Cambridgeshire County Council

People Strategy Action Plan 2023 - 2028

Update for Staffing and Service Appeals Committee

November 2025

Presented by Anna Syson, Head of Workforce Policy and Wellbeing

People Strategy and Action Plan

Enabling strategy for the delivery of our Vision and Ambitions Our People Strategy sets out our workforce strategy around 5 themes:

- Attracting you
- Appreciating you
- Supporting you
- Developing you
- Including you – links to workforce elements of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

Supporting action plan created following extensive engagement across internal stakeholders including IDEAL network (our colleague network) and our recognised trade unions.

Approved by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) in June 2024 and Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee in July 2024.

Governance of this plan is via CLT with biannual updates to Staffing and Service Appeals Committee. Our last update to this Committee was in June 2025.

People Strategy Themes

Attracting You	Your experience starts from the moment you are first interested in joining us, and from that point onwards, your employment journey is welcoming and engaging. Our inclusive, supportive, and safe working environment attracts and retains diverse people who want to come to work as part of our team.
Appreciating You	Our culture of compassion and appreciation means that we really do all feel that we belong. We feel valued for the work that we do, the contribution that we make and the differences that we bring. People talk positively about working for Cambridgeshire and we are known to be a kind and compassionate employer
Suppporting You	Our commitment to considering wellbeing in all aspects of employment ensures that you feel supported at every stage of your life and time with Cambridgeshire. You have adequate resources and safe spaces to support you to do your job well, and you feel that you belong in your team and in the wider organisation
Developing You	We work with you to enable you to manage your own development and careers, and our commitment to learning extends beyond skills and knowledge for your current role.

Update Overview

Actions	Number of actions	Completed	In progress	Planned, not started	Cancelled
Attracting You	**19**	4	14	1	0
Appreciating You	**7**	0	7	0	0
Supporting You	**14**	6	7	0	1
Developing You	**11**	4	6	0	1

This is calculated by considering the timelines for each action, the review dates that have been given and the updates provided from each owner. Those listed as ‘Planned, not started’ are yet to begin due to their future timescales.

Attracting you: Highlights

Continuing to fulfil EDI commitments to attract a diverse workforce

- Recruitment eLearning package now available alongside face-to-face delivery, with 132 online and 220 in-person completions recorded as of August 2025.
- Guaranteed Interview Scheme launched for care-experienced applicants; monitoring in place to assess impact.

Our work to increase the number of permanent social workers

- We have taken a proactive approach towards agency social workers actively encouraging them to become permanent employees, with 3 agency to permanent in Children's Social Care (CSC) within 6 months and a further 5 in Adults' Social Care (ASC).
- We offer an agile recruitment processes to increase number of applications and ensure a positive experience
- ASC vacancies reduced through successful recruitment of 18 apprentices, who started in January 2025, and 4 new Think Ahead Social Workers were appointed this year.

Quick apply now

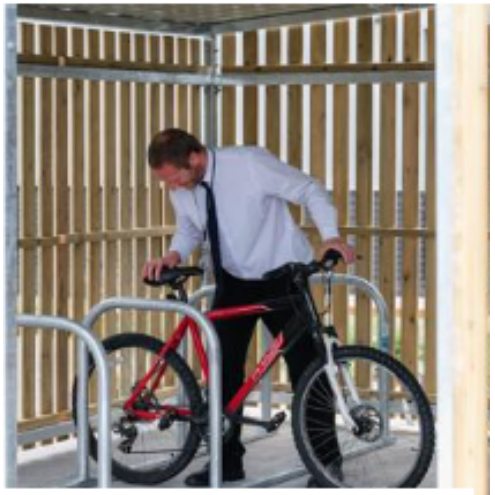
Attracting you: Highlights

Employee Benefits Contract Review and Enhancement

- New contract awarded via the ESPO Framework, covering employee discounts, lease car scheme, and loans/savings — effective 1 November 2025 with minimal transition required.
- Cycle to Work Scheme: New contract direct with provider enabling a 7.5% cashback return alongside NI savings, following Member feedback and procurement approval.

Improving workforce metrics and benchmarking capabilities

- We have standardised our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that they can be benchmarked against relevant sector comparators. While we had aimed to enhance our external benchmarking capacity by identifying and using the most relevant service/tool, there were significant subscription costs attached to this and therefore benchmarking insights will be sourced manually to include comparator data in our performance reports / commentary within the next reporting cycles.



Benefits

Attracting you: Highlights

New Colleague feedback

New starter survey engagement levels vary by Directorate, some key facts include:

- 20% average response rate:
- 16/18 having regular Our Conversations with their manager
- 14/18 found suitable learning resources to meet their identified needs
- 16/18 intend to keep working for the Council

Direct outreach to new starters across Adults, Health and Commissioning (AHC) and Children's, Education and Families (CEF) indicates generally positive onboarding experiences.

Take up of new starter discussions is encouraging (29% of those contacted responded); the feedback is qualitative so themes are shared as opposed to figures.

Some inconsistency in induction quality—especially for frontline roles—but colleagues describe teams as supportive. Feedback on system access, access cards, and documentation has been promptly addressed.

Attracting you: Highlights

Our commitment to wellbeing as a compassionate employer

- Our new colleague survey now includes a question measuring awareness of our wellbeing offer, which shows that overall, new starters have a good understanding of our offer, with highest awareness of mental health interventions, and that we could do more to highlight the Healthy You offer supporting physical health.
- We continue to develop our Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) network to ensure appropriate coverage, contact, and timely refresher training, sustaining a skilled and supported network.
- Our recruitment training and materials are reviewed regularly to reflect our commitment to wellbeing and the breadth of our offer.

Data from new colleague survey

Attracting you: Highlights

Inclusive Employment and Accessibility Initiatives

- Collaborative work between EDI and Learning & Development teams to create employment schemes that remove barriers and improve workplace accessibility.
- Achieved Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) status and Carer Friendly Employer accreditation (Sept 2025), reflecting strong support for disabled colleagues and carers.
- Ongoing commitment to menopause awareness and support as a Menopause Friendly accredited employer, ensuring accessible resources and an inclusive environment.
- Current focus on promoting support, raising awareness, and creating opportunities for colleagues to share experiences of workplace inclusion and flexibility.

Apprenticeship Diversity and Development

- Ongoing annual monitoring of apprenticeship diversity data, aligned with the workforce EDI dashboard and 5% Club accreditation. Representation trends show steady gender balance among our apprentices (approx. 75% female) and growing ethnic diversity; age profile primarily 25+.
- Apprenticeship opportunities and case studies promoted to encourage participation and highlight diverse career pathways.
- A project has mapped all early career entry routes, including apprenticeships, work experience, graduate programmes (IMPACT), T-Levels, and Grade 1–4 roles. Analysis identified a significant gap at Level 2 and below, with only 1% of roles falling into this category. Next steps: Designing and testing new pathways in areas such as Libraries, Early Years, Social Care, and Customer Services to create scalable entry opportunities.

Appreciating you: Highlights

Responding to Employee Feedback and Building a Supportive Culture

- Listening sessions established after the 2023 employee survey, bringing together directorate representatives to share actions, feedback, and good practice. Sessions held bi-monthly to ensure ongoing dialogue and organisational learning.
- Ratings process review conducted via focus groups with managers and colleagues, leading to recommendations presented to CLT and agreed process improvements.

Embedding Organisational Values and Feedback Culture

- All internal communications (wellbeing, EDI, pay, and policy updates) explicitly connect to our CARE values and encourage a culture of appreciation and open feedback.
- 2025 employee survey includes targeted questions on the understanding and impact of organisational values, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with cultural goals.
- New starter survey indicates that 100% of respondents can say how they use our values in their roles

We have invited teams to share with us examples of putting our values into practice

Appreciating you: Highlights

Celebrating Success and Recognition

- Between Oct 2024 and Sept 2025, there were 252 Employee Recognition nominations, demonstrating strong engagement with recognition initiatives and identification with our values.
- Spotlight Awards received 166 nominations across 12 categories including the new Members' Choice Award, reflecting positive participation in celebrating colleague achievements.

Enhancing Employee Benefits and Value for Money

- New benefits contracts effective 1 November 2025, with continued promotion of local offers through Our Cambs Rewards.
- Enhanced promotion of financial wellbeing benefits (e.g., Salary Finance, My Money Matters, Pension Awareness Week) and ongoing updates to the employee benefits portal, with steady engagement growth (Q2: 431 → Q3: 468 visits).

Supporting you: Highlights

Health & Safety Leadership and Monitoring

Incident dashboards presented to CLT monthly, and at quarterly meeting with trade unions, providing clear oversight of trends and areas for action.

Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Peer Support

Monthly Wellbeing Hours with expert speakers, covering topics including wellbeing in our armed forces community, understanding powers of attorney with the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and continuing our Lifestyle Medicine series with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)

Inclusion and Peer Support Networks

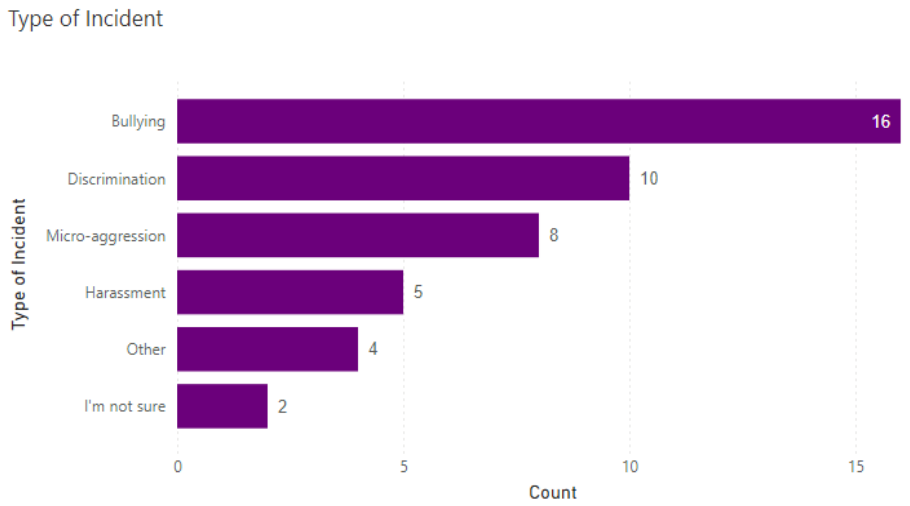
Ongoing support for the IDEAL Network and Peer Support Groups through monthly EDI working group.

New Global Majority Peer Support Group established in 2024, successfully arranged events for Black History Month in collaboration with the EDI team.

Recent Carer Friendly Employer and Disability Confident Leader accreditations validate the council's commitment to supportive networks.

Respect at Work Disclosure Tool:

The Respect at Work disclosure tool continues to be used as a confidential channel to raise concerns, with 29 disclosures made since launch. Data and key themes from these disclosures are shared with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to inform action and organisational learning.



Total disclosures from the Respect at Work Disclosure Tool - between September 2024 and October 2025. Please note that colleagues can choose more than one category.

Supporting you: Highlights

Employee Engagement & Feedback

2023 Survey actions
Insights from the 2023 Employee Engagement Survey have been incorporated into both the People Strategy and EDI Strategy action plans; both of these action plans were discussed with our trade unions.

2025 Survey results
The next engagement survey has been conducted in partnership with Ipsos, with full results expected by the end of November.

The data will inform refreshed priorities within the People Strategy, helping us to measure the impact of ongoing initiatives and identify emerging areas for improvement.

Responding to insights
Our “You Said, We Did” campaign highlights how feedback is driving change. The communication highlights tangible progress in areas such as wellbeing initiatives, creating and embedding our CARE values, a refreshed and relaunched strategic framework, streamlining processes to make work easier, and recognising colleague contributions. This reinforces accountability in responding to what we hear.

Supporting You: Highlights

Manager Development

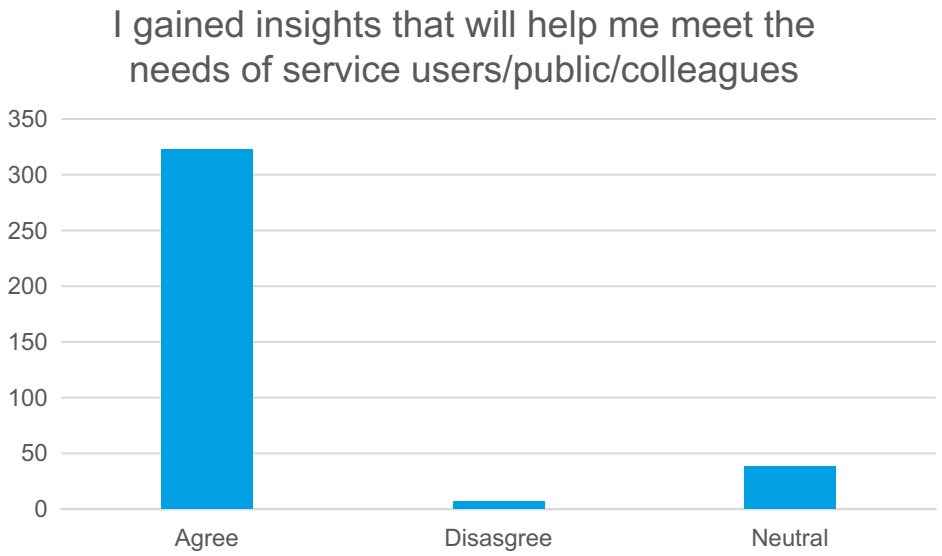
A review of wellbeing conversation learning has informed the design of future manager training programmes. It supports the wider promotion of regular, high-quality wellbeing conversations across all directorates, ensuring that managers are confident and equipped to identify and address wellbeing needs within their teams.196 completions this reporting period.

Schwartz Rounds

Schwartz Rounds reflective sessions continue monthly, providing a safe and supportive space for all colleagues to discuss the emotional aspects of their work. Attendance remains consistently strong, with highly positive feedback highlighting the value of the sessions in supporting emotional wellbeing and team connection. 281 people have attended this reporting period.

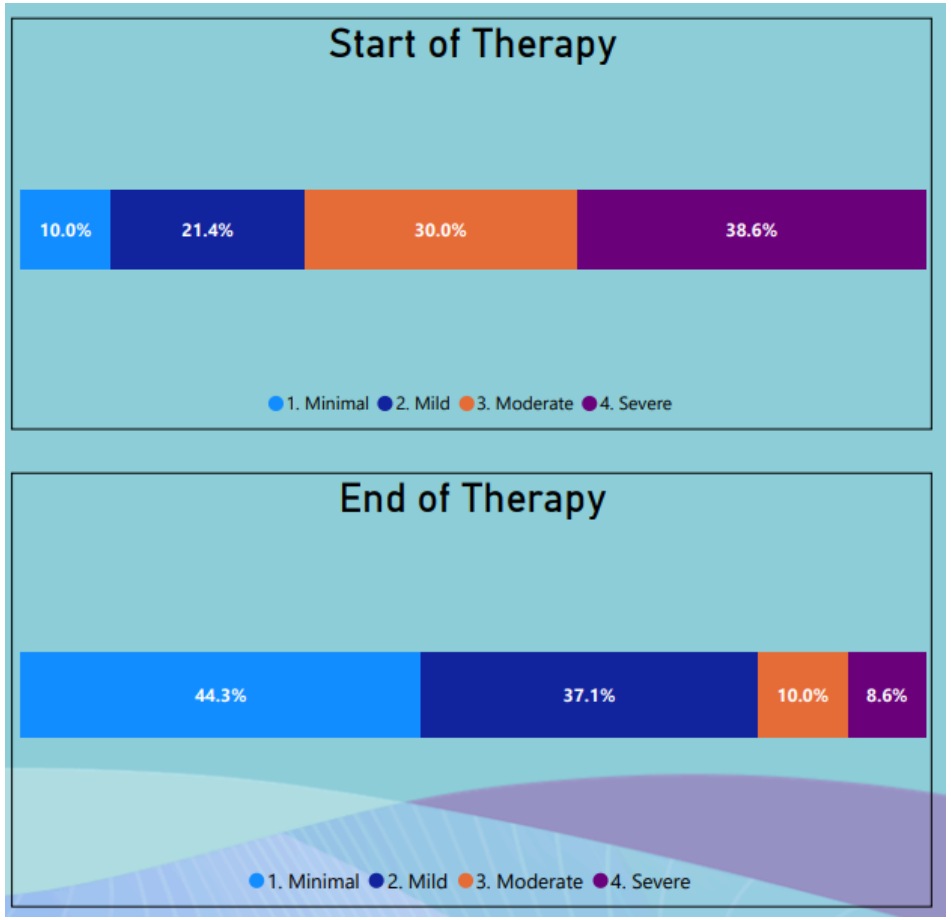
Work Well Partnership

New connections have been established with the Integrated Care Board's (ICB) employment support programme, "Work Well," enabling improved signposting and communication of this self-referral service to colleagues. The provides tailored support for those experiencing health or wellbeing challenges, helping individuals to sustain or return to work and promotes a proactive approach to health and wellbeing at work.



Feedback from Schwartz Round evaluations

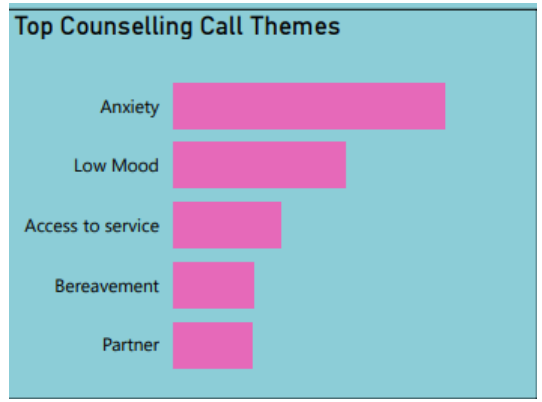
Supporting You: Highlights



Following structured therapy there has been a 68.6% improvement in GAD-7 scores (General Anxiety Disorder)

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
Offering employees and members access to professional wellbeing support, including counselling and practical advice. Promotional sessions for leadership teams help embed awareness and encourage proactive use of the programme within directorates.

Usage and impact are monitored regularly through contract management meetings, CLT, and Trade Union forums to ensure ongoing effectiveness and reach.



As an example of impact, there is a significant improvement in scores relating to anxiety, the most common presenting reason, at the end of structured therapy.

Monitoring and Reporting
Ongoing monitoring of attendance, participation, and feedback from wellbeing initiatives continues to be undertaken through the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Health, Safety & Wellbeing meetings, which include trade union colleagues. This enables transparent reporting and ensures that interventions remain responsive to the needs and experiences of colleagues.

Impact of interventions

Our wellbeing interventions continue to demonstrate value.

Wellbeing Hour

Delivery: Three sessions delivered in the past quarter covering mental, physical and financial wellbeing.

Attendees: 406 attended live

Feedback: 44 comments received – 82% positive

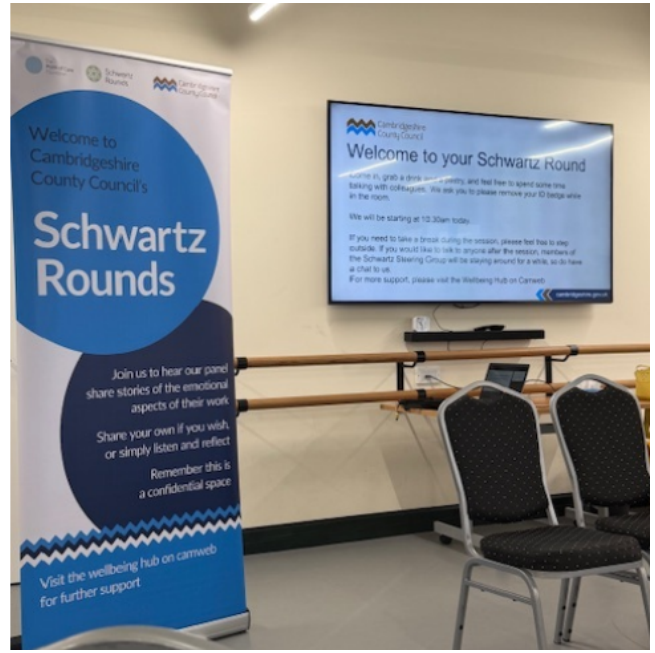
- “Fantastic session. Lots of valuable information shared in a clear and accessible way.”
- “Content was spot on. It feels like this should be essential training in workplaces.”
- “Lots of questions raised but ran out of time to all be answered.”
- Impact: 97.5% of participants reported learning something to support their own or others’ wellbeing.

Impact of interventions

Schwartz Rounds

Feedback: 34 comments received – 27 positive, 7 negative.

- "A powerful and thought-provoking session that allowed me to reflect on my own experiences and those of who I support."
- "I was hoping to hear how colleagues/managers/the council can help those suffering."



Impact:

- **97%** would recommend Schwartz Rounds to a colleague.
- **87%** agreed they gained insights to support colleagues, service users, and the public.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Activity:

- 40 contacts recorded in past quarter, primarily related to anxiety, stress, and workload, resolved through short, timely support.

Training & Accountability:

- Refresher training arranged for 24 practitioners.
- Ongoing monitoring of contact data and refresher completion maintains network effectiveness and accountability.

Impact: A sustainable, skilled and responsive MHFA network, promoting psychological

Developing You: Highlights

Digital Learning Management System
We are procuring a new Learning Management System (LMS) to include functionality to record and report learning needs identified during Our Conversations, enabling data-driven workforce development planning. Driven by the need to modernise our learning infrastructure, streamline operations, and improve the user experience for colleagues, external professionals, and members of the public, a new system will support a wide range of learning formats, including eLearning, digital classrooms, and in-person training. It should offer robust reporting capabilities to meet governance requirements and provide evidence to support inspection frameworks including Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Supporting Career Progression & Transferable Skills
All colleagues can now book 1:1 careers conversations with qualified careers guidance practitioners.
Our transferable skills course supports colleagues in identifying and applying their skills to future roles and is offered to teams experiencing change. Future development: Creating a resources bank once the new LMS platform capabilities are confirmed.

Learning Centre Development
Plans for a bespoke, in-person learning centre cancelled due to the closure of the Accommodation Improvement Programme.

Career Pathways in Hard-to-Fill Areas

Career pathways are being co-produced in areas with known recruitment and retention challenges. Apprenticeship initiatives are progressing, with Adult Social Care expanding opportunities and Children's Services adopting a measured approach, weighing the risks of inexperience against the benefits of growing their own talent. Place & Sustainability successfully transitioned 4 of 5 apprentices into permanent roles, with plans to support the final apprentice into employment. The CIPFA scheme in Finance and Audit and the Graduate Scheme continues to perform well, with several securing permanent positions.

Developing You: Highlights

Measuring Learning Effectiveness

Pilot undertaken inviting 30 individuals in 3 courses to participate in a Teams discussion to explore their application of knowledge and skills from learning, including the relevance of learning to their role, how they have applied this, any barriers to application, and further learning required. The information gathered has helped in the development of new learning opportunities, refinement of existing opportunities to make learning more meaningful and is supporting the identification of themes which could highlight barriers.

This is now being expanded and rolled out across a wider range of courses and learners to provide a richer level of understanding and themes which can be shared more widely in service areas.

The approach will be further reviewed once the new Learning Management System is procured featuring functions to gather evaluation information beyond existing forms.

Equity in Learning Access

Work is underway to baseline learning attendance and completion data alongside demographic data, enabling analysis of equity in access to learning opportunities and informing an action plan to address any identified inequalities.

Developing Leadership Capability

The learning offer now includes:

Coaching Skills for Managers – supporting effective development conversations.

Development and Career Conversations – helping leaders to nurture and grow talent.

Developing You: Highlights

Growing Our Own Workforce through Professional Schemes

In Children's, Education and Families, the Social Work Practice Development Pod launched May 2025 to support four newly qualified social workers transition from the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme. Cohorts in January–March 2026 will progress into qualified roles, with structured support through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

In Adults, Health and Commissioning, apprenticeships have been fully embedded, building a sustainable talent pipeline and reducing reliance on agency workers. Adults' Services: Four 'Think Ahead' students successfully completed their placements and are progressing through ASYE.

Both directorates are using social work apprenticeships as part of their grow-your-own strategy for critical roles.

Other services are using apprenticeships to enable career progression and develop internal talent, including in Finance and in People and Culture Services.

69 new apprentices have started since April 2025 – all internal employees focused on upskilling.

Developing you: Highlights

Line Manager Training
The new Elevate management course has launched, with strong early feedback. Delivery capacity is being increased to meet demand.

Extended Leadership Team development is now supported through regular, co-designed sessions led by group members.

Additional development underway includes:

- Induction eLearning for new managers
- A Welcome Event for new leaders and managers joining CCC
- A new Impactful Conversations course to strengthen communication and performance management capability.

Embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Delivered a series of EDI initiatives including Reasonable Adjustment and Recruitment eLearning (352 total completions)
- Guaranteed Interview Scheme for care-experienced applicants, and updated external EDI content for applicants to understand our offer and support networks.
- We have launched Neurodiversity Awareness Training with 117 attendees so far.
- Women of Colour in Leadership programme delivered to two cohorts, supporting inclusive career progression.

What do colleagues tell us?

Wellbeing learning and the impact that this has:

- 'I will build trust with my colleagues so they can feel comfortable when having conversations with me'
- '[I will] Prepare for Our conversations meetings better'

Our Schwartz Rounds are increasingly popular:

- 'I was hoping to hear how colleagues/managers/the council can help those suffering'
- 'I found this to be a very powerful and thought-provoking session, which allowed me to reflect on my own experiences and those of who I support'

Examples of how our CARE values are demonstrated from our New Colleague survey:

- 'working as a team, to achieve organisational goals, being respectful to all'
- 'I work with multiple areas of the council, hold myself accountable for tasks, respect my colleagues and work to the best of my abilities'
- 'Work with other teams signposting service users where required, taking ownership of work from start to finish correcting any issues that arise. Visiting people in their homes being respectful of their individual needs. Good feedback received for excellent service provided'

Feedback from Menopause Awareness:

- 'Fantastic session. Lots of valuable information shared in a clear and accessible way. Thanks to the presenter and for all involved in arranging this'
- 'Lots of questions raised but ran out of time to all be answered'

What do our trade unions tell us?

We meet with our trade unions regularly in the following ways:

- **Corporate Joint Panel (CJP)** Monthly meeting chaired by Service Director: People and Culture and the Chief Executive attends this meeting at least twice a year.
- **Local Joint Consultative and Negotiating Groups** (JCNGs) Quarterly meetings within Directorates, chaired by the relevant Executive Director
- **Strategic Health, Safety and Wellbeing Meeting** Quarterly meeting chaired by the Chief Executive with representatives from service areas and trade unions.
- **Directorate health, safety and wellbeing meetings** Service-specific meetings on the same themes

In this period, themes arising have included:

- **Feedback on our ratings process** This has been incorporated into the recent review
- **Requests for additional data and discussion about employee relations work** This includes grievances and restructuring and has been provided through CJP meetings
- **Feedback on employment aspects of the draft Artificial Intelligence use policy** This is in development through Customer amd Digital Services and we have established a regular route for union feedback through CJP.
- **Consideration of how we share impact of our wellbeing offer to encourage confidence and uptake** Helpful feedback as part of our quarterly meeting that using evaluation data in our messages to colleagues will build confidence.

In the next six months

- We will receive the results from the 2025 IPSOS survey, consider insights, and incorporate into our People Strategy action plan.
- We will continue to improve benchmarking capabilities to better understand our workforce data in the regional and national context.
- We will communicate the result of our Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme Gold reaccreditation
- We will select a provider for our new Learning Management System in January
- We will train a new cohort of Mental Health First Aiders to further expand the reach of the network by the end of March
- We will further explore how to promote and encourage engagement with all our retention listening activities to ensure that we are hearing from a representative sample.
- We will re-start learning activities paused due to enhanced financial controls from April 2026