

A photograph of two ambulance workers, a man and a woman, standing in front of an ambulance. They are both wearing green uniforms. The man on the left has a beard and is looking directly at the camera. The woman on the right has her hair in a bun and is smiling broadly. The ambulance behind them has the word 'AMBULANCE' visible on its side.

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BY  
CSMA

# The hidden contribution of Britain's public sector and civil service workers

Celebrating the extraordinary people who  
make our society better on Public Service Day

## Introduction by Darren Milton, Boundless

We have always known that the 5.5m people who work in public service in the UK, whether that is in the public sector or civil service, are the bedrock of British society. But nothing has underlined it more than their response to the pandemic.

It is in times of difficulty, tragedy and crisis that you get to see the true character of people. So, the way our nurses, teachers, police officers, administrators, local council and central government officials have responded is remarkable.

Their hard work has saved lives, protected the vulnerable, delivered millions of vaccines and reminded us all how important it is to have people out there who care.

That's why Public Service Day, which falls on 23 June every year, is so important.

It is an annual reminder to the public that we need to appreciate those who work in public service – and an annual morale booster for those who put so much time and energy into keeping the country running smoothly and helping others in need.

The appreciation day, officially launched by the United Nations as long ago as 2003, had barely been recognised in the UK until 2019, when Boundless began campaigning for it to be celebrated more publicly.

Now its profile is growing, with backing from MPs on all sides of the House and increasing recognition across the country.

This year, more than any year, those who work in public service deserve to be thanked, and people across the country have been doing exactly that.

Whether it's a simple 'thank you' to the workers who empty their bins, a letter from a pupil to their teacher, a message in the window, a Tweet of appreciation to nurses or a big thumbs up to those

involved in the vaccine roll-out, all have a real impact on those who receive them.

Each year, Boundless commissions a survey to find out how appreciated people working in public service feel, how they see their jobs and how they view the future.

It has been hugely encouraging over the last three years to see evidence that levels of appreciation from the public are growing, and that levels of pride in public sector and civil service professions are rising, too.

This year we wanted to find out more about those who work in public service. What drives them? What contribution do they make to society? How have they coped in such a difficult year?

The results were remarkable, because they showed that even in the midst of crisis – when many in the sector were working long hours – Britain's key workers were still thinking not about themselves but about how they could use their skills to give something back to society.

So, here we celebrate the stories behind our public service heroes and heroines.

They include the frontline workers who were clapped on the doorsteps of millions of homes across the country, of course. But, also, the hidden heroes, people who the public don't see and don't always recognise as part of the public sector – but who nevertheless made a huge contribution to society during the pandemic.

Their stories and the stats that go with them should leave nobody in any doubt that Britain's public service workers are the glue which binds our society together....

## CHAPTER ONE

# 72% of public service workers volunteered or raised money - even whilst saving lives

Almost three-quarters of the UK's public service heroes have undertaken volunteer work or raised money to help others during the pandemic, according to the Boundless Survey, and that really is a revelation.

The nation's nurses, teachers, firefighters, carers, administrators, civil service workers and police officers have been some of the hardest working during one of the most difficult periods in the country's history.

But remarkably, even whilst battling to save lives and beat the virus, they have still found time to give something back to society, volunteering for roles to help others or raising money for good causes.

Some of the activities supported by public service workers who volunteered or raised funds over the last 15 months include:

- Donating items, **30%**
- Taking part in sponsored walks or runs, **15%**
- Delivering meals or items to the underprivileged or vulnerable people, **14%**
- Organising fundraising events, **13%**
- Producing and sharing important information on Covid-19, **13%**
- Organising virtual quiz nights, **12%**
- Making or donating PPE, **9%**
- Providing online counselling services, **8%**

Other volunteer work carried about by public service workers included collecting and delivering medicines, running a mobile library, donating food parcels, donating and delivering cooked meals, volunteering for the vaccine rollout, running a soup kitchen or foodbank, working with homeless charities and shopping for vulnerable people in the community.

The statistics showed that all public service professions had been involved in volunteer work or fundraising during the pandemic, with police officers the most likely to have given up time to do so. In fact, a remarkable 88% of those working in the police had volunteered or raised funds – incredible when you consider the pressures police officers were under to enforce social distancing and keep the public safe.

## Top 10 giving back during the pandemic

- 1 | Police **88%**
  - 2 | Fire **83%**
  - 3 | NHS **78%**
  - 4 | Education **74%**
  - 5 | Civil Service **70%**
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Public sector - 72%

Private sector - 65%

Third sector - 81%

The survey also revealed that giving back wasn't only restricted to 2020 and 2021. Most respondents revealed they have regularly raised money for charities and good causes throughout their time in public service.

In fact, we can even put a figure on how much they have raised – and average of £8131 per person during their career. That figure was even higher for those in the fire service, police and NHS.

## Top five money raised by profession

- 1 | Fire **£14,783**
- 2 | Police **£13,816**
- 3 | NHS **£10,425**
- 4 | Civil Service **£8,401**
- 5 | Education **£6,629**

Average figure for the public sector and civil service: £8,131

## Top five money raised by region

- 1 | London **£12,158**
- 2 | South East **£10,365**
- 3 | East England **£8,465**
- 4 | East Midlands **£8,034**
- 5 | West Midlands **£7,552**

# But do they feel appreciated?

Given the fact that Britain's public service workers have gone to such extraordinary lengths to help their communities, especially during the pandemic, you would hope they feel appreciated by the public.

But this isn't always true.

There has been a significant rise in public appreciation over the last 15 months, not least the 'clap for heroes' movement in which millions applauded and banged pans together in front of their homes to say thank you to the NHS.

However, not all professions within public service have received the same appreciation and the outpouring of thanks and support has slowed as the pandemic moved on.

When we asked public service workers if they felt appreciated enough, only just over a third, 34%, said yes – which shows there is still a long way to go.

This figure was significantly down on last year's survey result of 47%. That was a poll which was taken at the height of the pandemic when 'clap for heroes' was also at its peak, which perhaps explains the drop from a significant high.

But it's also a concern to think that public service workers, in their most difficult year, are feeling less appreciated at the end of it – and shows just how important Public Service Day is.

## Do you feel appreciated enough by the public?

Yes: **34%**

No, not really: **52%**

No, not at all: **14%**

## Sector by sector:

Public Sector: **42%**

Private Sector: **29%**

Third Sector: **27%**

## Most appreciated professions

1 | Fire **65%**

2 | NHS **46%**

3 | Police **45%**

4 | Education **44%**

5 | Civil Service **38%**

## Most under-appreciated who answered 'no, not at all'

1 | Civil Service **12%**

2 | Police **12%**

3 | Education **11%**

4 | NHS **10%**

5 | Fire **4%**

## CHAPTER TWO

# The hidden heroes and heroines of the public sector

If the general public were asked to name a public sector profession then you suspect nurses would be the most popular answer, given how the NHS has been at the forefront of the battle against Coronavirus.

But not all public sector professions are quite as well known. Our survey revealed that 51% of public sector and civil service respondents who took part don't wear a uniform and aren't anywhere near as visible, even though they perform vital roles.

These are often the hidden heroes who play a big part in keeping the country running smoothly but are rarely in the public spotlight.

It might be civil service workers who played a major role in the furlough scheme, administrators who helped organise the vaccine rollout, local authority workers who planned foodbanks and school meals, refuse collectors who kept an eye on elderly residents whilst doing their rounds or catering managers who kept our nurses and police officers fed in a crisis.

Here we take a look at some of the stories of hidden heroes in roles you may not have associated with public service...

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**51%** of public sector and civil service respondents don't wear a uniform

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# Case studies: hidden heroes in action



## Gaurav Minocha Surveyor, Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

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Not everybody realises that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) is part of the public sector, but they had to spring into action during the pandemic when cruise ships famously suffered outbreaks of Covid-19.

When the cruise industry came to a sudden halt, ships were stuck all over the world – many with crew still on board. Among them were six vessels in Tilbury Docks, Essex and in Bristol, operated by a foreign cruise company. Humanitarian concerns were raised for the hundreds of crew members on board, so a team of Maritime and Coastguard Agency surveyors was sent to investigate.

“At first, everything on board looked fine,” recalls Gaurav, “but it soon became clear that things weren’t quite as they seemed. Many of the seafarers hadn’t received their wages and had been aboard the ship for much longer than the legal maximum of 11 months. They were essentially stranded with no idea when, or how, they could return to their home countries.”

“Cruise ships employ a huge number of seafarers. People from India, the Philippines, South America – and they send their wages home to support their loved ones. If they don’t receive what they’re owed, their entire families will suffer.”

After examining the company records and interviewing crew, Gaurav and his colleagues detained five of the vessels – preventing the ships from leaving the UK until the MCA’s concerns were addressed.

“Soon after our intervention, more than 1,200 seafarers were fully paid and flown home,” says Gaurav. “It was a fantastic result. As a former seafarer myself, it’s an honour to fight for their rights.”

# Case studies: hidden heroes in action



## Iain Robertson Catering Operations Manager, Solent NHS Trust, Southampton

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It's easy to forget when we are clapping on the doorstep that not everybody employed in the NHS is a nurse. There are many professions within the organisation, and all played a huge part in helping people during the pandemic.

Iain Robertson is catering manager at Solent NHS Trust and like many other key workers found himself torn between his shielding family and a vital frontline job.

Iain's daughter Isabella was just a few months old when the pandemic began, but she'd already faced her first battle. Born with Down's Syndrome and a heart condition, she had undergone major cardiac surgery aged 12 weeks – and was only allowed home last February.

"She still had a hole in her heart, and was extremely vulnerable," explains Iain. "Naturally, we were instructed to shield." But Iain is a key worker, catering for patients and frontline staff. "I didn't want to stop working," says Iain, "but how could I keep Isabella safe?"

Initially, Iain planned to set up a tent in the garden, isolating from his wife Vanessa and the couple's two children. "But then I found out that the trust was offering hotel rooms, so I asked my manager – and moved out of home that night." The next three months were "very lonely," says Iain, "but video calls with my son Josh got me through."

By chance, Isabella was called for the operation to close the hole in her heart, so Iain isolated for a further two weeks – and then returned home. With the procedure deemed a success, the family no longer needed to shield.

# Case studies: hidden heroes in action



## Pardep Kaur Corporal, British Army – Royal Welsh Regiment

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Members of the armed forces are part of the public sector and many wanted to give something back to society during the pandemic. In Pardep Kaur's case, she raised money for charity by completing a marathon – on her six-metre patio!

"I did 5,715 laps in total," said Pardeep, recalling her backyard marathon. "I just kept going and going. I knew if I stopped, my legs would simply give up."

For six hours and 21 minutes, without a break, Pardeep slogged back and forth in the modest garden of her barracks house – raising a total of £1,320 for the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

"Whenever things got too hard, I thought of Captain Sir Tom Moore and everything he achieved," she remembers. "I pictured his face as I ran – trying to carry his determination with me."

Pardeep's army career has taken her all over the world, cooking for troops in Latvia, Germany, Kenya and beyond. "Food is the biggest morale booster – and it really has the power to bring people together," she says. "When the pandemic began I wanted to share that, so I set up a channel on YouTube, teaching my friends and colleagues – and complete strangers too – how to cook and how to keep fit."

Pardeep's fundraising efforts are set to continue, as she's planning another charity challenge: a triathlon, to raise money for Army veterans. "Training has kept me going through lockdown," she explains. "And hopefully this time around, I won't have to do it in my garden..."

# Case studies: hidden heroes in action



## Lynne Short Councillor and Fairness and Equalities Commissioner, Dundee City Council

Being a councillor is an important part of public service, and Lynne Short at Dundee City Council used her knowledge and expertise to help people during the pandemic. In conjunction with a local charity, she helped raise £87,000 to keep children from low-income families warm.

"It was a conversation in a food bank meeting that sparked the idea," said Lynne. "It was October, and we were discussing how schools now needed to keep their windows open in lessons. It ventilated

the classrooms, but all of the children were getting so cold – and how would they cope when winter hit?"

As a councillor, Lynne is all too aware of the financial instability that many local families face. And as a single mother, she knows how expensive good-quality thermals can be.

"It gets incredibly cold up in Dundee, so you want clothing that lasts," she says. "But if you're already using a food bank, that's simply impossible."

Lynne contacted Dundee Bairns, a charity tackling food and fuel poverty in the city. "I proposed an emergency project, Cosy Bairns, to distribute winter clothing to low-income families. It was a huge undertaking: we knew at least 1,500 Dundee children would qualify for support."

The charity's report on the project praises Lynne's 'energy and commitment' to fundraising, which generated a remarkable £87,000. "I'm just the person that joins the dots," she insists. "With a cause like that, people and businesses can't help but be generous – and the council also contributed £31,415."

Almost 3,000 children received a Cosy Bairns pack, with clothing and footwear designed to withstand the winter. "Families told us it was a lifeline," said Lynne, who juggled the project alongside other outreach work including the distribution of free period products.

"So, we just kept packing those boxes, thinking of the bairns who'd receive them. Everybody pulled together, with a team spirit that amazes me to this day."

# Case studies: hidden heroes in action



**John Mumford**  
Prison Officer, HMP Dartmoor, Devon

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Prison officers have been described as the 'hidden front line' because not everybody realises they are part of the public sector – and they can be forgotten even in a crisis.

The reality is that no part of prison life has been untouched by the pandemic and keeping prison officers safe is not always easy.

That has been the focus for John Mumford, HMP Dartmoor's branch chairman of the nationwide union, the Prison Officer's Association (POA), with initiatives ranging from providing laptops for home schooling to helping prison officers deal with the realities of social distancing.

"Our job often relies on safety in numbers – when you're working with violent offenders, it makes sense for prison officers to congregate together," he said. "But almost overnight, Covid-19 made that dangerous.

"We have prisoners with the virus – and if they need support, or are aggressive, social distancing just isn't an option.

"Prison officers throughout the UK have managed the pandemic amazingly well and I would like to pay tribute to each and every one of them."

# Case studies: hidden heroes in action

**Sarah Smith,**  
Leisure Centres Manager,  
Chelmsford City Council

Prison officers have been described as the 'hidden front line' because not everybody realises they are part of the public sector – and they can be forgotten even in a crisis.

People who work directly for a local council are part of the public sector, and in Sarah Smith's case she runs a leisure centre for Chelmsford City Council.

It was a role she used proactively to help others during the pandemic, turning her leisure centre into a food distribution hub for shielding families.

"The athletics track was covered with boxes and shopping trolleys," she said. "We had 50 staff

working seven days a week: from taking shopping orders by phone to delivering it to people's homes.

"Looking back, I can't quite believe it," said Sarah. "Our food bank just kept growing – and by the end of the summer we'd helped over 600 families."

The scheme continued until July, when other support systems took over.

Sarah added: "It was rewarding, but tough: we got to know the customers, and many of them lost loved ones – they'd call us in tears, it was heart-breaking. But there were lovely stories, too: we managed to source a birthday cake for an 80-year-old woman who was shielding, and she was over the moon! It's moments like these that I'll never forget."

## Workers surveyed didn't know the following roles are public sector workers:

Driving examiners	17%	Leisure centre workers	14%	Medicine	13%
Council	15%	Prison worker	14%	Officers in the Armed Forces	12%
Social work	14%	Fire service	14%	Catering Managers for public services	12%
Teaching	14%	Tax inspector	14%	The security service	12%
Police force	14%	Psychotherapist	13%	Diplomatic service officers	10%
Civil service	14%	Waste management	13%		

## CHAPTER THREE

# The future of public service

With some public service professions constantly in the news over the last 15 months, it's no surprise that increased profile has led to greater interest in a career in the public sector.

The NHS has reported a 'significant surge in interest in careers in the NHS' and still needs new recruits for its Test and Trace programme and to run an unprecedented winter flu vaccine programme – a well as potential Covid-19 vaccine top-up jobs later in 2021.

The same trend has been seen in most caring professions, with interest in health or related medical degrees on the up, increased applications to work in care homes – and record numbers wanting to become a nurse.

Those trends have also been reflected in our survey.

The results reveal that a quarter (25%) of private sector workers surveyed are considering a career in the public sector – with figures even higher in some regions such as Brighton and Manchester.

### Top 10 considering a career in public sector

- 1 | Cardiff **38%**
- 2 | Brighton **31%**
- 3 | Newcastle **30%**
- 4 | Manchester **29%**
- 5 | Sheffield **28%**
- 6 | Glasgow **27%**
- 7 | Norwich **27%**
- 8 | London **26%**
- 9 | Birmingham **26%**
- 10 | Liverpool **25%**

# Loving the job

The good news for the future of public service is that those who work in the public sector or civil service are increasingly proud of their roles and happy in them.

As high as 85% of public sector workers say they either love or like their job – significantly higher than results in the private sector. This figure reaches 89% in the NHS – which means almost nine in 10 people working in the NHS are happy in their jobs.

## Public Sector:

Love my job: **38%**

Like my job: **47%**

Combined: **85%**

## Private Sector:

Love my job: **28%**

Like my job: **50%**

Combined: **78%**

## Top 5 Love or Like their jobs:

- 1 | Fire 96%
- 2 | Education 87%
- 3 | NHS 89%
- 4 | Police 84%
- 5 | Civil Service 81%



# Proud to serve

Working in public service can provide employees with a feeling that they are doing a job which is meaningful in society.

When we asked respondents to say whether they felt proud when telling other people about their job, 52% in the public sector and 48% in the civil service said they did. The figure was even higher in the NHS (61%) and teaching (58%).

We also asked whether they felt their job gives something back to society, 60% saying 'yes'. Another example of why working in public service is growing in popularity in a world in which employees are searching for meaning in the work they do.

## Proud to tell people what job I do:

NHS: **61%**

Education: **58%**

Civil Service **48%**

Police **45%**

Fire **39%**

## My job allows me to give something back to society

Overall: **50%**

Public Sector: **60%**

Private Sector: **43%**

Education: **68%**

NHS: **68%**

Civil Service: **55%**

Police: **51%**

Fire: **43%**

# Conclusion

The more you learn about Britain's public service workers, the more you realise just how important they are to the country. The roles they perform are vital, of course, with frontline workers primed to save lives and prevent harm.

Then there are hidden heroes doing the jobs that keep our society ticking over, whether it is collecting refuse, running council services, administering furlough payments or working in government departments.

But what has been most impressive about the Boundless Survey of 2021 is finding out just what a massive contribution these same people make in their own lives and in their own communities.

Volunteering for community service, raising money for good causes, helping neighbours, manning foodbanks or delivering meals to school children – all selfless acts which make Britain a better place to live in.

They ask and expect nothing in return, working tirelessly for the good of society and for the benefit of others.

The very least we can do as a nation is to say a heartfelt thank you.

Public Service Day, held every year on the 23rd of June, is our opportunity to do exactly that.

## What are public service workers most looking forward to once social distancing measures are eventually removed?

- 1 | Families and friends being able to visit loved ones in hospital 29%
- 2 | Interacting with and meeting members of the public, 26%
- 3 | Celebrating with colleagues in person, 24%
- 4 | Not having to worry about shielding, 20%
- 5 | The public appreciating workers in the public sector more as a result of the pandemic, 18%
- 6 | Going back to the office, 13%
- 7 | Doing charity/volunteer work in person, 12%
- 8 | Moving back in to live with family, 11%
- 9 | Supporting the elderly in person, 10%

# Ongoing MP support for Public Service Day

## Lord Davies of Gower

"Having personally passed the 50-year mark in public service, I am only too aware of the enormous but sometimes unseen contribution public service workers make to the quality of life in Britain

Whether in our police, health service, local or national government or any other area of public service, we should appreciate and recognise their enormous commitment to our nation's wellbeing and success by joining in and celebrating Public Service Day on Wednesday 23 June 2021."

## Jason McCartney MP, Colne Valley, West Yorkshire

'On this Public Service Day, we must all stand back and take stock of the incredible work that all of our public servants have undertaken during the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic we have all been faced with uncertainty, however, ever present and certainly rising to the challenge, were our key workers and inspiring public servants. I am so grateful, as we all should be, for what they have done, and continue to do for us all.'

## The Rt.Hon.Sir Roger Gale MP, North Thanet, Kent

"It is absolutely right that on this day we should pay a particular tribute to all of those public service workers, at home and overseas, who have worked through the pandemic in order to maintain the services on which we all rely. We owe them a debt of gratitude".

## Caroline Ansell MP for Eastbourne

"I thank Boundless for its tireless endeavours to highlight the work of our public servants through its Public Service Day.

"In normal times, what these people do in classrooms, offices, hospitals and care homes, to name just a few locations, is something to celebrate. But over the last 15 months, the work of our dedicated public servants has been the difference between life and death, the difference between vulnerable children staying in school or being lost to the system; the difference between rubbish on our streets or regular refuse collection in such challenging times. These are just a few examples - there are many more.

"I thank everyone in the public sector for all they have done. Some have put their lives on the line to help others. Others have worked long hours in difficult situations to keep our country functioning in the most challenging time since the Second World War. The whole country owes them all a debt of gratitude..."

# Ongoing MP support for Public Service Day

## **Royston Smith** **MP, Southampton Itchen**

"Iain's work for the Solent NHS Trust certainly sounds beyond the call of duty and we should all be very grateful for his dedication to his role. Even more impressive is his decision to move into hospital accommodation to ensure he was on hand during a period of significant pressure on the NHS. This would have been a very difficult decision; leaving his young family while his wife was pregnant. This is testament to how important he saw his role and I am pleased to express my thanks to him".

## **Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw** **MP, Exeter**

"Our public sector workers have always been vital to our communities, but the past year has been a vivid reminder of just how valuable they are. Public Service Day is an opportunity to say thank you to those across the sector who have had an impact on our lives, and I'm delighted to hear that Exeter firefighter, Tom Taylor, is among those being recognised this year, not only for his work with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, but also for the thousands of pounds he has raised for emergency service and health charities."

## **John Glen** **MP, Salisbury**

"Countless public sector workers have been heroes over the course of the pandemic. It is inspiring to hear stories of all the people who have been going above and beyond to support the community – and each other - through these difficult times."

## **Marcus Jones** **MP for Nuneaton**

"I am delighted to support Public Service Day 2021 and to commend all of those who have not only kept our essential public services functioning throughout the pandemic but have gone above and beyond. It is easy to forget that many in our communities do not have family or close friends nearby and that something as simple as a friendly word or smile can mean so much. There are many examples of people making self-less efforts to support their neighbours and the wider community.

"Here in Nuneaton, we are fortunate to have people like Jamie Lewis working for the Borough Council. Jamie's dedication to the community he serves is exemplary and I have no doubt that he makes a huge difference to many local people, day in, day out. I congratulate him on being recognized as a real champion for Britain's public services. Public service may not always be glamorous but every one of us depends on those who carry out so many essential jobs and I thank them all."

