



# Durham County Council Workforce Strategy

2021-2023



# Foreword

by the Chief Executive

County Durham is a great place to live, visit or work in. Durham County Council is a great council and we are ambitious with our plans for the county and are continually reviewing what we do and how we do it to improve the services we provide to our residents and customers.

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

We are aware that the world is changing, and how public services are delivered will continue to change. The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had a major impact, and this will have a significant influence on our future operating model as a council, how our residents access services and what we will need from our workforce. The council will also need to continue to respond to other challenges such as health inequalities and wellbeing, rising demand for services, ongoing impacts of austerity, health and social care challenges, climate change and challenges in children's social care. We will need to continue to embrace new technology, as well as respond to national shortages in particular professions and also address the impact of an ageing workforce.

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

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

Our workforce and that of our partners, is integral to our success. This Workforce Strategy sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for our workforce over the next three years which will enable us to get to where we want to be as a council. This includes priority areas for organisational development and transformation which will enable us to deliver on our organisational values of "Outcome Focused, People Focused, Empowering and Innovative".

We aim to be renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and for being a fantastic place to work whilst delivering great services for our residents.



**John Hewitt**

Chief Executive of Durham County Council

# Context

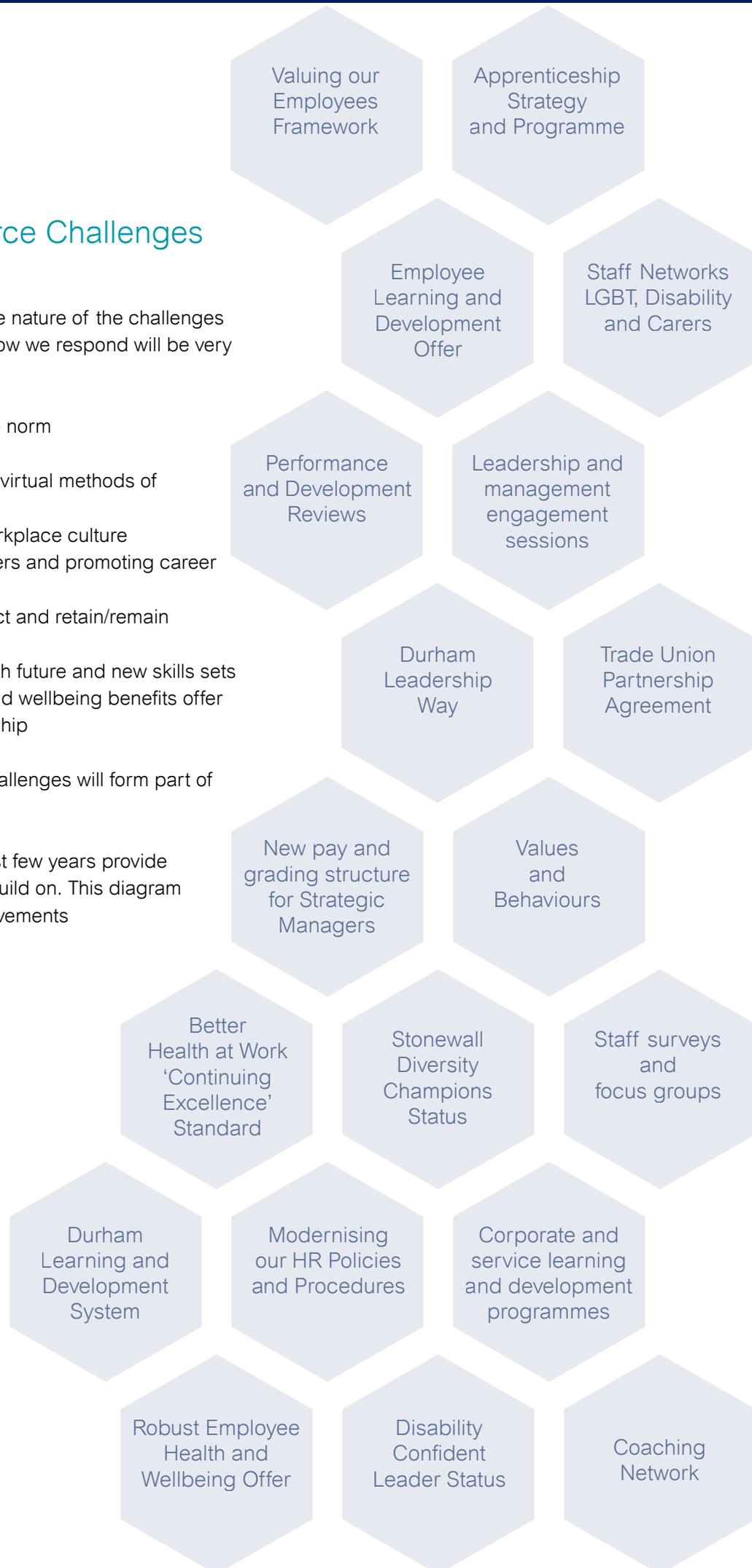
## The Future Workforce Challenges

As we move into the future, the nature of the challenges affecting our workforce and how we respond will be very different.

- Work-life balance being the norm
- Flexible workspaces
- Moving to more digital and virtual methods of development
- Cultivating an authentic workplace culture
- Developing our future leaders and promoting career progression
- Employer branding to attract and retain/remain competitive
- Upskilling the workforce with future and new skills sets
- Offering a holistic health and wellbeing benefits offer
- Different models of leadership

Initiatives to address these challenges will form part of this Workforce Strategy.

Our achievements over the last few years provide a fantastic platform for us to build on. This diagram demonstrates the many achievements during this period.



# The Council Plan

Ultimately, the vision for the County, the vision for the council and the vision for the future workforce all need to align to deliver what is set out in our [Council Plan](#), against the following four ambitions:

More and  
Better Jobs

People Live  
Long and  
Independent  
Lives

Connected  
Communities

An Excellent  
Council

Whilst the strategy supports delivery of the overall Council Plan, it primarily focuses on the fourth ambition: 'Excellent Council'.

In developing this Workforce Strategy, it is important to recognise where we want to be. The Council Plan provides us with this direction.

As an organisation we aspire to:

- Redesign services with the customer in mind
- Use and embrace technology as an enabler to change
- Achieve the best outcomes within current resources
- Ensure all activities add value to the customer
- Use our data and information to inform our decision making
- Empower and enable our staff and communities
- Be as efficient and effective as possible, removing waste and reducing costs
- Continue with our partnership working from good to great
- Be renowned for our skilled, engaged and flexible workforce
- Help communities become more self-reliant and resilient

Our values describe the type of organisation that we want to be:

**Outcome Focused**

**People Focused**

**Empowering**

**Innovative**

We continue to embed these in everything we do.

We will create a workforce for the future whilst supporting our people through change. We will have the right people, with the right skill sets, in the right location, at the right time and at the right cost to deliver high quality services and to build a council for the future.

We will also continue to learn from feedback from our employees and the lessons we have learnt through the COVID-19 pandemic to build upon the transformation that has quickly been established.

# Our Workforce Profile

To develop a workforce that can meet the current and future needs of residents, we first need to understand our existing employee profile. A snapshot taken at 31 December 2020 highlights key data we know about our workforce. This data excludes school-based employees.

**Headcount** 7,961

**Sex** 63% Female 37% Male

**Disability** 3% of staff have a disability (as a % of post count)

**Sickness Absence** 9.71 days lost per FTE

**Staff Turnover exc Schools** 6.97%

**Apprenticeship Posts** 228 apprenticeship posts

**Age Profile** 6.95% staff aged under 25 as a (% of post count)

**Age Profile** 42.53% staff aged over 50 as a (% of post count)

## High Risk Recruitment Areas

- Social Workers (particularly Children's Social Care)
- Trading Standards • Community Protection (Environmental Health)

## Gender Pay Gap Reporting

Gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. For further information in relation to the council's position, please follow this [Link](#)

## Understanding the make-up of the workforce helps us to plan for the future.

We know:

- We have a large diverse workforce with turnover being low in most areas
- We have an ageing workforce; therefore, we need to have succession plans in place
- We are making progress with apprenticeship recruitment and support into employment
- We understand our risk areas in terms of recruitment and retention in key professions and are making plans to address these risks
- We are tackling the main causes of ill-health and have achieved the Better Health at Work 'continuing excellence' standard and are now working towards 'maintaining excellence', whilst continuing to take a holistic approach to health and wellbeing agenda
- We understand the main causes of absence and have targeted interventions to address these areas
- We will build upon the targeted initiatives in order to eliminate our gender pay gap
- We remain compliant with the public sector equality duty; building 'an inclusive and welcoming employee culture' by way of developing employee networks.

The initiatives set out in this Strategy will enable the council to respond to some of the workforce and wider demographic challenges and enable us to put robust workforce plans in place to robustly address those challenges.

# Our Workforce Priorities

## The right transformational people practices

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

When we connect our vision to our values and priorities, the illustration below describes what this Workforce Strategy will deliver over the next three years. The priorities and plans in the Workforce Strategy will act as enablers to transform our people and services by developing and putting the right transformational people practices in place.

### **PRIORITY 1 Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce**

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- Evidenced based workforce decision making, planning and delivery supported by accurate workforce data and insight
- Workforce plans for each of our services to address current and future workforce needs
- Strong succession planning and talent management strategies to help us 'grow and develop our own employees'
- Developing modern HR practices and approaches which will enable us to transform what it is like to work for the council and how we manage the organisation

### **PRIORITY 2 Building leadership capacity and culture change**

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- Investing in our leaders and managers to be the best and to inspire and empower employees
- To develop a model of leadership which is conducive to leading flexibly in a modern organisation
- Embedding our values in everything we do
- Creating a supportive and inclusive working culture where employees thrive and perform

### **PRIORITY 3 Developing our workforce**

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- Giving all employees the opportunity to develop and grow to achieve their full potential
- Ensuring our employees have the right skills to support them in their roles and to deliver high quality services to our communities and build a council for the future
- Building learning and development into everyday work
- Focusing our programmes on critical skills and competencies for the future
- Enabling accessible and easy access to learning and development by a one stop shop/ blended learning offer

### **PRIORITY 4 Being a good employer**

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- Attracting and retaining the best talent through a branded employment offer, creating a great place to work and being an employer of choice
- Investing in new and flexible ways of working to develop an agile workforce
- Valuing our employees through effective employee engagement and recognition, a range of employee benefits and encouraging ideas and innovation
- Ensuring employees are supported through a holistic health and wellbeing approach

# Delivering the Strategy

A range of strategic HR and OD initiatives under each priority area will help us to deliver our workforce strategy, modernising the organisation. Actions plans are in place to deliver these initiatives.

## **PRIORITY 1 Planning for the future and refocusing our workforce**

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All employees heading in the same direction to achieve culture change and transformation. Robust workforce planning in order that the workforce development and workforce plans can be built to address priorities and challenges.

How:

### **Culture change**

- Lead organisational cultural change considering COVID impact and local government landscape changes
  - Develop a plan of initiatives to support cultural change based on our priorities, values and behaviours, and organisational model going forward
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### **Organisational Model**

- Develop a strategic approach to re-organisation.
  - Develop and lead the workforce elements of health and social care integration
  - Develop protocols for shared posts across organisations/other service arrangements
  - Consider the strategic HR practices and policies required for integrated services.
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### **Workplace Model**

- Develop an Employee Workplace Strategy and Guidance for leading differently
  - Review HR policies and procedures against the future model
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### **Workforce planning**

- Implement the council wide approach to workforce planning, using workforce data
  - Develop corporate and service workforce contingency plans
  - Develop key career pathways for key occupational posts across services
  - Map apprenticeship standards across service areas to support development opportunities
  - Digitise and deliver the corporate development offer
  - Develop, digitise and deliver service development plans
  - Review Induction/ onboarding
  - Delivery of the actions within our Apprenticeship Strategy
  - Review role profiles and competencies for the future
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### **HR Policy Modernisation Programme**

- Modernise the approach to recruitment: develop the employer brand, careers hub, digitise and improve processes, review the overall approach including person specifications.
- Review the approach to restructuring/redeployment linked to efficiencies, flexibility of the workforce and the future organisational model.
- Review role profiles to modernise and increase flexibility across services
- Continue to digitise HR processes
- Continue to review all HR policies and procedures in line with our public sector equality duty and progress inclusion.

## **PRIORITY 2 Building leadership capacity and culture change**

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Effective leaders get the most from the team they lead, inspiring and empowering others. They also take people on the right journey for the organisation and help us to change culture and transform.

How:

- Implement standardised management role descriptions to support leadership expectations
- Work with services for service specific management, leadership development initiatives
- Review the leadership and management programme:
  - Senior leadership development
  - Strategic Leadership events and engagement
  - Develop a Talent Programme Approach
  - Develop career path mapping for leadership posts
  - Maximise management qualifications through the apprenticeship route
  - Develop a fit for purpose manager induction
  - Further enhance the Coaching programme/offer
  - Introduce a succession planning approach
  - Focus on leadership and management remotely

## **PRIORITY 3 Developing our workforce**

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Investing in and developing our workforce will be critical. We need to build a workforce development infrastructure and whole council approach to realise efficiencies of scale and plan appropriately, using the resources we have to maximum effect.

How:

- We will have an inclusive approach to talent management and have in place a comprehensive Employee Learning and Development programme, access to over 300 digital and E-Learning resources, together with a Leadership and Management Development Programme to support all employees to grow and develop in their roles.
- Develop a Corporate Employee Development Programme 2021/22 and softer skills programmes/ digitise/blend offer
- We will digitise the full Learning and Development infrastructure, systems and processes
- Deliver Service specific workforce development plans
- Maximise the use of Apprenticeship Standards to upskill the workforce
- Implement the full roll-out of digitised Performance and Development Reviews (PDR)
- Review the approach to training budgets and maximise resources available
- Review the approach to qualifications
- Create a fit for purpose evaluation framework
- Transfer/implement processes of service specific data and progress into the Durham Learning and Development System
- Establish organisational reporting requirements for workforce development
- Embed the Coaching and Mentoring framework
- Deliver a Digital training programme and support for the workforce
- Implement the mental health development programme and awareness
- Ensure all frontline training is built into the Durham Learning and Development System

## **PRIORITY 4 Being a good employer**

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The services we deliver are only as good as the people we employ so we need to focus on being a great employer, one where people want to work for. The health and wellbeing, engagement and support/encouragement and recognition we give to our workforce will lead to a workforce who aspire to do their best at all times.

How:

- Refocus/ repackage health and wellbeing offer through a more holistic approach
- Set up health and wellbeing focus groups and identify new future actions
- Ensure those who are vulnerable are protected with the right organisational measures in place
- Ensure return to activities are managed in a phased, gradual and safe manner
- Deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Plan
- Deliver the actions associated with the council's Autism Strategy
- Implement the Domestic Abuse Charter and plan
- Focus on improving attendance at work and overall wellbeing
- Deliver the actions and initiatives relating to the Gender Pay Gap
- Inclusive employer – staff networks, focus on make-up of the workforce, delivery of equality objectives to the workforce
- Review, develop and implement the new framework for employee recognition
- Enhance and actively promote the employee benefits offer
- Develop a framework, policies and tools to support smarter working
- Review the approach to enhance communications and engagement
- Progress our organisational commitment to being a Disability Confident Leader and a Stonewall Diversity Champion
- Increase employment opportunities for disabled people and other groups e.g. young people, SEND, Looked After Children

# Measuring our success

We need to know this strategy and the initiatives are making a difference.

We need to know that they are delivering against our vision for the workforce, our vision and priorities, values and behaviours. The outcomes will therefore be tested in a number of quantitative and qualitative ways.

## Employer of choice

Where our recruitment, career development and reward and recognition structure align with workforce plans and employee satisfaction levels and the number of people wanting to come and work for us increases.

## Undertaking regular temperature checks and staff surveys

A full staff survey complimented by regular health checks.

## Attraction and retention

Feedback from those joining and leaving the organisation.

## Health and Wellbeing

Survey results and measures such as attendance. Measuring overall wellbeing figures and data and analysing trends and changes.

## A skilled and flexible workforce

Where we have the right skills and behaviours supported by an induction, PDR and development programme.

## Strong and effective leadership

Demonstrated by how our employees feel supported working for the council.

# Our values are



**For advice regarding the application of this document please contact:**

HR Advice and Support  
hradviceandsupport@durham.gov.uk



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