



# Families and Children's services workforce strategy

September 2021

**This workforce strategy is a priority because we know children and families need consistency to be able to trust us to help them, and to achieve this, we need a stable and highly effective workforce. Our vision is for staff to see Wiltshire Council as their long-term career choice where they can develop, succeed and have full and rewarding careers.**

## Foreword

You, as our children's workforce in Wiltshire, are our greatest asset and we want to demonstrate our commitment to improving the lives of our children, young people and families by ensuring you are supported to progress in your career. There has never been a more exciting time to work for Wiltshire Council as we continue to manage rapid change through public service innovation and work towards achieving our overall vision of making a positive difference to the lives of Wiltshire's children and young people, ensuring they are safe and fulfil their own high aspirations. Our workforce strategy sets out what we will do over the next three years to deliver this vision, as such it is our pledge to you.



**Martin Davis**

Director Families and Children's Service



**Why have a workforce strategy?** To ensure we have a committed, engaged and resilient workforce that continually strives to improve the lives of children and young people in Wiltshire.

### Leadership views:



**Cllr Laura Mayes, Lead Member for Children, Education and Skills:** “I want Wiltshire to be the place where children thrive and grow-up to achieve in their adulthood. Our staff are very committed, and I want to ensure we offer our staff the best training and development opportunities so they have the chance to perform at their best.”

**Terence Herbert, Chief Executive:** “We are fortunate to have a dedicated workforce and they need to be able to access the highest quality training and development opportunities.”

### Young people’s views:

“J and T have provided me with an opportunity and chance to live a life, something I wouldn’t have had if I remained with my biological family. I must offer my most sincere gratitude and many thanks to you all again, you have hired some amazing people in the council and I hope that you continue to strive for excellence and bring more people like J and T into your service.”

**Young person, and recent first-class honours graduate**

Of their independent visitor, **J, 14** said: “I look forward to him coming. My best friend.”

### Staff views:

“Working in Wiltshire is like working with an extended family, it doesn’t matter where you are located, you can work from any team and feel supported.”

**Claire Stephens – Support Assistant Team Manager**

“I work for Wiltshire Council because I feel well supported within my team. I’m offered a range of learning opportunities and I’ve been able to work with a service user group that I’m passionate about.”

**Tanesha Milner – ASYE Social Worker**

“I have the great pleasure of working in a fantastic team who support and listen to each other and feel like a big family. Our team manager is very supportive of us all, both as individuals and as a team as a whole. I have thought about working elsewhere, however, I think that I would be hard pushed to be in a more caring, supportive team!” **Kate Farrar – Social Worker Children in Care**





“Wiltshire has a really flexible working approach that allows me to juggle my work life balance. That is so important to me.”

**Shelley Vickerman – Care Proceedings Case Manager**

“I have been an Independent Reviewing Officer for nearly seven years working for Wiltshire Council. Throughout this time I have been impressed with the extreme hard work and dedication frontline social workers demonstrate to strive to ensure the best possible outcomes for the looked after young people in Wiltshire Council. This ethos of striving for good outcomes for looked after children is also apparent across the service and include the virtual schools, fostering and family assessment teams and support services such as family support and contact supervisors, alongside clear management oversight. I have found it a positive experience working for Wiltshire Council. The ease of home working and working from hubs across the county allows for work life balance and there are opportunities to continue to gain knowledge and enhance skills within the role.” **Gemma Dowding, Independent Reviewing Officer**

“I love working for Wiltshire Council as I feel well supported, not just within my team but through the whole of families and children’s services. Wiltshire Council offer numerous incentives and career progression is encouraged. I never want to work for another local authority.”

**Stephanie Lane, Level 3 Social Worker in Support and Safeguarding**

“I like working within Wiltshire as everyone not just our team but the wider team are so supportive and if our managers are not available there is still support available. There is real joined up working approach and being able to tap in the knowledge of other colleagues is really valuable,”

**Juliet Cook, Stronger Families Team, Outreach worker**

“I work for Wiltshire Council because they are passionate about what they do. I enjoy being part of a council that is flexible and open to change to ensure that we continually deliver a high standard of services to the individuals that we work with. I am valued within my role and Wiltshire Council provide a breadth of opportunities and support to encourage me to develop within my career.”

**Amber Webster, Level 4 Social Worker in Children and Young People’s Disability Team**

“I enjoy working for Wiltshire Council and being part of a small team who are supportive of each other and strive to offer excellence and make a difference for children and their families. I have benefited from support and encouragement to achieve career progression and had opportunities to diversify and follow my own personal goals.”

**Adele Lake, Child Protection Chair**



# Where are we now?

## Families and Children's Directorate

### ✓ What we do well



**598** employees



**224 (37.5%)** social workers

**21** apprenticeships

as of March 2020

### In 2018



**74** promotions

**X 86** leavers

↳ 40 of these were social workers

**135** new starters



**374** different training opportunities

**14** members of staff have received coaching

**1056** >>

EPIC Impressions sent

**1129** <<

EPIC Impressions received

Our staff recognition and thank you scheme



**88%**

feel proud to be part of Wiltshire Council

**93%**

felt trusted and supported by their manager



**76%**

receive constructive feedback from their manager about their performance



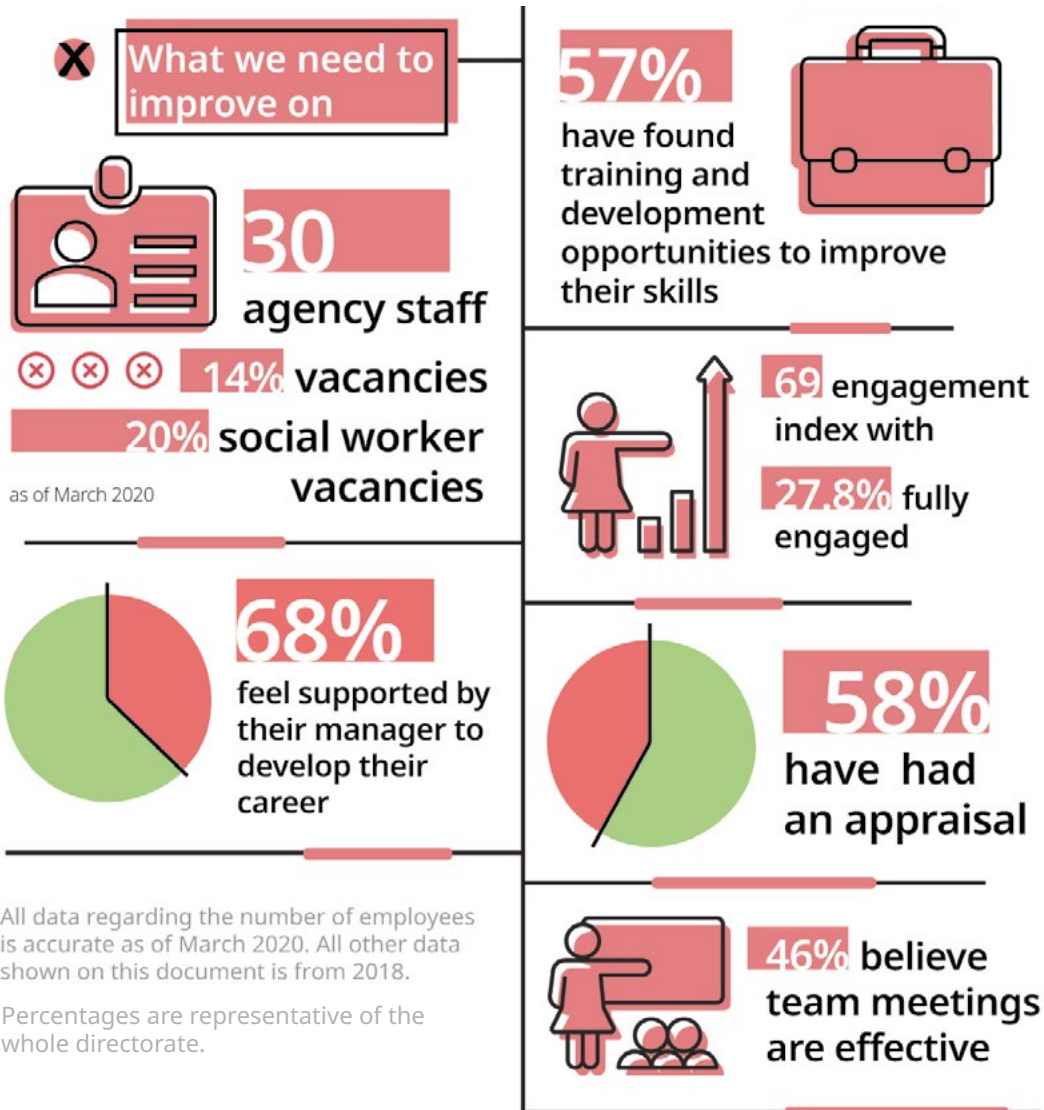
**9.3** days lost to sickness per FTE

**8%** sickness is due to work-related stress or mental health

In line with corporate average



# Where do we need to improve?



## Our workforce strategy priorities for 2020-2023 are:

- **Wellbeing:** we want a culture where you are valued and listened to with a manageable workload
- **Recruitment and retention:** we want you to be part of an outstanding and stable workforce which delivers high quality services. We want you to be aspirational and to be committed to our children's services, to remain and develop your career here
- **Staff development:** we want you to be confident and competent in your work with access to high quality learning and development and progression opportunities
- **Positive team culture:** we want you to be well supported and participate in good quality supervision, thrive in a culture of positive praise, support and respectful challenge, and have your voice heard and visible in interactions and communication.

## 1 Priority one: Wellbeing

The current picture: We appreciate that your workloads vary, and we would like your caseloads to be consistently manageable. Whilst there is flexibility in the workplace, we would like you to be aware of the benefits of working at Wiltshire to help you with your wellbeing, for example, flexible working, 9-day fortnight pilot for social workers, use of Wiltshire Rewards and purchase of additional annual leave.

Where do we want to be: You are well supported, continue to have regular quality supervision; feel valued and know how and where to access support; have a consistently manageable workload and organisational, team and personal resilience. Everyone understands how their role contributes to our vision and is recognised for a job well done.

To achieve this, we will promote flexible working, actively review our practice based on the latest research on employee wellbeing and promote a culture where a good work life balance is struck. Your manager will support your wellbeing alongside your professional development.

(Standard 4 of The Local Government Association LGA Standards)

## 2 Priority two: The recruitment and retention of staff

The current picture: We know that our vacancy rate of 14% across the whole directorate, and 20% specifically within social worker roles creates additional pressure on you. However our staff turnover rate in children's services is low when compared to the national average; 9.24% vs 15% nationally and our retention of newly qualified staff is very good – 95% for ASYE (2020) and our reliance on agency staff has reduced from 33 in September 2018 to 22 in September 2020.

Where we want to be: Our Families and Children's Service is a great service which focuses on the strength and quality of relationships developed with children and families, where people choose to work; there are low vacancy rates; a fast, effective recruitment process resulting in high quality staff; new recruitment methods are continually explored and their impact assessed; a stable, motivated workforce with low staff turnover. We want to build on the success of the Step Up and Front Line programmes to help strengthen our future social worker workforce and reduce our vacancy rate and agency usage. Our non-social work roles are well regarded with multiple applications if the need to recruit arises. We want to ensure these staff stay with us and receive appropriate recognition and development opportunities.

To achieve this, we will ensure that you have good working environments, and will increase our reputation by attending regional/national events, hosting learning events as well as inducting new staff effectively and offering opportunities for non-traditional routes into social work (Step Up, Front Line, Social work apprenticeship). We want to ensure diversity in teams, as we know the more perspectives we have, the better the decision making and effectiveness of teams. To do this we will ensure our managers are trained in equality and unconscious bias prior to engaging in the recruitment process.

(Standard 1 and 3 of The Local Government Association LGA Standards)

### 3 Priority three: Staff development

The current picture: You have told us that our current traditional model of training could be more accessible and better suited to your needs, and that finding the time to devote to your development is challenging.

Where we want to be: You are supported to find and undertake a variety of modern training opportunities to enable you to be skilled, stimulated and stretched, with clear progression opportunities.

To achieve this, we will develop work shadowing and training opportunities fit for the modern workforce, such as apprenticeships and bite-size CPD events. The development pathways into social worker posts offer great career development thus aiding retention of skilled staff, whilst creating progression opportunities for others. We will ensure you have good quality resources and sufficient time to meet your development requirements. A review of administrative support is underway where staff have had the opportunity to feedback on how they would like the administrative support function to be structured, including more generic role descriptions and a clear career pathway with associated training easily available.

(Standard 6 and 7 of The Local Government Association LGA Standards)

### 4 Priority four: Positive team culture

The current picture: You told us you would like a review of the corporate appraisal system, reduction of bureaucracy wherever possible, and to work within a structure which is flexible yet fit for purpose.

Where we want to be: You continue to be supported by skilled and trusted by managers; participate in effective regular developmental supervision and appraisals and receive improved communication both within and between teams. Your time is well used (meetings are purposeful), and, you attend and engage with 'Staff Voice' sessions and manager seminars to foster your relationship with senior leaders and keep abreast of latest developments and have a chance to voice your opinion. We want all of you to feel a sense of belonging and enjoy being empowered and having autonomy.

To achieve this, we have piloted a new appraisal system, increasing genuine positive praise and putting emphasis on what makes good supervision. We will explore systems which support and enable you to develop and refine your practice. Your manager will support your best interests, be supportive, empathetic and able to challenge constructively and sensitively.

(Standard 1, 2 and 5 of the Local Government Association LGA Standards)



# Workforce strategy success measures

Priority? Wellbeing (WB) Recruitment and Retention (RR) Staff Development (SD) Team Culture (TC)	Measure	Current	Target (2023)
RR	Agency staff	30 as at March 2020	10
RR	Apprentices	21 as at March 2020	40
RR	Vacancy rates	14% (all staff) 20% (social workers) as at March 2020	10% (all staff) (10% social workers)
WB	Sickness	9 days lost per FTE (2019)	Remain at or below corporate average of 9 days per FTE
RR/SD	Career progression (eg. Keyworkers to seniors, Keyworkers to SW ASYE, Social Worker progression)	79 upward career moves (2019)	Launch of SW apprenticeships will see benefit realisation in 2024 (6 ASYEs). L4 children and young people apprenticeship to develop those who do not wish to be social workers but would like a qualification. Step Up should produce 5 SW per year Internal progression of business support staff.
RR	Increased engagement with benefits	95% of directorate are member of LGPS. 151 weeks of annual leave purchased (2018-2020). 318 registered with Wiltshire Rewards – saved £26,367 from Jan 2018 to Sept 2020. Encouraged the use of 9-day fortnight.	Continuing promotion of benefits by the service. Culture which promotes usage and ensures accessibility.
SD	Purposeful training to meet the need of contemporary workforce which is easily accessible	53% can find training and development opportunities to improve their skills (2018). 57% accessed purposeful training (2018)	80% can find training and development to improve their skills. 90% positive ratings for purposeful training.

**Priority?**

Wellbeing (WB)  
 Recruitment and  
 Retention (RR)  
 Staff Development (SD)  
 Team Culture (TC)

**Measure****Current****Target (2023)**

	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Target (2023)</b>
		19% of registrations were cancelled, 2% of registrations were no shows.	10% cancellations and 1% no shows for registered courses.
TC/WB	Effective meetings	49% believe team meetings are effective (2018)	90% believe team meetings are effective
RR/SD	ASYE retention (completion and move into Level 2 post)	Cohort 6 (2017-18) 86% retention (76% had been a student with us) Cohort 7 (2018-19) 68% retention (50% were not Wiltshire students) Cohort 8 (2019-20) 95% retention to date (65% had been a student with us)	90% retention by 2023 cohorts. The learning from cohort 7 is that we should encourage Wiltshire-based students to apply for ASYE with us.
RR/SD	Student retention	2019 cohort retention 95% 2020 cohort 90%	95% retention
RR/SD	Step up retention (16- month programme)	Cohort of 5 in 2019 100% retention so far	95% retention of first and second cohorts
RR/SD	Front line retention after 1, 2 and 3 years of completing their training	75% retention - 4 in one pod, cohort 2019.	95% retention of all future cohorts
RR/SD	OU retention	100% retention – 5 in current cohort	95% retention
RR/SD	Business support roles clearly defined with career pathway	Admin review underway to ensure effective support. Currently 23 business admin role descriptions	Efficient admin support provided. Move to >5 generic role descriptions with career pathway mapped out
RR/SD	Social Care staff roles with a career pathway	Level 4 apprenticeship in social care	Evident career progression through accumulated data.

<b>Priority?</b> Wellbeing (WB) Recruitment and Retention (RR) Staff Development (SD) Team Culture (TC)	Measure	Current	Target (2023)
SD	This strategy will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people as evidenced through audit	Ongoing audit processes	Re-auditing to track improvements, staff. Family and child feedback. Having a stronger audit profile and evidence we implement learning
SD/WB	External work shadowing for CPD	0	15
SD/ WB/RR	More effective appraisals	Piloting new approach	100% appraisal completion and increased positive feedback from staff on appraisal value
SD/WB/RR	Higher quality reflective supervision for all social care staff	Bespoke CPD for all supervisors in Children's Services	Measured through audit, observations and measuring improvements following bespoke training for social work supervisors in Wiltshire
WB/TC	Recognition – increased thank yous, EPIC impressions, nominations and winners of EPIC star awards	EPIC impressions (staff recognition): 1403 sent 1522 received (2018)	Measured through staff feedback and data review

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