NUANCE

Report: public sector strategies for 2022

How leaders can help their teams focus on citizen support by tackling admin burdens

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Public services in the UK: a sector under pressure

After 18 months of unprecedented pressure on UK public services, we wanted to understand how the public sector was preparing for a post-pandemic future. So, we surveyed more than 100 public sector professionals to learn about their priorities for 2022, and the challenges they're facing as they build their strategies.

The survey

To better understand how public sector organisations are making decisions and planning for 2022, we started the survey with some questions around business goals for the next year.

Our main aim was to understand the real impact of admin and documentation requirements on public sector professionals— and how factors such as typing habits and working environments are affecting that admin burden. We were also interested in the technologies people are using to make their working lives easier, particularly speech recognition.

In the following sections, we'll outline our key findings, and reflect on how public sector organisations and individual professionals can address some of the issues and take advantage of new opportunities to boost efficiency and service.

1. Striking a difficult balance between service and savings

Maintaining an effective balance between budget and service can be a challenge for any organisation. But it's especially complex for public sector organisations, with shrinking budgets making it even harder to meet increasingly high citizen expectations. Current Institute for Fiscal Studies projections indicate the UK's public services are facing up to £17 billion in cuts from April 2022.[1]

We asked our respondents to select their top three priorities for the next 12 months—and that delicate balancing act is reflected in their answers. Many are focused on improving the services their teams provide in the coming year, but that work will need to be done with a close eye on the number two priority, cost savings.

Here are the top priorities for public sector teams in 2022:

Priority	Percentage
Improving citizen service	43%
Cost savings	37%
Boosting productivity	33%
Implementing new technologies	27%
Cloud adoption	23%
Increasing employee satisfaction	21%
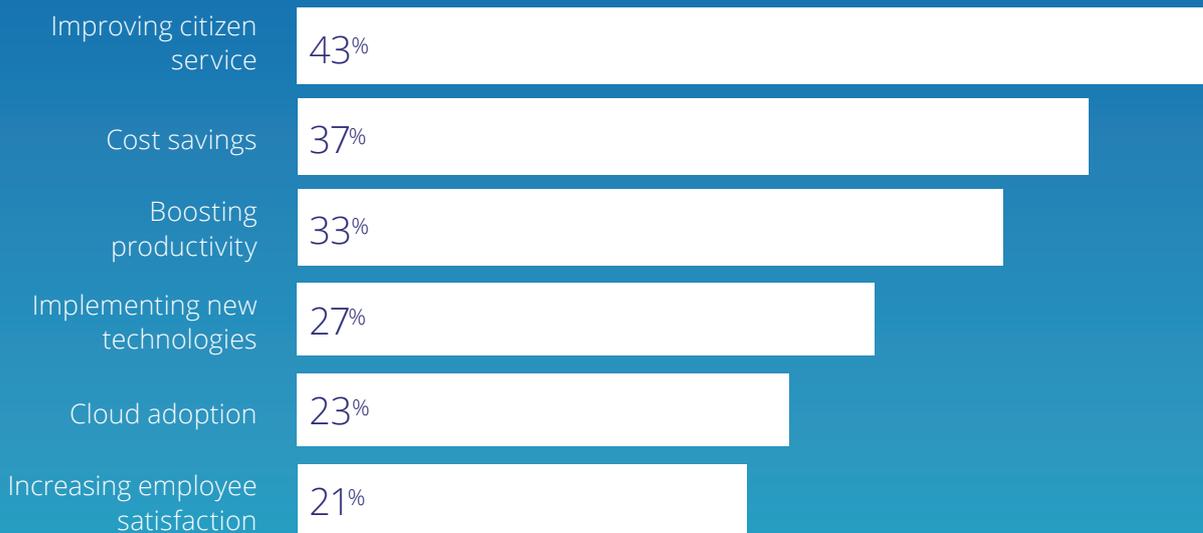
Although there is a wide spread of different priorities across our respondents, they can all be complimentary goals. If public sector leaders choose the right solutions, new technologies and cloud adoption will help boost productivity and save on costs by replacing outdated legacy systems. And with better tools, employees are often happier in their work, which makes them more productive[2] and more likely to deliver a higher standard of service.

1 theguardian.com/business/2021/jul/21/uk-public-services-face-cuts-of-up-to-17bn-says-ifs
2 papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3470734

2. Most public sector professionals spend over half their workday typing

Well over half of the public sector professionals we surveyed reported spending at least four hours a day typing for work, with 54% spending a further hour or more typing for personal reasons once they've finished work for the day. On average, our respondents are typing for over seven and a half hours a day.

7 hours and 37 minutes

The average time a public sector professional spends typing every day.

To see how all those hours are allocated, we asked our respondents what kind of typing tasks they do most frequently in their role.

These are their main tasks:

| 58%	54%	51%	43%	40%
Internal communication	Citizen/customer communication	Filling out forms	Taking notes	Using a browser
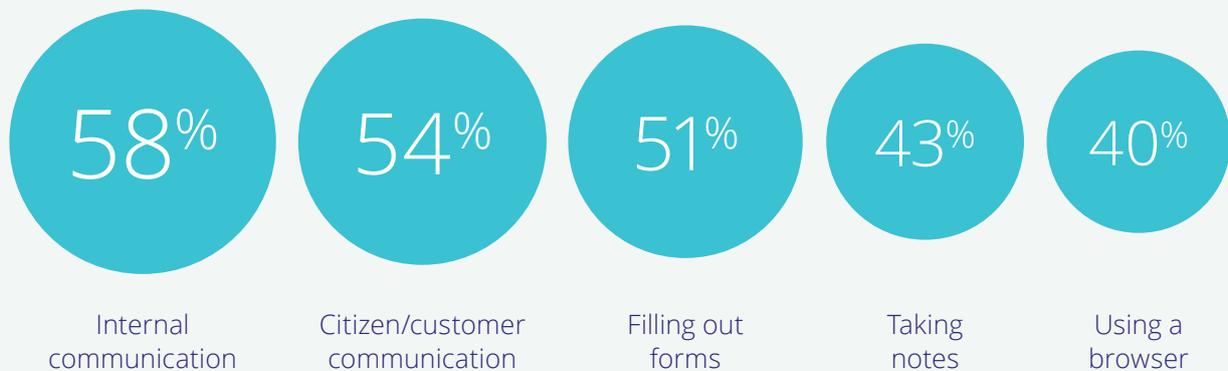
37% of our respondents said their typing speed was either average— 40 words per minute—or slow. Almost half agreed that their typing speed makes documentation tasks more difficult and time-consuming to complete.

With so much time spent on communicating, filling out forms, and typing up notes, organisations could benefit from looking to productivity-boosting technologies—tools designed to make repetitive tasks such as sending emails and drafting letters faster and easier. With fewer hours spent typing, there's more scope for public sector professionals to focus their time on improving services, working directly with citizens, and other higher-value tasks.

3. Stress-related burnout is exacerbated by the admin workload

Nearly three quarters of public sector professionals say they've experienced stress-related burnout at work. And part of that is down to the amount of admin they need to do on a daily basis; 84% agreed that their admin workload contributes to stress, with 57% admitting that they often struggle with the amount of documentation their role requires.

Two-thirds of our respondents also noted that their organisations experience difficulty sharing information, communicating, or collaborating across teams or departments—which often contributes to admin workloads.

75%	**84%**	**57%**
of public sector professionals say they've experienced stress-related burnout at work	agreed that their admin workload contributes to stress	agree that they often struggle with the amount of documentation work their role requires
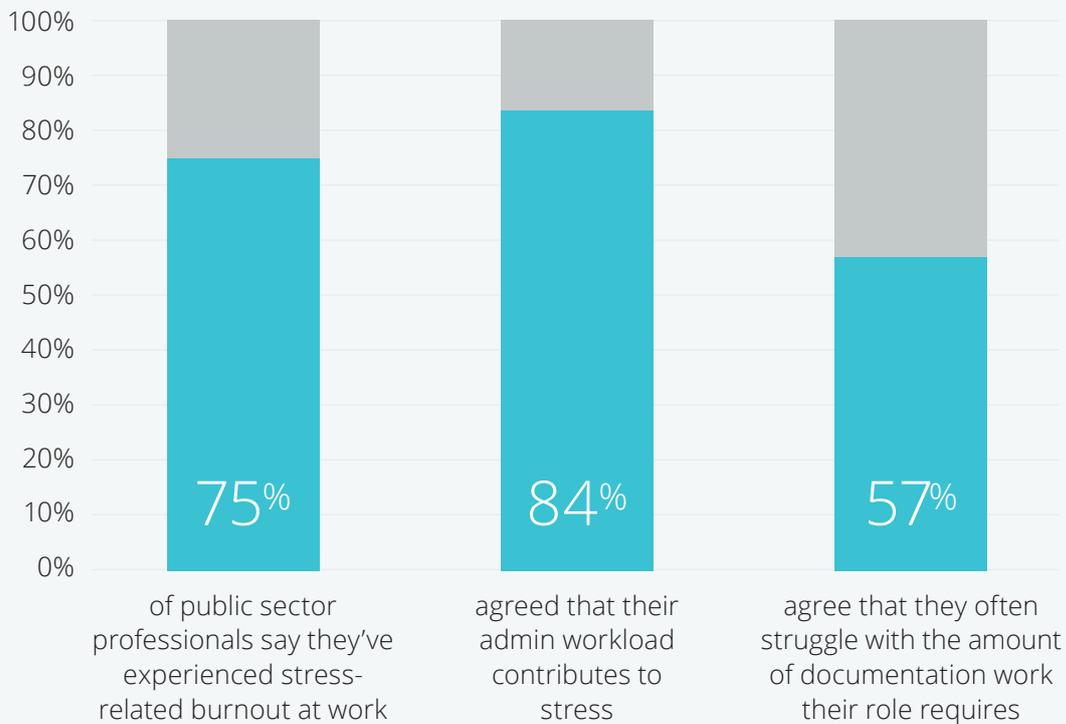
With increasing employee satisfaction in their top five goals for the next year, public sector leaders need to focus on addressing their people's stress levels and the workloads that contribute to them. However, we also identified another factor that's adding to admin and the stress it creates—adapting public services during the pandemic.

Overcoming public sector burnout with technology
Explore how technology can help streamline workloads for public services in our white paper.

4. Changing roles have created even heavier workloads

The pandemic has put many public sector organisations under enormous pressure. An Institute for Government report concluded that "failures in planning and funding cuts meant public services were not well prepared to handle the coronavirus crisis", noting particular pressure on hospitals, adult social care, and police and prison services.[3]

A recent LocalGov survey showed that many local government employees had taken on extra responsibilities during the first year of the pandemic, with many adding COVID response tasks on top of their usual workload.[4]

To see if our respondents had similar experiences, we asked about how our respondents' roles had changed in the past 18 months. More than a third reported taking on extra responsibilities to support their organisation during the pandemic.

And, crucially, 97% of them also said that their new responsibilities had increased their workload.

97%

of our respondents said that their new responsibilities during the pandemic had increased their workload

Public services professionals

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3 instituteforgovernment.org.uk/news/latest/public-services-coronavirus-crisis
4 localgov.co.uk/COVID-19-Is-local-government-the-forgotten-partner-of-the-pandemic

5. Most public sector professionals have never worked at an organisation that uses speech recognition

Just a third of our respondents currently use speech recognition technology—and only 35% of have worked for an organisation that used speech recognition.

Part of that is likely due to concerns over accuracy; 48% of public services professionals think that speech recognition tools struggle with their industry's specific terminology. This is actually their top barrier to adoption, followed by concerns that a solution would require a lot of IT management, and that speech recognition is difficult to use.

But this perception of speech recognition could mean public sector organisations are missing out on a powerful tool for productivity—and a cost-effective alternative to outsourcing.

35%

have worked for an organisation that used speech recognition

Public services professionals

65%

of public sector professionals have never worked at an organisation that used speech recognition
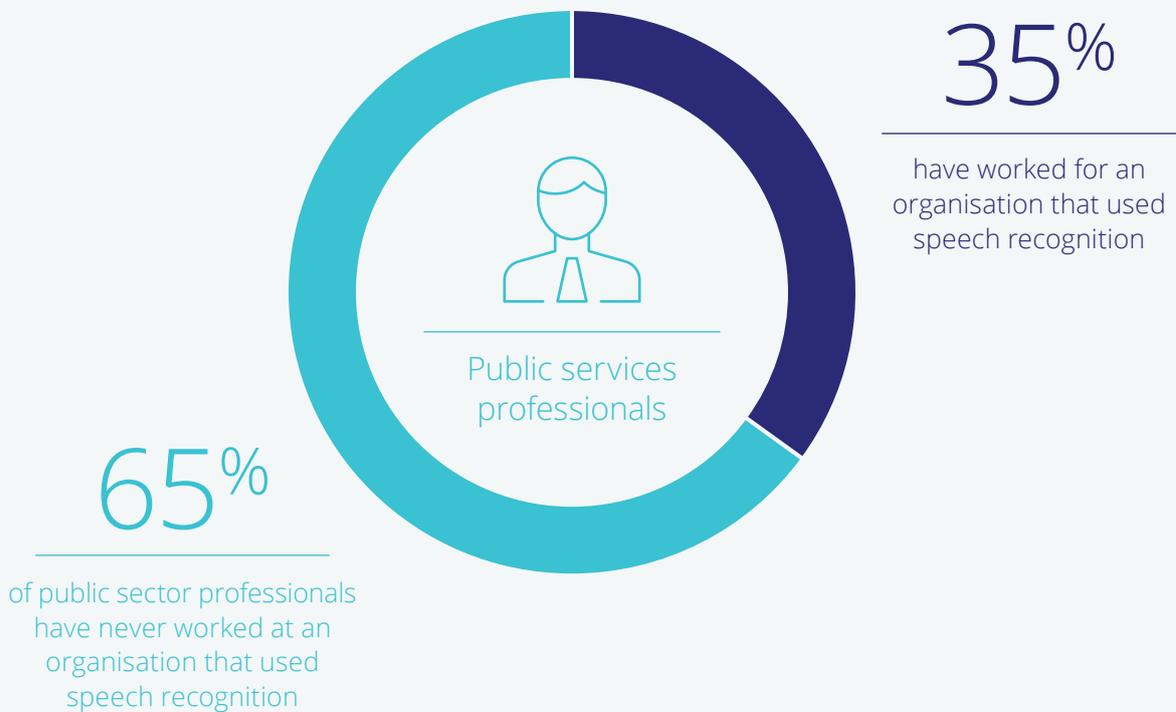
Alleviate the burden with Dragon

Just over half of public sector professionals say their organisation outsources transcription work and other admin tasks to typists. Although this can help alleviate some of the workload for employees, it often adds an unnecessary costs to budgets that are already over-stretched.

Speech recognition is a versatile solution that helps solve many of the problems facing overworked public sector employees—without major expenditure or adding to the list of tools for IT teams to manage.

Dragon Professional Anywhere is our purpose-built, professional-grade speech recognition solution, designed to deliver fast, accurate speech-to-text through an intuitive tool. With the ability to transcribe up to 160 words per minute, Dragon is more than three times faster than the average typing speed, and twice as fast as most professional typists.

Users can create documents, fill out digital forms, navigate apps, and even use browsers with voice commands. It provides up to 99% accuracy out of the box, and uses AI and machine learning to adapt to users' accent and speech patterns over time.

The dictionary is fully customisable, which makes it simple for individuals to add the non-standard words and phrases that they use frequently in their roles—particularly useful for roles with very specific terminology, such as social work.

Secure sensitive data
Our whole family of Dragon solutions is supported by a secure Microsoft Azure backend and 256-bit end-to-end encryption, which protects sensitive data in transit and at rest. It's also approved by the UK Government's Technology Code of Practice, so there are no compliance or integration issues to worry about.

The Nuance Management Centre also helps leaders track usage and visualise ROI, to help monitor productivity and cost savings.

Did you know?
Dragon Professional Anywhere is approved by the UK Government's Technology Code of Practice

61%

of public services professionals agree that the ability to complete documentation faster would help improve the service they provide citizens.
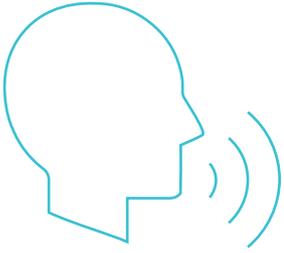
Speech recognition is a powerful way to rethink documentation and admin for public sector organisations.

Looking to the future of public services

After an especially difficult period for public sector organisations, leaders are turning their attention to the coming months, with citizen service and budget concerns at the top of their agenda.

However, admin workloads and stress levels are high—and won't be improving anytime soon without a new approach to complex, manual, and often paper processes. Speech recognition is a powerful way to rethink documentation and admin for public sector organisations. Our survey showed that users and decision-makers do have reservations about accuracy and complexity, but with the right solution, public sector organisations could offer their people an intuitive way to work using their voice—with high accuracy, and without adding to their IT team's workload.

Particularly for those organisations that plan to focus on technology adoption in the coming year, selecting a professional-grade speech recognition solution like Dragon Professional Anywhere will boost productivity, reduce outsourcing costs, and help employees focus on citizen service.

LEARN MORE

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dragon-professional-anywhere