



INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

Local Authority Conservation Staffing Resources in England 2020



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Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) has analysed and compared Local Authority capacity in 2020 in England with that from 2006, 2009 and 2018.
- 1.2. The key findings on capacity and change are
 - 6% of Local Authorities¹ do not have access to conservation advice in any form.
 - 25.50% of all Local Authorities have a service of any type which is below 0.5 Full Time Equivalent and may not be providing a credible service.
 - Since 2018 the conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 0.78%
 - Since 2006 the conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 35.22%
 - Since 2009 the conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 48.7%

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This report summarises Local Authority capacity in 2020 in England based on research and data collection funded exclusively by the IHBC
- 2.2. This report also compares changes in the last ten years to the levels of conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England comparing data collected in 2006, 2009 and in 2018 to that in collected in 2020.
- 2.3. The datasets have been collected using a consistent methodology from 2006 onwards, and IHBC has produced figures regularly since then, bar occasional interruptions in cycles of funding support²

¹ Two tier and unitary Local Authorities excluding County Councils

² This report does not use those figures produced in 2003, which were collected using different methodology.

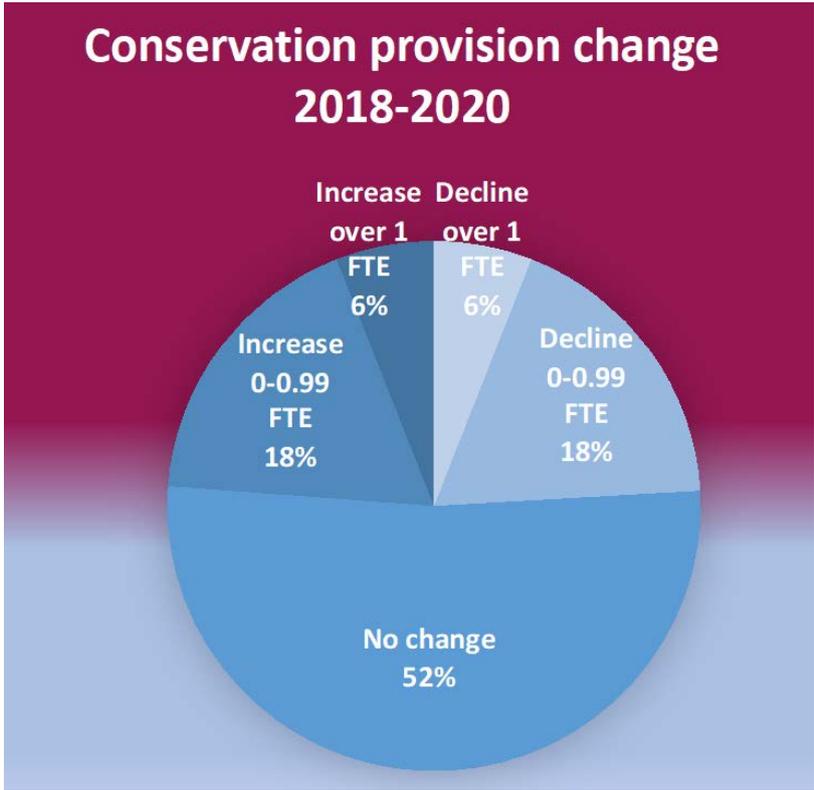
3. Local Authority conservation provision

- 3.1. Conservation advice is available to Local Authorities through permanent and temporary in-house staff (full time or part time), consultants and advice through agreements with other Local Authorities.
- 3.2. In the first half of 2020 there were estimated to be the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 529.27 posts providing conservation specialist advice to local authorities in England³.
- 3.3. Posts counted may be specialist conservation posts for which require a conservation professional or academic qualifications or extensive specialist experience. Alternatively they can also be for other staff, without specialist conservation training but who give specialist conservation advice. Administrative staff are not included and technical support posts only where the role carried out is giving professional advice. Time spent directly managing conservation staff is counted, as it has a direct consequence for the management of the historic built environment but not included is time spent on non-related activities or managing other parts of the service.

4. National change since 2018

- 4.1. **2020:** In the first half of 2020 there were estimated to be the Full Time Equivalent of 529.2, this had fallen from 533.44 in 2018
- 4.2. **2018-2020:** From 2018 (January-March) to 2020 (February – June) the conservation specialist advice to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 0.78%
- 4.3. **2018-2020:** Just over half (52.12%) of Authorities experienced no change in staffing over the two-year period from 2018 to 2020. Of those with change the losses and gains were broadly similar with 0.78% fall overall; 5.95% of Authorities lost the equivalent provision of 1 or more full time conservation specialists and 5.95% gained 1 or more FTE.; 18.13% of Authorities provision declined by between 0 and 0.99 FTE whilst 17.85% rose by between 0 and 0.99 FTE.

³ This is based on confirmed information of 524.14 FTE provided from all but seven Local Authorities in England and a further assumption of no change since 2018 made on those remaining seven. A further verifying calculation was made by analysing the data with those seven Authorities removed from 2018 and 2020 and this confirmed the conclusions giving the same percentage changes.



5. National change since 2006 and 2009

- 5.1. **2006-2020:** Since 2006 the conservation specialist advice to Local Authorities in England has fallen by 35.22% (a fall of 388.7 Full Time Equivalents)
- 5.2. **2009-2020:** Since 2009 the conservation specialist advice to Local Authorities in England has fallen by 48.7% (a fall of 557.23 Full Time Equivalents)

6. Regional breakdown

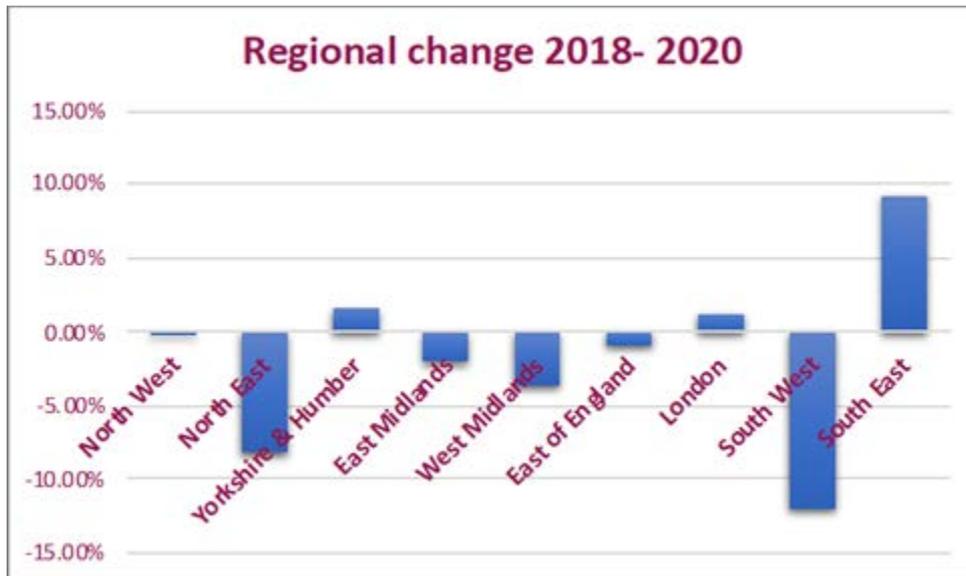
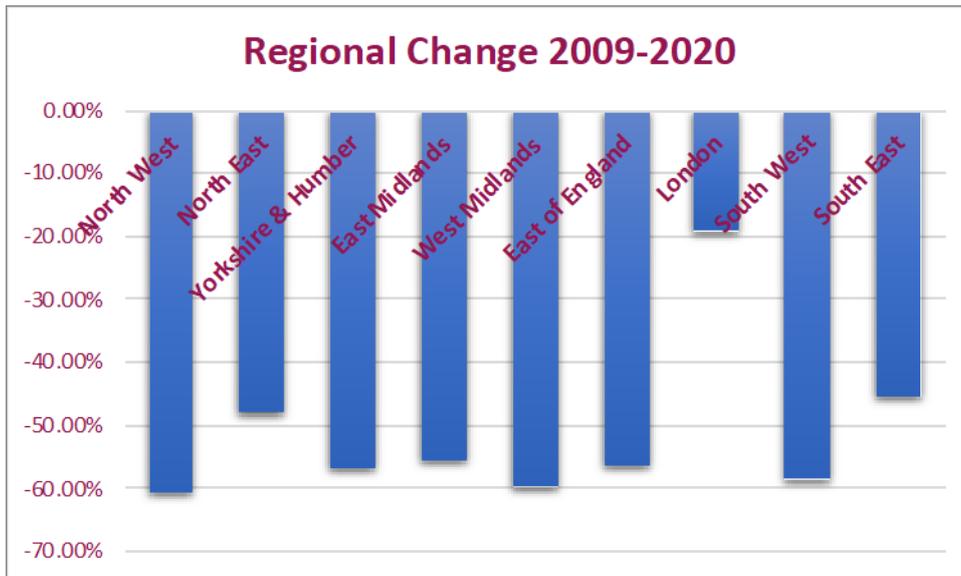
- 6.1. The regional breakdown of the data highlights a significant variation.
- 6.2. **South East:** In the South East staffing has risen by 9.18% since 2018. Although a moderate increase in the South East is encouraging the overall provision there has still fallen by 45.3% since 2009.
- 6.3. **South West:** Since 2018 in the South West provision has fallen by 12.00%. The fall in the South West is especially of note because it comes on top of continuous decline in previous years. The 2018 10th

Report on Local Authority Staff Resources by IHBC, ALGAO & Historic England⁴ reported a fall of almost 50% in the South West from 2006 to 2018. The current figures show that from 2006 to 2020 the decline is 51.24% and from 2009 to 2020 it has been 58.55%.

- 6.4. **North East:** Provision in the North East has fallen by 8.2% since 2018 which continues a previous decline from a comparatively small starting base provision. The provision in the North East has fallen by 48.0% since 2009.
- 6.5. **North West:** Provision in the North West fell by 0.3% from 2018 to 2020 the lowest decline in all regions in that period but overall, since 2009, the reduction is 60.9% making it the region with the most significant percentage decrease.
- 6.6. **East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside:** All these regions have experienced a decline in provision since 2009 of between 55% and 60%.

Regional Percentage change			
Region	Percentage Change 2018-2020	Percentage Change 2006-2020	Percentage Change 2009-2020
North West	-0.30%	-39.02%	-60.9%
North East	-8.20%	-29.38%	-48.0%
Yorkshire & Humber	1.64%	-26.46%	-56.7%
East Midlands	-2.01%	-38.01%	-55.77%
West Midlands	-3.73%	-47.86%	-59.79%
East of England	-0.87%	-28.95%	-56.26%
London	1.24%	-29.01%	-19.10%
South West	-12.00%	-51.24%	-58.55%
South East	9.18%	-22.41%	-45.31%

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/tenth-report-la-staff-resources/tenth-report-la-staff-resources/>



7. Notable Trends

7.1 Authorities without conservation provision

7.1.1 **2020:** In 2020 there are 20 Local Authorities without any form of conservation advice (using the same profile and excluding County Councils).

- 7.1.2 In 2020 6% of Local Authorities (two tier and unitary excluding County Councils) do not have access to conservation advice in any form.
- 7.1.3 In 2020 25.50% of all Local Authorities have a service of any type which is below 0.5 Full Time Equivalent. Occasionally this may be adequate, for example in smaller areas with fewer heritage assets, but for most Authorities this is likely to be a questionable level of provision.
- 7.1.4 **2006:** In 2006⁵ some 7 Local Authorities (excluding County Councils which were analysed separately) received no conservation advice having no in house member of staff focused on conservation (specialist or otherwise) and no agreement with another local authority or a consultant.

7.2 Unitary and merged Authorities

- 7.2.1 Since 2018 a number of new Unitary and merged Local Authorities have been created. Since monitoring began total conservation provision has often decreased when new Authorities are created although some fewer Authorities do maintain or enhance their staffing provision. But overall those new Authorities created as unitary or from merged two tier authorities have experienced, since 2018, a 16.17% fall in the conservation staffing provision covering the same geographical areas.

7.3 Advice sources

- 7.3.1 Although the actual levels of advice obtained by local authorities has declined since 2009 the amount of the service made up by various internal tenures and external provision has remained consistent.
- 7.3.2 In 2020 87% of conservation provision is from permanent specialist staff employed in house by the local Authority. In 2009 that figure was 86%. Conservation provision from employing external advice from consultants was 2% of the service in 2009 and remain at 2% in 2020. Similarly 1% of local authority conservation provision came from agreements with other Local Authorities' and in 2020 that figure remains at 1%.
- 7.3.3 Although useful to see that the proportion of advice from various sources have remained consistent in proportion to the total, this should be set in

⁵ http://www.ihbc.org.uk/recent_papers/docs/quantifying_lpa_conservation_staffing.pdf

the context of the overall 48.7% cut in services since 2009, giving a real reduction in the number of staff and external advisors of each type.

Year	Percentage of service from permanent specialist in house	Percentage of service from temporary specialist in house	Percentage of service from non specialist in house	Percentage of service by provision from other local authority	Percentage of service from external consultant
2009	86%	5%	6%	1%	2%
2018	85%	6%	6%	1%	2%
2020	87%	4%	6%	1%	2%

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 With 6% of Local Authorities now having no access to conservation advice and many others having just part time access to advice this lack of advice exposes the nation’s heritage to the real risk of harm.
- 8.2 The loss of 48.7% of conservation provision across England since 2009 can only have had a devastating effect on local authorities and some may be no longer even able to carry out even their statutory conservation duties. Where there is conservation provision available the reduced levels affecting most Local Authorities mean that Listed Building owners and developers are often no longer able to get detailed proactive and practical support and advice from the Local Authority to help them to maintain and protect the heritage they are responsible for.