

Workforce Strategy 2024-27

Helping deliver the council plan through our people and creating a great place to work



Foreword

County Durham is a great place to live, visit and work in.

Durham County Council is a great council; we are ambitious with our plans for the county and are continually reviewing what we do and how we do it to improve the services we provide to our residents and customers.

We have a clear vision and ambitions as set out in our Council Plan which outlines how we will transform and modernise the council, our services and our people.

We are aware that the world is changing, and how public services are delivered will continue to change. Operating in a post pandemic world has undoubtedly changed our operating model and will continue to impact on how we deliver services, how our residents access services and what we will need from our workforce.

The council will be required to continue to proactively respond to many issues including health inequalities and wellbeing, rising demand for services, ongoing impacts of austerity, health and social care challenges, demographic changes such as an ageing population and workforce. We also face challenges in key professional areas including workforce shortages and for this reason a proactive approach to workforce planning, recruitment, retention and resourcing is required.

The digital agenda is becoming more important, and we will need to invest in our employees to ensure they have the necessary skills required for the future. We work with residents to design our services and use technology as an enabler for how residents can access our services, joining up processes from a customer perspective and focusing on achieving the best outcomes within the resources available to us as a council.

As a result of changes in Government funding, we will need to continue to be a highly efficient and effective organisation, re-designing services, considering how our workforce can be adaptable, flexible, empowered and enabled to do things differently. This will require a culture which supports innovation and creativity.

Our work with partners and communities will steer our delivery model as we move forward, considering how we enable people to help themselves, support each other and join up services from a preventative perspective. Our partnerships with others including our Trade Unions, equalities groups and employees will be key and will help steer and deliver on our Workforce Strategy.

I am proud to be the Chief Executive of Durham County Council where our workforce continually strives to go the extra mile, responding and adapting to change and living our organisational values of being *“outcome focused, people focused, empowering and innovative.”*

This Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce for the next three years, taking into account the challenges we will face as a council. The priorities identified within the strategy will enable us to deliver on our vision as set out within our Council Plan through having a strong, resilient, sustainable and flexible workforce.

We aim to be renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce, being an inclusive, modern and progressive employer and for Durham being a fantastic place to work whilst delivering great services for our residents and customers.

John Hewitt
Chief Executive

Our Workforce Strategy 2024-27

The purpose of the Workforce Strategy is to help deliver the council plan through our people and creating a great place to work.

Through this strategy we aim to attract, retain, and develop the best talent and create a great working environment to ensure we are an employer of choice.

The council vision

A place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, healthy, and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

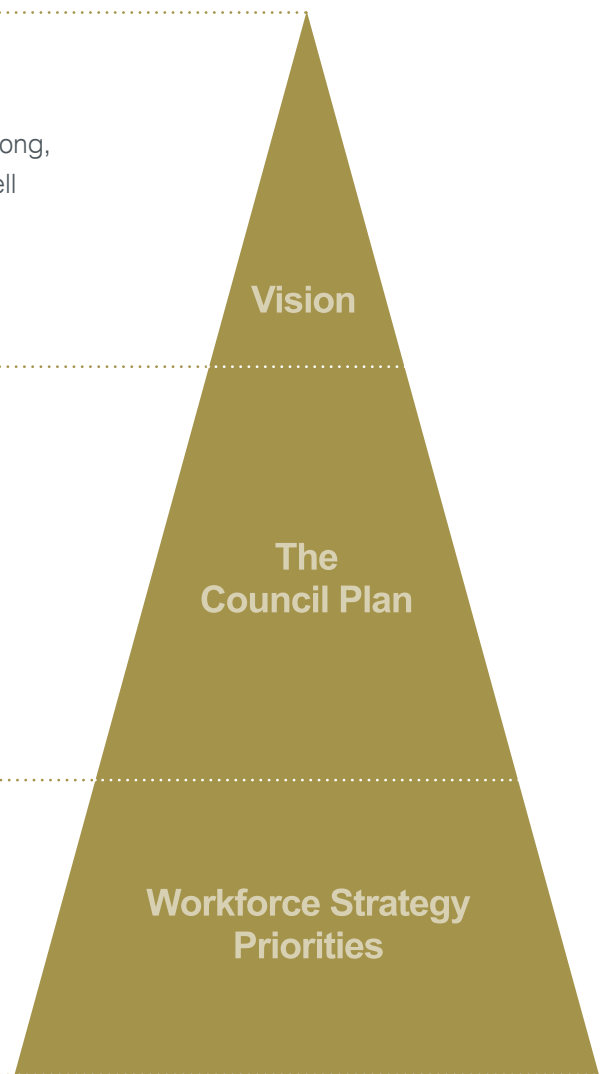
The council plan

The council plan describes how we will achieve this vision through our ambitions.

- Our economy
- Our environment
- Our people
- Our communities
- Our council

Our Workforce Strategy priorities

Enabling the organisation to deliver through our people.
Being a good employer and creating a people first culture.
Building capacity and developing great talent.



Supporting the delivery of our council plan

One of the council's key ambitions is 'our council'.

We want a council which is efficient and effective, financially sound and forward looking. A council which is delivering high value local services that meet the wants and needs of our residents in a sustainable manner by a motivated workforce trained for the future. The workforce strategy will play a key part in delivering this ambition.

The strategy will also support our approach to wellbeing, not only by supporting the health and wellbeing of our employees but also upskilling them to make every contact count and to have the knowledge and confidence to have health promoting conversations to promote health outcomes across County Durham. The wellbeing of our workforce is one of our main priorities. We have made significant progress over the last three years to ensure we have a comprehensive health and wellbeing offer and holistic approach for the workforce. The results of our Working Well Survey in October 2022 were positive and indicated our sustained efforts and initiatives were making a difference to the health of the organisation and how people feel working for the council. Engagement with the workforce on the outcomes of this survey have been considered and have shaped the proposals set out within this strategy. We will continue to support managers in reducing sickness absence and work with our health advocates and champions to ensure Durham is a healthy place to work, where our employees are supported and valued.

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of our council's vision and core values, and this is demonstrated through our commitment to equality standards and initiatives. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity as an employer, in the services we deliver in partnership and in the decisions we make. The strategy will support this by helping to improve employment opportunities for disabled people, build inclusive communities and build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture.



We are committed to building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects the communities we serve and where all our people feel valued and included. We have several staff networks in place, including Armed Forces, Carers, Disability, LGBT+, Menopause, and Race Equality and Diversity. Our networks have proved to be an invaluable means of raising awareness and supporting staff. They will also be invaluable in helping to inform and deliver initiatives as part of this strategy.

Our 'OPEN' values focus on creating a positive working environment by setting guidelines for the way staff should approach their work. By demonstrating the behaviours that underpin our values, we can provide the best possible services to our communities and create a great place to work. Our staff and unions worked with us in developing these values which continue to shape and steer what we do and how we do it. Our organisational values are critical to our success.

Outcome focused

We work together to achieve the best for people

People focused

We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees

Empowering

We value, trust and support each other

iNnovative

We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Our achievements so far

The achievements from the previous Workforce Strategy (2021-2023) provides a great platform for us to build on. Our success is demonstrated by the following achievements.

Planning for the future

- Comprehensive workforce plans in place for Children and Young People's Services and Adult and Health Services enabling a stable and skilled workforce for the future.
- A strategic approach to recruitment and resourcing corporately and across services to enable the council to attract and retain the best talent.
- A comprehensive digital skills programme to upskill the workforce.
- The delivery of the Apprenticeship Strategy and Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Policy. A retention rate of 71% of apprentices into posts with the council.
- Significant progress with new ways of working including "hybrid" and workplace redesign all centred on smarter working.
- Workforce interventions to support key priorities such as climate change, health, safety and wellbeing and equalities and diversity.
- The digitisation of our learning and development system, digital training offer and HR and Payroll system, enabling our managers and employees to self-serve.

Building leadership capacity

- A robust corporate leadership and management development strategy and programme in place which has resulted in 83% of managers completing the main leadership programme.
- The delivery of strategic leadership engagement events and managers briefings.
- Succession plans across services for key management posts accompanied by an approach to develop new and aspiring managers and leaders.
- A strengthened approach to managers induction enabling our new managers to have the support they require.
- The use of Management Apprenticeships as part of our development offer with 126 managers completed or studying towards
- High priority areas of development planned and delivered including business continuity, cyber security, company governance, risk management and commercialisation.

Developing the workforce

- The delivery of corporate and service workforce development programmes, including mandatory training to support knowledge and competencies in key priority areas, such as GDPR and climate change.
- Workforce development plans across all frontline services in place to deliver mandatory training.
- Apprenticeship standards aligned to professions to support the apprenticeship first approach to upskilling the workforce.
- Talent pipelines developed through apprenticeships to grow our own, particularly in harder to fill roles.
- The digitisation of our learning and development system and training offer, enabling a more cost effective and accessible approach.
- A strengthened approach to performance management, including digitised Performance and Development Reviews.

Being a good employer

- A comprehensive health, safety, and wellbeing offer.
- A strengthened approach to wellbeing through our Wellbeing Portal with latest information, guidance, and support in one centralised place.
- The implementation of the Working Well Survey resulting in very pleasing results, with subsequent actions being addressed.
- A refreshed employee benefits offer implemented, communicated and embedded.
- Achievement of various workplace accreditations:
 - Disability Confident Leader status
 - Maintained Excellence in the Better Health at Work Award
 - Gold award of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme
 - White Ribbon Accreditation
 - North East Rainbow Alliance
- A commitment to being a Dementia Friendly organisation and a supportive employer through the Menopause Pledge.
- Continued development of our employee networks to help promote an inclusive and supportive culture.
- Significant working in partnership with our Trade Unions.
- Recognition schemes including our staff awards and long service scheme.
- New initiatives such as our Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme.

Workforce Strategy priorities

To achieve the vision set out in the Council Plan, address future skills gaps, and tackle emerging challenges, the Workforce Strategy will concentrate on three key priorities.

This will be underpinned by service workforce plans which will be linked to service plans and will address key challenges across the various service areas and provide a plan for ensuring each service the council delivers is supported by a skilled, motivated, resilient and flexible workforce. Service workforce plans will address key areas of risk and propose local solutions to address those risks and challenges.

The priorities set out within the workforce strategy will function as enablers to transform our people and services by developing and putting the right transformational people practices in place.

Priority 1

Enabling the organisation to deliver through our people

- Implement efficient and effective future working practices and business processes.
- Enable the delivery of a modern digital council, putting technology and information at the heart, digitising HR systems and learning where possible to empower managers and employees..
- Effectively use workforce data across the employee lifecycle to inform workforce planning and decisions concerning our workforce.
- Develop modern approaches to organisational re-design, restructuring and change ensuring a resilient, flexible, and sustainable organisation for the future.
- Build a strong employer brand to promote the council as an employer of choice, extend our candidate reach to attract a diverse range of talent and provide the best possible candidate experience.
- Develop strategies to target occupational shortage areas of the workforce to ensure future sustainability and resilience.
- Support routes to employment through initiatives including work experience, apprenticeships, internships and graduate schemes.
- Ensure innovative workforce planning and effective resourcing initiatives are in place to support the retention of talent. This will ensure we have the right people with the right skills, in the right place at the right time to deliver key priorities and services to our communities.
- Build community wealth and address inequalities through targeted employment opportunities.
- Proactively work with our partners, colleges, universities and schools to ensure a pipeline of talent coming into the council as our age profile demographics change.

Priority 2

Being a good employer and creating a people first culture

- Prioritise the health, safety, and wellbeing of all our colleagues and communities through our health and wellbeing offer, approach and education.
- Revise our behavioural framework to embed our values in everything we do.
- Embed cultural change through employee engagement and communication, including robust and inclusive mechanisms for our frontline employees, to improve the employee experience and shape how we make decisions on service improvement.
- Develop a diverse, inclusive, and flexible workforce where diversity is valued, and employees feel they belong through our equality, diversity and inclusion plans.
- Ensure we have modern and enabling HR policies and procedures which underpin an agile workplace culture.
- Ensure we create a workplace culture where employees are engaged, feel valued and are rewarded for their work.
- Through our preventative approach, occupational health offer, and workforce data analysis, focus on reducing sickness absence and improving attendance at work across all service areas.

Priority 3

Building capacity and developing great talent

- Through our workforce development programmes and offer, develop and upskill our people to ensure we have the right skills to deliver high quality services.
- Develop a technologically confident and skilled workforce through our digital skills programme and approach.
- Build leadership capacity and capability to effectively lead the workforce through change and deliver the priorities set out within the Council Plan within the resources available.
- Build strong internal talent pipelines across services with clear career pathways, underpinned by a 'grow our own ethos' linked to our approach to workforce planning.
- Enhance our digital learning and development offer to ensure we are able to upskill the workforce in a modern, efficient and cost-effective way.
- Maximise the use of our apprenticeship levy to develop existing employees and attract new talent through our apprenticeship programme
- Explore approaches to maximise the transferable skills of existing employees through talent mobility across the council to enable the flexibility and potential of the workforce.
- Develop workforce skills and capacity to ensure we are a data driven organisation.
- Embed performance management and personal development to support our employees to develop and grow.

Measures of success

The Workforce Strategy will be underpinned by detailed implementation plans for each of our priorities, with clear actions and timescales.

We will measure the success of our Workforce Strategy to ensure we are delivering against our vision and priorities. We will continue to make improvements and identify new initiatives to meet the changing needs of the council, our workforce and communities.

Progress and monitoring oversight of the strategy will be provided through the council's governance arrangements and corporate performance reporting/KPIs detailed in the Council Plan. Our success will be measured through a range of mechanisms including:

- Customer and resident satisfaction
- Delivery of Council and Service priorities
- Employee surveys and employee satisfaction
- Apprenticeship programme success and % of apprentice levy spent
- Apprenticeship retention rate
- Employee turnover rate
- Completion of corporate mandatory training
- Completion of Performance and Development Reviews
- Sickness absence data
- Re-advertisements data