

The chef shortage: A solvable crisis?

What needs to be done to address the shortage?

The way forward requires a joined-up approach with action at a business level, across the sector as a whole and by government. It also demands a holistic approach that doesn't just focus on a careers campaign, but also on why we continue to lose talented chefs.

Careers campaign



There is a critical need for a cross-sector careers campaign that brings together all interested organisations (trade associations, chef associations, learning providers, careers organisations and, importantly, employers), puts competing agendas aside and unites around a central message and campaign.

Early age interventions

Almost all of the students on full-time chef programmes in further education were stimulated to cook at an early age. But many children do not have the chance to cook at home and so it is important that the existing initiatives such as Adopt a School and the Saturday Morning Chef Academy, that give young people the opportunity to experience food and cooking are encouraged and supported.



Maximising the opportunities from colleges



Increasing the number of students who actually go on from college to work in the industry would have a significant impact on alleviating the chef shortage:

- More employers need to establish links with their local colleges - working with **People 1st's network of accredited colleges** is a great place to start.
- A voluntary code of practice drawn up by employers and colleges to provide a better transition for the students during their first 12 months in the sector should be explored.
- We need the government to ensure that the transition to the new T levels is smooth, and that the content reflects the new apprenticeship standards, as well as to address the current incentive for schools to encourage students to continue into sixth forms, despite their career aspirations.

Creating a quality workplace

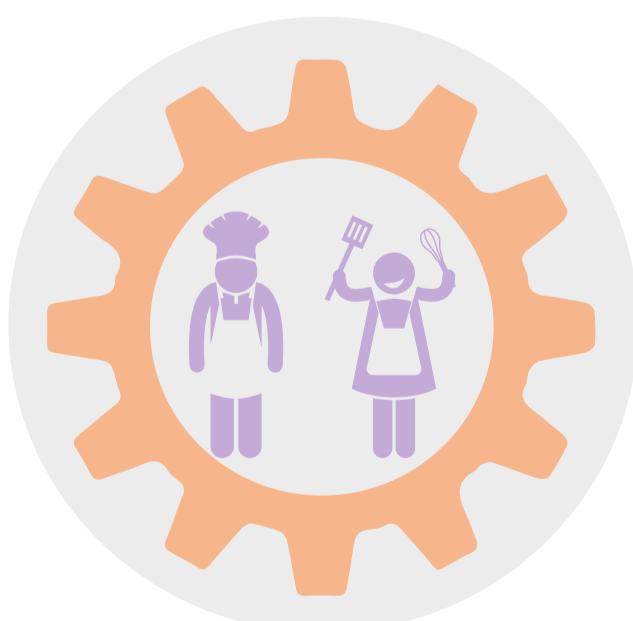
The dilemma for many businesses is that they are operating on wafer thin margins, with rising food and staff costs and a highly competitive market. But without competitive salaries, realistic hours, tangible development and a good working environment, the shortage will only get worse.



A range of solutions that businesses are successfully using include:

- A longer-term approach to recruitment
- Maximising the use of apprenticeships
- Boosting retention via a holistic package of a competitive salary, realistic hours, tangible development and a good working environment
- Addressing the culture of the kitchens and the management skills of senior chefs
- Addressing the issue of hours, shift patterns, pay and incentives
- A renewed emphasis on learning and development

Job and operational re-engineering



Many taking part in this research think that deskilling to reduce the need to recruit and retain classical chefs is an extreme response that will undermine quality and the reputation of a business. However, some businesses have de-skilled more subtly by buying in more prepared items and some multi-site businesses are increasing the use of centralised production kitchens.

Recruiting internationally

If restrictions were to be imposed on EU workers coming into the UK, as a result of Brexit, it would further reduce the pipeline of skilled chefs coming into the sector. The sector therefore needs to work constructively with government to ensure that any restrictions are realistic and reflect its labour and skill needs.

