

Kent County Council People Strategy 2022-27

Annual Report 2023-24

Introduction

This report presents a review of the progress made from the first into the second year of Kent County Council's current 5-year People Strategy. The strategy is presented in terms of key themes which support the organisation to ensure it has a productive working environment for all staff to continue to meet the needs of the residents of Kent.

The themes are:

1. Maximising organisational capacity, capability, and confidence
2. Creating an environment for people to thrive
3. Supporting our people as individuals
4. Attracting, retaining, and maximising our talent

The strategy is divided into to these themes in order to give focus to the areas that need to be concentrated on to build on and develop the culture that will continue to ensure that Kent County Council is a place people want to work and can perform and achieve while they are there. However, the themes should not be looked at in isolation of each other as there is a significant degree of interconnectivity between them which influences progress towards the organisation's goal of building a workforce for the future whilst ensuring the people we employ are healthy, engaged, empowered to act and are able to be themselves at work.

The path to 2027 is not linear but there is an expectation that an overall improvement in the organisation's key indicators is seen and that these improvements influence how the organisation operates. As such, there will be a number of small fluctuations in the first couple of years of this strategy as KCC consolidates the improvements that the previous strategy delivered and builds to the future.

The following report will review each of the strategic themes in the context of the key performance indicators for that section. The document will also show what activity has occurred that informs the delivery of the strategic themes. At the beginning of each subsection of the themes the headline aspirations will be presented and the corresponding KPIs shown. The changes from 2022/23 is shown in brackets (represented as a percentage point) alongside the figure for 2023/24.

1) Maximising organisational capacity, capability, and confidence

Our people are supported to be well at work.

We will provide a safe, supportive, and healthy working environment with wellbeing at the heart of change.

KPI 1: % of employees who believe that KCC cares about the wellbeing of its staff 63.1% (0.0 p.p.)

KPI 2: Average days lost to staff sickness 8.24 (+0.06 p.p.)

Both performance indicators have remained relatively static over the last year.

While the indicator regarding whether KCC cares about wellbeing has not moved a perspective on this can be seen amongst a set of other strong indicators from the staff survey in that employees told the Council that they feel they are able to be themselves at work and feel safe. They also felt able to raise issues with their managers and could discuss personal circumstances that might affect work. The disconnect has come regarding their confidence in action being taken in relation to the matters that they raise.

In terms of sickness absence, the top five reasons why people are absent from work have stayed the same, but we have seen a halving of days lost due to COVID related illnesses. This has been offset by both time lost to mental health and musculoskeletal illnesses having increased. KCC aims to reduce the number of days lost per employee, however, the current figure is not out of sync with other public sector employers of an equivalent size.

Much work has occurred to support staff, directly, and to support managers in order to help people who are ill to return to work and to raise awareness of various conditions so that people become more informed about the support they can get and how managers can support people at work. The Council also has a key focus on proactively influencing people's wellbeing to ensure that the impact of those elements KCC can directly influence is minimised and ensure people are signposted to support that can help stave off impacts on their wellbeing. This is focused on four pillars of mental, social, financial, and physical wellbeing.

The activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2027, published in May 2023.
- Targeted approach for teams with the highest absence levels, including pilot Q&A sessions made available for all managers to have 1 to 1 support with a member of the HR Team in relation to absence management.
- Targeted interventions for managers of teams with the highest absence levels overall but with a particular focus on those teams with high musculoskeletal and mental health absences.
- Wellbeing Diagnostic Tool rolled out across the organisation from November 2023, designed to help managers improve their approach to wellbeing in their teams with the aim of reducing sickness absence.
- A resilience summit was held for staff in the Children's, Young People & Education Directorate (CYPE) and Adult Social Care & Health Directorate (ASCH) in 2023. It brought together keynote

speakers and staff from across Social Care and SEND professional areas to support resilience, wellbeing, and knowledge sharing. Over 100 staff were supported on the day and the resources have been used widely thereafter.

- Targeted support sessions with a focus on coaching for a growth mindset have been delivered in operational teams within ASCH and CYPE. This work was tailored to the experience of teams supporting 6 Managers at each session. This support is in addition to the 144 staff members who attended Growth Mindset development as part of their professional development and learning.
- Targeted programmes of resilience and job application support have been delivered in GET, ASCH and CYPE. These sessions have supported preparation for job applications, recruitment and selection as well as what to do when you are thinking about a change in career.
- Targeted support for wellbeing, making use of trauma informed coaches and tested coaching approaches continued with targeted team's experiences high volumes of change, stress, or demand, including loss and bereavement.
- Communications and engagement activity with spotlights on several topics including mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing, social wellbeing, and winter wellness.
- Review and refresh of the Authority's financial wellbeing offer and resources available to staff, including forming a relationship with the Money and Pensions Service (providing us with new resources and delivery of a webinar on Financial Wellbeing for all staff in November 2023) and developing a relationship with Wave Community Bank (following a merger between the bank and Kent Savers in Feb 24), to promote their services and to use them to further support our financial education offer.
- Support to the Mental Health Support Network with recruiting new chairs and increasing membership engagement.
- Launch of Change Hub to KCC Managers and Staff, integrating all aspects of change support into one learning space, with workbooks, videos, and support activities.
- T200 managers event in January 2024 to support managers' own wellbeing and resilience through change. The event included decompression tools, and a full guidance pack was produced drawing together a full range of supporting information and resources. This pack has subsequently been shared through wider manager briefings and engagement activities and is housed on KNet for future reference.
- Three all Manager briefings, KCC wide, to explore the issues and action focused requirement in relation to Bullying Harassment and Abuse. Management guidance shared with links to key documents and policies.
- Wellbeing integrated further with Health and Safety, with the previous Health and Safety Group now the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group.
- Strengthened partnership with Maximus (formally Remploy) to promote them to our staff and managers, to support positive mental health.

Further activity proposed for 2024/25 includes:

- Continue to drive down sickness absence across the organisation, focusing on both preventative measures and targeted interventions where necessary.
- Continue to focus on our mental health wellbeing offer, including how we can further utilise and promote the support services such as Maximus, who offer KCC staff fully funded,

confidential, 1 to 1 support sessions for up to 9 months. Maximus to run staff and manager webinars to promote their offer.

- Review our offer for musculoskeletal support to establish whether our current interventions are sufficient, taking into consideration feedback from managers.
- Further promotion of Shared Cost AVCs to all staff and Kent Rewards to make money go further and support financial wellbeing.
- Continue to focus on financial wellbeing, including promotion of Wave Community Bank and further webinars run by them and the Money and Pension Service and rebrand of AVC Wise and expansion of offer to include financial wellbeing support and education.
- Broader wellbeing communications and engagement activity to continue across the organisation, focusing on our priority areas.
- Further work to promote and increase usage of KCC's Inclusion Passport, greater support for colleagues through workplace adjustments, good conversations approach with focus on supporting wellbeing, review of Dignity and Respect at Work guidance (encourage staff to escalate issues and build sense of psychological safety at work)

Our people are motivated and deliver well for the people of Kent.

We will create mechanisms to support effective self-leadership across our workforce, the tools and information to take action and the coaching support to enable growth and development.

KPI 3: % of employees who rate their engagement with KCC positively 62.3% (-1.3p.p.)

KPI 5: % of Internal Movement 10.7% (-1.9p.p.)

KPI 9: % of employees who feel they are able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role 75.4% (+0.5p.p.)

The Council has found itself facing significant challenges over the last year and employees will have been aware of them and conscious of their potential impact. There have been a number of significant restructures, improvement plans for services, an increase in volumes of people requiring our services and not least the Council's budgetary position. In that context the relative maintenance of people's engagement with its employer is a testament to them and the leadership shown by their managers. This is recognised in the largely positive views of employees of their managers, demonstrated by the staff survey, and that staff turnover is at a level expected of an organisation the size of KCC.

Internal movement has dropped in comparison to last year and is comparable with overall turnover. The Authority knows that managers need to do more to support people's career development but what it does show is the Council continues to strike a balance between supporting people to move internally but also bringing skills, experience, and new perspectives from outside of the organisation.

The Council continues to support its staff in engaging with its broad development offer, both in terms of professional specific development and a more general skills and knowledge offer. Engagement with that has gone up slightly over the last year.

The activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Evaluation of reverse mentoring pilot and recommendations taken forward.
- Coaching offered to staff groups to support growth and development.
- Support to the SEND accelerated action plan and DFE requirements. Resetting culture and behaviours through long term targeted interventions.
- Management and Leadership communication, guiding managers through the core requirement of equality, diversity & inclusion.
- KCC Celebration through Moments that Matter on KNet, showcasing the work of teams in delivering positive outcomes for Kent residents.

Further activity proposed for 2024/25 includes:

- Review how reverse mentoring programme can be integrated into leadership development.
- Further coaching and mentoring support will be trialled in support of staff groups.
- Coaching development using the 6C's inclusion model will be trialled to embed inclusion practice in development coaching, directly supporting KCC's objectives.

2) Creating an environment for people to thrive

Clear pathways to encourage young people into our organisation.

We will mobilise and sustain opportunities for access to careers in KCC and with partner organisations for young people aged 16-25. This work will be supported through expert advice, guidance, and supported development.

KPI 9: % of employees who feel they are able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role: 75.4% (+0.5p.p.)

KPI 13f: KCC workforce representation compared to Kent working population of (Census 2021, 16.0%) 16-25 years old: 8.1% (-0.8p.p.)

In terms of employees aged between 16 & 25 years the proportion of the overall workforce has fallen by 0.8p.p. Employees from this age group were 6% more positive about their overall learning and development experience than KCC as a whole and were the most positive of all the age groups (82%) with regards their manager and the support they receive from them. The turnover for this age group has fallen by c.8% in the last year but is still about 10% higher than KCC's overall voluntary turnover figure. Young people between 16 and 25 as a percentage of new recruits has fallen over the last year.

In the context of this age group being positive about their experience not as many as the Council would choose are staying to develop their careers so we have continued to work on supporting young people in Kent find entry job opportunities with the Council and to stay engaged and continue their careers in KCC. The positive is that many do stay but the Council is conscious it needs to do more through its managers to engage these employees in developing themselves in terms of experiential opportunities as part of their work and help them see career trajectories for the future.

Work continues across KCC to enhance support for Social Work Recruitment and grow the entry points available for the profession. In March of 2024 we successfully bid to recruit 12 new Social Work Degree Apprentices to Adult Social Care. Think Ahead opportunities also went live that same month, broadening the opportunities to secure social work qualifications for new and existing staff across the authority.

The Graduate Programme in KCC continues to attract successful young people within a variety of roles across the Council. Between 6 and 8 Graduates are recruited each year and they have themselves shared their praise of the support the programme offers.

At the end of 2023 The Workforce Development Team within HROD began scoping the work for KCC to bring back in-house Work Experience Programmes for the County Council. This along with the development of T Level Qualifications and Internships are being tested in different parts of the organisation - from Business Administration to Laboratory Technician.

Other activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Support to staff groups, which includes Aspire the group for younger employees, to raise awareness of KCC's employment offer and career development opportunities available, including coaching.
- Review of contract types by young people to understand if there are any barriers, alongside workforce profile data and recruitment data.
- Review of minority ethnic ASYE student experience, resulting in improvements to address potential barriers to them passing and staying with the Authority.
- Review of onboarding experience for ASYE minority ethnic students
- Implementing a social mobility strategy at KCC
- Supported Internship pilot programme launched for 16-25 SEND students as a pathway into employment.

Our people are well managed, and their talent nurtured as they develop their careers at KCC.

We will work together to retain our talent, offering opportunities for career development through succession planning and clearly identified talent management programmes.

KPI 4: % of higher TCP ratings 41.8% (-3 p.p.)

KPI 6: % Voluntary Turnover 10.5% (-2.8 p.p.)

KPI 5: % Internal Movement 10.7% (-1.9 p.p.)

Turnover has continued to fall and is at an organisationally sustainable level. With turnover falling it can constrain opportunities for internal movement to support career development. This mixed with striking the right balance between internal appointments and bringing people in externally – and the benefits associated with that – has led to a small decline in the pace of internal movement. However, we do know that staff tell the Council that many of them are adequately supported by managers to understand and engage with career development opportunities but there is significant scope for improvement in how managers engage with staff on looking at how to

develop their career. Also, the Council has been told via the staff survey that just under half of its workforce does not see opportunities to develop their careers in KCC although they see KCC committed to developing people. This would suggest a push factor on turnover; however, this has fallen. There are certain factors that could influence this such as the external job market which has been quite tight over the last year and that other aspects of KCC's offer and work are attractive to our employees.

Whilst the proportion of higher TCP ratings has fallen slightly the key insight is where these are distributed in the organisation – we know that certain groups such as part time staff and those who are disabled do not have their talent recognised so readily. Senior staff continue to have their contribution more readily recognised.

In this context other activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- A new workforce planning tool and associated e-learning and KNet page have been launched for managers to use. This will enable managers to understand their workforce, plan for how to fill gaps in supply and demand of staff using approaches such as succession planning, talent management and apprenticeships/graduates.

In 2024/25 the Authority will:

- Use the data, strategically, to inform areas for new apprenticeship standards, improved career pathways and where we can, organisationally, use flexible deployment to make best use of our staff in supporting key service delivery.

Kent County Council is an employer of choice.

Our employer brand is clear, and we will be known for and celebrate the moments that matter to our residents delivered through the contribution of our people.

KPI 7: % of employees who are satisfied with the total employment offer 56% (+0.1p.p.)

KPI 13: % KCC workforce representation compared to Kent working population.

Census 2021:

- a. Gender: Female **49.0%**
- b. Ethnicity: Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic **11.6%**
- c. Disability: Disabled **15.7%**
- d. Religion: Faith **49.1%**
- e. Gender Reassignment: Transgender **0.5%** (16+ population)
- f. Age: 16- to 25-year-olds **16%**
- g. Sexuality: LGBTQ+ **2.9%** (16+ population)

KCC Workforce 2022-23 to 2023-24 (compared to Census):

- a. 79.2% to 79.7% (+30.7p.p.) difference increased by +0.5p.p.
- b. 8.9% to 9.6% (-2.0p.p.) difference decreased by -0.7p.p.

- c. 4.9% to 5.6% (-10.1p.p.) difference decreased by -0.7p.p.
- d. 45.4% to 45.9% (-3.2p.p.) difference decreased by -0.5p.p.
- e. 0.5% to 0.4% (-0.1p.p.) difference increased by +0.1p.p.
- f. 8.9% to 8.1% (-7.9p.p.) difference increased by +0.8p.p.
- g. 3.3% to 3.6% (+0.5%) difference increased by +0.2p.p.

In terms of the KCC employment offer and what staff tell the Authority the KPI figure is bolstered by how employees view wellbeing and accessing the right learning to do the job. The areas of significant issue are in relation to feeling adequately paid and people's perception of the total employment package.

As such KCC continues to work hard to develop and promote its overall employment package within the financial constraints that surround it.

In this context other activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Employee offer communications campaign to raise awareness of the employment package available.
- Survey to staff to understand interest in electric vehicle/green lease car scheme and agreement to implement as part of our employment offer and to support the Authority's CSR in relation to the environment – it is also helpful in attracting new staff who share these values.
- Update to Family leave policies to ensure compliance with statutory changes.
- Promotion of Kent Pension Fund webinars to staff as part of Pension Awareness week
- Update to Car Loan policy for those people who do not have ready access to finance for vehicles.
- Contract extension with Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution provider and continual promotion of the scheme as part of employment offer and financial wellbeing campaigns - an increase of 118 new staff taking out an AVC this year, a total of 512. This represents 5.82% of the KCC workforce, a steady increase from 22/23.
- Shared Cost AVC's – continue to promote webinars, linked to financial wellbeing.
- Review of volunteering policy to include 2 days paid leave for volunteering, and clarity on time off for reservists /cadet leaders.
- Review and implementation of changes to KCC's fertility policy as part of a suite of family friendly policies.
- Kent Reward newsletter – greater links with staff communications to promote the offer with a view to increasing membership.
- Enhanced Kent Rewards offer by introducing physical wellbeing/gym discounts and benefits, and savings calculator. Also introduced Smart Spending App, to provide an alternative channel to access offer. Wellbeing hub in Kent Rewards further developed.
- Continue to pay above the Foundation Living Wage hourly rate for our KR3 grade.
- Apprenticeship pay – 2nd year of tracking National Minimum Wage for first 6 months with KCC, then move to KR3.
- Reiteration of our approach to hybrid working as part of our employment offer to clarify for current staff the expectation and how they can engage with it as part of their employment.

In terms of pay the financial circumstances of the Council provide a challenge, however, the Authority understands the need to continue to provide reasonable pay increases year on year. That said in order to address a number of challenges that are causing pressure on our pay and grading structure and in order to address some design idiosyncrasies KCC has spent the last year working on designing a new grading structure which will give a defined length of time to reach the rate for the job (top of the grade) and will shorten the length of grades by bringing up the bottom salaries. This will also address wage inflation pressures at the bottom end of the grading structure and the Councils hopes will also aid recruitment and retention whilst taking into account that there is no extra money to bolster salaries and it is being delivered within the amounts set aside in the medium-term financial plan.

The new pay structure will remove the Total Contribution Pay System and will be replaced by a new approach to performance management. Work has been continuing throughout 2023/4 to design this to be implemented alongside the new grading structure which is due to go live in 2025. Also, in relation to pay work has been going on to analyse and determine if there are equal pay gaps for protected characteristics other than gender. The Authority also continues to analyse and report on any gender pay gap and work on what can be done to reduce it.

The Council's external employer branding has been modernised and the Authority is making a significant investment in the use of social media in order to attract a wider range of candidates to apply for roles in KCC. This applies equally to internal staff and external candidates. Social media is being used to celebrate new joiners to KCC and staff moving roles, thus highlighting the flexibility for development within KCC.

There is also an ongoing campaign, using social media, to raise awareness of many of the benefits of working for KCC, using actual staff to promote these.

In this context other activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Social media recruitment posts focus on Reward and Benefits
- Publishing equal pay reporting to support employer brand
- Further engagement on total Employee Value Proposition and maximising value of total rewards, including feedback on gaps to inform offer and to understand how the total benefits package is landing with staff.
- Review EVP through diversity & inclusion lens to inform offer.
- Implementation of new approach to Job evaluation
- Flexible career pathways – linked to job evaluation project.

3) Supporting our people as individuals

Our leaders and managers are accountable and drive the effective delivery of services. We will collaborate organisation wide to support leaders and managers with their roles and responsibilities targeting interventions to support growth in each area of these areas and ensure accountability is shared for the delivery of these aspirations.

We will foster an inclusive culture where people are treated fairly and with respect through supported development and delivery of supported learning, knowledge sharing and engagement support.

KPI 8: % of employees who rated their manager positively 73.4% (+0.5 p.p.)

KPI 10: % of employees who rate the culture of KCC positively 70.5% (-0.6 p.p.)

KPI 12: % of employees who rate inclusion and fair treatment in KCC positively 82.1% (+0.1 p.p.)

The 2023 staff survey shows that staff continue to feel positive about inclusion and fair treatment at KCC although there continue to be some differences in experience for minority groups, notably disabled staff who were less positive across all 14 themes of the survey, those with caring responsibilities (albeit an improved position from 2022) and staff age 36 and over.

Minority ethnic staff continue to be less positive on the theme of pay and benefits (33.7% compared to 42.8%). Other indicators such as turnover data suggests there may be a retention issue amongst some groups but significantly with ethnic minority social workers (KCC overall turnover in 2023/24 for ethnic minority staff is 16.67% compared to 12.27%, an improvement from 22/23 when turnover was 24.05% for ethnic minority employees), and minority ethnic staff who live outside of Kent. We know that we lose people due to their day-to-day experience of the workplace, which was reinforced in the findings of a review into ASYE student onboarding experience.

Managers can have a profound impact on an individual's experience of the organisation. The 2023 staff survey shows there has been a slight increase in staff responses rating their manager positively, from 72.9% to 73.4%. However, insight from engagement forums held this year has revealed that, in some cases, managers are more comfortable addressing some protected characteristics/staff groups than others and focus their conversations on structures and processes to support diverse teams rather than a more nuanced approach with the individual employee which delivers more empathy and increased engagement.

An extensive programme of activity continues to be delivered to support leaders, managers, and staff to create a more inclusive culture, this includes:

- The Managing Well Campaign featured a spotlight on diversity and inclusion at KCC, which included new Neurodiversity guidance and e-learning and promotion of tools and resources such as Inclusion Passport, Good Conversations and Workplace Adjustments guidance to enable them to support their staff to be their best at work.
- T200 on Inclusion to explore scenarios around race and neurodiversity, which was followed up with a managing inclusively resource pack.
- Extended CMT session to explore practical actions to make a step change on Inclusion at KCC
- All Manager briefing on bullying and harassment/expectations on Dignity and Respect at Work, and workplace adjustments.
- Continue to promote Developing Inclusive Management practice.

Further activity proposed for 2024/25 includes:

- A focus on bullying and harassment at work, particularly from people external to the organisation but not exclusively, as this was highlighted as an issue for staff at KCC.
- Continue with series of manager briefings planned to outline the requirements/expectations on managers.
- Support for managers in dealing with challenging situations.
- Leadership team interventions e.g. as part of the Accelerated Programme Plan on SEND, strengths-based skills assessment with GET leadership team which continues to be piloted across the organisation.
- Managing Now programme – evolving Managing in KCC to new Managing Now programme – activities to drive practice through development e.g. flexible manager, performance manager, budget manager, and to help managers understand Inclusion as part of day-to-day management.

KCC has some positive indicators in relation to how staff view the culture in KCC. However, that masks, to a degree, the experience of some groups in the workforce. The older an employee is the less likely they are to be positive about the culture in KCC. In the context of the overall response from disabled people to the survey from disabled people they did not rate organisational culture as highly as the rest of the organisation. In order to address the specifics in relation to disabled staff but also to continue to invest in the 6Cs model of inclusion to create a culture where effective management and leadership brings staff with them.

The activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Communication and engagement activity to mark celebratory moments throughout the year, including a spotlight on Inclusion during Inclusion week in September 2023.
- Events held with external speakers on Trans Awareness, and Visible Difference
- CMT Open door with Rainbow and Single Parent Staff Group with resulting actions
- Refresh of the Dignity at Work policy and guidance to reflect CMT's zero tolerance policy.
- Launch of neurodiversity guidance and e-learning.
- Race equality objective in action plans as part of performance management conversations.
- Targeted OD interventions with teams e.g. small coaching-led workshop activities in high-risk teams,
- Wider whole service OD interventions e.g. culture growth in social care, behavioural framework and standards in SEND, Infrastructure cultural development
- 360 feedback process in development
- Launch of Change Hub, and provision of briefings to promote the use of the tools.
- Safe space workshop with Level Playing Field staff group.
- Scoping Member development of Inclusion

Further activity proposed for 2024/25 includes:

- Expect Respect external campaign on KCC's zero tolerance stance to discrimination.
- Disability objective as part of performance management conversations
- Further embedding diversity and inclusion into culture to gain traction on the ground e.g. development of inclusive leadership.

- Evaluation of the learner experience by thematic areas, to include inclusion and wellbeing.
- Further deep dive into the HR Case data for minority ethnic staff
- Review the Disability action plan considering Safe Space workshop feedback.
- Disability Confident scheme renewal
- Review of support to carers
- Review of opportunities to enhance change hub materials in order to support neurodiversity.

4) Attracting, retaining and maximising our talent

Our people have what they need to innovate and change.

We will be future focused, reimagining what is possible within our organisation and across our sector capitalising on digital skills and technology.

KPI 5: % Internal movement 10.7% (-1.9p.p.)

KPI 7: % of employees who are satisfied with the total employment offer 56% (+0.1p.p.)

KPI 9: % of employees who feel they are able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role 75.4% (+0.5p.p.)

KCC continues to provide and adapt its learning and development offer to staff to meet the workforce's changing needs but also to support differing ways of service delivery and the adaptive needs of residents. There is an extensive suite of professional development available as well as managerial development which ensures our managers stay ahead of what is required. The Authority has also embraced the changing focus on digital skills and the role it plays in service delivery and supporting staff to work more efficiently and productively. Learning and development forms part of the overall employment offer and returns a more positive outlook from staff than other aspects of the offer, such as pay.

To ensure the continuous development of our workforce the following activities have been undertaken:

- Review and evaluation of Skills for Growth, making sure staff development is updated based on feedback, and remains accessible for all staff.
- Development, delivery and briefing of and for the KCC Change Hub. Providing a full range of tools for staff and managers, including workbooks, videos, and online learning that support staff to get ready for change, make it happen and make it stick. The launch of the Change Hub has been supported by a communication and engagement campaign to encourage staff and managers to use the tools as part of their team discussions.
- The Commissioning Academy has supported the development of the new integrated commissioning activity embedded within Adult Social Care and Health and Children Young People and Education.
- The coaching offer for leaders, managers and staff continues to support individuals with their professional growth and development.

- Professional development for social care has been delivered through the Kent Academy for Social Care delivering training and developments for teams in line with their Practice Development priorities.
- The Development Request process enables staff from across the organisation to be supported with professional development that directly supports their job role. 304 staff benefited from role specific development in the last financial year.
- For this new financial year there will be further development of the Change Hub to enhance both the wellbeing and support for neurodiversity within the hub.
- Further development is underway to support Managers. Managing Now will be the core development programme supporting managers to determine their professional accountabilities. Training will be enhanced with supporting information, briefing materials, and engagement sessions.
- Coaching and mentoring will be enhanced this year with programmes to support staff groups and ensure we build professional growth.

Our people are recruited based on our values and their potential as much for their experience and knowledge.

We will use a variety of recruitment approaches which will be modern, responsive, inclusive and enhance the candidate experience.

KPI 6: Voluntary Turnover rate 10.5% (-2.8p.p.)

KPI 11: % of employees that see our values demonstrated in the way we operate 71.9% (-0.1p.p.)

KCC continues to demonstrate a strong score in relation to its workforce reflecting the values that is expected from it. This is due to a combination of factors in terms of recruiting the right people, effective development, and strong leadership from local managers. That said there are points of improvement, not least in how staff see the actions of senior managers reflecting those values. This latter point can be affected by a range of factors such as budget restraints, restructures, and organisational wide changes. However, this is an area that requires future focus. The Council has undertaken a wide range of activity to attract the right type of people, to ensure it is workforce is diverse and that it drives towards an inclusive culture as part of the Authority's key values.

The activity undertaken throughout 2023/24 to sustain the endeavour to progress the Authority's position included:

- Employer branding videos created for use on social media channels with KCC values embedded in order that prospective applicants understand our values from the outset.
- Values-based self-selection quiz/education tool in process of being designed to help inform potential recruits about the values and behaviours that KCC sees as fundamental to the way we do things and the reasons for them.
- Values based interview questions mandatory as part of every interview.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion questions mandatory as part of all interviews.
- Manager/Leadership questions mandatory when recruiting to managerial/leadership roles to ensure we are recruiting managers with the right values and mindset.

- Recruitment training emphasises drafting job descriptions based more on skills than relying on qualifications.
- Recruitment training recommends adverts drafted to entourage wide applications i.e. less restrictive than before
- Use of existing staff images and quotes to create new videos in line with our employer brand, used on our social media channels to promote KCC as an excellent employer.
- Photoshoot and interviews with further staff members to build the portfolio of content for further employer brand social media posts. New videos from this activity have been used on our social media channels.
- New joiners and staff moving roles celebrated and welcomed to KCC via posts on LinkedIn.
- LinkedIn contract reviewed and extended with a change in provision to build on the previous year's success.
- Glassdoor and Indeed home pages have been refreshed to enhance KCC's profile externally.
- Ongoing analysis of our candidate recruitment experience surveys, to inform any changes required to enhance the candidate experience overall. Further information from candidates required for certain areas and so survey updated to get this.
- Recruitment training for managers rolled out and improvements made, based on feedback received.
- Direct job posting to LinkedIn.
- Advice to managers to share any jobs they are posting to their wider networks to achieve increased visibility of opportunities.
- Option to close adverts early if there are enough high-quality applications.

Diversity and inclusion activity included:

- Developments to recruitment website following feedback from staff groups.
- Guidance for recruiting managers updated to emphasise workplace adjustments, system prompts to notify adjustments during onboarding and signposting successful candidates to Access to Work
- Addressing any barriers in the recruitment process for neurodiverse applicants
- Update to equality monitoring form to raise awareness on its importance and why data is collected.
- Review of customer recruitment experience survey to inform inclusive recruitment practice.
- Standard advert wording updated to include reference to caring responsibilities and 'let's talk flexibility'.
- Photoshoots and content created to reflect our diverse workforce for use on recruitment website and social media postings.
- Benchmarking and horizon scanning to inform KCC approach e.g. diverse interview panels, reasonable adjustments in recruitment process, outreach.
- Pronouns on Tribepad recruitment system updated.
- Review of retention guidance for managers, resulting in amendments to Managers Area on KNet
- Collation of workplace adjustments to understand support being put in place to deliver their roles. Review of signposting and process to implement workplace adjustments in a timely manner on joining KCC and/or when a need arises.
- Deep dive analysis into turnover data for minority ethnic staff to better understand drivers.

- Deep dive analysis into recruitment data for minority ethnic staff to understand the difference in applicants vs. hires.
- As a result of an accessibility audit, requirements for managers to use digitally accessible job descriptions has been included in Tribepad prompts, in Tribepad Guidance and on KNet.

The table below shows the changing profile of applicants and new hires:

Recruitment Activity by Protected Characteristic

Disability

Year Disability	2022-23			2023-24		
	Applied	Interviewed	Hired	Applied	Interviewed	Hired
Disabled	7.11%	9.47%	8.08%	7.39%	10.48%	8.41%
Non Disabled	92.56%	88.92%	90.95%	90.14%	87.84%	90.29%
Prefer not to say	0.33%	1.61%	0.98%	2.46%	1.68%	1.30%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Ethnicity

Year Ethnicity	2022-23			2023-24		
	Applied	Interviewed	Hired	Applied	Interviewed	Hired
Ethnic Minority	27.15%	17.76%	13.17%	36.68%	23.11%	15.72%
White	68.82%	77.37%	81.30%	58.81%	71.95%	78.47%
Prefer not to say	4.04%	4.88%	5.53%	4.51%	4.94%	5.81%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Faith

Year Faith	2022-23			2023-24		
	Applied	Interviewed	Hired	Applied	Interviewed	Hired
Faith/Religion	50.91%	46.70%	43.63%	56.03%	49.08%	44.29%
No Faith/Religion	41.96%	44.54%	46.29%	35.76%	41.61%	45.18%
Prefer not to say	7.13%	8.76%	10.08%	8.21%	9.31%	10.53%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Sexual Orientation

Year Sexuality	2022-23			2023-24		
	Applied	Interviewed	Hired	Applied	Interviewed	Hired
LGBQ+	6.42%	6.02%	6.07%	6.25%	6.18%	6.29%
Heterosexual	85.07%	85.15%	83.52%	84.17%	83.58%	82.91%
Prefer not to say	8.51%	8.83%	10.41%	9.58%	10.24%	10.80%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%