Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

# Public Service Leaders Survey: Summary Report

WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

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# Introduction

1   This report sets out the findings of the survey of public sector leaders carried out as part of our **A Picture of Public Services 2015** report. The key messages from the survey are incorporated into our main report, which can be found on our website: www.audit.wales. This report follows the structure of the survey, which was designed to reflect past, current and future challenges facing Welsh public services and the response to those challenges.

2   We sent a total of 688 surveys to public service leaders. We sent them to Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities, health boards and Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies (WGSBs). For the purposes of our analysis, we have combined councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities as 'local government'. We invited responses from chief executives and members of senior leadership teams as well as from board members and (for local councils) leaders and cabinet members.

3   We asked people to indicate in their response which sector they were from and which role they were undertaking, so that we could identify similarities and differences between sectors. Other than this, we did not ask for any identifying information and the survey was anonymous.

4   Between 1 July and 6 August, we received 230 completed surveys, a response rate of 33 per cent. For each sector, the response rate was: local government, 33 per cent (134 respondents); NHS, 38 per cent (71 respondents); and WGSB, 26 per cent (26 respondents).

5   There are a number of important points to make about the data and our interpretation. Firstly, because the number of respondents is relatively small, the comparisons between sectors should be seen as indicative rather than definitive. To make comparisons between sectors, we have used percentages rather than numbers. While using percentages aids comparisons, the small number of respondents means that apparent differences can be exaggerated.

6   We carried out an analysis of whether there were clear differences of opinion depending on the role of the respondent – so, for example, whether executives held fundamentally different views to non-executives. Our analysis of this data showed that in the main there was little difference in the views expressed by people undertaking different roles. Where there were differences, the relatively small numbers involved meant that we were cautious about drawing firm conclusions based on this analysis. We have therefore not included any comparison by role in this report.

7   In addition to the quantitative questions, we also included open questions that asked for qualitative comment on the challenges, barriers and opportunities public services have faced and are likely to face in the future. In order to analyse these responses, we categorised them into common themes, where possible. The report reflects the most frequently mentioned themes for each sector.

# Part 1

What public service leaders said about the period from the start of financial year 2011-12 to the end of 2014-15
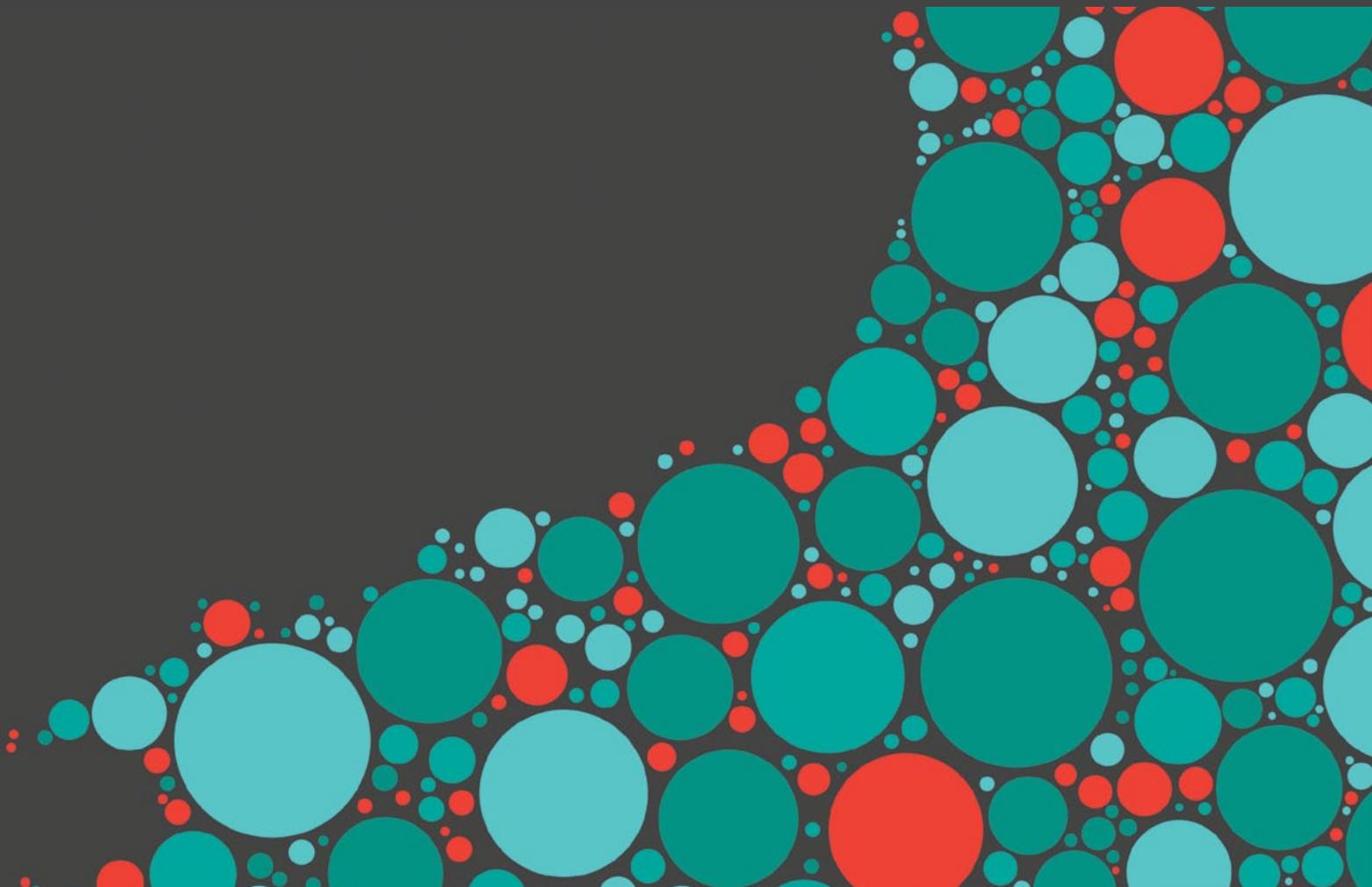
# Question 1: Has your organisation changed the way it delivers services?

1.1    Our **A Picture of Public Services 2011** report stated that in order to respond to the financial pressures they face, public bodies in Wales needed to make changes to the way they deliver services. In our survey, we asked respondents to identify whether change had taken place, and the significance of that change, asking respondents to characterise change as incremental or transformational. It is important to note that we did not provide a specific definition of what could or could not be considered incremental or transformational; therefore, the survey results demonstrate the perception of the respondents.

1.2    Figure 1 shows that out of 230 responses, only two people said that their organisation had not made any changes to the way it delivers services. Incremental change to most services was the most common response (75 responses; 33 per cent) followed by transformational change to a minority of services (66 responses; 29 per cent). Therefore, the perception of respondents is that the last four years have seen changes, but overall there has not been a transformation across the whole of Welsh public services.

Figure 1 – Has your organisation changed the way it delivers services? (All sectors)
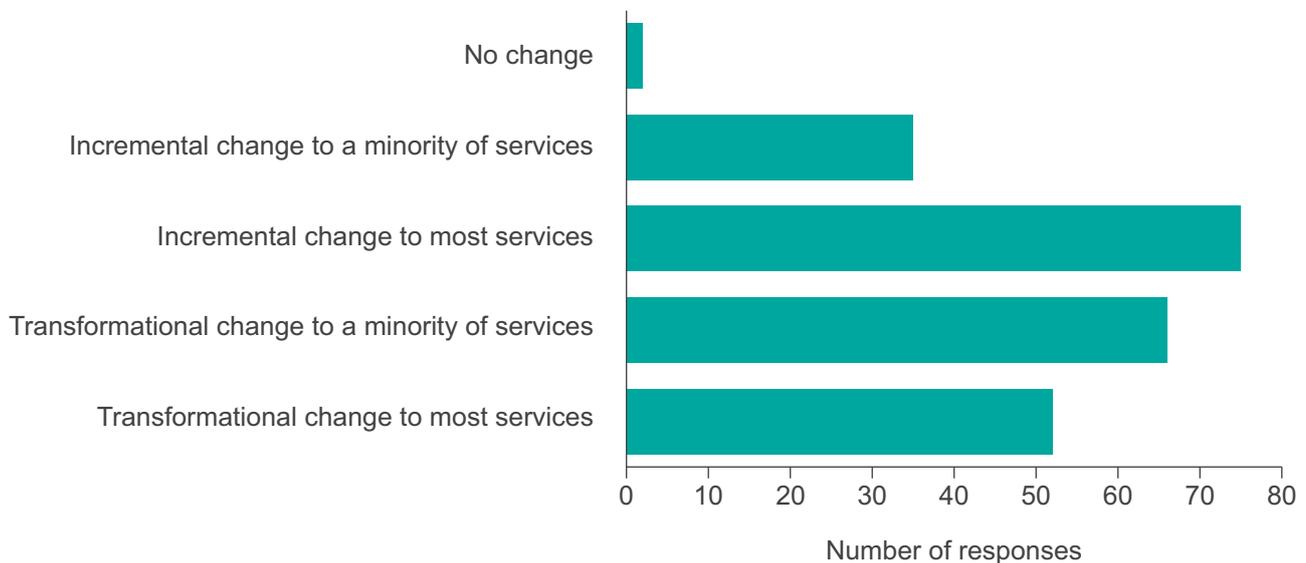
1.3 Figure 2 separates the responses into different sectors. It shows that respondents from the local government sector were most likely to report incremental change to most services. NHS respondents were most likely to report significant or transformational change in a minority of service areas. WGSB respondents were proportionately most likely to report transformational change across the majority of services but the two respondents who reported no change were also from this sector.

Figure 2 – Has your organisation changed the way it delivers services? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
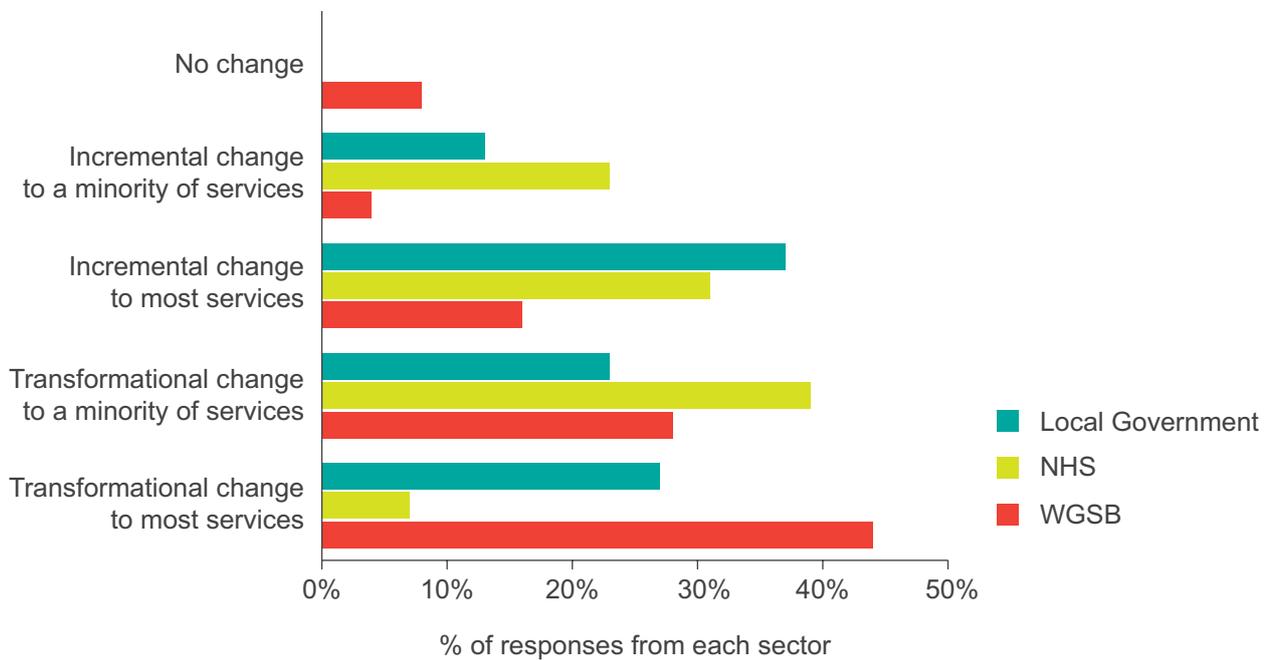
## Question 2: In seeking to make savings, where do you estimate the balance between reducing services and improving efficiency has been?

1.4 Since 2011, public services in Wales have had to find ways of making financial savings. We asked respondents to describe the balance of savings between reducing levels of services and improving efficiency. We did not specify a definition of efficiency, therefore the results reflect the perception of the respondents. Figure 3 shows that respondents were most likely to report that savings had been achieved mostly through improving efficiency with some service reductions (137 respondents; 60 per cent). A small number said that savings had been made all through efficiency or reducing service levels.

Figure 3 –  Where do you estimate the balance between reducing services and improving efficiency has been? (All sectors)
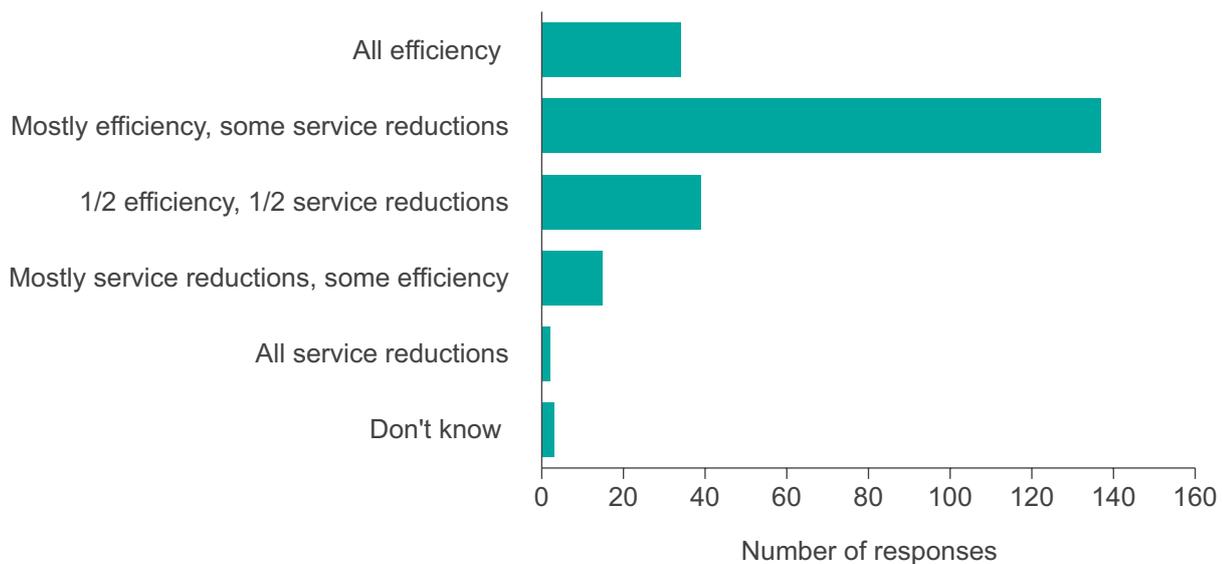
1.5 Figure 4 shows that there was some variation between sectors. Local government respondents were more likely to report making at least half of their savings from service reductions than other sectors. Very few NHS respondents said that more than half of their savings had come from service reductions.

Figure 4 – Where do you estimate the balance between reducing services and improving efficiency has been? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
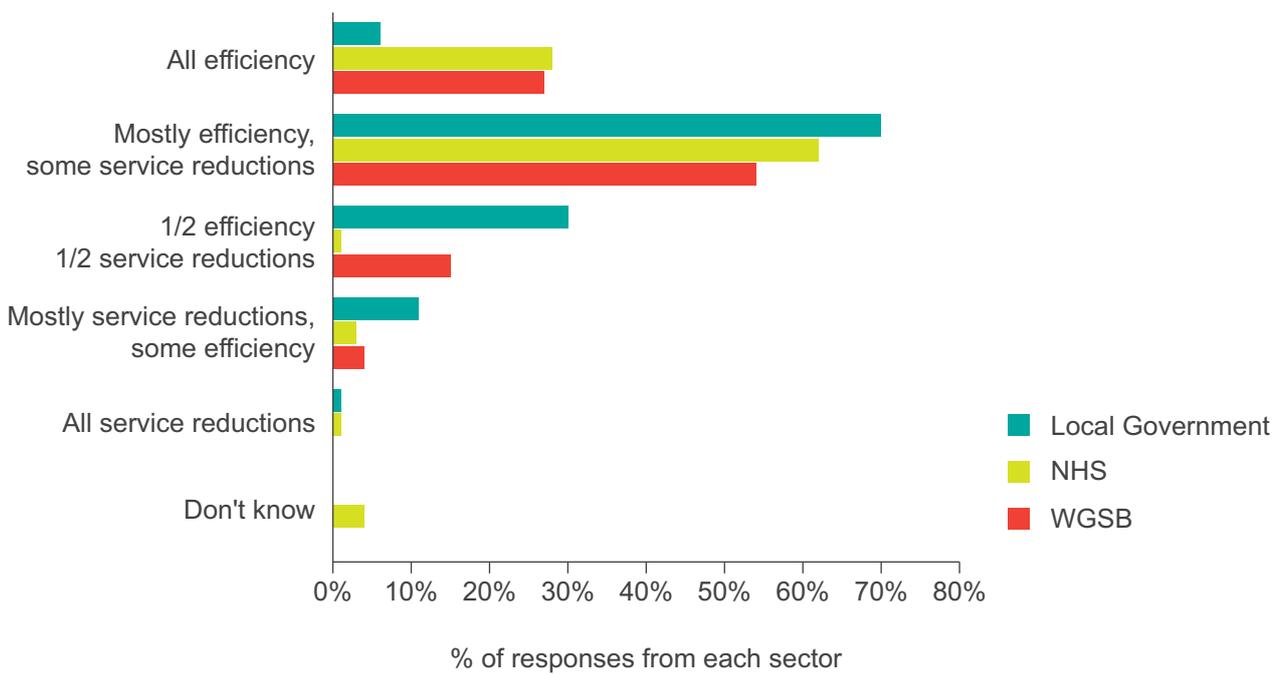
## Question 3: Has your organisation had clear and realistic plans in place to mitigate the impact of reductions in budgets on service users?

1.6 In our **A Picture of Public Services 2011** report, we stated that public services needed clear plans to manage the impacts of budget cuts on service users. We asked public service leaders whether their organisations have had such plans in place in this regard. Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents told us that they thought their organisation had clear and realistic plans in place (180 respondents; 78 per cent).

Figure 5 – Has your organisation had clear and realistic plans in place to mitigate the impact of reductions in budgets on service users?
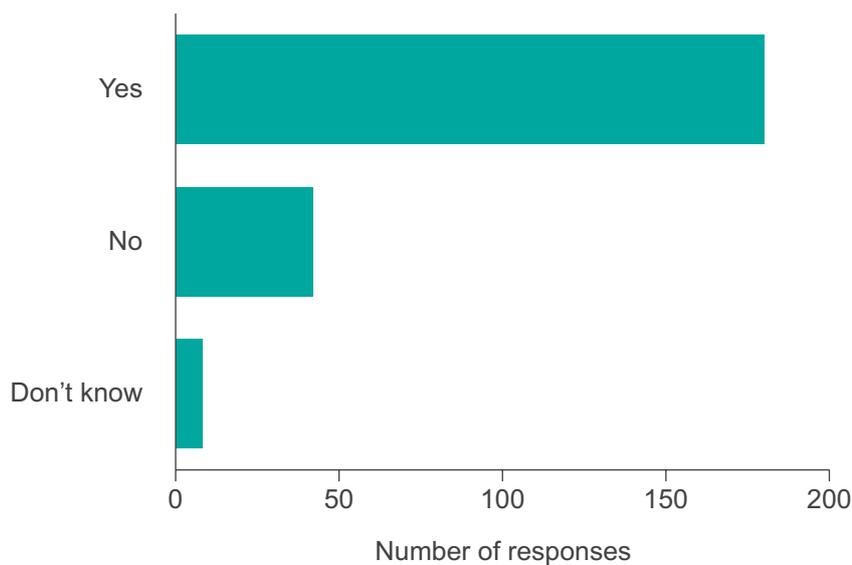
1.7    Comparison of the different sectors (Figure 6) shows that respondents from the NHS were less likely to say that they had clear and realistic plans in place. Despite the apparent confidence of local government respondents, in our main report, **A Picture of Public Services 2015**, we note that our own audit work suggests that where councils have plans to mitigate the impacts they are often not robust enough.

Figure 6 – Has your organisation had clear and realistic plans in place to mitigate the impact of reductions in budgets on service users? (Categorised by sector)
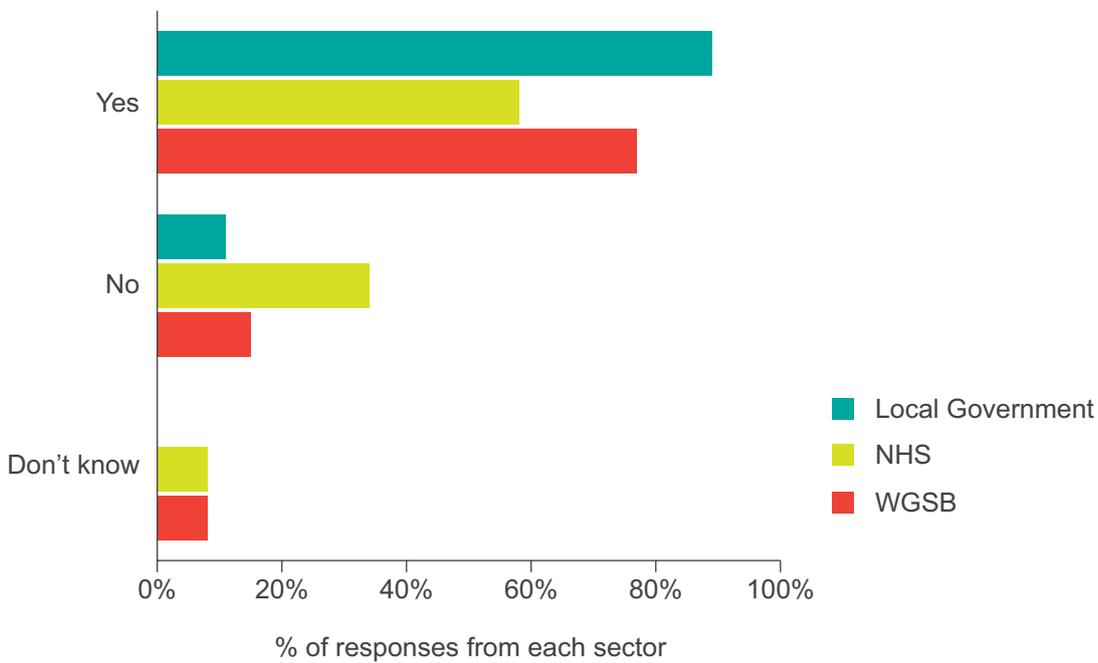
## Question 4: Please tell us more about the challenges your organisation faced between 2011-12 and 2014-15, and the way your organisation has responded. This could include your main concerns or examples of actions taken, or experiences that others could learn from.

1.8     This question in the survey was an open text box inviting free comments. We received 160 responses to this question and we identified some common themes.

1.9     Across all sectors, financial pressures were the most frequently mentioned challenge, with 78 respondents explicitly mentioning this issue. Reducing budgets were typically mentioned alongside a range of other pressures, such as increased demand (31 respondents), particularly for the NHS, and the capacity and capability of their organisations to maintain services or take forward more significant change (16 respondents).

1.10    Several respondents commented on staffing issues. Some set out that they had cut the number of staff in order to make savings (26 respondents), particularly those in local government. By contrast, 12 NHS respondents said that recruiting suitably qualified staff was a challenge for them.

1.11    Twelve respondents from the local government sector told us that uncertainty about their budgets had been a challenge for them. Many of the 12 were exercised by what they saw to be a lack of notice about larger-than-expected cuts to their funding from the Welsh Government. Several said the uncertainty over funding hampered their ability to plan their finances. Our report, **A Picture of Public Services 2015**, reports the Welsh Government's view that it did provide sufficient notice to local government bodies on changes to their funding. Some respondents also commented on the uncertainty regarding local government reorganisation.

'Because we do not have 3-5 year budget settlements the majority of the cuts have to be based on projected settlement figures that change including in year cuts. This does not allow a planned and systematic approach to budget/service reductions… The clear lack of Welsh government thinking has led to piecemeal cuts with little strategic thinking.'

National park authority senior manager

'Intimations from Welsh Government of a reduction in funding but without sufficient, or indeed for quite a period of time any, indication of the level of reduction required of us. This meant a lot of work from officers in preparing a number of scenarios for making efficiencies together with cutting services which wasted time, created uncertainty within the organisation and was inefficient in planning for the future.'

Local government cabinet/authority member

1.12 Some respondents described the difficult actions that their organisations had taken to address the challenges. Twenty-four respondents commented on reductions in staffing levels and 20 commented on reductions in service levels in response to the pressures they faced. Most of those that described reductions in staffing and service levels were in the local government sector. However, some NHS respondents reported that they were struggling and had reached a point where reductions in services were being contemplated.

'Challenges around Tier 1 Targets, financial deficit and political expectations all led to decisions which had a significant impact on increasing waiting times for some specialties. Decisions to make things balance in year caused us to then have an insurmountable challenge the following year (i.e. stopping elective surgery to cope with flow meant our 36 and 52 week waits for orthopaedic surgery dramatically increased as did the cost of dealing with it.'

NHS senior manager

'Mostly [savings proposals] has resulted in staff reductions and reconfiguration of operations. There has been some impact in some areas on service provision for residents.'

Local government leader/cabinet member

'Financial cuts have led to redundancies and cutting some services we would have liked to continue.'

Local government leader/cabinet member

'All the traditional areas of efficiency are now exhausted and the ability to deliver this level of savings from 15/16 is not sustainable without considering service reductions.'

NHS senior manager

1.13 Some respondents commented positively on the changes that their organisation had made, and some saw austerity as an opportunity to push through necessary changes. The nature and extent of the changes described varied. We identified 25 respondents whose comments referred to incremental 'efficiency' initiatives or programmes. Twenty-two respondents described having transformed some services or adopted alternative ways of providing services. In some cases, the same respondents referred to both developing new ways of working and more traditional efficiency. Fourteen respondents specifically stated that better planning, including the move to three-year integrated plans in the NHS, had helped them to meet the challenges they had faced during this time.

'We have undertaken a comprehensive review of services, developed a whole council efficiency programme and are delivering on this programme. We accept that not all can be achieved from this approach so we have also developed a programme of Alternative Delivery Models (Tecal, mutual, collaboration) which we are now embarking upon. We have also engaged with local communities in relation to community assets and have embarked on a programme of asset transfer.

Local government senior manager

'We have responded by ensuring that better alternatives than admission are sought, and where an admission is needed, that we expedite return home. This helps flow of patients through the hospital. We are also changing care pathways to ensure that we more systematically offer support for lifestyle change and patient self-management, so we prevent poor health and delay progression.'

NHS senior manager

'The changes in the past have largely been comparatively minor tweaks and 'salami slicing' of services in light of modest cuts. … In hindsight these measures have made us a leaner and more focused organisation…which is clear on its core business. Looking forward service redesign at a more systemic level will be required and we will have to stop doing some things completely.'

Local government senior manager

'The move to a 3 year financial plan was, I believe, a sensible step in encouraging longer term planning and accountability.'

NHS board member

# Part 2

What public service leaders said about
the current financial year (2015-16)
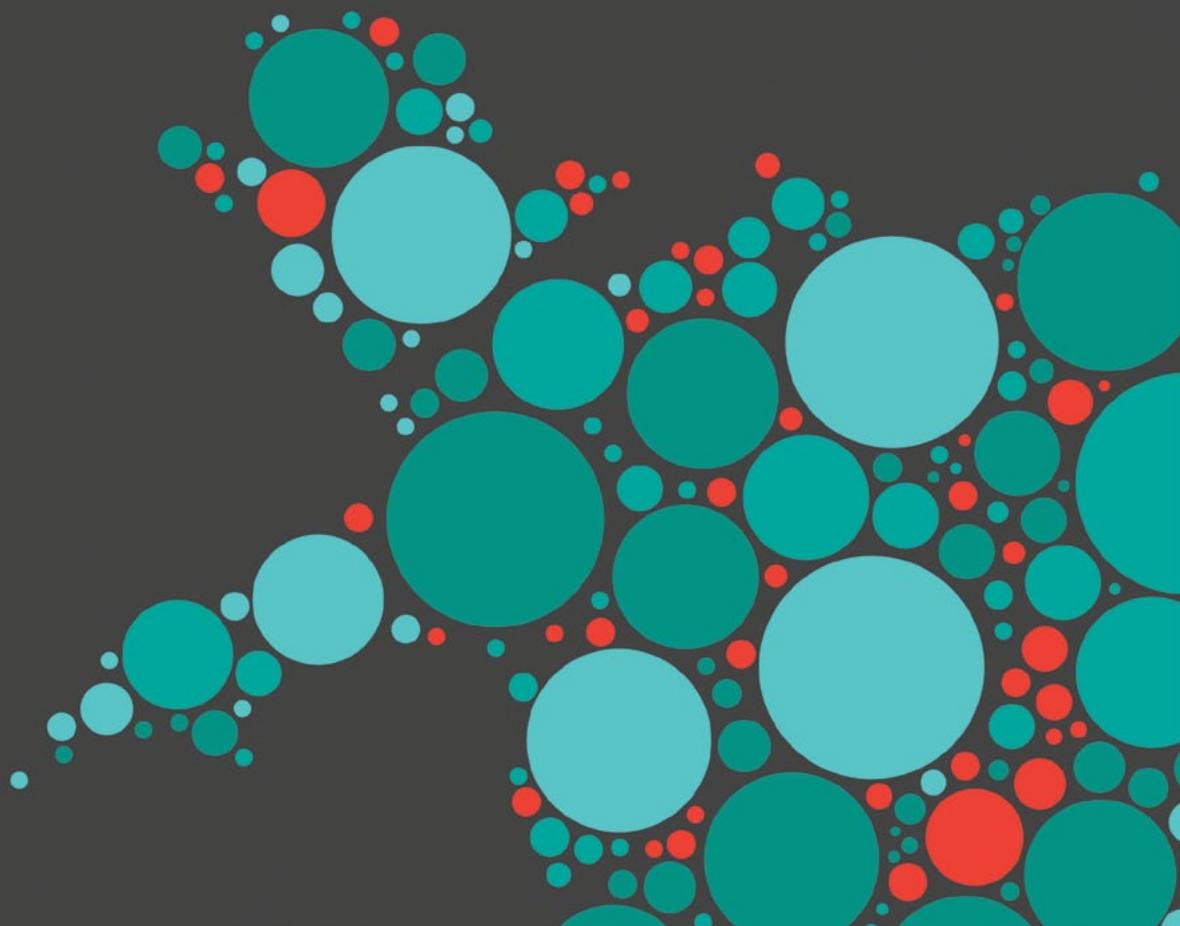
## Question 5: How confident are you that your organisation can make the financial savings it needs to this year?

2.1 We wanted to understand the financial pressures that public services faced at the time of our survey. We asked whether respondents were very confident, fairly confident or not confident that they could make the savings they needed to this financial year. Across all sectors, a majority (183 respondents; 79 per cent) told us they were very or fairly confident that they could make the savings that they needed to this year.

Figure 7 – How confident are you that your organisation can make the financial savings it needs to this year? (All sectors)
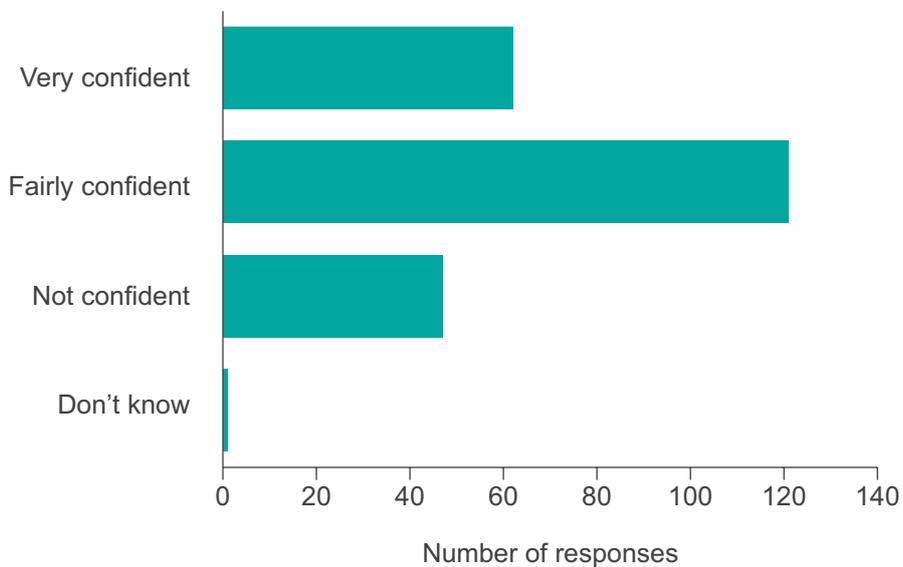
2.2 Figure 8 shows that there are some clear differences between different sectors. The proportion of those in the NHS who reported being very or fairly confident was noticeably lower than for respondents from local government and WGSBs.

Figure 8 – How confident are you that your organisation can make the financial savings it needs to this year? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
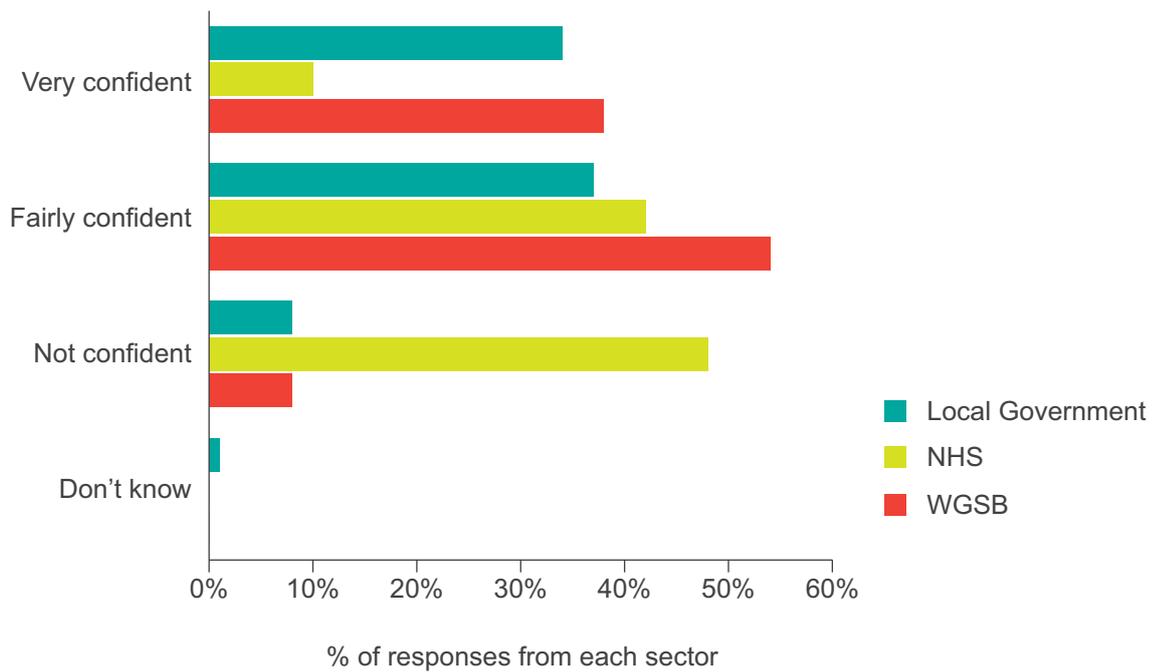
# Question 6: Do you think that making financial savings will have a significant detrimental impact on service levels or quality in this financial year?

2.3    We wanted to understand how public service leaders think that efforts to make financial savings this year will impact on service users (Figure 9). Overall, most respondents told us that making the savings they needed to this year would have a detrimental effect on service levels or quality (119 respondents; 52 per cent).

Figure 9 – Do you think that making financial savings will have a significant detrimental impact on service levels or quality in this financial year? (All sectors)
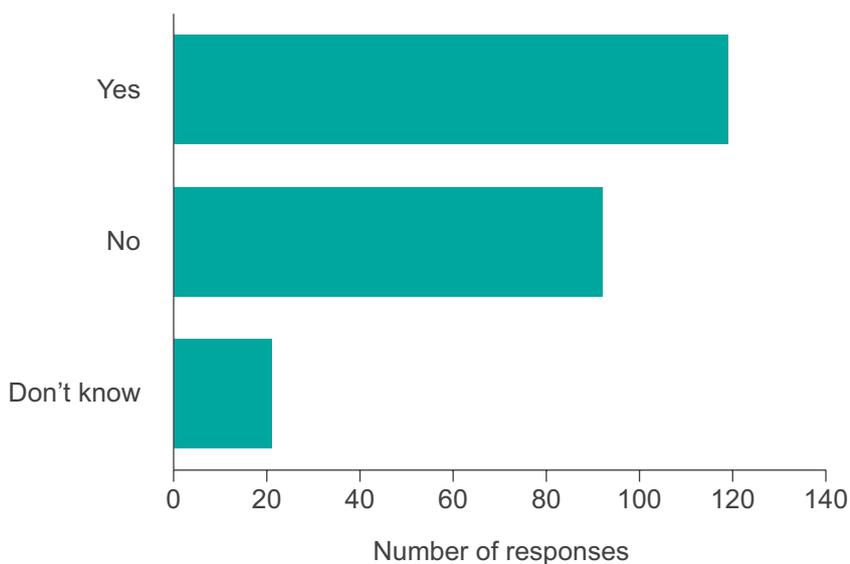
2.4 Overall, there was little difference in the answers from each sector. Local government respondents seem to have been slightly more likely than those in the NHS to say that making financial savings would have a detrimental impact on service levels or quality. However, the small sample size means that this difference may not be statistically significant.

Figure 10 – Do you think that making financial savings will have a significant detrimental impact on service levels or quality in this financial year? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
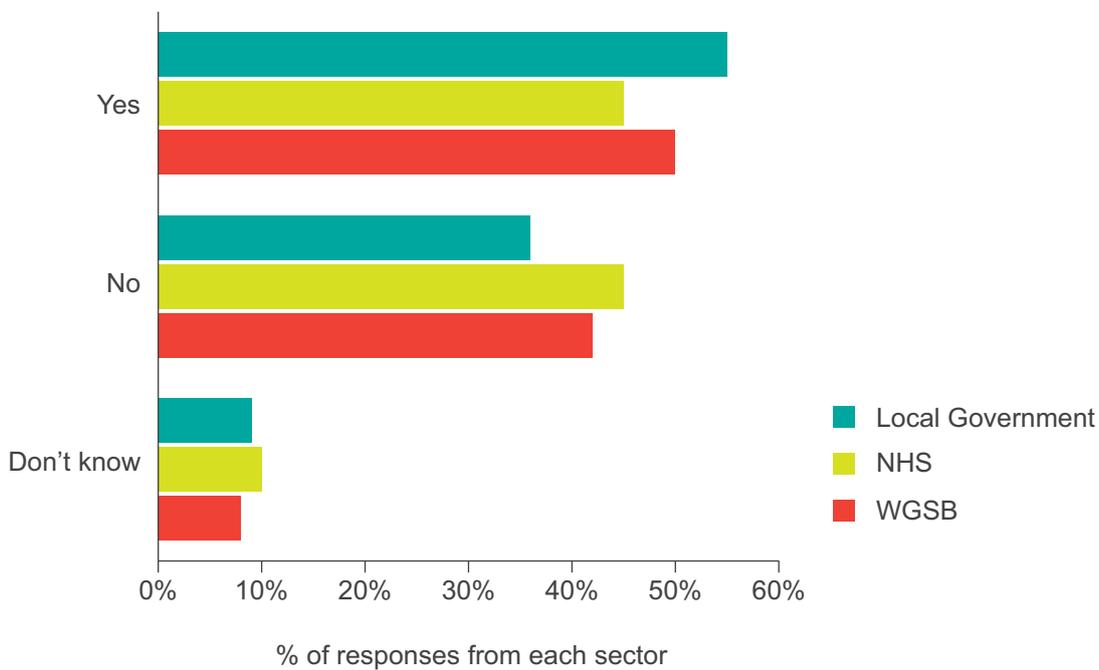
## Question 7: Please tell us more about your views on the challenges faced by your organisation in the current financial year. This could include your main concerns or actions that your organisation is taking to address these challenges that you think others could learn from.

2.5   This question in the survey was an open text box. Our analysis showed some common themes. One hundred and sixty three respondents offered comments on this question. The themes reflect the position previously described in responses to question 4 for the period between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

2.6   The most frequently mentioned challenges were financial (40 responses). Nineteen respondents across all sectors reported concerns regarding their organisations' capacity to implement change. Twelve NHS respondents raised concerns about staff recruitment. Twelve respondents from the local government sector reported that their ability to realise further efficiency savings has been exhausted. Some in the NHS specifically referred to difficulty achieving the level of savings set out in their plans.

'Key concerns are about availability of qualified staff, particularly nurses and doctors, which is a UK wide issue.'

NHS senior manager

'Financial savings will be made this year but probably not as much as we have scheduled in our budget.'

NHS board member

'We no longer have opportunities for efficiency savings or salami slicing. We are now developing a strategic vision for the medium and long term which will define what service areas remain and what has to be discontinued.'

Local government senior manager

'The financial challenges are becoming ever more acute.'

Local government senior manager

'We are running out of options to continue current level of service.'

Local government senior manager

2.7 Some respondents talked about the action they had taken or planned to take in 2015-16. Twenty-five respondents referred to reducing service levels and 13 referred to reducing staff numbers. These respondents were almost all from the local government sector. Ten respondents reported that they had, or intended to, increase collaboration with partners in 2015-16. Eight respondents referred to engaging the public although the comments varied from engaging the public in decision making to informing them so that they better understand the scale of the challenges. Some highlighted the challenge of engaging the public in understanding the need for changes.

> 'Collaboration and sharing services will be increasingly important. There is emerging good practice in areas such as Health and Social Care that show the benefits of closer working.'
>
> Local government cabinet/authority member

> 'Yet more front line services will be cut and a significant number of staff will be lost.'
>
> Local government senior leader

> 'The challenge of making our communities understand and accept the need to do things in a different way in order for them to get the best from the situation.'
>
> Local government cabinet/authority member

2.8 It is worth emphasising that only a few NHS respondents set out what actions their organisation had taken. Out of the actions that were mentioned by more than one NHS respondent, three respondents mentioned engagement with the public, two mentioned prudent healthcare and two identified the need for radical or transformational change. No-one from the NHS said that they had reduced staff or services, although one respondent said that they were at the point of having to withdraw services in order to remain in budget.

'A number of the structural improvements that are being introduced in the organisation will take time to fully embed (e.g. morning discharges) and some of the improvements that are made (e.g. better liaison with GPs by consultants) take time to diffuse (and become common practice). Also, patient safety is paramount and if there is a vacancy or high sickness levels, then we will use agencies to assist with this. Other reasons are that some of the big transformational changes that need to take place and that would result in increased savings (e.g. complete service redesign linked to more services in communities) need time and energy to plan and implement. Although they are happening in places (e.g. diabetes pathway, dementia action plan, substance misuse, stroke, mental health), much of our time and energy is still taken up with 'getting our house in order'. This work also needs careful understanding and handling of professional roles and boundaries but hopefully Prudent Healthcare will help.'

NHS board member

# Part 3

# What public service leaders said about the future
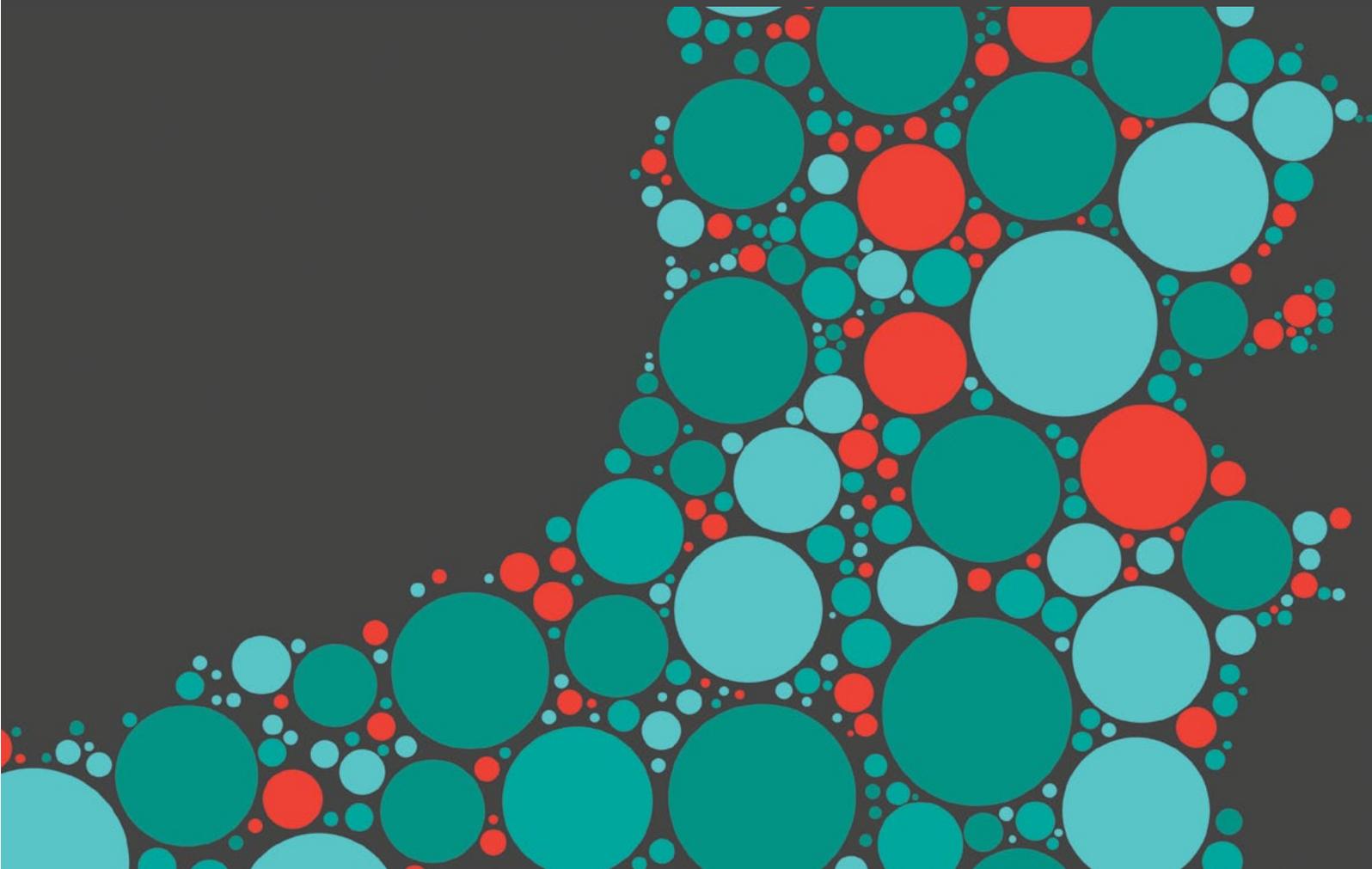
# Question 8: In the three years from 2016-17, how do you expect your organisation to change the way it delivers services?

3.1 We wanted to get an understanding of public service leaders' views of the kinds of changes to the way their organisation delivers services they expect to see in the coming years. We asked respondents to identify whether they expected change to be incremental or transformational. As with question 1, we did not define incremental or transformational change. Across sectors, the respondents expect to see transformational change to a majority of services.

Figure 11 – How do you expect your organisation to change the way it delivers services? (All sectors)



Number of responses
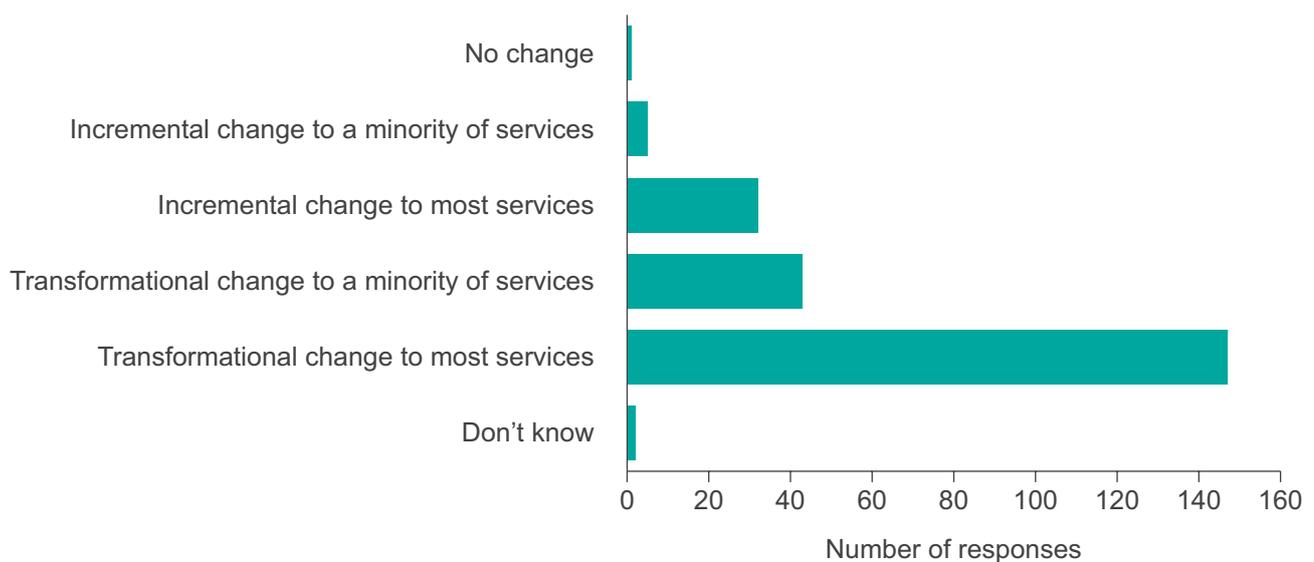
3.2   Figure 12 shows that there is a broadly consistent pattern between sectors. It appears that NHS respondents are less likely to expect transformational change to most services than local government. However, this may be due to small numbers of respondents rather than a real difference in expectations.

Figure 12 – How do you expect your organisation to change the way it delivers services? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
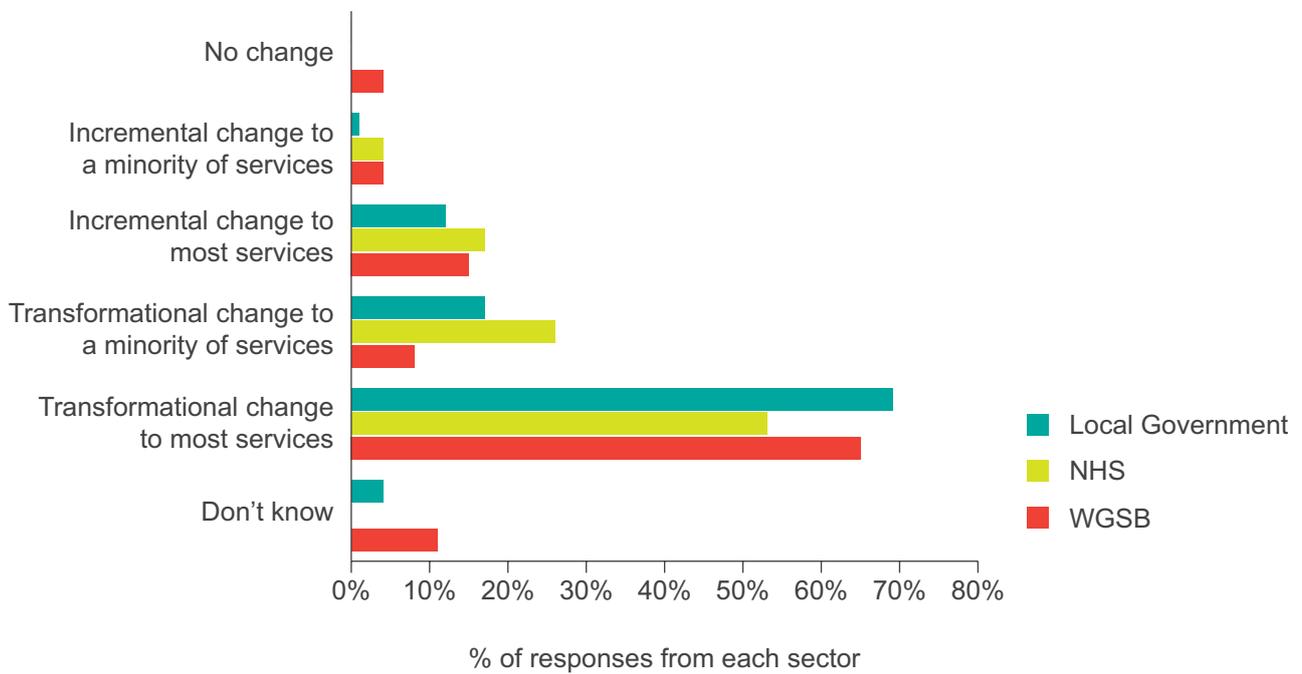
3.3    Overall, respondents are much more likely to report that they expect to see transformational change than they are to report that it has already taken place. Figure 13 shows that almost three times as many respondents expect to see transformational change to the majority of services in the three years from 2016-17 than reported they had made transformational change in the years 2011-12 to 2014-15.

Figure 13 – How to you expect your organisation to change the way it delivers services? (Compared to changes made between 2011-15)
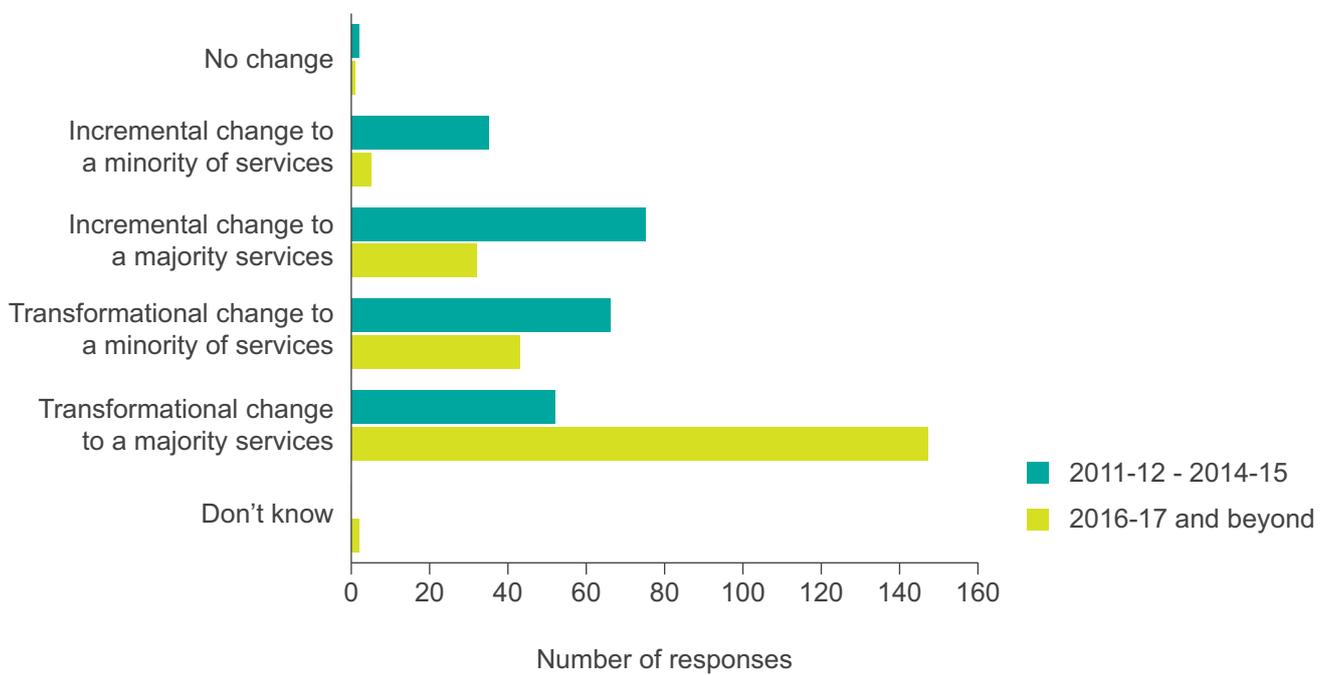
# Question 9: In the three years from 2016-17, where do you anticipate the balance between reducing services and improving efficiency will be?

3.4    We wanted to understand the extent to which public services planned to make savings from greater efficiency or from reducing levels of activity in future. Figure 14 shows  that slightly more respondents (90 respondents; 39 per cent) said the savings would be made entirely or mostly through efficiency. It shows that 130 respondents; 57 percent said around half or more would come from reducing levels of service.

Figure 14 – In the three years from 2016-17, where do you anticipate the balance between reducing services and improving efficiency will be? (All sectors)
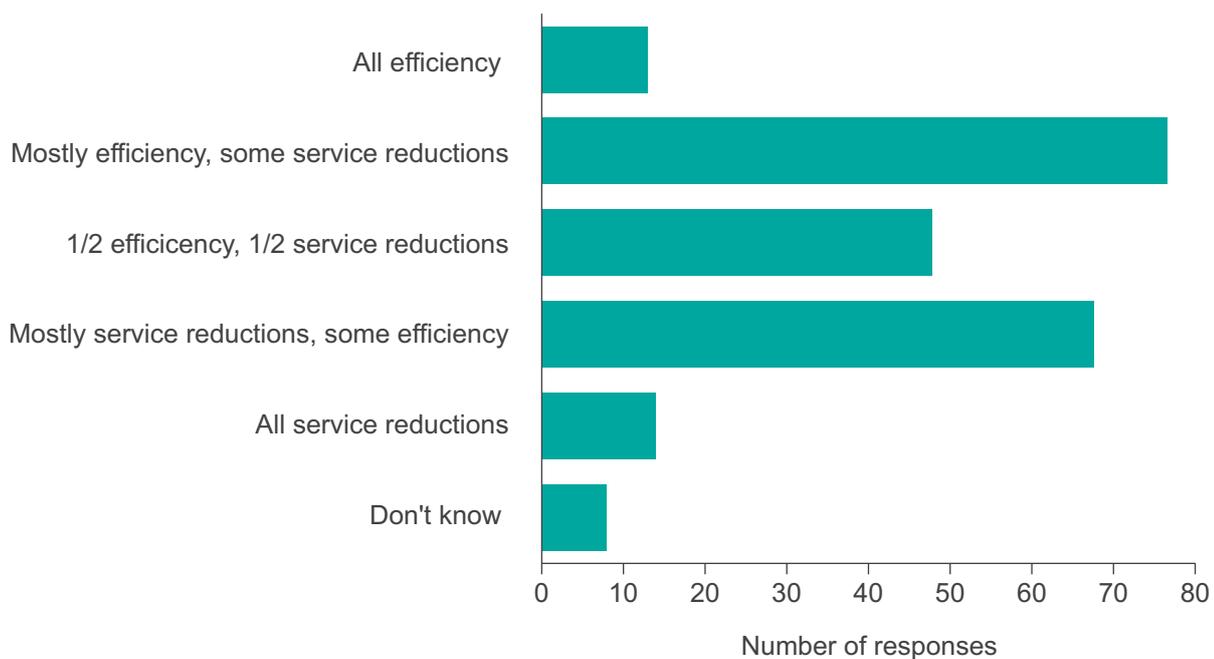
3.5    There is some variation between sectors. Figure 15 shows that respondents
       from the NHS and WGSBs remained likely to cite 'mostly efficiency and some
       service reductions' as the most popular answer. In the local government sector,
       respondents that thought savings would come mostly from efficiency were very
       much in the minority. For that sector, the most popular answer was 'mostly
       reductions and some efficiency' followed by 'half efficiency and half reductions'.
       The more pessimistic views of local government on the future can be contrasted
       to their response to question 2, relating to 2011-12 to 2014-15, where the majority
       of local government respondents said they had made savings through improved
       efficiency and some reductions.

Figure 15 – In the three years from 2016-17, where do you anticipate the balance
between reducing services and improving efficiency will be? (Categorised by sector)
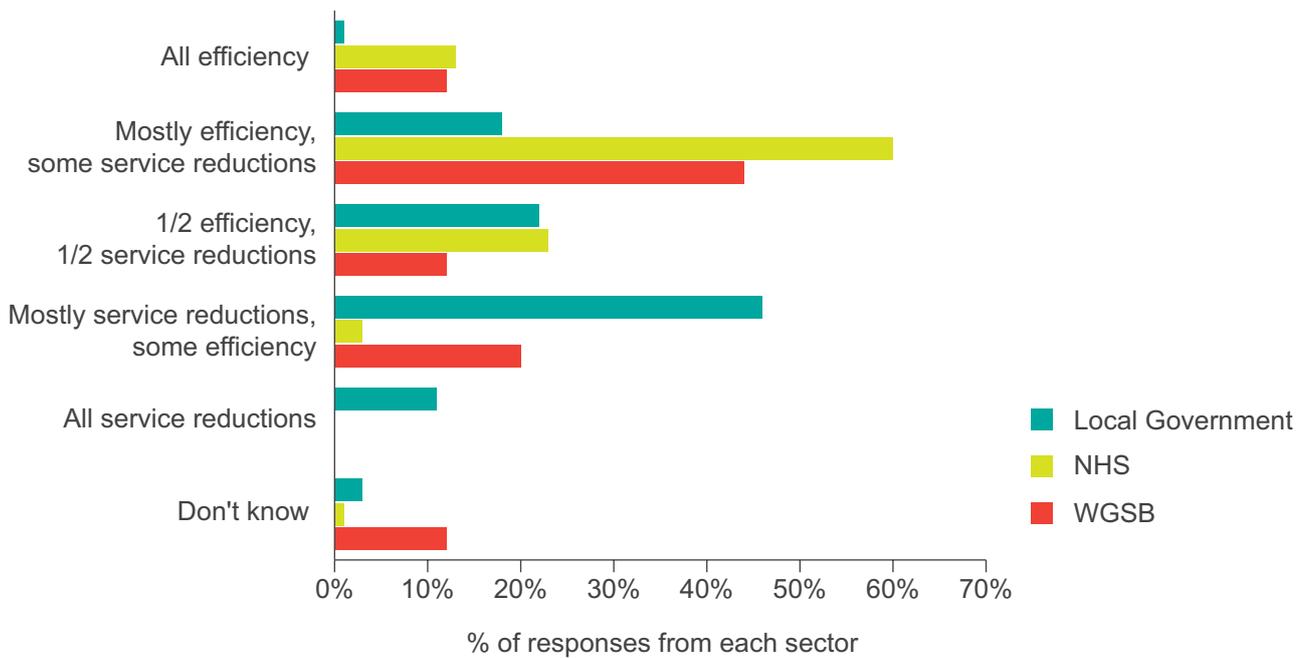
3.6     Figure 16 compares views about future savings to the response to question 2, which asked about past savings. It shows that respondents are considerably more likely to expect cuts to services in the future than has been the case so far.

Figure 16 – The balance between reducing services and improving efficiency (2011-15 compared to 2016 and beyond)
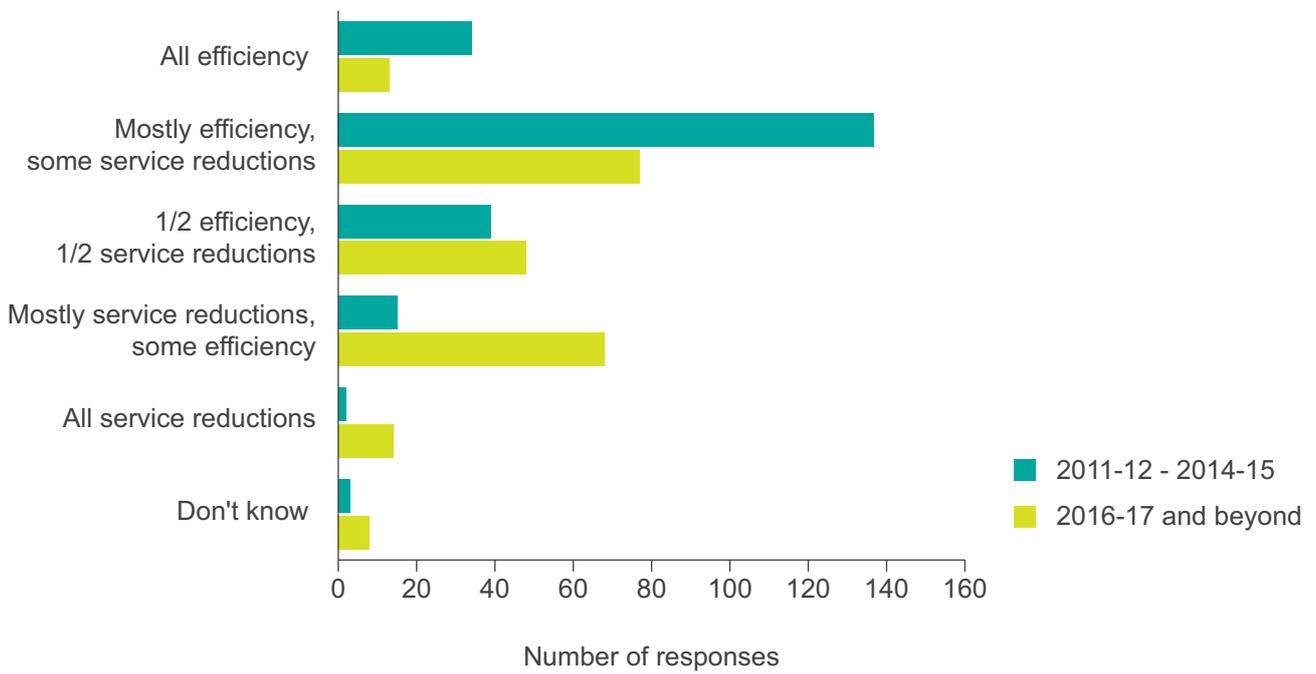
# Question 10: What do you see as the three main challenges for your organisation in the medium to long term?

3.7    We wanted to know what public services leaders saw as the main challenges in future. We asked respondents to choose three challenges, in no order of preference. Overall, 'financial pressures' was the most commonly chosen challenge, followed by demographic changes and public expectation.

Figure 17 – What do you see as the three main challenges for your organisation in the medium to long term? (All sectors)



Number of responses
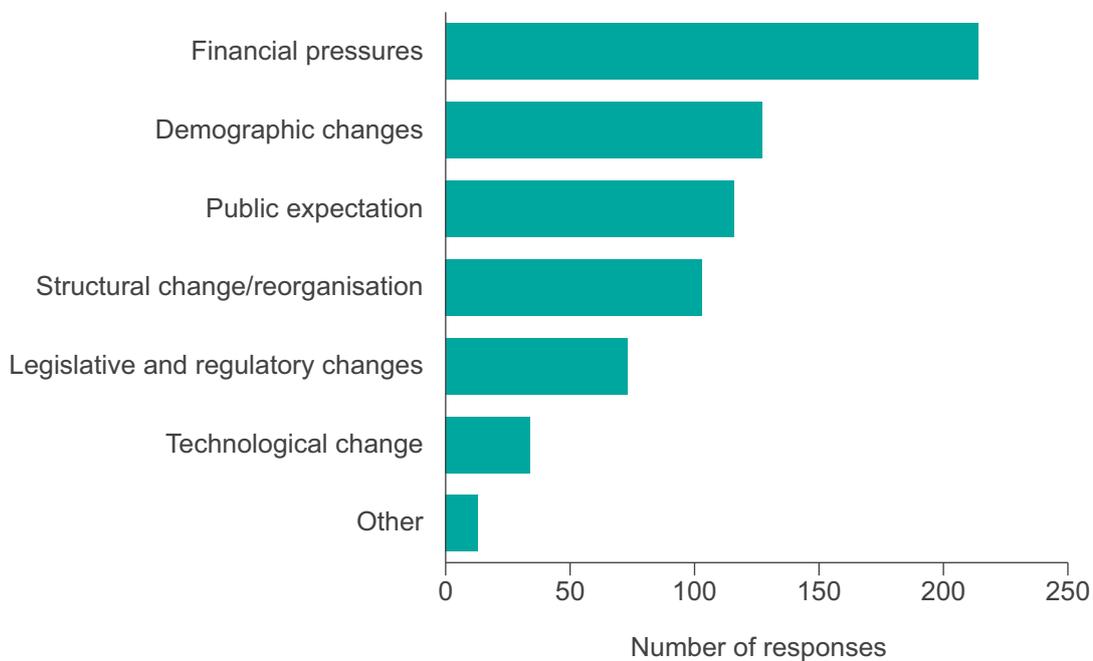
3.8    Figure 18 shows that there were some differences between sectors. Across all sectors, financial pressure was the most frequently chosen challenge. For respondents from the NHS and the local government sector, demographic change was the next most frequently mentioned challenge. The local government sector was more likely than other sectors to see structural change/reorganisation as a key challenge. Public expectation was a common concern across all sectors, especially for the NHS. Legislative and regulatory changes appear to be a particular concern for WGSBs.

Figure 18 – What do you see as the three main challenges for your organisation in the medium to long term? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
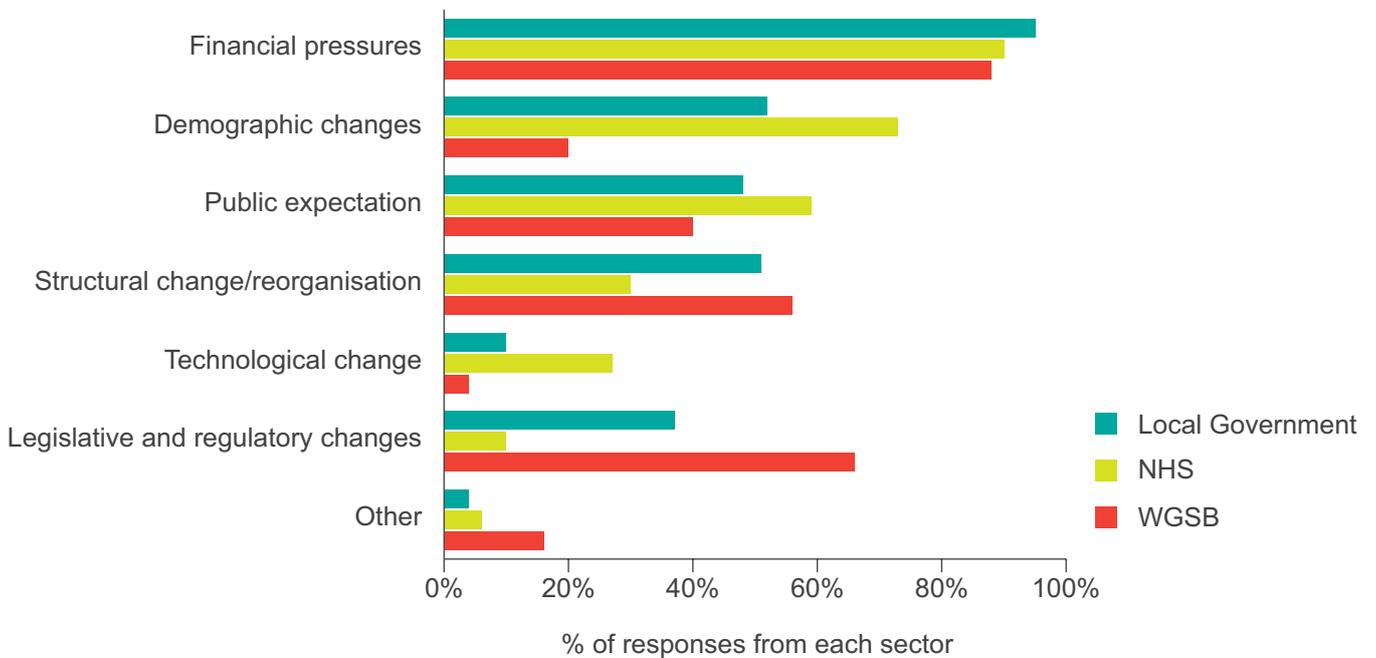
# Question 11: What are the three most important changes you are planning to make to transform services?

3.9    We wanted to understand the kinds of changes that public services plan to make in order to transform services. We asked respondents to choose what they considered to be the three most important changes from a list. It should be noted that some of those that chose 'other' took the opportunity to say that they intended to use a mix of all of the options offered in this question. Overall, the three most commonly chosen approaches to transforming services were:

- Collaboration with other public sector organisations
- Lean/business process improvement methods
- Service user input into service user design and/or delivery

Figure 19 – What are the three most important changes you are planning to make to transform services? (All sectors)



Number of responses
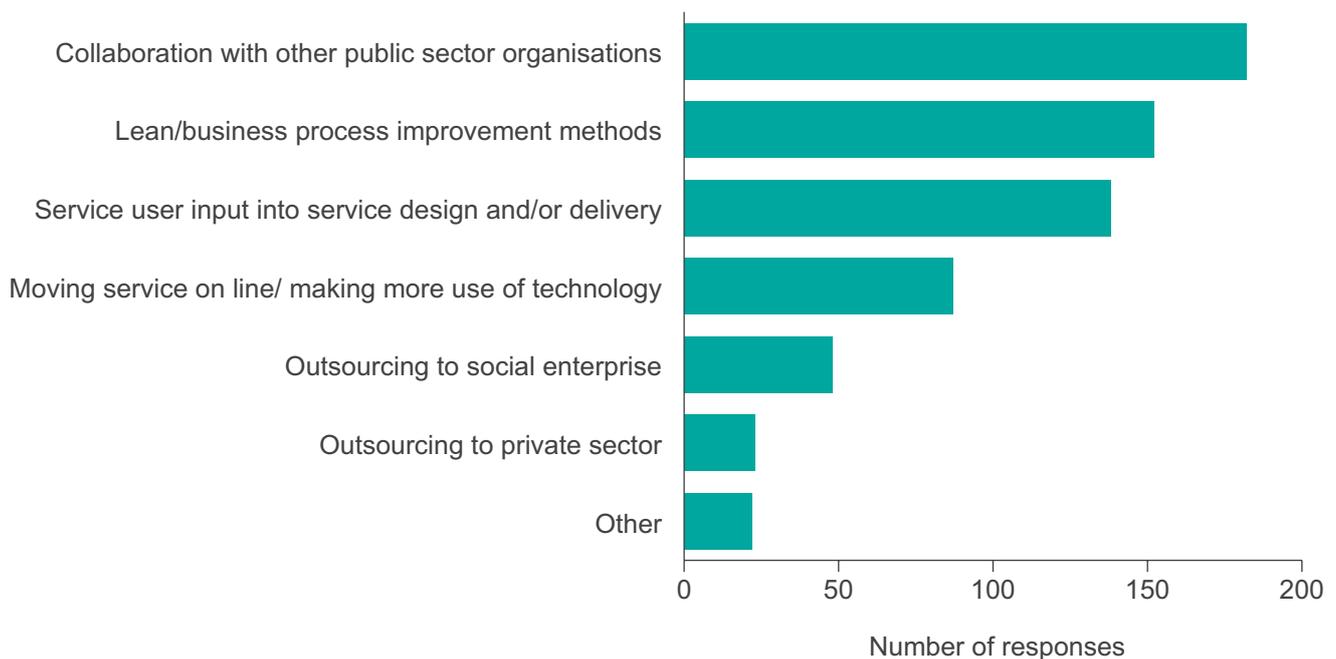
3.10 Within each sector, there was some variation, but 'collaboration with other public sector organisations' was consistently the most frequently chosen option. NHS respondents were most likely to choose service user input into service design and/or delivery as one of their top three. Local government was far more likely than other sectors to choose outsourcing, either to private or social enterprises, as one of their top-three approaches to transforming services.

Figure 20 – What are the three most important changes you are planning to make to transform services? (Categorised by sector)



% of responses from each sector
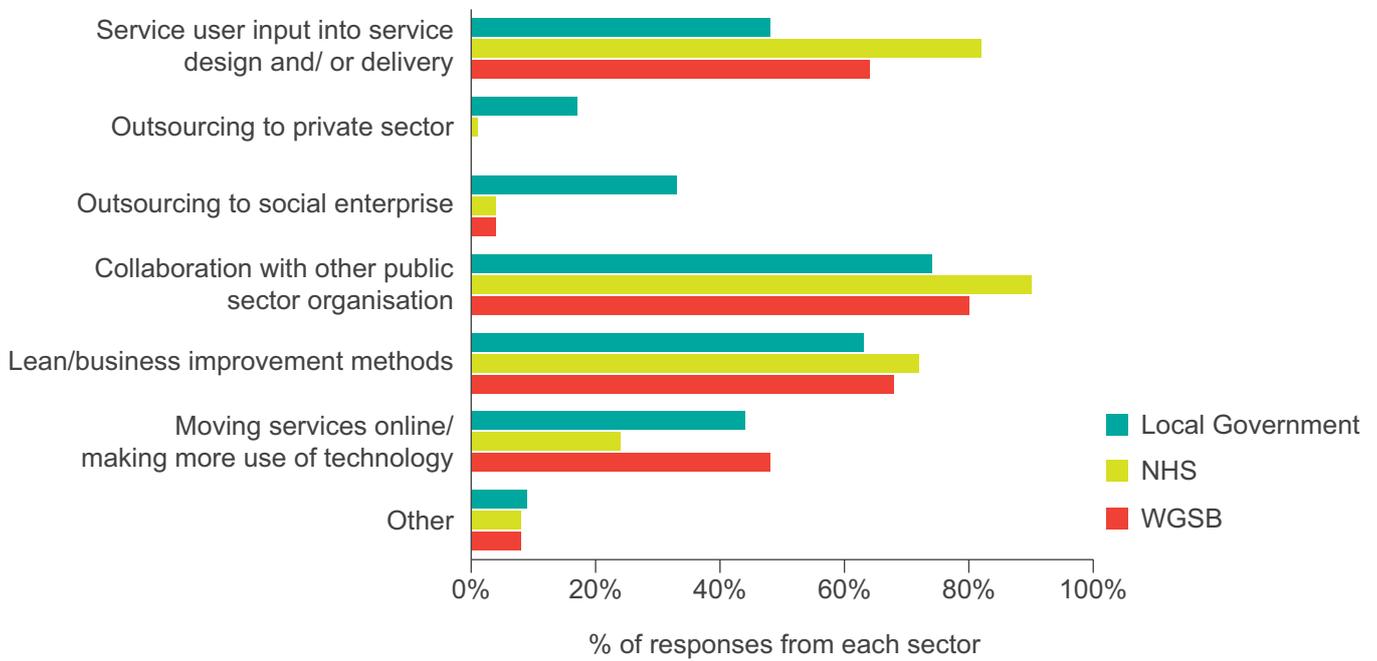
## Question 12: Please tell us more about your views on the challenges your organisation faces over the medium to long term. This could include your main concerns or your views on the kinds of changes that your organisation will need to make in order to respond to the challenges it faces.

3.11   As this question did not provide options to choose from, we received a diverse range of responses. In total, we received 160 responses to this question. The responses to this question were diverse with many respondents referring to specific issues that were cited by few or no other respondents.

3.12   Overall, respondents were more likely to describe the difficult challenges they face rather than their intended response. As with the answers to previous questions, the most frequently mentioned challenge was financial (24 respondents). Eighteen respondents referred to challenges around organisational capacity to drive through change in the timeframe needed. Fifteen respondents – mostly from the NHS – highlighted changing demographics as a key future challenge. Eight respondents reported concerns about short-term budget settlements making it difficult for them to plan strategically over the medium to long term.

'I can't see that we will be able to balance the books after 2017 unless there is investment in public services or we close down anything other than the statutory responsibilities – they will also be affected and we will have to lower public expectation.'

Local government cabinet/authority member

'The increasingly frail elderly within the population served will present an ever increasing challenge which must be addressed through major revisions to the current service model.'

NHS board member

'The difficulty is that the level of cuts year on year gives little opportunity to plan ahead as councils are constantly fire fighting to keep heads above water. If for instance we could be given a 3 year budget we could plan more sensibly for the future.'

Local government board member

3.13 Twenty-four respondents reported challenges around local government reorganisation. Although the majority of respondents on this issue were from the local government sector, one respondent from a WGSB said that this would also cause challenges for them. It is also important to note that the majority of the responses did not debate the case for or against reorganisation, but sought to make the point that it is likely to be a distraction from other important challenges.

'The greatest challenge is the financial pressures on the organisation and also the anxiety around local government reorganisation and therefore our own reorganisation. It would be considerably helpful if there was clarity about LGR so that we can start the process of discussions with other organisations with whom we will be required to collaborate with.'

Sponsored body senior manager

'The prospect of local government reorganisation is clouding the issues around challenges to the organisation.'

Local government cabinet/authority member

3.14 Eleven respondents referred to political issues that they thought would be challenging for them. These issues included the difficulty of having an open debate in a political environment, and the difficulties that they anticipated in making decisions at a political level, particularly around election times. The responses referred to issues at both a local and national level. These responses were mainly from the local government sector, but some NHS respondents also raised these issues related to politics.

'The difficulty in having a frank discussion with the public about the challenges of increasing the health of an ageing population and responding to new medical advances, against the background of reducing public expenditure in a highly charged party political atmosphere.'

NHS board member

'There is a need to radically reset the services provided by local authorities to their citizens and this will require politicians to take extremely difficult policy decisions.'

NHS board member

'Key issue is political decision making around some of the very tough choices that need to be made.'

Local government cabinet/authority member

3.15 Some respondents also took the opportunity to tell us about what they planned to do or thought should be done in order to meet the challenges they described. The most frequently mentioned responses to the challenges were cuts to services (22 respondents), followed by the need for people to do more for themselves (12 respondents). A few respondents from the NHS highlighted the need to shift resources and focus towards primary/community care. The few WGSBs that commented on their plans to respond to challenges emphasised the need to increase the amount of partnership working they were undertaking.

'We will always need to deliver necessary services for those vulnerable who need them, but we must encourage independence, community involvement and healthier lives, we need people to engage in the process of change and understand why it is necessary, to encourage a 'can do society' not 'can't do'.'

Local government cabinet/authority member

'Biggest challenge is making a transformational change in public expectations of the NHS, and in the way public at all levels starts to take real responsibility for its own health rather than expect the NHS to do it for them.'

NHS board member

'Already the pattern for Social Services is year on year reduction in numbers of people receiving services despite evidence of increasing numbers of people in need.'

Local government senior leader

# Question 13: More generally, what do you see as the opportunities and barriers involved in successfully transforming public services over the medium to long term?

3.16 Question 13 was an open question, inviting free comments. We received 159 responses. Again, the responses to this question were diverse with many respondents referring to specific issues that were cited by few or no other respondents.

3.17 In general, respondents were clearer about the barriers they faced than the opportunities. Nevertheless, there were a number of responses that were optimistic about the opportunities to develop new ways of working. Twenty-nine respondents referred to opportunities for greater collaboration and partnership working with other organisations. Seventeen respondents mentioned the potential opportunities associated with making better use of technology. There was also an appetite for new ways of delivering services, with 15 referring to alternative delivery models and 13 respondents referred to scope for greater involvement for communities and individuals, including through co-production.

'The need for co-production and service user involvement is immense but this is poorly understood in the public sector and the investment required in people, skills and culture change is a long term fundamental requirement.'

Local government leader/cabinet member

'We need to get patients carers and families to design services as they always design pathways that make the most impact on people and are less medicalised and therefore less expensive and do less harm.'

NHS senior manager

'I believe the financial climate can drive genuine service improvement and help empower local people and communities.'

Local government senior manager

'The opportunities to unlock innovation and technology are growing… which will help to support changes in the absence of significant new funding.'

NHS senior manager

'Opportunities for real partnership working with mutual dependencies that plays to the strengths of operating in a small country with excellent networks.'

NHS senior manager

'Technology is offering new ways of delivering services, managing processes and even engaging with our communities.'

Local government senior manager

3.18 In terms of the barriers to transformation, again, the answers covered a diverse range of subjects. The most frequently mentioned was local government reorganisation. The majority of the 19 responses identifying reorganisation as a barrier came from the local government sector, but a small number of NHS and WGSB respondents also identified this as a potential barrier. It is important to note that, as with similar responses to earlier questions, the majority of respondents do not debate whether or not reorganisation should take place, but point out the practical difficulties they believe it will pose.

'Local government reorganisation dragging on is singularly unhelpful – it makes sense to get on with it quickly to enable us to get on with the real task of designing services that are sustainable and meaningful for the public. Further delays will only make our task more difficult and drawn out.'

Local government senior manager

'Local government reorganisation is unhelpful; it is difficult to plan long term due to the continuing decline in resources and the uncertainty of what the 'map' will look like in 3/4 years, and what will be the priorities for a new enlarged Council area.'

Local government senior manager

'The current focus is about 'the map' for local government reorganisation. This is shuffling the deckchairs and retaining the existing public services model. We need something more radical for Wales… All the talk of LGR is a big distraction and a huge cost, for in the end something that is simply not radical enough… It's not about 'local government' it's about 'public services'.'

Local government senior manager

3.19 Respondents also identified public and political expectations as a key barrier to change. Fourteen respondents identified public lack of understanding about the scale and nature of changes, and 10 referred to unrealistic expectations. Fifteen respondents identified the political environment and expectations as a barrier. These issues of understanding and politics were particularly prevalent in comments from the NHS. Four respondents specifically identified the need for a national public debate about the level of service that the public expects and how much that costs.

'I think the biggest issue would be the major cultural change this implies, this is turning back the notions of the welfare state it may lead to resentment and rivalry between those who receive and those who don't. It will put strain on front line workers who will bear the brunt of public reaction to the changes.'

Local government senior manager

'The difficulty in having a frank discussion with the public about the challenges of increasing the health of an ageing population and responding to new medical advances, against the background of reducing public expenditure in a highly charged party political atmosphere.'

NHS board member

'In summary, balancing public expectation about the availability of services, [particularly local access, against the need to concentrate many services to ensure safety, quality and sustainability. A national debate is needed on these issues; local approaches to strategic change are too easily challenged by the public and are often then not supported by politicians.'

NHS senior manager

'Radical service reorganisation is needed and there needs to be true political buy in to the need for this.'

NHS senior manager

3.20 Respondents also made reference to other difficulties in achieving change. Twelve respondents highlighted problems of resistance to change in their own and other organisations. Eleven respondents highlighted the lack of time and/or capacity to manage and implement change. Respondents' comments on capacity included the capacity of their own staff and partners.

'It takes time to reconfigure, transform services. Over the past few years we have all lost capacity, expertise and knowledge and given the expected funding levels in future years this is not expected to improve.'

Local government senior manager

'Barriers include reluctance on the part of certain key players to change the way things have traditionally been carried out.'

Local government senior manager