

## Review of People Strategy

Date: 9 December 2024

Report of: Interim Assistant Chief Executive – People, Digital & Change

Report to: Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

The council's People Strategy was launched in 2020 to cover the period 2020-2025.

A review of the strategy is currently being undertaken to renew it for 2025-2030, with a view to publishing a refreshed People and Culture Strategy in Spring 2025.

The People Strategy supports the Best City Ambition and Organisational Plan, describing our vision to be "The Best Place to Work", and with the mission to offer the best employee experience, the best leaders and managers working within a values driven organisation.

Since the People Strategy 2020 – 2025 was launched, the Council has refreshed its Organisational Plan that commits to further developing our organisational culture, bringing our values and behaviours to life in a workplace where people know they are valued, feel included, perform at their best and can reach their full potential. The plan sets out clear expectations of managers and the need to maximise the potential of our people under the heading "Well Run Council," highlighting the need to prioritise employee development and support health, safety and wellbeing.

The reviewing of the People Strategy should be in cognisance with the Best City Ambition and Organisational Plan. The review also needs to reflect workforce data, demographics and trends, feedback from employees via the staff survey 2023, engagement with stakeholder groups to reflect on progress since 2020, the wider external context and our ambitions for the years ahead. The Resources & Strategy Scrutiny Board are asked to be part of this review and to help guide the content of the refreshed Strategy.

### Recommendations

Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board are asked to:

- a) Note the contents of this report, including the intention to publish the refreshed People & Culture Strategy 2025-30 in Spring 2025.
- b) Consider the draft content changes that are proposed for the strategy, as outlined in section 1.22 to 1.36.
- c) Receive further progress updates and reports, making links to the current and future scrutiny work programme as appropriate.

## What is this report about?

### 1 People Strategy Review

- 1.1 The current People Strategy (Appendix 1) was launched in 2020, to cover the period 2020 – 2025. It is therefore timely to review the strategy, consider progress since 2020 and shape the workforce vision and priorities for the years ahead.
- 1.2 We need to do this with due regard to our revised Organisational Plan (Appendix 5), which sets out a clear direction for the future of the organisation within a rapidly changing context. [A full copy of this plan can be found in this link.](#)
- 1.3 The People Strategy contributes to the successful delivery of the Organisation Plan by attracting a skilled and engaged workforce to ensure effective and efficient service delivery and high quality customer service.
- 1.4 Cognate programmes that are relevant to the workforce include workforce planning and integrated service design, digital and public service transformation, new ways of working and estate rationalisation. All of these will help the council to achieve its medium-term financial strategy commitments.
- 1.5 The People Strategy 2020-25 is firmly rooted in the council values, the employee experience and ambition to become the Best Place to Work. It aims to describe what employees can expect throughout their employment journey and the conditions which enable colleagues to develop and perform at their best, including expectations around leadership and management.

### Performance and progress

- 1.6 To review the success of the current People Strategy, a range of performance measures are considered. These cover service performance, customer satisfaction and employee feedback. Key data and performance indicators are regularly reported to the full range of Scrutiny Boards, and these are captured in the [Corporate Performance Report 2023/4](#).
- 1.7 There are a number of key performance indicators that have been specifically aligned to tracking People Strategy outcomes. These include:
  - Workforce demographic data
  - Gender pay gap
  - Appraisal completion
  - Sickness absence
  - Accidents
  - % of staff who feel they have opportunities to progress their career
  - % of staff who feel their manager looks out for their health & wellbeing
  - How likely employees would be to recommend working for LCC.

Results from the most recent Corporate Performance Report are listed at Appendix 2.

- 1.8 The most significant employee feedback data is received via the Staff Survey, which provides responses directly linked to the People Strategy outcomes. Over 52% of employees took part in the Staff Survey 2023, highlighting areas which were progressing well and others where improvements were needed. A full report from the Staff Survey 2023 was considered by Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board in September 2023. Summary headlines (Appendix 3) and resulting actions agreed (Appendix 4) are included below. Directorates continue to progress improvements within their own services and teams. The

next Staff Survey is provisionally planned for Spring/Summer 2025 and will provide an updated indication on how employees are feeling about their experience.

- 1.9 In addition, important and valuable feedback and insights into the experiences and views of colleagues are heard through regular engagement with Trade Unions and Staff Networks. Since 2022, our Freedom to Speak up Guardian has also been able to bring a wider range of issues affecting staff to the attention of senior managers and leaders.
- 1.10 Since 2020, relationships with a range of city and regional partners have been strengthened to share opportunities for joint working and good practice. Learning has also been gained from internal recommendations (Organisational Culture Audit, 2023) and external opportunities for feedback (LGA Peer Challenge, 2022).

### **Significant developments since People Strategy launch in 2020**

- 1.11 The People Strategy was launched shortly before the Covid pandemic. It was necessary therefore to quickly pivot our employment emphasis to ensure essential services remained open safely by assessing and managing risk and enabling the flexible deployment of staff. Employee wellbeing was monitored through five pulse surveys and we provided direct support to vulnerable and isolated colleagues. This remains a top priority.
- 1.12 In response to the financial challenges facing the organisation, we have developed a robust framework that supports services to reshape and resize, whilst implementing a range of voluntary measures to reduce the size of workforce, deliver savings targets and maintain harmonious industrial relations.
- 1.13 The council has made a strong commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, publishing a clear EDI statement, establishing a strategy with five workforce priorities and delivering mandatory training to all our managers. We are proud to be a Top 100 Stonewall employer, A Disability Confident Leader and hold the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award for employers. A report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was considered by Scrutiny board in February 2024.  
[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Corporate Approach and Staff Networks Feedback](#) - 19 February 2024
- 1.14 In 2023, a revised Health Safety and Wellbeing framework was launched. Directors have made leadership pledges to prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of their staff. The comprehensive #BeWell Wellbeing offer, which includes dedicated financial wellbeing support and a 24-hour Employee Assistance programme, continues to develop. We are a Mindful Employer and support a network of trained Mental Health First Aiders and volunteer wellbeing champions across the organisation. A report on Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing was considered by Scrutiny board in June 2024.  
[Employee Mental Health and Well Being](#) - 17 June 2024.
- 1.15 We continue to review our buildings and estates. Our vision remains to have fewer, better quality and better used buildings. Building closures have taken place and staff have been supported to work at new and different locations.
- 1.16 In 2020, a set of Hybrid Working principles were developed to guide a diverse range of services into new ways of working, with around 9,000 people adopting a hybrid working approach. Further to this, a commitment was made to all council colleagues through a Best Place to Work pledge, focussing our efforts to create a productive work environment for all. This includes colleagues having the right tools for the job, ensuring they get support from managers and the wider team, keeping people safe and well and taking green, low carbon and low waste approaches.

- 1.17 Improvements have been made to streamline recruitment and selection processes and develop a modern jobs site to attract a diverse range of talented applicants. Over 94% of new starters in 2023/4 said they are happy with their recruitment and induction.
- 1.18 The new Be Your Best leadership and management programme develops managers to lead their teams effectively in line with Council values. This sets out the core skills required of our managers and builds their confidence and capability. Over 99% of managers attending training in 2023/4 said it helped them to do their job better and would recommend it to colleagues. Our Be Your Best manager community has grown, enabling over 2,500 members to connect, collaborate and support each other.
- 1.19 The Core Business Transformation programme has been central to the development of efficient and effective working practices. We have invested in new recruitment and HR/payroll systems to streamline and modernise the employment related processes which will eventually provide new self-service functionality to all staff. Improvements have also been made to workforce data and reporting to make better evidence-based decisions and measure our performance effectively.
- 1.20 We continue to develop our staff and provide opportunities to gain qualifications. Almost 1,000 apprentices have begun their learning journey with LCC since 2020, and the council has earned a place in the Apprenticeship Top 100 Employers 2024.
- 1.21 The council has reviewed and developed its internal communications framework to ensure leaders, managers and staff receive timely and accurate information. We continue to explore further opportunities to engage with frontline workers and enable digital connection for all employees. Our Core Business Transformation programme is directly tackling the digital divide that exists.

### **Proposals for People Strategy 2025-30**

- 1.22 Our extant vision and mission to be the Best Place to Work have provided us with a clear and simple strategic intent. It is therefore our intention to retain this general framework for the refreshed People & Culture Strategy.
- 1.23 It is proposed that the refreshed strategy include an updated one-page graphic (to replace Appendix 1), a narrative section to describe the journey since 2020 and a key priorities section which will be updated every 12 months during the five year lifecycle.
- 1.24 Early discussions have identified themes for proposed changes and Scrutiny Board are invited to comment on these. They are listed in the section below and fall into the following three categories: things to keep, to further strengthen and to add.

#### **To keep**

- 1.25 It is proposed that we retain our Best Place to Work vision and use this in the refreshed 2025-30 strategy. It is well assimilated and understood across the organisation and gives clear meaning and purpose.
- 1.26 At the centre of this vision is a strong focus on the employee experience, the employment lifecycle and journey. We propose that this too is retained, and it is backed by our Be Your Best brand, which is well established and connected to our Organisational Plan.
- 1.27 Keeping our 'Me, We and Us' mission is also recommended. This helps us to set out the commitments and expectations in the strategy for employees, line managers and the

organisation overall.

### **To further strengthen**

- 1.28 Scrutiny Board will be aware of the significant programmes of work that have been undertaken around Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Leadership & Management Development. They remain central to our approach. These three key areas can be more explicitly referenced in the refreshed strategy.
- 1.29 We have a relentless focus on values to inform our organisational culture, combined with the broader Team Leeds approach in the city, informing governance, decision making and organisational development. It is proposed that this is better reflected in the refreshed strategy, and that we signal this by renaming the strategy as the People and Culture Strategy 2025-30.
- 1.30 Development and career progression already feature in the current strategy. Given that our latest employee survey feedback highlighted this as a lower performing metric, it is proposed that, as part of action planning for 25/26, we set out specific plans for addressing this. This will build on the follow up work that has already taken place across the organisation. Setting out our development strategy for all colleagues, as we have done for managers in our Be Your Best programme, is an important aspect of this.
- 1.31 Maximising digital and technology opportunities is a clear priority in our Organisation Plan, and it is proposed that we strengthen this link in the People Strategy, with a specific focus on digital transformation and skills and improving digital access for front line operational staff.
- 1.32 A review of the key performance indicators used to track People Strategy progress and outcomes should be undertaken as part of the refresh. This will ensure that we continue to have the necessary robust measures in place.

### **To add**

- 1.33 Given the context we are currently working in, and the ongoing challenges and change we face, it is important that the refreshed People Strategy gives a clear direction on key people issues for the forthcoming five year period. In addition to the changes set out above, the following are also recommended for inclusion.
- 1.34 **Workforce Planning and Organisation Design.** How we will address the changing role, shape and size of the council and its services, to make sure we have the right people with the right skills in place. A new emphasis on well-designed roles, workforce flexibility and deployment could be included in the refreshed Strategy.
- 1.35 **Hybrid Working.** How we will ensure that hybrid working continues to strike the right balance between service and team needs, council resources and individual employee choice.
- 1.36 **Productivity.** How we will support all colleagues and teams to be their best, support health and wellbeing, continue to deliver efficient and high-quality services and meet changing expectations and demands, all against the backdrop of sustained financial challenges.

### **What impact will this proposal have?**

- 2 The People Strategy supports the Best City Ambition and Organisational Plan, describing our vision for the employee experience as “The Best Place to Work”. This includes attracting and enabling a talented, skilled workforce to fulfil the Best City Ambition priorities and ensure

services are delivered productively, flexibly and efficiently within the financial resources we have available. The People and Culture Strategy supports the aim to be a well-run council as described in Organisational plan 2024/5: “An efficient, healthy and enterprising organisation that is financially stable, with the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. An ambitious and well governed organisation that is reshaping to continue to be resilient.”

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

- 3 The People Strategy supports the Best City Ambition and Organisational Plan, having a content and productive workforce supports delivery of the three pillars of the Best City Ambition.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: N/A

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 4 During the last five years, engagement has taken place with key stakeholders including Staff Networks, Trade Unions and directorate/service leads. Early engagement on the strategy refresh has taken place during Autumn 2024.

### What are the resource implications?

- 5 The People Strategy aims to ensure sufficient capacity and capability within the workforce to deliver high quality service delivery and customer service. The workforce budget must be well managed and represent value for money in the current financial context.

### What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 6 Over the next five years, the workforce may be affected by rapid and frequent change and financial pressures facing the organisation. The People & Culture Strategy highlights the importance of creating a positive employee experience to attract and retain a talented, skilled, and engaged workforce to drive effective service delivery. Reviewing annual priorities each year will ensure the strategy is flexible and resilient, responding and adapting to change.

### What are the legal implications?

- 7 There are no specific legal implications for this report.

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### What other options were considered?

- 8 The People Strategy needs to be refreshed to reflect the changing organisational context and set our direction for the next five years.

### How will success be measured?

- 9 Our People Strategy 2020-25 sets out our ambition to be the Best Place to Work with a clear focus on creating a great all round employee experience for all staff, with the support of their leaders and managers working in a positive organisational culture, driven by our council values. We will continue to monitor performance and outcomes through a range of key performance indicators, workforce data and staff surveys that capture how efficient, enterprising and healthy the organisation is, and the overall employee experience for staff.

## **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

10.1 Engagement and consultation will continue over the next three months.

10.2 It is proposed to launch the refreshed People and Culture Strategy in Spring 2025.

10.3 Regular monitoring and reporting to Directors, Executive Members and Scrutiny Board will continue throughout the life of the 2025 – 2030 strategy.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1- People Strategy 2020 – 25
- Appendix 2- Key Performance indicators (People Strategy)
- Appendix 3- A council level analysis of question responses from the 2023 Staff Survey
- Appendix 4- The collective approach to staff survey response planning
- Appendix 5 – Be your Best Organisational plan

### **Background papers**

- None

# THE BEST PLACE TO WORK

Our People Strategy 2020/25



## OUR VALUES AND CULTURE

### Being Open, Honest and Trusted

- Performance and change management
- Workload management
- Data and evidence based decisions

### Treating People Fairly

- Inclusion
- Holistic staff wellbeing
- Safe modern working environment and carbon neutral travel

### Spending Money Wisely

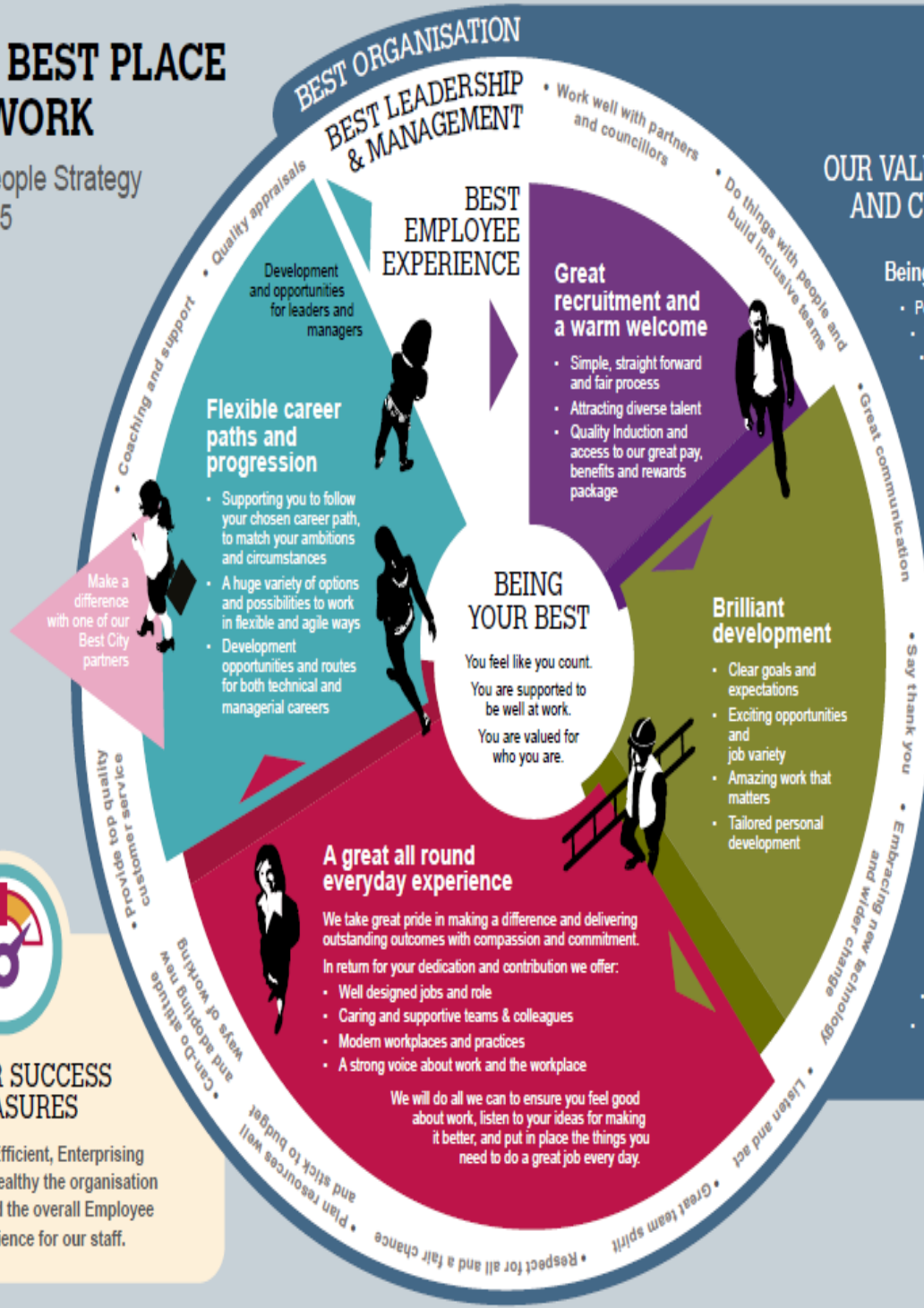
- Staffing Costs
- Pay, benefits and recognition
- Good work – workforce planning, job and service redesign

### Working as a Team for Leeds

- Innovation and creativity
- Skills (Digital and financial)
- Partnerships

### Working with All Communities

- People before process
- Customer Service
- Making a difference





## Appendix 2 Key Performance indicators (People Strategy)

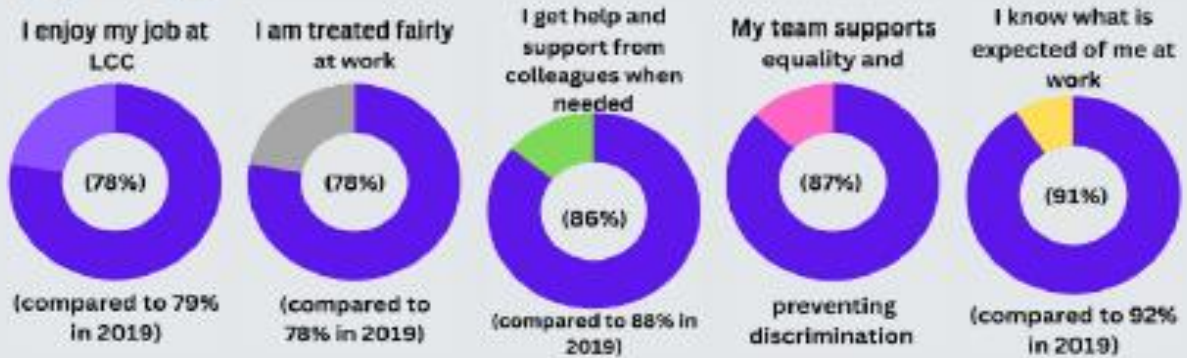
[Corporate Performance 2324 Report Appendix 110724 compressed.pdf](#)

Operational performance indicators		Target	Previous result	Latest result	Progress
Demographic comparison of the council workforce against the Leeds working age population from Census 2021	Female	Track	60.9%	60.4%	
	Older workers (Aged 50-64)	Track	38.8% estimated	38.7% estimated	
	Ethnically diverse	Track	15.2%	16.1%	
	Disabled	Track	6.1%	6.0%	
	Carer	Track	8.8%	8.8%	
	LGBTQ+	Track	3.7%	4.0%	
	Gender identity not as assigned at birth	Track	0.4%	0.3%	
"How likely would you be to recommend working for Leeds City Council?"		Increase	7.5 out of 10	7.4 out of 10	
Average number of days sick per Full Time Equivalent member of staff	LCC	10 days	12.84 days	12.93 days	
	Schools	10 days	9.49 days	9.12 days	
	Combined	10 days	11.42 days	11.29 days	
Percentage of council staff who feel their manager looks out for their general health and wellbeing		Increase	77%	76%	
Gender pay gap across council staff	Mean hourly pay	Decrease	3.8%	3.4%	
	Median hourly pay	Decrease	9.4%	8.5%	
Percentage of staff appraisals and mid-year reviews completed		100%	Mid-year: 92% Year-end: 94.4%	Mid-year: N/A Year-end: TBC	N/A
Percentage of staff who agree there are opportunities to progress their career		Increase	New measure	54%	N/A
Workplace safety: LCC	Specified (major) injuries	Track	12	4	
	Over 7 days injuries	Track	12	12	
	Reportable diseases	Track	0	0	
Workplace safety: Schools	Specified (major) injuries	Track	13	8	
	Over 7 days injuries	Track	17	31	
	Reportable diseases	Track	0	0	

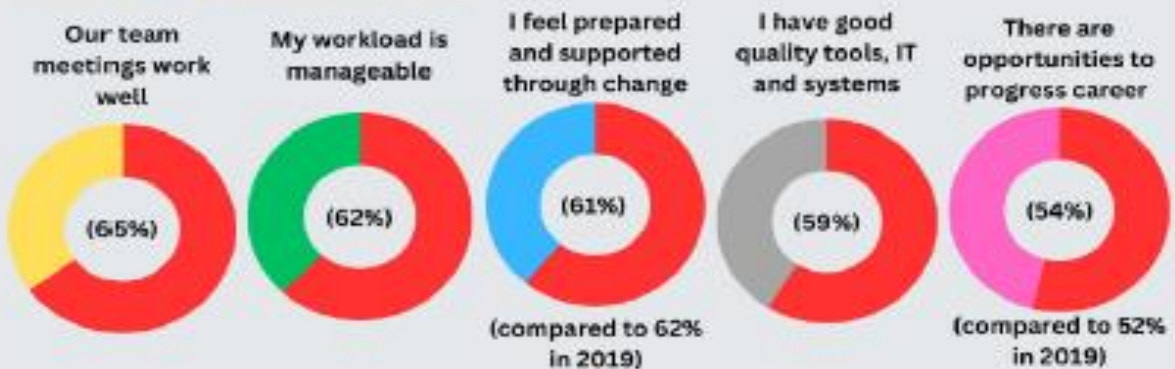
## Appendix 3 Staff Survey summary 2023



### Highest agreement levels



### Lower agreement levels



## Appendix 4 Staff Survey response actions



To all managers and teams

Here are council-wide issues that came up through our 2023 Staff Survey, with some suggested actions for you to build into your local response and plans.

<b>Career progression opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of personal development plans in appraisals</li> <li>Coaching and mentoring opportunities</li> <li>Uptake on Be Your Best and other development</li> <li>Career ambitions conversations in appraisals</li> </ul>
<b>Quality tools, IT equipment and systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doing a stock take on what tools and equipment people have and need</li> <li>Issuing all required kit promptly to new starters</li> <li>Understanding which IT systems are causing most frustration and why</li> <li>Supporting and regularly reviewing reasonable adjustments</li> </ul>
<b>Support around change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involving colleagues in forthcoming changes</li> <li>Communicating well</li> <li>Regular wellbeing checks</li> <li>Supporting disabled colleagues</li> <li>Understanding the needs of older colleagues and carers</li> </ul>
<b>Workloads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How work is prioritised and allocated</li> <li>How we are managing staffing gaps and pressures</li> <li>Helping each other to get through busier and more challenging times</li> <li>Escalating if you are concerned about delivery</li> </ul>
<b>Team meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing all meetings</li> <li>Checking purpose, duration and attendance</li> <li>Asking team members for ideas to improve meetings</li> <li>Make sure that all meeting time, is time well spent</li> </ul>
<b>Feeling valued</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Saying thank you often</li> <li>Celebrating good work and success</li> <li>Listening to those who are feeling undervalued</li> <li>Delivering our Step 4 EDI plans</li> </ul>