

Cheshire East Council

Workforce Strategy 2021-2025



Open

Fair

Green

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Measuring our success

Foreword



Welcome to Cheshire East Council

Our people are our greatest asset. This has never been demonstrated more clearly than over the last 18 months, where staff across the Council have shown their commitment to public services throughout the most demanding time.

I am pleased to launch Cheshire East Council's Workforce Strategy 2021-2025. This is an ambitious plan that recognises the great value of our staff and aims to ensure we have the workforce we need in place to deliver the priorities set out in our Corporate Plan.

At Cheshire East Council we have a clear cultural vision and a strategy for our workforce. We have a set of values, behaviours and an employee deal that provides an excellent foundation for us to build upon in making Cheshire East Council an employer of choice.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges, it has also been a transformational time that has proved we have great organisational resilience and provided us with opportunities for designing a future way of working that provides an improved work life balance for our staff, keeping our customers at the heart of all we do.

We have embraced the new technology that is available to us and will harness this to provide residents with access to our services as well as a more agile workforce.

We have considered these factors alongside our current workforce profile to shape the plan for the next four years. We place great value on engaging with our staff and listening to what they tell us. This is central to the delivery of this plan. We are committed to developing and supporting our staff to provide for the future and attracting and retaining a workforce that reflects the community we serve.

Dr Lorraine O'Donnell
Chief Executive



Introduction

Cheshire East Council's Workforce Strategy 2021-2025 sets out how we will develop the capacity and capability of our workforce to support the priorities identified in our Corporate Plan and deliver our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Our four-year strategy builds on the previous workforce strategy and our cultural transformation journey. Some of our achievements, delivered since the last Council's Workforce Strategy was published, are illustrated in the diagram below.

This has provided us with an excellent platform to build on, embedding our cultural vision and behaviours. We continue to ensure that we develop our staff and employ staff who are able to realise their potential, supporting delivery of effective and efficient services to our residents and businesses.

Achievements



Our context

Our Workforce Challenges

It is important that we understand our workforce and the challenges we face in a local, regional and national context in order to address future demands on Cheshire East Council and our workforce. The challenge to recruit the right people, with the right skills at the right times continues for local authorities.

The diagram below illustrates some of our key challenges.



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on our workforce and the way in which we work. It has demonstrated our workforce's ability to respond and adapt quickly to challenges we face, but also presented an opportunity to re-shape the way in which we work in the future. The two 'Pulse' staff surveys we have carried out since the beginning of the pandemic are informing the development of new ways of working.

The actions outlined within this strategy take these into account, alongside our existing workforce profile and set out the identified steps to overcome these.



Our context

Future skills requirements

In addition to national, regional and local challenges, Cheshire East Council will need to address future skills requirements, these include:-

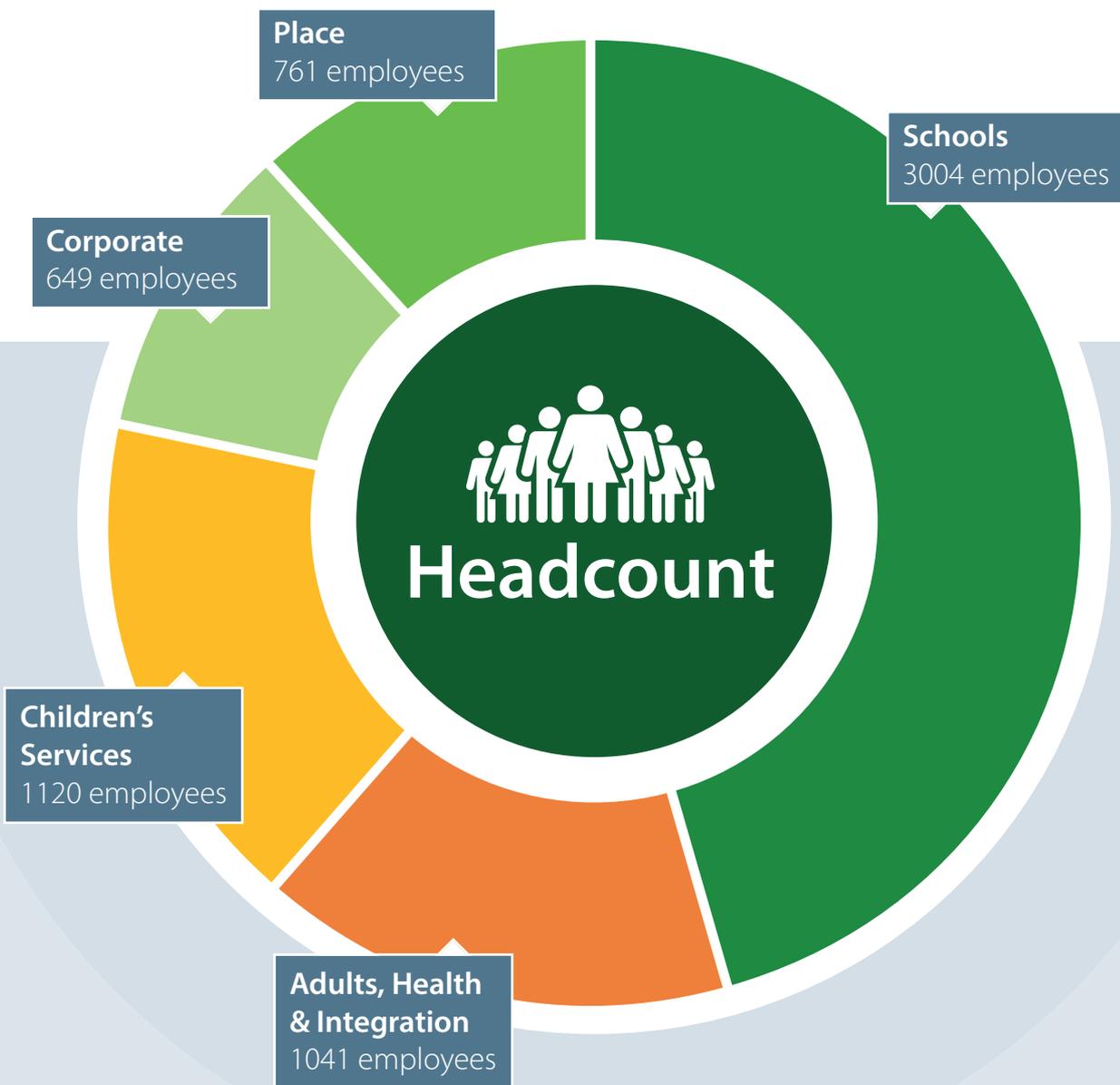


Our Workforce Profile

Understanding the profile of our workforce helps us to plan for the future. The Council is committed to fairness and equality and in particular, promoting equality of opportunity for all and a culture that values differences. As an employer, we want to ensure our workforce is representative of the community it serves and that we attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds and with diverse skills and experience.

Headcount

At Cheshire East Council, we employ around 3,500 staff, who are our most important asset in delivering the outcomes we want to achieve for the people of Cheshire East. We also employ just over 3,000 staff in our maintained schools. Total headcount as of 30th June 2021 was 6,577.





Our context

Age

The age profile of the Council shows that nearly 74% of our workforce is over the age of 40, and 48.1% over 50 with only a small cohort of staff under the age of 20. We have an ageing workforce and need to work, attract and retain more young people, through consistent talent management, our apprenticeship programme and succession planning.

Age group	Workforce %
Under 20	0.6%
20 - 29	9%
30 - 39	17.6%
40 -49	25.7%
50 - 59	33.5%
60 -69	13.5%
Over 70	1.1%

Gender

76% of our staff are female and 24% are male. The majority of employees within the Council are part-time females, contributing to 41.3% of the workforce which reflects the high volume of occupational roles within the Council which are predominantly performed by female employees.

Gender pay gap in Cheshire East Council

The mean gender pay gap for the Council is 12.8%. This means that female employees receive 12.8% less average pay than male employees. The mean pay gap has decreased by 1.7%, from 14.5% in 2019-20 to 12.8% in 2020-21. The median pay gap has decreased by 2.2%, from 12.7% in 2018-19, and 2019-20, to 10.5% in 2020-21.

The pay gap identified through this analysis is influenced by worker distribution, with a higher proportion of female workers in lower paid roles.

The Council's gender pay gap is lower than the provisional national public sector mean and median pay gaps of 14.5% and 15.8% respectively for 2020.

These pay gaps do not indicate that male and female employees are being paid differently for equal work. The Council operates a robust grading structure based on non-discriminatory job evaluation schemes to ensure that it complies with equality legislation and provides equal pay for work of equal value.

Race

In terms of ethnicity, 86% of staff have reported as White British, with Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff accounting for just 3% of our workforce. The remaining 11% of staff have not reported their ethnicity.

Disability

We have limited information on the disability status of our workforce, with only 1% of staff reported as having a disability, and the remaining 99% either not reported or not disclosed.

We will continue to work closely with colleagues to ensure that our workforce, policies and procedures and activities to deliver these are aligned to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Sickness absence (1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021)	8.66 days per FTE employee
Staff turnover (1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021)	9.7%

Sickness absence and staff turnover remain key priorities for Cheshire East Council. We will continue to proactively manage sickness, support staff wellbeing and develop our employee offer through a range of actions as set out in our action plan.

Our Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025

Our staff are instrumental to the successful delivery of our ambitious Corporate Plan and need to be supported and equipped to drive this forward.

Our Vision

A white oval with a purple border, centered on a green background, containing the word "Open".

Open

We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East

A white oval with an orange border, centered on a green background, containing the word "Fair".

Fair

We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents.

A white oval with a light green border, centered on a green background, containing the word "Green".

Green

We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.

The vision is ambitious and long term and we want to start progressing towards it at once. To help focus on the right things we have set ourselves three broad aims, each with a set of priorities. Achieving these priorities will help us to achieve this vision.

Our Priorities

An open and enabling organisation

- Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
- Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
- Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
- Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
- Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

A council which empowers and cares about people

- Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs
- Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2025

Our Values

Providing a great public service in a radically changing world is something that we are passionate about in Cheshire East.

Our promise of '**working for a brighter future - together**' is at the centre of this and can only be delivered upon by us all consistently living our five core values which we believe underpin our success.

Our values are embedded across the council and influence the behaviours of our staff as we work together for the wider benefit of our residents.

The council is rapidly changing and delivering more than ever before, and our values reflect what we collectively believe will stand us in good stead in the years to come.



Our Cultural Vision and Values

We have a clear vision for workplace culture



Our vision for workplace culture was co-created with our employees and details the environment and climate that we want to create to support our employees to deliver exceptional services.



Our Workforce Priorities

Using the quantitative and qualitative data from the sections above as well as the insights from staff surveys and the Workforce Plans drawn up by service areas across the Council, **we have developed four strategic themes for our Workforce Strategy:**

1. Delivering Our Future

Forward workforce planning is critical to our longer-term success. We need to use the insight and data available to us to forecast future organisational capacity and capability and develop and put into place strong organisational design and succession planning processes to address this. We also want to embed a future way of working that supports our climate change ambitions.



2. Living Our Values and Delivering Our Employee Deal

Our cultural transformation journey began in 2018. Significant progress has already been made on this cultural transformation journey and this has been recognised not only by our staff but externally by partners and the Local Government Association.

We want Cheshire East Council to be the 'employer of choice'; where people want to work - our services are only as good as our staff who deliver them to our residents and businesses. We will define our employee offer and regular staff engagement, recognition and comprehensive wellbeing support will continue to be key to our success. Our plans to embed further cultural change are set out below.

3. Inclusive workforce - ensuring everyone has a voice

Our vision for equality, diversity and inclusion is to make Cheshire East Council a welcoming place, where equality, freedom, fairness and opportunity are open to all. We want everyone to feel valued, to celebrate diversity and to understand people's different needs and aspirations.

Staff engagement is central to our workplace culture and we want to ensure that all our staff feel that they have a voice and that voice is heard.

We will ensure we continue to offer engagement structures that are easy to access – designed to support the well-being and work/life balance of our staff and inspiring a culture of trust, inclusivity and transparency.

We will continue to value partnership working with our trade union colleagues to maintain positive employee relations.

4. Empowering Our Workforce

We want our staff to be empowered to flourish, grow and develop to achieve their maximum potential. This is essential and a key element of our Employee Deal. A framework will be developed to achieve this and provide staff with the ability to enhance the skills they already have.

A range of 'We will' strategic HR initiatives are identified in the action plan over the next pages to support the delivery of the strategic themes above.

Our Action Plan

Action	Timescale
1. Delivering Our Future	
1.1	<p>Conduct an annual strategic workforce assessment to inform future workforce planning and address identified issues, particularly in respect of our ageing workforce, hard to fill posts and those staff groups that are currently under represented.</p> <p>March 2022 and then annually</p>
1.2	<p>Work closely with senior managers to regularly monitor and review service workforce plans, providing feedback and support on progress, emerging themes and challenges.</p> <p>Ongoing on a quarterly basis</p>
1.3	<p>Implement standardised management role descriptions to support leadership expectations.</p> <p>April 2022</p>
1.4	<p>Design and deliver a programme of senior leadership engagement and development aligned to corporate priorities.</p> <p>December 2021</p>
1.5	<p>Develop and lead the workforce elements of health and social care integration.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
1.6	<p>Maximise management development through apprenticeships.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
1.7	<p>Introduce a pathway approach to leadership and management development, to include an aspiring managers programme.</p> <p>April 2022</p>
1.8	<p>Identify further options, as new apprenticeship standards emerge, to capitalise on the apprenticeship levy to grow our own talent to improve the occupancy of hard to fill roles and support longer term workforce planning.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Action	Timescale
1. Delivering Our Future	
1.9	Map and launch career pathways for all service areas, which includes a cohesive approach to secondments. April 2022
1.10	Introduce more generic job profiles, to facilitate flexibility between teams and support secondments. 2022
1.11	Define our employee offer and further develop our employer brand to ensure we are well positioned and promoted as an employer of choice. March 2022
1.12	Develop a recruitment and retention strategy that addresses the main challenges identified in our workforce profile including hard to fill posts, salary benchmarking and attracting young people. June 2022
1.13	Introduce mandatory recruitment and interview training for staff holding recruitment interviews. 2022
1.14	Maximise management development through apprenticeships. Post B4B implementation
1.15	Continue to work with our schools to ensure their workforce needs are identified and met. April 2022



Our Action Plan

Action	Timescale
2. Living Our Values and Delivering Our Employee Deal	
2.1	Embed modern and agile working practices to support future ways of working through a range of initiatives and engagement events. March 2022
2.2	Further define our cultural vision and continue to embed our cultural values and behaviours. September 2022
2.3	Align the corporate induction process, including an opportunity to meet the Chief Executive, to the new flexible way of working and to develop a more streamlined onboarding process. September 2022
2.4	Refine and align the Council's recognition scheme to the future way of working, ensuring access and recognition for all staff is retained. December 2021
2.5	Introduce an updated agile working policy and procedure and an accompanying Handbook to facilitate an environmentally considerate, post-Covid working environment that promotes a healthy work-life balance. November 2021
2.6	Develop an action plan for managing attendance at work to reduce absence. Ongoing
2.7	Develop a package of initiatives, based on workforce data, to target staff retention. April 2023
2.8	Delivery of Wellbeing Strategy and actions. Ongoing

Our Action Plan

Action	Timescale
3. Inclusive workforce - ensuring everyone has a voice	
3.1	Work with the EDI Board to deliver the actions identified within the EDI Work Plan for HR. Ongoing to 2025
3.2	Deliver the (annual) gender pay gap action plan. 2021/2022 and then annually
3.3	Review recruitment and selection practices to ensure under represented groups in our workforce are addressed. September 2022
3.4	Work with all staff groups across the Council to better understand their lived experiences and its impact on their experience at work, addressing any issues identified. September 2022
3.5	Review the training offered on equality and diversity, and provide additional training on unconscious bias and cultural competency. April 2022
3.6	Continue to work with the Communications Team to deliver a programme of staff engagement, including 'An Audience with', Manager Share and Support and Brighter Future Champions. Ongoing
3.7	Work with colleagues in Adults, Health & Integration to support the delivery of the Kickstart programme. Ongoing
3.8	Work closely with the trade unions to help support performance and maintain employee relations, including embedding the new trade union consultative arrangements and workload agreement. Ongoing

Action	Timescale	
4. Empowering Our Workforce		
4.1	Roll out an updated digital PDR through the learner management system, including 360-degree feedback.	April 2022
4.2	Utilise the functionality of the upgraded LMS to offer staff and managers a more consistent and improved access to development.	September 2022
4.3	Develop and implement a consistent council wide talent management process that identifies and develops our talent.	September 2022
4.4	Work with services, partners and colleges to increase the number of apprentices and develop our offer to new starters and staff.	Ongoing
4.5	Refine our Corporate Training Programme in line with the future way of working.	March 2022
4.6	Commission and deliver service specific training plans to address identified skills gaps.	Ongoing
4.7	Continue to develop our coaching and mentoring offer and introduce career coaches for staff to support succession planning.	2023
4.8	Review the advice and guidance offered in relation to the Officer Code of Conduct, in conjunction with Legal Services.	April 2022
4.9	Work with colleagues in Customer Services to ensure all staff have the skills they require to work with our customers and residents.	Ongoing
4.10	Further develop the tracking of mandatory training through the enhanced learner management system to ensure completion.	March 2022

Measuring our success

We need to know that we are delivering the strategy we have set out and be able to demonstrate the productivity, performance, development and engagement of our workforce. **This will be measured by the following:**



Reporting arrangements

Regular progress reports will be provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and Corporate Policy Committee.



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