

People Strategy

2025 - 2028



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Introduction

At South Kesteven District Council, our ambition is to deliver the very best services to our residents. This cannot be achieved without a dedicated, skilled, and supported workforce. It is a cliché, but our people really are our greatest asset and this refreshed People Strategy is our commitment to them.

Within this strategy, we promise to continue listening to our people, to value their contributions and to support them at every stage of their journey with us. The strategy reflects the collective insight of colleagues and Elected Members who have shared

with each other their aspirations for a thriving and friendly workplace. These conversations, aligned with our corporate plan and values, have helped shape a People Strategy rooted in trust, empowerment and accountability.

Over the past few years, we have made significant strides including the launch of our Human Resources and Wellbeing Hubs, increasing internal collaboration and embedding a culture of continuous learning. The achievements delivered through our previous People Strategy have laid strong foundations, but we know there is more to do.

Our refreshed strategy builds on the momentum. It focuses on supporting and developing our people, equipping them with the skills and leadership they need to

meet the evolving demands of local government, including the upcoming reorganisation. We are committed to fostering an inclusive, innovative, and resilient workforce. One that feels proud, empowered, and equipped to make a real difference for our communities.

Listening remains at the heart of our approach. We were delighted that 85% of colleagues took part in our last employee survey and we remain committed to acting on what they told us.

Through collaboration, shared ambition and a deep sense of purpose, we will continue to create the conditions where our people can thrive.

Together, as #TeamSK, we will unlock potential, embrace change and deliver excellence. When one of us improves, we all improve.

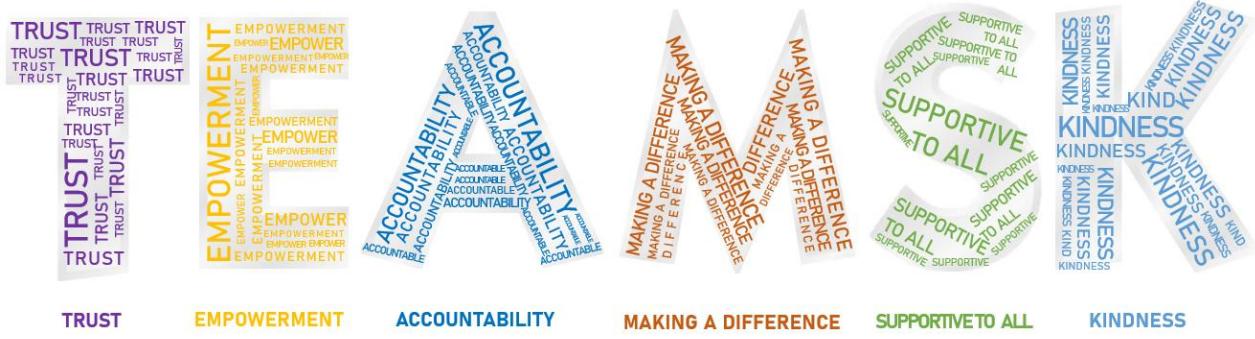


Cllr Ashley Baxter
Leader of the Council

Karen Bradford
Chief Executive of the Council

Our Values

In 2024, we refreshed our corporate values through a series of workshops with colleagues and Elected Members from across the Council. Together, we explored what makes people proud to work at SKDC, what matters most to us as an organisation, and the strengths that define our culture. These conversations also highlighted what our people value in their day-to-day work and what they need to feel supported and engaged.



These workshops led to the development of our new '#TeamSK Core Values' – below summarises the feedback from the sessions highlighting why these values are important to our people.

Trust

- “Trust is an important guiding principle in the Council’s work and decision-making processes.”
- “Trust needs to be in every relationship – between employees, trust with management, trust between Officers and Members, and our residents trusting us.”
- “Trust is about integrity and ethics. It implies that we are all carrying out our roles with integrity, honesty and transparency. It’s about fostering a culture of honesty and openness.”

Empowerment

- “Having Empowerment” as a corporate value means SK is committed to creating an environment where employees are encouraged and supported to take initiative and contribute to the betterment of the community.”
- “This includes skills development, training and continuous learning so people are empowered to excel in their roles.”
- “We have a culture of collaboration and teamwork here, but empowerment is encouraging everyone to share ideas, contribute to discussions and work together. Being inclusive is relevant here too – being a Council that values diverse perspectives.”

Our Values

Accountability

- “Accountability is about being transparent in our actions and decisions and recognising the impact we have.”
- “Providing clear information about the Council’s activities, policies and outcomes to residents. This allows for scrutiny on the Council’s actions”
- “This implies taking ownership and ensuring that tasks are completed in a timely and effective manner.”

Making a Difference

- “Reflecting that the Council is driven by a purpose to create a positive impact and improve the lives of residents and the community of South Kesteven.”
- “Service excellence.”
- “Addressing the complex challenges we face with innovative solutions.”
- “Setting goals and measuring the impact our initiatives have. This is about working together too; to really make a difference it often requires collaboration and partnerships with local businesses and other organisations.”

Supportive to All

- “Putting the residents at the heart of everything we do.”
- “Being an inclusive Council with an inclusive culture that embraces and celebrates diversity.”
- “Having an environment where everyone feels respected, valued and supported.”

Kindness

- “Empathy and understanding of others.”
- “Actively listening to residents and employees to understand their perspectives, needs and concerns.”
- “Treating everyone with respect.”
- “Going the extra mile to help individuals.”
- “Positive and constructive communication.”

Our Priorities

To help shape our People Strategy priorities, we engaged colleagues and Elected Members from across the Council through a series of workshops, including sessions with the People Panel, Senior Leadership and Councillors. At the heart of this work was a focus on understanding how we can create the right conditions for our people to thrive. These conversations explored what matters most to our workforce and identified the key support and development needed to successfully deliver the corporate plan—both now and in the years ahead.

The following are some of the key themes that emerged:

Clear career development and progression

Colleagues expressed a strong desire for visible career pathways, opportunities for progression and support to develop the skills they need to advance in their careers.

Support in readiness for the Local Government Reorganisation

Joined-up workforce planning

The importance of having the right numbers of people in teams and forward contingency planning for absences/shortages.

Recognition and Appreciation

Many highlighted the importance of feeling valued for their contributions, both formally and informally, and the positive impact this has on morale and motivation.

Wellbeing support

Colleagues emphasised the importance of a proactive and preventative approach to wellbeing including managing workloads and having healthy work habits.

Collaborative and cross-functional working

Colleagues called for more opportunities to collaborate across departments and develop better service delivery together.

Delivering high quality services to residents

Members wanted staff to be equipped, supported and motivated to deliver excellent, responsive services that reflect local priorities.

Joined-up recruitment and retention of key skills

There was concern amongst Members about attracting and retaining skilled professionals, particularly in hard to fill roles. Members stressed the need for a positive employer reputation.

Our Priorities

Drawing on the feedback, along with insights from the corporate plan, we have identified six key priority areas for our people strategy:



Workforce Planning

Our aim is to build and retain a resilient, agile workforce that is equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Learning and Development

Through accessible and forward-looking development opportunities tailored to individuals' learning styles, we aim to equip our people to thrive now and into the future.

Employee Experience

We are committed to creating a positive, inclusive employee experience where colleagues feel valued, supported and empowered to contribute their best.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Our aim is to create a truly inclusive workplace where diversity is celebrated, equity is embedded and everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing plays a vital role in our People Strategy and our aim is to create a workplace culture that actively supports and promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of our people.

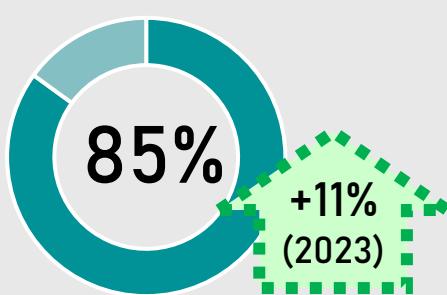
Reward and Recognition

We recognise the exceptional contributions of our people and are committed to ensuring they feel appreciated and motivated through fair, transparent, and meaningful recognition and reward practices.

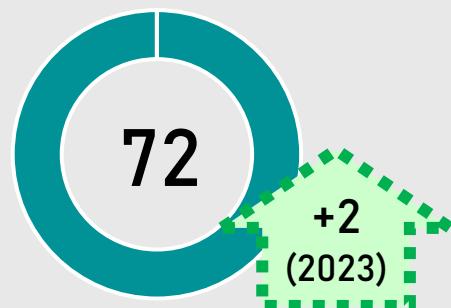
Employee Experience

Engagement Survey Results (2024)

RESPONSE RATE



ENGAGEMENT INDEX



88%



said the people they work with treat them with respect

78%



said they would recommend working for SKDC

65%



said different departments/services work well with their team

49%



said the Council introduces change effectively

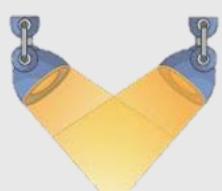
27 colleagues form our People Panel



Over **6000** visits to the HR Hub since it launched in 2024



13 teams have presented 'Team Spotlight' webinars



Employee Experience

We believe that delivering great outcomes for our communities starts with creating a great experience for our people. Employee experience is about every interaction and touchpoint colleagues have with the Council.

By listening to our workforce, acting on feedback and building a culture rooted in our #TeamSK values, we aim to create a positive, inclusive and engaging working environment. One where people are proud to work for us, motivated to grow and empowered to make a difference every day.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Employee Survey

We heard from 85% of colleagues in the 2024 survey. Each team discussed the results and built action plans.



People Panel

A platform for colleagues to share ideas, provide feedback and contribute to shaping workplace policies and culture.

Team Spotlights

Launched in 2024, these webinars increase cross-team understanding, share best practice and foster stronger internal connections.

HR Hub

Also launched in 2024, the HR Hub provides accessible, practical support, and guidance for managers and employees.

FUTURE STATE

Implementing actions from the Employee Survey feedback

In line with feedback, focusing on areas such as teamworking by continuing to find creative and meaningful ways to bring colleagues together, strengthen connections and enhance collaboration.

Further developing the HR Hub

Provide more responsive and user-friendly resources for employees, supporting them with clear guidance, tools and information throughout their journey with the Council.

Further enhancing experiences at all stages of the employee lifecycle

Continual evaluation of employees' experiences to make improvements from recruitment and ensuring robust support in integrating successfully into the Council, through to positive exit experiences that help us learn and grow as an organisation.

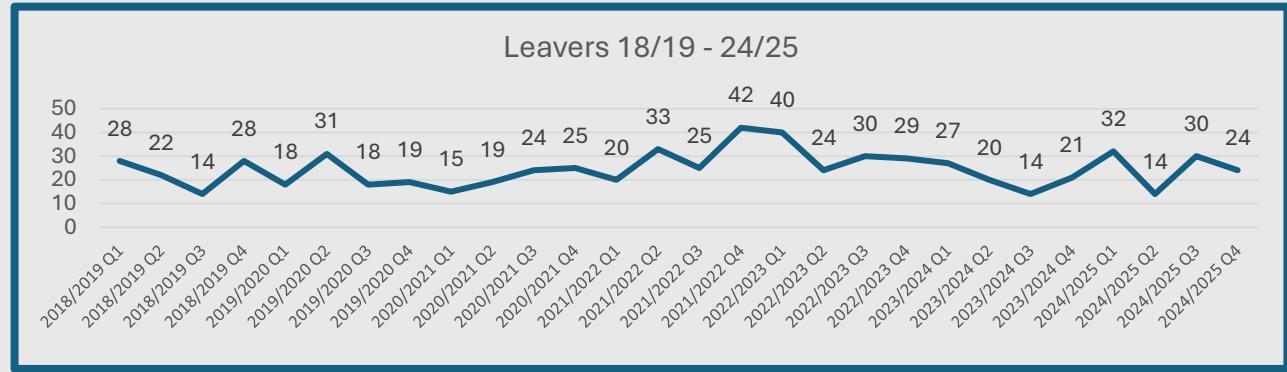


Workforce Planning

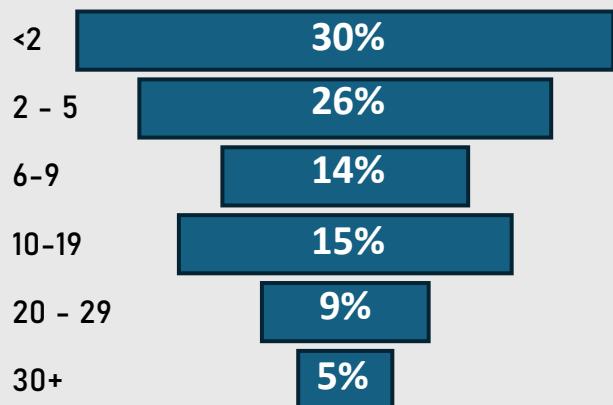
No. of employees:
582

Full-time **80%**
20% Part-time

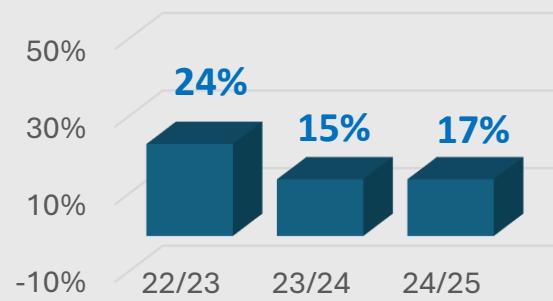
 **54%**
 **46%**



Headcount by Years Service



Employee Turnover



Workforce Planning

Effective workforce planning is central to delivering high-quality, responsive services to our community both now and in the future. As the needs of residents evolve and the local government landscape continues to change, we must ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles. This means understanding current workforce capacity, anticipating future demands and taking a strategic approach to retention, recruitment, succession planning and development.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Improved retention and reduced turnover

Turnover has decreased by 7% over the past two years indicating progress in retaining talent, improving culture and building organisational stability.

Recruitment challenges

Nationally, there are skills shortages in some specialist roles which can cause recruitment challenges for the Council, particularly in services like Environmental Health and Building Control.

Hybrid working

We successfully embedded a hybrid working model that enhances flexibility, boosts productivity and supports a healthier work-life balance for our people.

FUTURE STATE

Forward-looking, data-driven workforce planning

We need to ensure we have the right skills aligned to future service needs and community expectations.

Strategic succession planning

Embedding continual succession planning is key to ensuring continuity in critical roles and the right workforce for the future. This includes building leadership capacity at all levels.

Agile recruitment processes

Responsiveness to attract, engage and secure the skills and talent required.

A strong employer brand

SKDC as an employer of choice for public sector professionals with a strong supportive reputation. .



Learning and Development

33 apprentices

studying a range of courses from Plumbing and Electricians to Environmental Health and Leadership.



54 managers

are part of our Line Manager Forum

&

16 senior managers

are part of the Senior Manager Forum

2 degree apprenticeships

24 trained mentors and qualified coaches

100%
of appraisals completed

131
formal learning events in 24/25

More than **50**
elearning modules

'Own your own development'

Campaign launched to promote personal accountability for learning.

'Learning Week'

Celebrating and promoting personal and professional development.

Learning and Development

Learning and development is essential in building a skilled, adaptable and motivated workforce capable of delivering high quality services and driving forward our strategic priorities. We are committed to creating a culture of continuous learning where all colleagues are empowered to take ownership of their development.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

'Own-your-own' development

We have a long-held ambition to foster a culture of continuous learning where staff are empowered to take ownership of their development, supported by their leaders and HR. Our current learning offer includes a mix of in-person training, e-learning and access to external courses.

Focus on early careers and apprenticeships

Ongoing investment in apprenticeships, including introducing degree apprenticeships in difficult to recruit services.

Internal work experience

Opportunities for colleagues to work with different teams allowing them to develop new skills and understanding about what other services do.

Increased leadership engagement

Regular Line Manager and Senior Manager forums are in place to support and develop leadership capability and effectiveness across the Council.

FUTURE STATE

Flexible learning

Accessible learning and development for all staff, aligned to Council priorities and individual career aspirations. Actively supporting more colleagues with clear career pathways, internal development opportunities and skills mapping.

Equipping colleagues for the future

Ensuring colleagues are equipped with the skills needed to deliver the corporate plan, with a particular focus on digital transformation and financial sustainability.

Agility for the local government restructure

Equip staff with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in a changing local government landscape, including adaptability, resilience and change-readiness.

Line Manager Development

Effective leadership is essential to achieving the goals of the corporate plan. The Council remains committed to supporting and developing our managers, ensuring they have the skills and confidence to enable every employee to thrive, delivering expected outcomes.

Learning offer

Expand learning opportunities by offering a wider range of formats to suit different learning preferences, such as short videos, interactive modules, and bite-sized content.



Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Gender pay gap

-4.83%

mean pay gap (2025)

0.80%
median pay gap (2025)

Networks

Carers' Forum

Working Parents' Forum

Menopause Cafe



4%

of colleagues have told us they are disabled

44%

Women in management positions

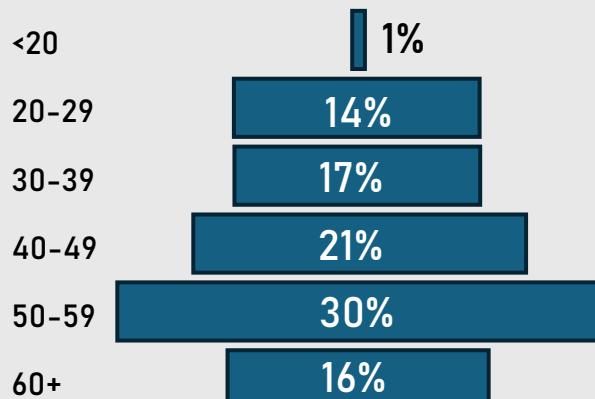
53%

Women in senior management

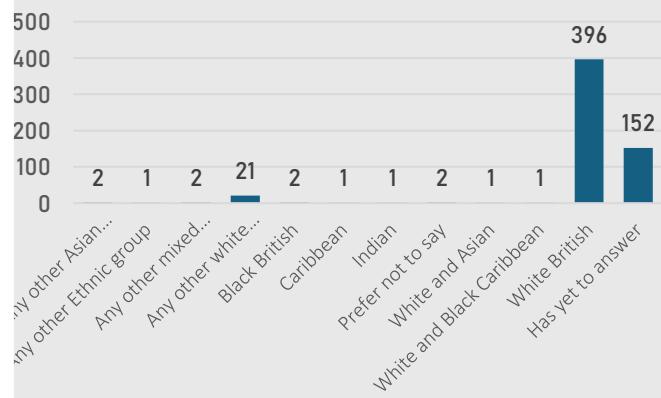
11

awareness events in the last year

Age profile



Ethnicity Profile



We're an
**Age-friendly
Employer**



Diversity
Pledge



International
Women's Day

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

At South Kesteven District Council, we are committed to creating a workplace where every employee feels respected, valued and empowered to contribute. Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are essential to how we serve our diverse communities and develop a workforce reflective of the people we represent. By fostering a culture where difference is celebrated and barriers are removed, we can ensure that all colleagues have equal access to opportunity, feel a sense of belonging and thrive at work.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Inclusive recruitment

Currently includes blind recruitment, balanced interviewers and adapted processes for care leavers, ex-military and disabled applicants.

Networks

Initiatives like the Menopause Café and Carer's Forum address specific needs of diverse employee groups, ensuring that support is tailored and accessible.

Diversity monitoring

Our workforce is broadly representative of the local population and we have equality monitoring in place for recruitment workforce demographics.

Policy and training in line with legal changes

Including updated guidance, training and policy to reflect new legal duties on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

FUTURE STATE

A fully inclusive workplace culture where all staff feel a strong sense of belonging and psychological safety.

Consistent and high quality EDIB training

For all staff, including leadership modules.

Age demographics

67% of our employees are aged over 40 and only 15% are under 30. It is essential that we focus on workforce development to ensure that critical skills and expertise are retained and passed on to future generations.

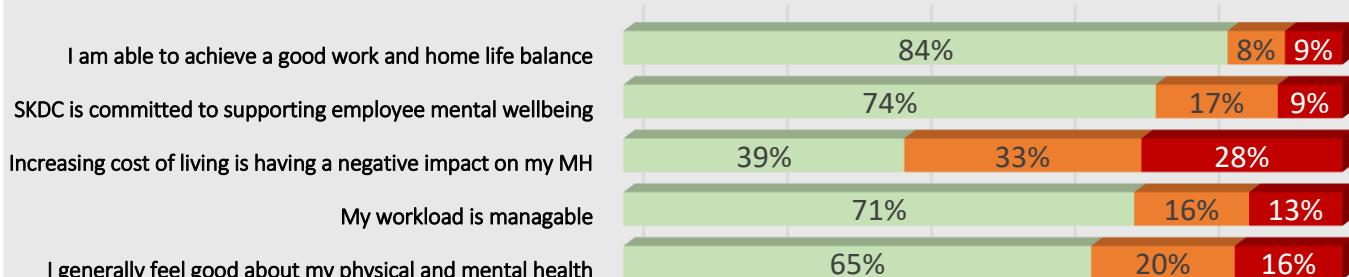
Inclusion policies

Continue to update policies and procedures to actively support inclusion and remove systematic barriers.



Wellbeing

Wellbeing Index (Engagement Survey Results, 2024)



Average days lost to sickness per full-time equivalent (24/25)

: **12.15**
days

24 Mental Health First Aiders (trained colleagues and Members)

96 visits to Mental Health First Aiders in 24/25

More than **50** wellbeing initiatives delivered in the last year

53 visits to the Employee Assistance Programme in 24/25

Recent activities

- Learning new skills workshops
- Family BBQ
- Bowling
- Wellbeing Hub
- Football tournaments
- Wellbeing fairs
- Volunteering
- Wellbeing walks
- Mental health workshops
- Charity fundraisers
- 'Talk Money' week
- Online Wellbeing Hub
- Individual and team challenges
- Gardening

Wellbeing

Wellbeing plays a vital role in our People Strategy, with a strong focus on fostering a sense of belonging across the Council. In 2025, we launched our first Wellbeing Plan which outlines our strategic priority areas for staff wellbeing. The electronic document, which can be viewed [here](#), includes 5 priority areas – connecting with colleagues, giving to others, keeping active, raising awareness and keep learning.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Launched the first SKDC Wellbeing Plan (2025)

Developed with staff input and designed to embed wellbeing into everyday culture across the Council, the plan sets out a clear, strategic approach to supporting wellbeing.

Employee led wellbeing approach

Regularly seeking input to shape the wellbeing programme.

Wellbeing Index score of 65

Action plans from the 2024 Engagement Survey included a wellbeing focus.

12.15 days lost to sickness (per full-time equivalent)

Highlighting the need for continued proactive support.



FUTURE STATE

Deliver the Wellbeing Plan

The Wellbeing Plan emphasises a holistic approach to wellbeing and outlines various programmes and resources designed to support our people.

Fully embedded culture of wellbeing

Further integration of wellbeing into our culture, ensuring it is a core component of policies and practices.



Reward and Recognition

Between

2.5% - 5.8%

Pay award for 24/25
(depending on grade)

An extra

5 days

annual leave after 5
years continuous service.

#TeamSK Thank You

Has recognised colleagues more than **700** times in the last year.



#TeamSK Awards

Highlighting exceptional achievements whilst fostering a culture of appreciation and team spirit.



Long service awards

Celebrates 10, 20, 30 and 40 years at the Council with 9 colleagues recognised in 24/25.

Reward and Recognition

South Kesteven District Council is committed to rewarding staff fairly and recognising their contributions in meaningful and inclusive ways. We understand that effective reward and recognition go beyond pay; they encompass the ways in which employees feel valued, motivated and appreciated for the work they do. As we build a modern, forward-thinking Council, we want our approach to reward and recognition to reflect our values and support a positive employee experience.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Nationally aligned pay awards

Supported by a local pay structure.

Staff benefits

Including Local Government pension, discounts and wellbeing support.

Recognition

Mix of informal and formal recognition initiatives including TeamSK thank you, long service awards, annual awards celebration and thank you cards.

Real Living Wage employer

Ensuring that all our people earn a fair wage that meets the cost of living.

FUTURE STATE

Consistent and transparent recognition culture

An organisation-wide approach to recognition that is inclusive, timely and aligned to council values. Recognition that is embedded in everyday practice and leadership as well as specific initiatives.

Benefits

Improved visibility and uptake of employee benefits and wellbeing offers.

Sustained commitment to the Real Living Wage and fair pay structure

Including a regular review of pay structures to ensure fairness and equity for all roles.



Key performance indicators

KPIs

Employee Experience

Engagement Index



Staff who would recommend SKDC as a great place to work

Survey response rate

Exit interview responses

Workforce Planning



Staff turnover rate

Time to fill a vacancy

Critical roles with succession plans in place

Internal promotion rate

Learning & Development



Appraisal completion

Staff satisfied with learning opportunities

Uptake of apprenticeships

No. of training and development opportunities

Metrics

Employee Experience

Score from Employee Survey

% from Employee Survey question

% responses to survey vs staff in post

Questions on rating the Council and recommending to others

Workforce Planning

Annual %

Average days to hire

% of critical roles with succession

% of internal promotions vs filled positions

Learning & Development

% complete

% via question on employee survey

No. of apprentices

No. of development opportunities offered annually

Key performance indicators

KPIs

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Workforce diversity metrics
(gender, age, ethnicity, disability)



Gender pay gap

% of staff reporting a sense of belonging

Wellbeing



Wellbeing index

Days lost to sick absence

Uptake of wellbeing resources

Reward & Recognition



Satisfaction with feeling valued

Metrics

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

% of workforce

Mean and median gender pay gap reporting

Employee survey answers %

Wellbeing

Score from Employee Survey

Average days lost per FTE

Mental Health First Aider visits
Wellbeing hub visits

Reward & Recognition

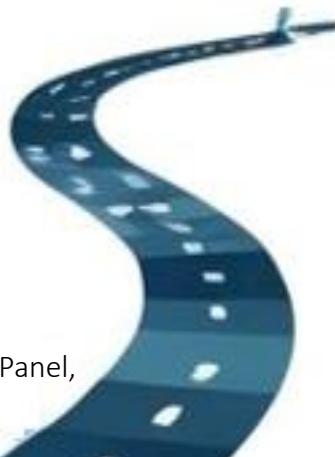
Score from Employee Survey

KPIs reported to Employment Committee twice yearly in the HR Dashboard.

People Strategy Roadmap

(7) Adapt and evolve

Use feedback and data to refine strategy delivery and respond to emerging workforce needs and local government changes.



(6) Ongoing engagement with staff

Continue to involve colleagues through the People Panel, surveys, Trade Union and team discussions.

(4) Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Including KPIs and staff feedback loops to track impact and adjust as required.

(5) Regular reporting and updates to Employment Committee

Tracking of KPIs and success measures.

(3) Deploy strategy

Launch strategy and develop strategic action plans with clear deliverables, owners and timelines.

(2) Approval by Employment Committee

Strategy approved by Committee to ensure alignment with corporate priorities and governance.

(1) Consultation on draft strategy

Engage with Trade Unions, Portfolio Holder, Elected Members and colleagues to shape final version.

On a final note...

This strategy is the beginning of our next chapter as #TeamSK. It reflects what we've heard from our people, what we aspire to be as an organisation and the values we live every day.

Over the next three years, our focus will be clear:

- Continue listening to our colleagues and acting on their feedback,
- Support and invest in the development of every person in our workforce,
- Foster an inclusive, resilient and high performing culture that meets the needs of our communities,
- Be bold about adapting when needed,
- And celebrate progress.

We are proud of the collective effort that shaped this strategy. The input of staff, managers, Trade Union, Elected Members and the People Panel has helped make this a truly collaborative vision.

The success of this strategy will not just be measured in KPIs—it will be felt in the way people experience working at SKDC: confident in their roles, supported by their colleagues, and proud of the services they help deliver.

Together, we will unlock potential and deliver excellence; for our people and for South Kesteven.

