MSc Environmental Health Graduate Employment Workshop

Keynote: EH Workforce research findings and development of EHP workforce skills

7th May 2026 - Frenchay Campus, UWE

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1

Key note speaker + QnA

Dr Jill Stewart Associate Professor

10.05-10.30am 15 mins presentation

10.20am QnA discussion 10 mins

- How do we individually and collectively develop and maintain authentic EH professional skills?
- Multiple challenges in both recruitment and retention
- So, why can't all graduates find work as an EHO/EHP?

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2

So, LAs are struggling to recruit, and some graduates are struggling to find jobs.

What's going on?

To help understand and unravel this, we will look at some findings of my research around the housing-specific workforce

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3

Key challenges arising

- Struggle to recruit EHOs, or can't recruit
- Lack of suitable candidates – both experience and qualification
- Geographical accessibility of programmes/course
- Large training gaps
- Increase in case numbers and complexity of EH work
- Not all new graduates have any/enough 'work experience' let alone placement experience - can this be replicated?
- Lack of 'basic' knowledge and skills
- Range of skills required – process, law, frameworks, communication etc
- General pressures of the work
- Career progression, salary structure
- Ageing staff profile, gaps, loss of experience

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4

In your private sector housing team What are the main challenges you have had in recruiting (housing) EHO 1) Issues at LA and staff recruitment

"Lack of **suitable candidates** without either **experience or qualifications**. There are no longer any qualified EHOs applying for the vacancies."

"Finally managed to get agreement for additional staff in team (this has taken years) and now unable to recruit staff with experience/knowledge; on third round of advertising despite good salary and not asking for qualified EHOs."

"**Unable to recruit EHPs**. The current team has two vacant posts, which have been advertised twice and extended twice. No suitable applicants. Dramatic decline in applicant numbers in last 10 years."

"The Officers in the Private Sector Housing Team in this authority are not Environmental Health Officers/Practitioners and we do not specifically recruit EHO/Ps. Our job adverts are for Private Sector Housing Officers yet we are **still struggling a lot to recruit** new Officers. The main challenges include lack of experienced officers, job applicants lacking knowledge of the sector and/or transferable skills. There has also been a lack of interest - we have re-advertised vacant posts several times but receive few applications each time."

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5

In your private sector housing team What are the main challenges you have had in recruiting (housing) EHOs

2) Issues of training opportunities

"We cannot recruit people who hold relevant qualifications. No training providers based close to us **geographically**."

"There is a **large training gap** in that we either take on inexperienced staff with little to no training or get barely anything. The lack of structured training and qualification make it difficult to recruit."

"… even if have EH degree are unlike to have taken the HHSRS training and have **experience** in the pay grade offered."

"There aren't enough qualified staff available especially when most authorities are increasing the size of their teams to cope with the **increasing workload** and **complexity** of the workload."

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6

What is missing?

"No one out there with any experience to hit the road running. Current staff so busy, they do not have time to train from scratch. On going raft of new legislation so adds to no experience situation." (e.g. something new this week)

"Lack of understanding of the purpose and importance of our work. Officers need many skills; including interpreting law, court skills, writing legal docs, comms (written and oral) to tnts and landlords, surveying and building knowledge, able to write schedules of work."

"Lack of knowledge and understanding of basic building construction and defects. Plus the "messiness" of working in housing, the different advisory and legislative approaches and then we add in the emotions of tenants and the different motivations."

"Pressures of work are showing, which is natural if you have more work than capacity. Pay and conditions until a recent pay and reward review which now makes the district attractive to new candidates."

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7

Staff retention: LA organisation and staff profile

"Local Authority Salary Structure constraints. Lack of career progression opportunities, lack of personal development. Lack of training or career pathways and structure to training and competencies within dept. and the wider role/career of a Private Sector Housing Officer. Frustration and consistency when applying legislation and enforcement within the Local Housing Authority (leadership directions) has lead to officers leaving the authority."

"Ageing staff profile, loss of experience."

"Many of our more experienced staff are coming up to retirement age and are opting for flexible retirement. While we are happy to be able to retain them for a little longer in this way, this is increasing workload on the rest of the team as these members of staff are difficult to replace. For younger qualified members of staff, there is a lot of demand for their skills across London, meaning if we are not able to offer progression, they are moving on to other authorities who can. Burnout and staff illness is also an issue - the role is physically demanding to some degree and with caseloads as they are there are stress-related issues as well. It is difficult to keep workloads within a range that promotes staff wellbeing.."

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8

What attributes are desired?

- "Qualification, relevant experience but primarily ability to fit into a Team, attitude and innovative thinking."
- "Min 5 GCSEs pass in Maths & English … EH experience."
- "Enforcement experience, legal experience, surveying/building or technical knowledge or experience. We do not necessarily demand particular qualifications."
- "Ability to analyse and solve problems, general knowledge …"
- "We have relied upon recruiting staff with basic experience dealing with the public & going into properties … and then training them."
- "Anyone who has remotely transferable skills considered due to lack of applicants with direct experience."

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9

Situation is acute and unmet: many LAs unable to recruit suitably qualified practitioners, inadequate appropriate training opportunities providing the range of knowledge, competencies and skills required by the complex nature of this regulatory work

There is a need for flexibility in both place (and mode) of delivery and subjects covered according to region, appropriate to local housing and communities, as well as a renewed focus on effective legal process and practice in individual cases

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10

What interventions might work?

Can graduates create their own competencies and skills log, and keep it alongside their emerging CVs - to help demonstrate 'transferrable' skills, with evidence

Up to new graduates to create their own C&S log? Demonstrate how they can meet criteria?

Need to think like an employer, how would you make yourself attractive to them?

Things we are investing into help replicating practice/experiential include:

1) Walking tour – to help replicate practice, looking out for EH issues etc

2) 360 immersive learning – but how can this be recognised?

3) New H&H series booklets, and workbook, gaining national traction and recognition

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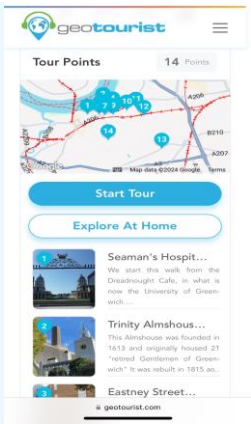
11



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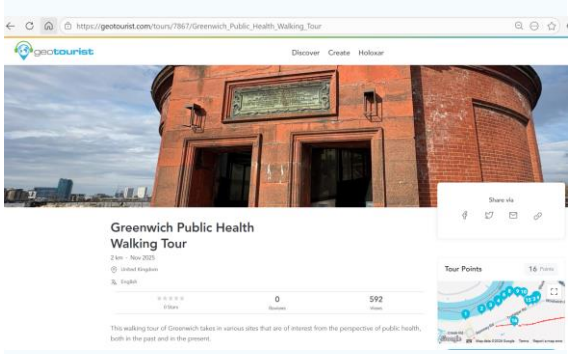

Something to say in an interview, practical example?

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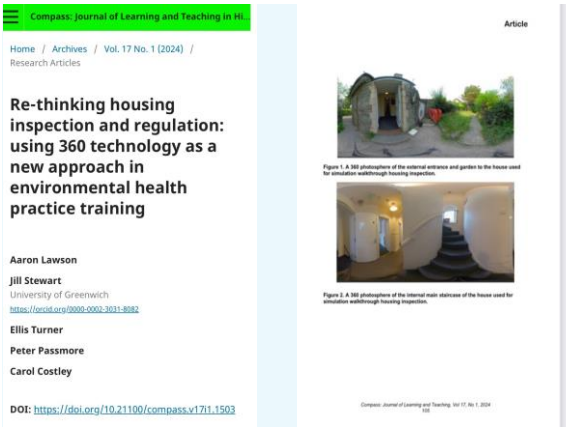
13



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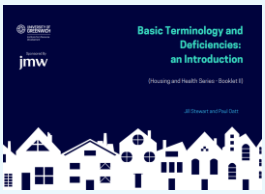
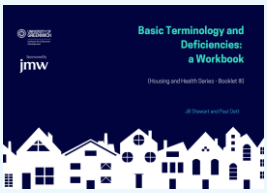
New resource (freely available from https://www.jillstewarthousing.co.uk/new-booklets-building-technology-and-deficiencies/) More in development





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15

Ongoing challenges?

We don't know fully what the EH workforce currently 'looks like' now (future proof?)
Is access to the profession inclusive and diverse, if not how to we challenge this?
Are training avenues a wish list, or do-able?
Impact on networking and other sharing/learning
Practice experience (or virtual options e.g. 360)
Recognition through various CPD e.g. C&S log – transferable?
How do we know nationally how suitable a potential employee is?
How do we continue to 'plug gaps' and where are we headed?

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16

References (plus multiple conference/workshop presentations)

Stewart, J., Cole, L, Jeavons, C, Ravindran, S (2025), Recruiting and retaining the right environmental health workforce beyond degree programmes: challenges and training opportunities supporting private-rented housing regulatory teams. Housing and Society. pp. 1-19 ISSN: 0888-2746 (Print), 2376-0923

Lawson, A, **Stewart, J**, Turner, E, Passmore, P, Costley, C (2024), Re-thinking housing inspection and regulation: using 360 technology as a new approach in environmental health practice training. Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching. pp. 101-117 ISSN: 2044-0081

Stewart, J. and Jeavons, C. (2023) *Regulating the privately rented sector: what can universities offer to support local authority workforce development?* Compass: The Journal of Learning and Teaching, 16 (2). pp. 42-46. ISSN 2044-0081 (Online) (doi:https://doi.org/10.21100/compass.v16i2.1447)

In press, following international AMPS conference (2025)
AARON LAWSON, JILL STEWART, PAUL OATT, ROBERT EADIE, ELLIS TURNER
TRAINING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HOUSING PRACTITIONERS WITHOUT ACTIVE WORK EXPERIENCE: CAN VIRTUAL LEARNING USING 360 PHOTOSPHERES OFFER A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE?

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17

Thanks for listening!

Any questions?

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18