

Adam Smith Institute

Briefing



Costing Jobs

By Jonathan Woolham

One Month in the Life of the Public Sector

Each Wednesday the *Guardian* newspaper publishes a supplement called *Society*. This section contains a few articles, often about social developments or stories of personal interest. Its main function, however, is to advertise jobs, overwhelmingly public sector jobs. Its pages are full of job offers from local authorities, NHS trusts, and other public bodies. Each lists a title, proposed salary, and brief job description.

In some issues the *Society* supplement consists of over 100 pages. Each page features several jobs. The sheer volume of them is immense. It is like entering into another country. One leaves behind the world of productive activity, of goods and services for which people are willing to pay. One leaves the wealth-creating process which sustains our present and future livelihood and Britain's economic position in the world. One enters instead into a world of public sector services, some of which seem to be of dubious, if any, economic value.

The sense is that of a producer agenda. Many of these jobs are there because people think they ought to be there, rather than in response to a demand for them from the general public. These are nearly all jobs paid for from public funds. Money collected in taxation is used to employ people to do things which are considered important not by citizens themselves, but by various layers of government and officialdom.

The pages take the reader into a world inhabited by anti-social behaviour co-ordinators, of racial equality officers, of social inclusion officers and community liaison officers. The salaries offered average just over ten percent higher than the average wage in Britain. Clearly, it pays better in the public sector. Many of the jobs seem very vague, although it is not obvious at first glance that Bristol's 'walking officers' are there to encourage people to take more exercise. A 'tobacco control manager' sounds pretty straightforward, but a 'positive activities

co-ordinator' has a job rather less readily divined.

The economic necessity of some of these jobs is by no means obvious. There is a real impression that some of these jobs were created to make work for people, rather than to fulfil any need. Looking over the pages of job descriptions, one has the impression that much of this seems to be political correctness translated into situations vacant. Many of these jobs might achieve worthwhile things, but there is often a sense that these achievements are tiny compared with the cost it takes to attain them.

The other question to ask is whether these jobs are justified, given the state of the economy. They might be pursuing desirable objectives, and ones to which a rich society should devote some attention and resources. Whether the country can afford to spend so much on unproductive work at a time of economic difficulty is open to question.

The amount of public money poured into these activities is certainly very large. In a single month, eliminating overlap, there were 2,315 jobs advertised, offering a combined salary of £63,713,000. This is equivalent to an average of £27,522 per job, a figure more than 10 percent higher than the average wage for jobs over the whole economy.

Furthermore, in terms of cost, this represents only part of what must be spent. As well as salary there will be additional costs. There will be employers' National Insurance

Contributions, increased last April. There will be the costs of pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave. There will be sick pay, by no means negligible in a public sector many parts of which average a noticeably higher rate of absenteeism than in the private sector. There will be pensions, markedly more generous in public sector than in private, and for the most part unfunded, to be paid for out of present and future taxation. Provision for these additional costs means that the total cost to the public purse will be considerably higher than the actual salaries offered. It could not be less than one third as much again, and may be higher than that overall.

Even without adding these additional costs, the figure for total salaries offered in a year in the Guardian supplement for the 30,095 jobs comes to £828,269,000. With the additional non-wage costs, the cost goes to well over £1 billion. And this does not present itself as any kind of exhaustive account. On the contrary, it is only a snapshot, an examination of the jobs advertised in one newspaper supplement. What it does give is an insight into an ongoing process. All over Britain, week by week, jobs are being advertised and filled which make little if any economic contribution to the nation, and most of which are a drain on its economy. Many of them have the flavour of a politically correct agenda. Individually worthwhile though some may be, taken together they amount to a huge burden we are imposing on ourselves, and one we cannot perhaps afford.

One Month of Jobs Advertised in *Society*

Issue 1

Total jobs 523

Total salary £13,585,000

Jobs advertised include:

Durham County Council - Young People's Substance Misuse Tier 3 Service Manager (£30k)

Borough of Telford - Cultural Activities Co-ordinator for Children and Young People (£22k)

Portsmouth City Council - Children's Services Officer (£26k)

Chorley Borough Council - Anti-Social Behaviour co-ordinator

Citizens Advice Bureau - Income Maximisation Worker (£10k) and Benefits Take-up Worker (£19k)

East Kent Coastal Care Trust - Smoking Cessation Specialist: Inequalities (£20k)

Issue 2

Total jobs 374

Total salary £9,790,000

Jobs advertised include:

Lambeth Borough Council - Principal Youth and Play Service Manager (£40k)

Calderdale Council - Definitive Map Review Officer (£21k)

Lambeth Borough Council - Scrutiny Lead Officer (£33k) and Democratic Services Officer (£25k)

University College Hospitals NHS Trust - Ethics Committee Administrator (£20k)

Herefordshire Council - Area Rights of Way Officer and Warden Manager (£17k)

Ealing Primary Care Trust - Five a Day Local Area Co-ordinator (£25k)

Issue 3

Total jobs 778

Total salary £22,518,000

Jobs advertised include:

Thurrock Council - Diversity Co-ordinator (£35k)

Milton Keynes Council - Corporate Equalities Officer (£35k)

Hounslow Council - Housing Enabling Officer (£30k)

Southwark Council - Senior Home School Liaison Officer (focus on attendance and punctuality) (£20k)

Ealing Racial Equality Council - Racial Equality Officer (£20k)

London Borough of Camden - Welfare Rights Advisor (£25k)

City of Stoke on Trent - Youth Music Development Worker (£18k)

Haringey Council - Adoption Social Worker for the African Caribbean Community (£34k)

Issue 4

Total jobs 640

Total salary £17,820,000

Jobs advertised include:

Lambeth Borough Council - Supporting People Team Manager (£35-37.2k)

Swindon Borough Council - Community Liaison Officer (Local Nature Reserves) (£17-18.5k)

South Tyneside Council - Social Inclusion Officer (£29-31.3k)

City of Salford - Equality Officer
(£24-26k)

Bolton NHS Trust - Tobacco
Control Manager (£29-32.6k)

Herefordshire Council - Public
Rights of Way Developments
Officer (£14.8-20.5k)

Kent County Council -
Development Workers X2 (Minority
Ethnic Communities) (£21.6-26.4k)

Chesterfield NHS Trust - Five-A-
Day Co-ordinator (£27k)

Totals:

Single month's issues

Total jobs 2,315

Total salary £63,713,000

In a year

Total jobs 30,095

Total salary £828,269,000

**Average salary per job:
£27,522**

Bibliographical information

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