



BTEC Higher National qualifications in Public Services

Pearson-set Theme Release

1st September 2026 to 31st August 2027

Unit 404: Planning a Public Services Project

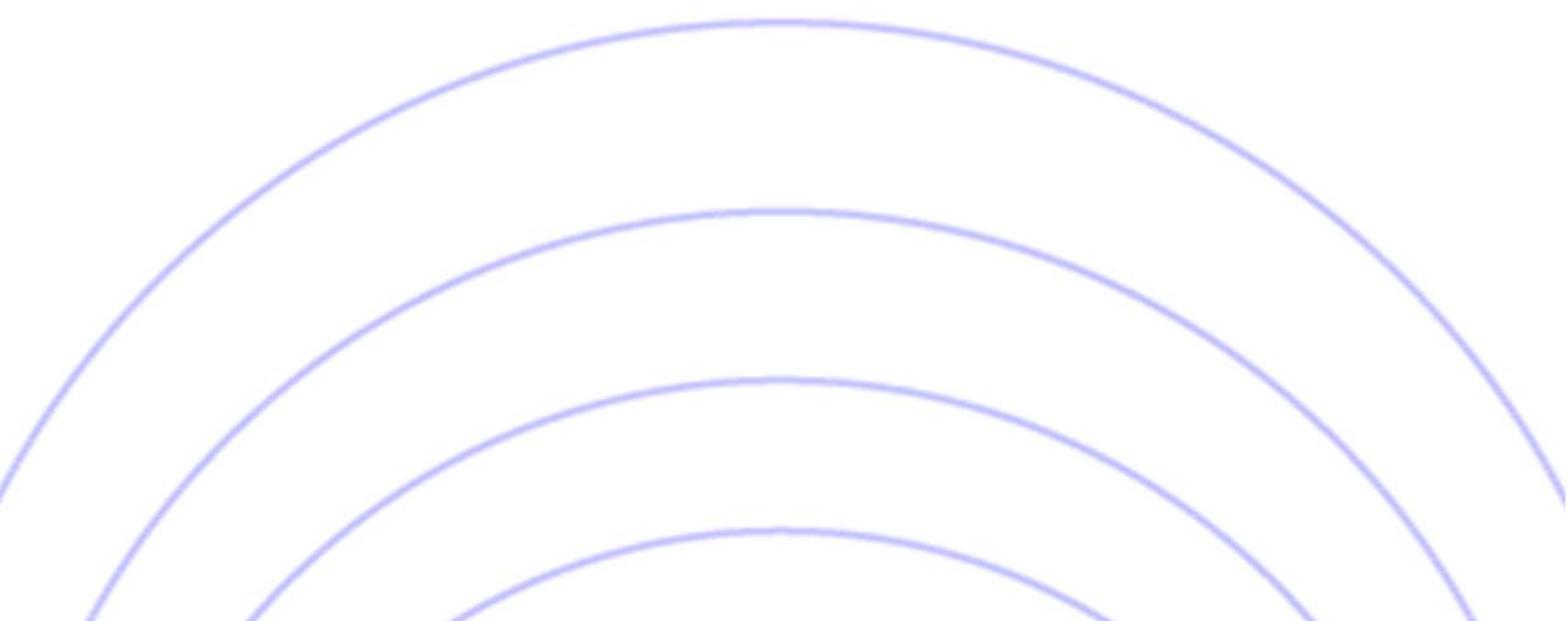
First Teaching from September 2025

First Certification from September 2026

For use with the following qualifications:

Pearson BTEC Level 4

Higher National Certificate in Public Services



Edexcel, BTEC and LCCI qualifications

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1. Introduction to theme

Pearson-set theme, for use with Level 4, Unit 404: Planning a Public Services Project:

The increase in the UK state pension age on the Public Services

The public sector has responsibility for all public services, including for example, education, emergency services, healthcare, defence. The demand for these complex services is increasing. Leaders across all public service sectors are required to manage demand, the services budget and an older workforce. This work may involve:

- Managing and supporting an older workforce to be able to offer effective delivery of public service provision.
- Managing the changes in the delivery of the public service and the impacts on service users and stakeholders.
- Financial planning to support older workers and management of the delivery of the public services.

Public services are responsible for managing and supporting its older employees. It must ensure that their policies and procedures adhere to changes in legislation and be ready to support their older workers and manage changes in a fast paced and complex environment. Public Services must recognise the limitations and adaptations to working practices. They must plan for the financial impacts in supporting older workers and be prepared for additional costs incurred whilst maintaining high levels of response to its service users.

This assessment will enable students to examine the increase in the UK pension age and the impacts on the management of the public services and on the society it serves.

Students can select a specific area of the public services on which to focus their research. The assessment will provide an opportunity for students to contextualise the impacts on services and provision. It will also enable students to explore the challenges and opportunities presented to leaders within public sector organisations and showcase innovative ideas to adapt and support an older workforce whilst meeting the rising demand on public services.

2. Choosing a research objective / question

Tutors must **choose one topic** from the list provided below and decide which type of assignment is most suitable for small-scale research. All students must complete an assignment brief for the **same topic**, as chosen by the tutor. However, if delivering to different cohorts of students, tutors may select a different topic for each cohort.

The **Assignment Guidance document for Unit 404: Planning a Public Services Project** provides additional support and guidance for both tutors and students.

Topics

1. The benefits and pitfalls of the new UK state pension age on the public service provisions, service users and its stakeholders.
2. Identifying innovative ways recruit, retain and support older workers in public services.
3. Maintaining an effective and proactive response of the delivery of the public services to meet the needs of public service older employees.
4. Identifying ways to improve and change the delivery of the working practices for older public service employees.
5. The financial implications to the public services to support an older workforce.
6. Use of critical analysis to compare the UK state pension age against similar provision overseas.
7. Managing the increase in the state pension age on the delivery of the public services to meet their targets and budgetary requirements.

3. Assignment evidence / outcomes

The assignment brief must set the context and scenario within the parameters of the theme and topic. Students are required to produce evidence for an assignment activity that has been constructed around a theme and selected topic. The brief must provide full guidance, focusing on content matter which specifically relates to the topic, so students are in a position to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria. The assignment must address all learning outcomes and be contextualised through investigation and research into a public sector organisation.

It is important to recognise that there are many different formats that a student could use to present their work and it is important that tutors think carefully about the suitability of the format in relation to the target audience. Verbal and written forms of communication should be appropriate to the audience, in terms of the nature and level of material used and also in terms of length. Students should be guided to produce research that gives a succinct account of the main arguments or developments from the assignment brief. If a verbal presentation is the chosen format, the question and answer session should address issues raised by the presentation, but also give student an opportunity to reflect on their work. Centres will need to robustly assess and evidence verbal presentations.

4. Employer engagement

It is advisable that centres look at the Pearson-set Assignment as an appropriate unit to embed employer engagement, although this is not a mandatory requirement.

Developing and establishing links with employers enhances the teaching and learning experience and improves students' employability. Where possible, identifying links with employers as part of the delivery of the Pearson-set Assignment could lead to enhancing and supporting student learning. Real-life projects provide students with the opportunity to develop and acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise required by employers.

5. Sharing of good practice

An appointed External Examiner (EE) for the centre will ask to sample the Pearson-set assignment briefs for review as part of the remote sampling request. Although this is not a mandatory requirement for centres we strongly advise that centres seek guidance and support from their EE on the Pearson-set assignment. The EE may also include the Pearson-set units in the centre visit sample of student work.

The EE will review and identify exemplars in all aspects of good practice. Good practice will focus on themes including, but not limited to:

- Innovation
- Digital literacy
- Student employability and entrepreneurial skills
- Employer engagement
- Quality of assessment feedback.

6. Resources and useful links

Suggested resources and links that centres may find useful are shown below. Centres should choose those resources that are relevant for localised use and complement these with additional resources to support independent research into the chosen topic. Resources should range from reports, website articles, theoretical and academic texts, journal articles.

Type of resource	Resource titles	Links
Website article	Future Issues for public service leaders	https://gov.uk
Website article	The fiscal impact of increases in the state pension age	https://obr.uk/box/the-fiscal-impact-of-increases-in-the-state-pension-age/
Website article	Lack of older people in employment costs UK £80bn a year	https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1744844/lack-older-people-employment-costs-uk-80bn-year
Website article	Older workers are the solution – not the cause – to the UK’s productivity problem	https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/older-workers-are-solution-not-cause-uks-productivity-problem
Website article	Retirement Age by Country 2026	https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/retirement-age-by-country
Website article	GAD and the State Pension age review	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gad-and-the-state-pension-age-review
Website article	Police Pensions – Retire and Return	https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/disclosure-logs/workforce-coordination-committee/2024/369-2024-npcc-retire-and-return---workforce-committee-8-march-2024.pdf
Website article	State pension age of 67 is coming – what to watch as it rolls out	https://ifs.org.uk/articles/state-pension-age-67-coming-what-watch-it-rolls-out

Website article	Army Welfare Pay and pensions	https://www.army.mod.uk/support-and-training/welfare/financial-and-legal-support/pay-and-pensions/
Website article	Here's a pension tweak for nudging civil servants to work past 60	https://ifs.org.uk/articles/heres-pension-tweak-nudging-civil-servants-work-past-60
Website article	Our fight for decent pensions	https://www.fbu.org.uk/magazine/april-may-2024/our-fight-decent-pensions
Website article	Denmark to raise retirement age to highest in Europe	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvg7lv533q6o
Website article	How can we make government more productive?	https://ifs.org.uk
Published article	Help and support for older workers	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/help-and-support-for-older-workers/help-and-support-for-older-workers
Published report	Employment Rights Act 2025 Economic Analysis January 2026	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/695d3ebfbd1c076f787e7399/employment-rights-act-2025-economic-analysis.pdf
Website article	UK strikingly unprepared for an ageing society, facing increasing costs and shrinking tax base	https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/175/economic-affairs-committee/news/211034/uk-strikingly-unprepared-for-an-ageing-society-facing-increasing-costs-and-shrinking-tax-base/
Published report	Fit for the future? Rethinking the public services workforce	https://committees.parliament.uk/
Published report	Policing in England and Wales Future Operating Environment 2040	https://assets.college.police.uk
Published article	Understanding older workers	https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/reports/understanding-older-workers/

Website article	Recruiting, retaining and supporting older workers: tips on getting started	https://www.britsafe.org/safety-management/2023/recruiting-retaining-and-supporting-older-workers-tips-on-getting-started
Website article	Valuing older workers: Keeping healthy	www.ren.org.uk/active-academy
Website article	Retirement age in France in 2026	https://www.retraiteconseil.com/retirement-age-france-2024/
Website article	Fostering Innovation in the Public Sector	https://oecd.org
Website article	Social Security - America What is full retirement age?	https://www.ssa.gov/faqs/en/questions/KA-01885.html
Website article	What do people want, need and expect from public services?	https://ipsos.com
Website article	Rethinking resilience: Ten priorities for governments	https://mckinsey.com
Published report	Welfare to Work: Tackling the Barriers to the Employment of Older People	https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/welfare-to-work-tackling-the-barriers-to-the-employment-of-older-people/
Journal article	Leading Change in a Complex Public Sector Environment	https://academic.oup.com
Journal article	Why hiring older workers can benefit your business	https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/business-guidance/guidance-articles/staffing/why-hiring-older-workers-can-benefit-your-business
Journal article	Evaluation of Public Services Considering the Expectations of Users	https://committees.parliament.uk/mdpi.com

Additional materials

Pearson-set Report:

<https://hnglobal.highernationals.com>

Training Video for the RQF BTEC Higher Nationals Pearson-set Assignments:

https://youtu.be/FkQi_l78_tw

The Assignment Guidance document for Unit 404: Planning a Public Services Project should be read in conjunction with the theme and topic release. It provides advice and guidance for both tutors and students.

For any further additional support or queries regarding this document, please email highernationals@pearson.com.



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