

Workforce Strategy 2018 – 2020

Introduction

The Workforce Strategy sets out our vision for our people and identifies the areas we need to focus on to achieve our ambitions in the next critical two year period. It seeks to create the best conditions to influence capacity, capability, cost, culture and customer service; thus increasing productivity and effectiveness.

It needs to look at the composition of the workforce and the current skills set but also to look beyond today and consider the skills sets needed for the future in order to ensure our people are resilient and resourceful and able to meet the challenges ahead.

To inform our Strategy moving forward it is important to consider the bigger picture in terms of local government whilst ensuring it “fits” within the West Suffolk aspirations, as detailed in the councils’ own Strategic Plan.

The strategy encompasses workforce planning but is less about rigid forecasting and more about having the flexibility to be able to evolve and morph into a continuum of change.

What have we achieved?

The Workforce Strategy 2014 – 2016 focused on the development of our workforce, post shared services, and the changing landscape of working in a much more collaborative way with partners than ever before. Joined up working was key to the strategy and still is a big driver for a refocused workforce strategy for the future.

Whilst our corporate priorities remain we need to be very clear whether we achieved the ambition we identified, whether they remain fit for the future and what needs to be strengthened in the strategy in order to meet the future and beyond, as far as the local government horizon stretches.

The strategy focused on 5 key areas:-

1. Skills and behaviours

- To have visionary and ambitious managers and leaders who can develop, motivate and lead our workforce to deliver our services effectively in challenging times.
- To further develop our teams so that in providing our services they can demonstrate flexibility, innovation, decision making and at all times excellent customer service.

- To create a culture of innovation and challenge, underpinned by an appropriate approach to risk and entrepreneurial activity.
- To foster commercial behaviours that support of our values and priorities

2. Recruitment and Retention

- To recruit and retain a workforce with the skills and values we need, promote jobs and careers as an employer of choice, and identify, develop and motivate talent.
- To develop and maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce, actively challenging and addressing accessibility barriers and issues.

3. Pay, Reward and Recognition

- To provide good and flexible reward packages within the current financial constraints and ensure fairness across all groups of employees.
- We will recognise great work and ideas; whilst dealing with poorly performing employees fairly, supportively and robustly.

4. Wellbeing and Engagement

- To be an organisation where risks are managed sensibly and proportionately to ensure the levels of accidents and incidents of ill-health are as low as possible.
- We will actively promote and manage wellbeing including effective and active employee engagement.
- Build resilience and energy among our staff and partners to enable change and deliver our priorities.

5. Performance and Change

- To be a partnership that is able to transform quickly and effectively, is agile and flexible in approach, working across boundaries and collaboratively with colleagues and partner organisations across Suffolk and the East of England.
- To be a highly productive organisation, focussed on achievement that values and engages with employees and has a culture that is collaborative, innovative, inclusive and creative.

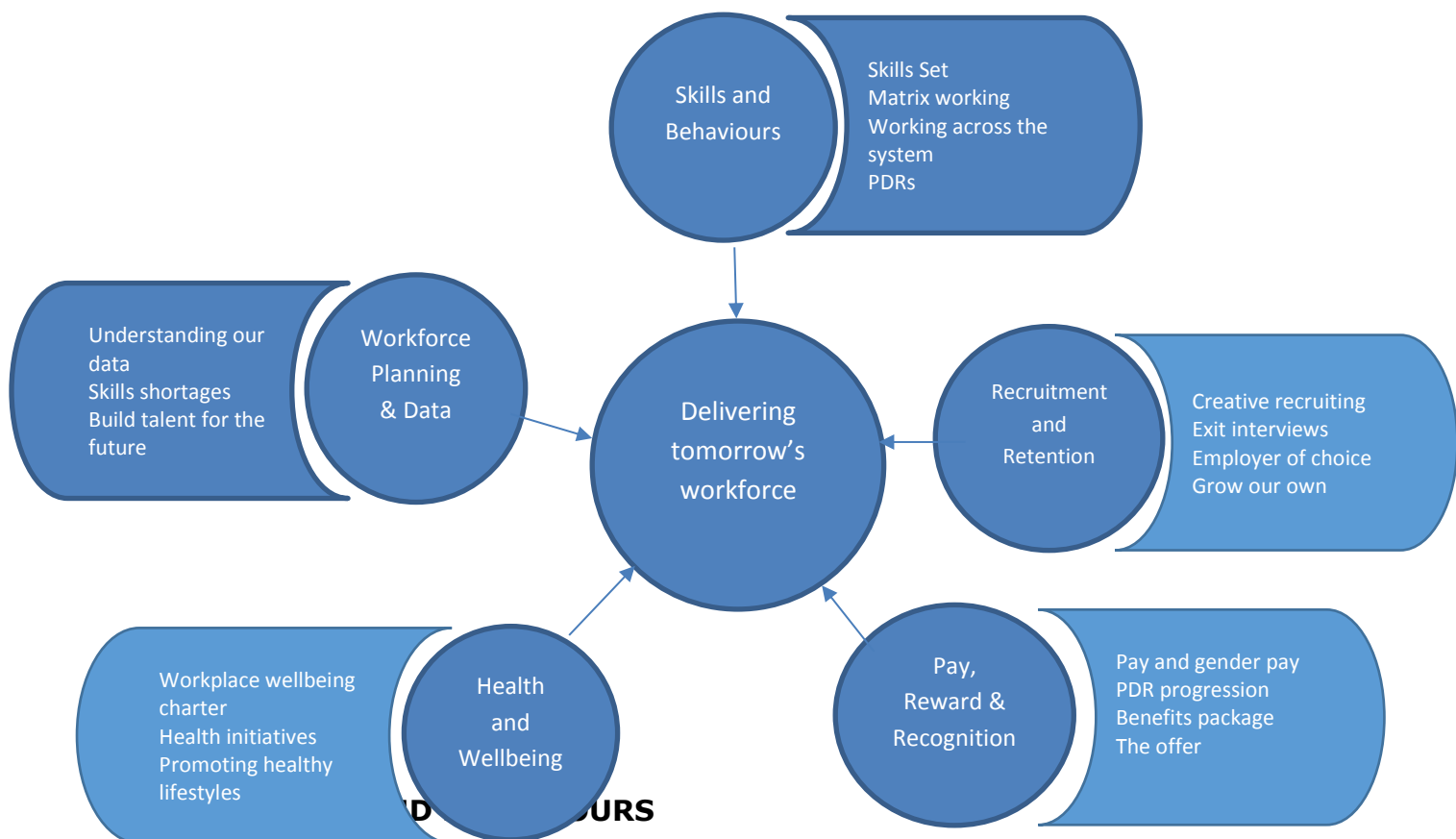
Moving forward it is clear that many of those key areas are themes which will always remain the foundation of the workforce strategy. It is also clear that we have made significant progress in delivering these commitments. **(See Appendix A below)**

Workforce strategy priorities for 2018-2020

We have a national reputation of transforming local government to meet the challenges faced by councils and their communities. The creation of a new single Council for West Suffolk is one of the ways the authorities are meeting these challenges which includes reduced funding and increased demand and expectations on council services. The new council will continue and improve upon the principles of investing in growth to create financial and social benefits as well as meeting strategic aims for the area. This will see changing the ways the council, a political and democratic organisation works with public and private sector partners to drive and meet strategic aims such as health and wellbeing.

In order to move forward into the next phase of our development we need to reposition as well as redefine our key workforce strategy areas in order to achieve and deliver in the future, leading up to and taking us into a Single Council, focussing on:-

- 1. Skills and behaviours**
- 2. Recruitment and retention**
- 3. Pay, reward and recognition**
- 4. Health and wellbeing**
- 5. Workforce planning and data**



What do we want to achieve?

We need to continue to train, develop and grow our workforce in multi disciplinary settings to ensure our staff have the skills for their role and able to work across the organisation. We need to focus on transferable skill sets as well as on professional and technical skills.

We need to continue to develop our teams to have the skills and behaviours to deliver services innovatively and with creativity and flexibility ensuring our staff are fully engaged at all levels.

We need our leaders to manage through emotional intelligence centred on people focus and balanced with fair, consistent and appropriate approaches. Most importantly we need our leaders to know their people.

It is the norm to work across professional boundaries and geographical boundaries, working with partners and organisations. We need to continue to develop opportunities for our staff to learn and grow and support those opportunities when they arise. We need our staff to show leadership, taking responsibility and ownership in their areas of work.

Why is this a priority?

Our ability to lead and manage through a changing agenda, with our focus on a wide range of challenging projects is essential. It is critical that our learning and development programme continues to focus on skills which are responsive to the needs and demands on our staff.

What is the current position?

- Non contributory offer of training for talented staff
- Comprehensive offer of a range of corporate training options for all staff
- Secondment opportunities across the Suffolk system and beyond (Suffolk Joint Secondment Policy)
- Staff working across the system – encouraged and enabled
- Performance review and pay progression based on achievements and behaviours

Where do we need to be?

- Maximise learning opportunities within the Suffolk system as well as through matrix working and project teams
- Be a key player/lead on Suffolk Joint People Strategy and the L&D agenda
- Develop talent management through succession planning, coaching, mentoring and training interventions
- Effective use of PDR outcomes to inform the L&D focus of West Suffolk
- Ensure our PDR scheme reflects the changes in values and expectations since its introduction in 2014
- Encourage staff to fully engage across the organisation in a way that is multi functional and well received and adds value to the work of others
- Confidence in engaging with others and valuing other service input
- Our leaders need to know their people and know how best to support and develop them, individually and collectively; giving and putting in the time to lead and direct

What actions will help us to respond to these needs?

- Realign the PDR scheme in terms of the expectations and reflect on what they looked like in 2014 and what is needed to deliver the vision for the future.
- Produce a future skills matrix/profile, mapping current skills against this, allowing us to assess how to move forward with training programmes and initiatives.
- Develop career pathways to map required skills and identify future knowledge, behaviour and skills
- Develop a suite of compulsory training for Leaders in terms of a basic level of management skills, mental health awareness, equality training etc
- Collaboratively work with the L&D Suffolk system to play a lead and influential role in influencing the future learning opportunities for 21st century public servants
- Actively influence in appropriate networks across the Suffolk system and wider.
- Increase skills and opportunities through matrix working, secondment and shadowing opportunities both internally and externally
- Take full advantage of the apprenticeship levy to train our future talent; celebrate apprentice success
- Widen the non contributory offer of training to "Rising" performers

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

What do we want to achieve?

We need to continue to source, recruit and retain the best people with the right skills at the right time deliver our vision. We need to seek to be reflective of our communities, at all levels of our councils. We need to ensure we support our staff at the start of their employment to the end, from appointment to retirement, ensuring we met their needs balanced with the operational needs.

Why is this a priority?

It is vital that we provide resources in the most cost effective way and be creative and innovative in our approach to recruitment. We must look at retention in order to retain as many of our high performing and rising performers but also to retain the workforce to ensure stability, whilst responding to healthy turnover in order to bring new skills and new ideas to complement our councils' workforce.

What is the current position?

- Turnover is a healthy 9.1% which offers both stability and opportunity in a measured and controlled way
- Advert to offer of employment is 23 days
- Successful probation is currently at 97%
- A creative approach to recruiting, use of social media, an increased online presence and promoting our employer brand
- Average age of employees is 44 years old
- A Disability Confident employer

Where do we need to be?

- An employer of choice driven by our staff and our communities
- Turnover to remain no greater than 12%
- Appropriate use of agency and consultancy workers
- Ability to recruit speciality posts
- Develop a leadership framework that will enable all staff to develop the skills and techniques needed to take the organisation forward
- To develop more creative opportunities to access people with the skills, behaviours and values we need
- Have an increasingly flexible and agile workforce

- Support our employees in their work and personal life, supporting flexible work, flexible hours, caring responsibilities, volunteering opportunities etc

What actions will help us to respond to these needs?

- Creative recruiting to include effective use of recruitment methods to target specific applicants for hard to recruit positions; increased use of social media for advertising
- Modernise recruitment web pages to promote our status as an employer of choice, the way we work and improve the applicant journey – particularly promote flexible and agile working to meet both work and personal life styles – tell our story, what is it like to work here
- Consider different models of recruitment and employment engagement
- Expand the exit interview and monitor staff reasons for leaving
- Continue to use agency/consultancy workers only where there is a particular need
- Get a better of understanding of what attracts people to work here, why they like working for us and why they stay
- Develop and promote more career pathways, secondments, job shadowing and learning and development opportunities
- Positively discourage long working hours culture and promote output coupled with healthy work life balance
- Agree a set of parameters around acceptable levels of meetings and emails
- Focus on developing meaningful employee engagement initiatives such as staff focus groups

PAY, REWARD AND RECOGNITION

What do we want to achieve?

We need to be able to recruit and retain a diverse range of people and pay, reward and recognition is a fundamental part of our offer to our staff. We will continue to consider options to enhance our reward package for employees where possible and within the financial constraints of the budget. We will continue to recognise and reward performance to help improve morale and motivation. We need to develop and promote affordable pay and reward strategies balanced with the employer of choice vision.

Why is this a priority?

We need to be competitive in our offer in order to recruit and retain our workforce. Working with Unison we will develop approaches to pay and reward and ensure consistency in application. We need to be creative in our offer – not all reward is about pay. We need to be clear that our benefits are wider than those we see as the “norm” and be able to promote our approach to flexible working and work life balance values.

What is the current position?

We struggle to recruit at the bottom of our pay grades forcing our starting pay levels up and compromising our principles of appointing on the first 2 points of the grade. Our median salaries are adrift of the national local government median salaries. However, our gender pay position is very balanced.

Where do we need to be?

- Widen our approach to rewards and benefits using salary sacrifice and employee benefit schemes where appropriate
- Know our offer
- Continue to work in partnership with Unison in the development of new approaches to the workforce.
- Recognising our staff who continue to be the constant factor in performance
- Ensure that any future payline changes do not compromise our gender pay position

What actions will help us to respond to these needs?

- Promote and celebrate our non financial benefits such as flexible and work life balance policies to both our staff and our future employees, through internal communications and our recruitment process
- Continue to ensure our pay line is fit for purpose
- Provide a clear understanding within our workforce of the value of our employment benefits offer
- Continue to work with Reward Gateway in order to promote the West Suffolk We Save benefits and increase engagement and show case “good news savings” through staff experiences
- Gender pay check any future pay proposals

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

What do we want to achieve?

A fit and healthy workforce who are able to deliver the services supported through the commitment and the framework of the Suffolk Workplace Wellbeing Charter. We want a workforce who feel supported and valued and know how to access support during varying periods of the lives. We want our staff to know and believe they matter.

Why is this a priority?

Putting health and wellbeing at the heart of our offer strongly correlates with our desire to be an employer of choice and an organisation our staff are proud to work for. Keeping our staff healthy is the key to delivering our aspirations.

What is the current position?

- Sickness is at a manageable level of 6.1 days per person
- Long term absence is managed exceptionally well, with all options considered for the benefit of the employee and employer
- Excellent occupational health service
- Attained recognition of excellence and achievement in the Suffolk Workplace Wellbeing Charter
- Strong people policies focused on health and wellbeing including delivery of health and wellbeing initiatives
- A Mindful Employer
- Signed up to Time to Change initiative

Where do we need to be?

- Astutely recognise health issues and address them, with Leaders playing a key role in this
- Continue reduction in sickness
- Proactive in preventative measures and health education
- Ensuring we support our staff to be resilient and manage personal stress and good mental health
- Be recognised as an employer who continues to support health and wellbeing

What actions will help us to respond to these needs?

- Work with OneLife to deliver health initiatives accessible to all of the workforce, during the course of each year, in line with the Suffolk Workplace Wellbeing Charter recommendations, in order to maintain and support a health workforce
- Focus these initiatives on the areas of promoting healthy activity, eating and lifestyles choices and enable us to achieve excellence in those areas of the Charter
- Ensure our policies and practices reflect the changing requirements of new ways and styles of working and service delivery, in terms of flexible working and work life balance and positively promote this
- Provide initiatives that support the building of resilience and wellbeing and the ability to take responsibility for our own health, recognising the opportunities to do so
- Join in and promote national initiatives such as Workplace Challenge, Stoptober, Mental Health at Work Week, etc

WORKFORCE PLANNING and DATA

What do we want to achieve?

We want a workforce that reflects the right people, with the right skills, with the right potential to develop in order to deliver our vision. We need our Leaders to have access to valuable workforce data and to understand their data in order that this may inform strategies to plan for the future.

Why is this a priority?

Understanding our workforce data and being able to plan on skills shortages, turnover and succession planning are essential in order that we are equipped to deliver for today but also for tomorrow and beyond.

What is the current position?

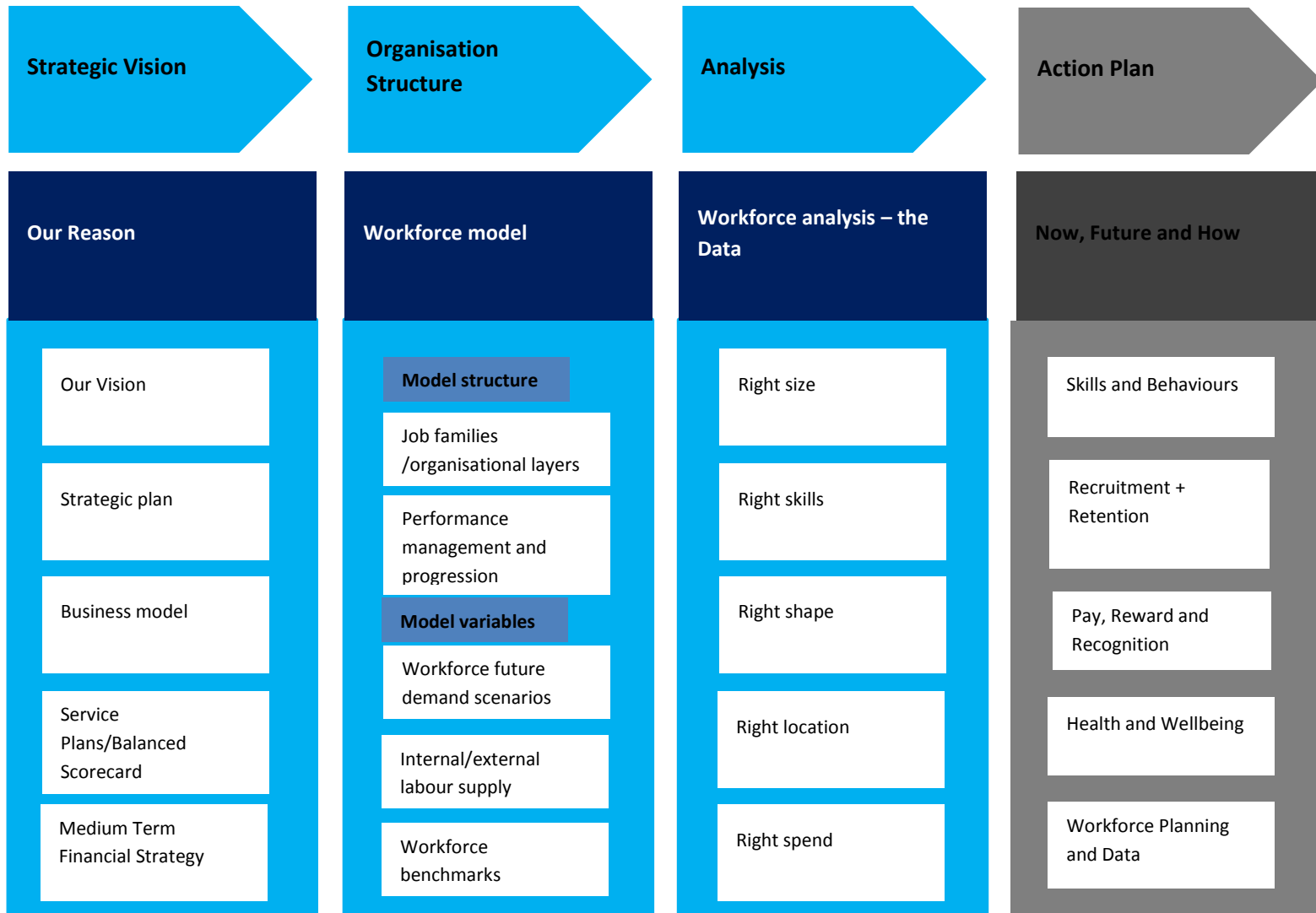
We are reactive in terms of skills needs and vacancy management. We have an aging workforce in some key areas and run the risk of losing key people. We have access to base line data in terms of workforce composition in general such as male/female/age/part-time/full-time/disability/sickness but we need to consider if we are producing the right data to be equipped to forward plan.

Where do we need to be?

- Better analysis of the workforce data not only in services but as an organisation as a whole
- We need to have some agreed metrics and benchmarking across the organisation and across professions
- We need to understand our current position but we need to also understand where we are moving to in short, medium and where possible long term
- Have career pathways for all professional roles and maximise the apprentice levy opportunities
- We need to ensure that knowledge retained by key people is shared amongst teams in succession planning – knowledge is only power if it is shared

What actions will help us to respond to these needs?

- Maximise job remits to provide for job enrichment and job satisfaction
- Positively encourage and seek opportunities for our staff to work within their band but outside their job to enable a stretch of skills and abilities
- Consider job rotation/job shadowing opportunities within the councils
- Produce relevant headline data, on a quarterly basis, to enable service managers to plan individually and understand where there service fits with the organisation
- Deliver a yearly workshop with service managers on detailed data
- Have detailed career pathway plans for all roles within the councils



WORKFORCE STRATEGY MODEL

Examples of actions and outcomes

Skills and behaviours

- Secondment opportunities offered to potential future leaders enabling promotion
- Extensive learning and development programme available for all staff with 572 learners attending training/development events during April 2017 – December 2017 for example
- 28 staff working towards accredited professional qualifications
- Increase in staff completing ILM levels 3 and 5 qualification in mentoring and leadership and management.

Recruitment and retention

- A robust vacancy management process
- Created a range of opportunities for young people to join the councils through interns, graduate scheme and apprenticeships – 80% success rate of apprentices being offered employment with the councils, 6% of the total current work force started as an apprentice
- Development of career pathways for internal promotion and external recruitment
- Key player in the launch of the Suffolk planning apprentice scheme
- Low staff turnover currently at 8.85%
- Time taken to recruit 22.8 days from advert to offer

Pay, reward and recognition

- Widened the employee benefits offered by West Suffolk We Save and promote the benefits to increase membership and opportunities for our employees
- Consistent and modified approach to reward through the performance review scheme to include both financial reward and development opportunities for high performing staff.
- Ensured our pay and reward packages are fair and inclusive of our workforce.

Wellbeing and Engagement

- Four new policies introduced – Mental Health at Work, Mediation, Mentoring and Workplace Wellbeing Strategy
- NHS health checks introduced and excellent participation with remedial action plans for some individuals to improve health and wellbeing
- Initiatives such as mental health at work week, Workplace Challenge, Health Eating rolled out.
- 112 members of staff, including 48 managers attending mental health training interventions
- Sign up to Time to Change Employer pledge
- Sickness at lowest rate for 2 years at 6.16 days per person
- Awarded Suffolk Workplace Wellbeing Charter

Performance and Change

- Decrease in formal performance management
- Increase in coaching and mentoring
- Effective shared service delivery
- Increase in participation in people management skills training such as mental health awareness, dealing with difficult conversations, 21st century managers, coaching conversations, dealing with distressed situations.