1	3	4	7	6	8	5	2
Grad 5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	8
Grad 6	7	4	8	1	7	2	3	5
Grad 7	6	5	2	8	3	1	7	4
Grad 8	2	4	8	6	3	1	7	5
Grad 9	0	0	7	0	8	5	0	8
	32	35	45	42	46	31	39	46



Discussion

The research method for this focus group was a self-report design, with scoring systems created particularly for the focus group; if the scoring systems for the data were changed, this could potentially alter the findings, or the significance of them.

The majority of subjects in the focus group completed the self-report in a controlled environment, in a 2 hour session on the afternoon of a working day. It should be noted that because of this, boredom effects could have been present, and indications of this effect appeared to be present with some of the responses particularly in the later tasks – it could be worth noting this as a confounding variable. Perhaps if the subjects were given the survey to complete in their own time, more comprehensive feedback may have been received. Time restrictions in this case prevented this approach from being adopted for this focus group. Another extraneous variable was identified as time limitations – the co-ordinators were aware that the workload capacity at the time of the focus group was at a maximum for many of the graduates, therefore it was difficult to gain their full engagement. Social desirability could have played a part; despite their current role was for many their first since graduating, no-one stated that they chose to work in the public sector “just because they needed a job”; all motivations were directly linked to proactively seeking work in the public sector.

A particularly interesting finding was that the role of networker was prioritised as the least important by the group in the question where subjects were asked to prioritise the roles out of 8 according to how *important* they were perceived to be, for either future of the council or how their teams currently work. Yet it was surprising to find that when asked to rate how *relevant* the 8 roles were to the current work of graduates, the role of networker was deemed the overall most relevant.

However when you look at the figures they have all broadly stayed within the same range of either scores over 30 or scores over 40 which demonstrates that all of the roles had some relevance. In the discussions this was reflected as the graduates acknowledged that all the roles would be required in a team or the employee would need to be flexible and able to adapt/utilise all of the roles depending on the situation.

It should be noted that the focus group was limited to graduates that had been recruited onto an established graduate scheme/programme. There are many graduates working in North Yorkshire county council who may have been recruited into entry level positions and their reasons for applying for public sector roles may differ to that of the group. To make data more meaningful widening the scope of the focus group to include more young people in the organisation that are not necessarily from the graduate cohort may be a good way of cross referencing the data and making the responses more meaningful, i.e. including responses from a more mixed group including apprentices, and young people that have applied for entry level roles and positions. It would also be useful to compare the findings from this focus group with results from other graduates, and also compare them with focus groups including more experienced employees in permanent roles, to gain and compare the views of both ‘ends’ of the employee scale.

If the focus group was going to be run again then consideration would be made for revising the focus group questions and the wording of the questions used in the survey accompanying it as in the feedback received from the people attending the focus group they highlighted that sometimes the questions were confusing making it difficult to give an answer.

Compare data and findings with other councils or public sector organisations – or alternatively run more focus groups using a similar format with other organisations.
Could have used forums to create discussions and request more feedback from young people about what attracted them to work at the council at a young age – what drove them to make the decision to apply.

The sample was also predominantly female, therefore the results may not be as accurate for regarding the male population.

References

1. Needham, C., & Mangan, C. (2014). The 21st Century Public Servant. *Birmingham: University of Birmingham*.

Appendix 1: NYCC Graduate Scheme Focus Group Survey

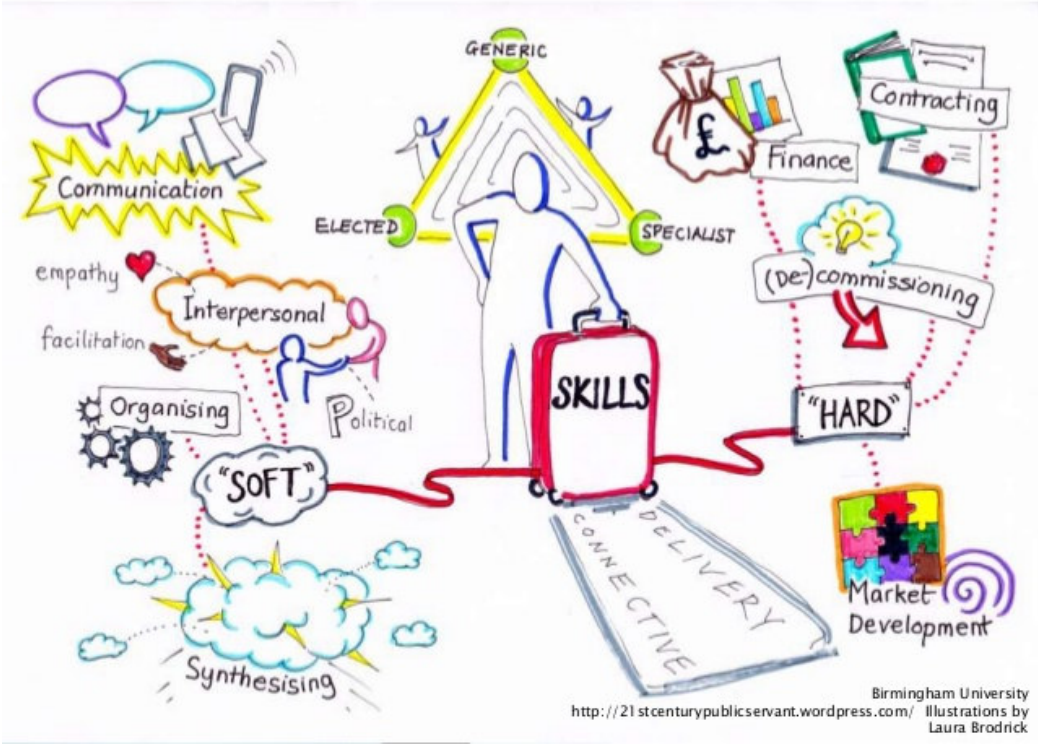
Introduction

Kathy Proctor, Principal Workforce Development Advisor at NYCC, is helping to lead on a knowledge exchange project looking at the skills, values and identities of the future public service workforce building on 'The 21st Century Public Servant' report produced by the University of Birmingham in association with the Economic and Social and Research Council and Public Service Academy.

The project aims to include specific groups like employees on Graduate Schemes as 'focus groups' for the research in order to find out more about how young people's perceptions of working for and applying for roles within the public sector is changing. As asked you to complete the 21st century public servant survey. There have been 111 responses received to this survey and the aim of the discussion today will be to find out a bit more about what you thought about the research, what attracted you to working in the public sector and what skills, roles and identities you think will be required as part of our future workforce.

http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/public-service-academy/21-century-report-28-10-14.pdf

What was it about North Yorkshire county council or the public sector that made you want to apply for a role here? Have any of these reasons changed?



The 21st Century Public Servant: What type of public sector worker are you?

Identities

8 Key future roles have been identified as part of the investigation. These are:

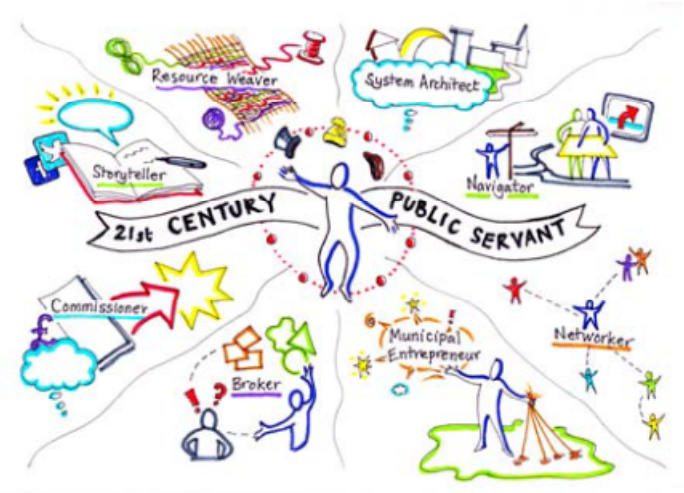
- Systems Architect
- Commissioner
- Storyteller
- Broker (emphasis on this role)
- Municipal Entrepreneur
- Networker
- Navigator
- Resource Worker

Others believe that there is a case to be made for introducing the following roles into the organisation:

1. Developer – increasing the sustainability, ability and flexibility of public services
2. Defender – negotiating to ensure local government is getting the most for its buck
3. Balancer –balancing conflicting demands, pressures and views

There are a variety of skills that have been identified as being important in the future of the public sector and we would like to see what you think about these. Please can

you complete the short survey below and rate the relevance of the various skills and identitites that have been identified as part of the research.



Below are the definitions of each key future role/identity:

Systems Architect	"someone who is able to describe and compile coherent local systems of public support from the myriad of public, private, third sector and other resources. This is a role that combines prescription with compilation and it is an on-going task as system resources are likely to vary over time and space."
Commissioner	"More emphasis on commercialism, and making public sector services accessible Commissioning localised public services innovation that delivers much better public outcomes for much lower costs' in part by 'reconceptualising' public service challenges. a role which the Policy Commission spent a long time considering and which a great deal is already known about. The key issue here is ensuring that there are sufficient commissioners with the right range of skills to be able to commission services and support on a system rather than simply a service basis."
Storyteller	"the ability to author and communicate stories of how new worlds of local public services might be envisioned in the absence of existing blueprints, drawing on experience and evidence from a range of sources. The ability to fashion

	and communicate options for the future, however tentative and experimental, will be crucial in engaging service users, citizens and staff."
Broker	"Working collaboratively with the public - a role closely associated with but distinct from that of The future of local public services advocate. It requires working closely with and on behalf of service users to access the appropriate portfolio of support. Its development is linked to the growing emphasis on personalisation and individual budgets and 'brokers' will make a key contribution to processes of co-production in these contexts."
Municipal Entrepreneur	*"In the future you will need to be a municipal entrepreneur, a steward of scarce public resources.'*
Networker	'*We need people who are really good with people and can form relationships, who are able to learn quickly.'* According to another, *'engaging with citizens and the use, analysis and interpretation of data to understand your local populations, they are quite newish sets of skills for people who work in local authorities'.*
Navigator	"a role specifically focused on guiding citizens and service users around the range of possibilities that might be available in a system of local public services. This is the kind of role that some area-based regeneration workers and neighbourhood co-ordinators and managers have developed in the past on a 'patch' basis."
Resource Worker	"the ability to make creative use of existing resources regardless of their intended/original use; weaving together miscellaneous and disparate materials to generate something new and useful for service users and citizen" **"weaver**, making creative use of existing resources to generate something new and useful for service users and citizens;"

TASK: Please rate the following personality/identity types on a scale of 0 – 8 regarding relevance to your current job role at NYCC; with **8 representing "extremely relevant to my role"** and **0 representing "not relevant to my role at all".** Please do this by circling a number on the scale for each item.

Systems Architect

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Commissioner

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Storyteller

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Broker

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Municipal Entrepreneur

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Networker

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Navigator

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Resource worker

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TASK: Still focusing on the relevance (or irrelevance!) of these identities to your professional role on a scale, please place them in **a direct hierarchical order** of how relevant they are to your current role, by writing the numbers 1 to 8 in the appropriate boxes – **1 represents most relevant, 8 represents least relevant.** *The prior task will naturally give you some indication as to the order in which you'll place the identities; in the case of some identities being given the same rating in the prior task, filling in the table below will display a direct hierarchy of relevance for each identity in current NYCC Graduate roles.*

Systems Architect	
Commissioner	
Storyteller	
Broker	
Municipal Entrepreneur	
Networker	
Navigator	
Resource Worker	

Out of the 8 role profiles and identities that have been described, which one do you think is the <u>most important</u> (in general) and why?

Appendix 2

What <u>skills</u> do you think will be most important for the future in the public sector and why?

What do you think the organisation needs to do to attract people with these skills and behaviours?

CHARACTERISTICS

10 key characteristics of a public sector worker have been identified including the following:

The aim of this focus group is to find out what you think about the values, roles and identities that have been identified.

1....is a municipal entrepreneur, undertaking a wide range of roles Future public services require a set of workforce roles which may be different from those of the past. As one interviewee put it, *'In the future you will need to be a municipal entrepreneur, a steward of scarce public resources.'* New roles that may be performed by the public servants of the future include story-teller, resource weaver, systems architect and navigator.	**2....engages with citizens in a way that expresses their shared humanity and pooled expertise** The notion of working co-productively, or in partnership, with citizens was the preferred approach of most interviewees: 'Valued outcomes in public services are not things that can be delivered, they are always co-produced', as one put it. One of the suggested approaches was alluringly simple: 'It's about being human, that's what we need to do'. One clear finding from the research was that the widespread calls for whole person approaches to care and support necessitate working practices in which staff are also able to be 'whole people'.
3....is recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise Generic skills are becoming as important as professional skills, with 'soft skills' around communication, organisation and caring becoming more highly prized. One interviewee said: '*We need people who are really good with people and can form relationships, who are able to learn quickly.'* According to another, *'engaging with citizens and the use, analysis and interpretation of data to understand your local populations, they are quite newish sets of skills for people who work in local authorities'.*	**4.....builds a career which is fluid across sectors and services** People are unlikely to stay in one sector or service area for life and require portable skills that are valued in different settings. People need opportunities to learn and reflect on new skills, which may be through action learning, mentoring, job shadowingand sabbaticals rather than formal training: *'People will have portfolio careers, working in different sectors, working for different people at the same time, not just sequentially. It's not a job for life, or even for 5 years'*, said one interviewee.
5....combines an ethos of publicness with an understanding of commerciality Ethics and values are changing as the boundaries of public service shift, with notions of the public sector ethos being eclipsed by an increased push towards commercialism, along with a wider focus on social value. One interviewee said, *'Local government will need more private sector skills, more crossover of skills and people. If staff in local government don't have the commercial skills they won't be employable. We have to help them get them.'* Another	**6.....is rethinking public services to enable them to survive an era of permaauster** Perma-austerity is inhibiting and catalysing change, as organisations struggle to balance short-term cost-cutting and redundancies with a strategic vision for change. Some interviewees expressed this in very negative terms: *'There's a narrative of doom…..it's all about survival'*. For others there was a potentially positive aspect to the financial context: *'The cuts are forcing us to confront change. In public service, change doesn't necessarily happen unless there*

interviewee said: *'I think there will be a fight between altruism and commercialism. We need managers who still care.'*	*is a crisis or a disaster, or it happens very slowly.'*
7....needs organisations which are fluid and supportive rather than silo-ed and controlling Many of the organisations where our interviewees were located had been through recent restructuring and there was little appetite for more structural change. Nevertheless there was a feeling that the organisations were not necessarily fit for purpose: *'We are trying to be 21st Century public servants in 19th Century organisations. There's that constant struggle. Not only how do we change what the people are but also how do we change the organisations to allow the people to be what they need to be?'* This can be about addressing issues of organisational culture, rather than assuming that new structures will be the solution.	**8....rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading** Hero leaders aren't the answer. Rather than emphasising the charisma and control of an individual, new approaches focus on leadership as dispersed throughout the organisation. This could be about thinking about leadership at the front line in a way that traverses traditional service sectors: *'We should offer a career in community leadership. The 21st century public servant should be able to cross organisational boundaries.'*
9....is rooted in a locality which frames a sense of loyalty and identity The role of place in public service needs to be recognised: public service workers often have a strong loyalty to the neighbourhoods and towns/cities in which they work as well as an organisational loyalty. For some interviewees this was about staff being based in the locality: *'Above a certain grade you should be required to live in [the council area], because you are making huge decisions on how people will live, work and spend their recreational time.'* For others it was about putting professional knowledge into an appropriate context for the locality: *'Professionalism will be the death of local government. It's that lack of ability to soften and shape stuff according to locality.'*	**10....reflects on practice and learns from that of others** The public service changes that we have set out here in which structures are fragmenting, citizens require authentic interactions, careers require much greater self management, commerciality and publicness must be reconciled and expectations of leadership are dispersed across the organisation, require time and space for public servants to reflect: '*You need spaces where you take yourself apart and sort it out with the fact that the organisation is expecting you to glide along like a swan looking serenely happy with no mistakes whatsoever.'*

Out of the 10 characteristics which one do you think is the most important and why?

TASK: As you did for the identities in the first task**,** please rate each characteristic below in terms of how relevant you feel each one is to your current role, with **8 representing "extremely relevant to my role"** and **0 representing "not relevant to my role at all".** Please do this by circling a number on each scale.

Is a municipal entrepreneur undertaking a wide range of roles.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Engages with citizens in a way that expresses their shared humanity and pooled expertise

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Is recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Buids a career which is fluid across sectors and services

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Combines an ethos of publicness with an understanding of commerciality

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Is rethinking public services to enable them to survive in a period of perma-austerity.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Need organisations which are fluid and supportive rather than silo-ed and controlling

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Is rooted in a locality which frames a sense of loyalty and identity

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Reflects on practice and learns from that of others

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

SKILLS

TASK: Of the following skills, identified by the research, which do you see as the top 3 most important for the future of public service? (**1 = most important, 2 = second most important, 3 = third most important**)

- Sense-making (ability to determine significance of what is being expressed)
- Social intelligence (ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way)
- Novel & adaptive thinking (proficiency at coming up with non-rule based solutions)
- Cross-cultural competency (ability to operate in different cultural settings)
- Computational thinking (ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts)
- New-media literacy (ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media)
- Transdisciplinarity (ability to understand concepts across disciplines)
- Design mindset (ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes)
- Cognitive load management (ability to discriminate and filter information for importance)
- Virtual collaboration (ability to work productively, drive engagement and have presence as a member of a virtual team)

Top 3 Skills

1:
2:
3:

Activity 2: What will our future workforce be made of?

"All employees should be motivated and incentivised to view their service from the 'outside in', or from the perspective of the service user or citizen. The aim must be to create a reflective frame of reference where public servants have both the capacity for

constructive criticism and the capability to devise creative solutions to the problems that
they confront.' Workforce foundation

We are going to have a look at some of the pen portraits to see if any of them reflect the future characteristics, roles and identities that have been identified as part of the 21st century public sector worker research.

Which characteristics of the 21st century public sector employee do you think that they demonstrate?

What will be the most important skills for them to carry out their role and carry it out well?

Appendix 2

Are there any findings from the research that you disagree with?

Thank you for attending this NYCC Graduate Focus Group! ☺

If you have any other thoughts or information that you want to share, why not check out the blog that has been set up for discussions regarding the 21st century worker which can be accessed online via this link: https://21stcenturypublicservant.wordpress.com/about/

Other information/background reading

http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/public-service-academy/twenty-first-century-public-servant--eight-lessons.pdf

http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/research/SocialSciences/FullPolicyCommissionreport1507.pdf

If you have any other information that you would like to share please add your comments below or email Kathy Proctor at Kathy.proctor@northyorks.gov.uk. Alternatively email Cheryl Pocknell Cheryl.pocknell@northyorks.gov.uk or Phil Derych philip.derych@northyorks.gov.uk for further information.