



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

# Employment Committee

22 September 2021

**Report of:** Councillor Annie Mason  
Cabinet Member for Communities




## Onboarding Employees Update

An update on the onboarding of employees at SKDC.

### Report Author

Jane Jenkinson, Senior HR Officer



 alan.robinson@southkesteven.gov.uk

Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
High Performing Council	Administrative	All Wards

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive	6 September 2021
<b>Approved by:</b>	Karen Bradford, Chief Executive	9 September 2021
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for Communities	14 September 2021

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. Notes the update on the onboarding process for employees at the Council.

# 1. The Background to the Report

1.1 One of the actions from the Employment Committee Workplan is a review of how onboarding has changed since lockdown and new ways of working and the effectiveness on inductions.

1.2 The onboarding process for new starters covers the period from day one to six months following the start of employment.

## **Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

1.3 Prior to the pandemic the onboarding process was mostly carried out face to face with line managers having responsibility for the arrival and welcome of new starters. New starters would normally attend the office for a welcome meeting with their manager prior to their start date.

1.4 A buddy system formed part of the onboarding process and in line with best practice, a buddy from another area of the Council was arranged for the new starter. Buddies were allocated from a network of volunteers across the Council. This was an informal arrangement usually starting with the buddy and new starter meeting for coffee.

1.5 There are some mandatory elements to the onboarding process, including Display Screen Equipment, General Data Protection Regulation, health and safety and equality and diversity training. These topics were provided by a range of methods - familiarisation with policies and procedures; completion of online training modules; and face to face training.

1.6 A member of the HR team met with new starters to show them the iTrent system and complete paperwork and right to work checks. New starters are also signposted to the new starter pages on Monty, the Council's intranet.

1.7 Throughout the first six months of employment face to face reviews took place to ensure the key elements of the onboarding programme had been covered.

## **During Covid-19**

1.8 The Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement for the majority of staff to work from home meant that the face-to-face elements of the onboarding process had to be provided in a different format.

1.9 Homeworking made it more difficult for new starters to establish relationships with employees from other departments. As a result, the buddy arrangement was changed whereby buddies are allocated by the line manager from within the same team as the new starter. It was felt this would be easier as new starters would see colleagues within their teams on a regular basis and having a buddy within their own team would be more effective in helping them to settle in.

1.10 Managers or buddies now show the iTrent system and Monty, the Council's intranet, to new starters.

1.11 All other HR processes are carried out electronically at the moment and a welcome email is sent together with the new starter paperwork.

1.12 Due to Covid-19 the Government implemented temporary adjusted measures for right to work checks where new starters can submit scanned copies of their original documents. These adjusted measures have been extended until April 2022.

- 1.13 New starters email scanned copies of their documents to HR and these are verified by the new starter's manager checking the original documents on the first day of employment.
- 1.14 Feedback on the onboarding process is sought from all new starters at the end of the first six months of their employment. This is to assess the effectiveness of the onboarding process and has continued since the Covid-19 lockdown to include those employees who started during lockdown.
- 1.15 The feedback indicates that homeworking has been challenging for new starters, but that managers and colleagues have been very welcoming and supportive.
- 1.16 The HR team is currently working on refreshing the onboarding process. This will include returning to the provision of a corporate induction event, involving members and the Chief Executive and Directors.
- 1.17 The OD team are in the process of implementing a learning management system to work alongside the iTrent learning and development module. This could have the potential to include, after initial implementation work has been carried out, modules for equality and diversity, health and safety and fire safety to be delivered as online modules as part of a new starter package.
- 1.18 Based on the feedback received in the survey, HR are currently updating the new starter pages on the intranet to provide more comprehensive information.
- 1.19 The refreshed onboarding process will need to take account of arrangements for when there is a return to the office. It will need to be flexible to reflect possible new ways of working, including hybrid working.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Assistant Director of Finance and s151 Officer**

## **3. Legal and Governance Implications**

- 3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Graham Watts, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer**

## **4. Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

- 4.1 The Council employs a number of new starters each year from a range of backgrounds and ages and the onboarding process needs to ensure equality and take account of differing needs. The onboarding process needs to provide the same quality of experience for the range of working arrangements across the Council, particularly to ensure that a virtual onboarding experience is as effective as face to face onboarding.

## **5. Risk and Mitigation**

- 5.1 There are risks to the reputation of the Council if new starters have a poor onboarding experience. This could result in them leaving within a short period of time and having a negative perception of the Council as an employer.
- 5.2 It is important that the onboarding process is effective to ensure new starters to the Council understand the culture and the values and behaviours that are expected of employees.
- 5.3 To help mitigate these risks feedback is sought from new starters on their experience at the end of their first six months of employment. Consideration of this feedback will assist in keeping the onboarding process under review to ensure it meets the needs of new starters.