

Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2024-2026

1. Introduction

We are an ambitious council and are proud of the work that we do, and the outcomes that we deliver for our communities. We achieve this through the hard work and dedication of our people, and it is this that makes it clear how critical recruiting the right people and creating a great place to work so they stay working with us really is.

As a local authority we are committed to delivering the four principles of our Council Plan:

- A sustainable district
- An inclusive and prosperous local economy
- Happy and healthy communities
- A co-operative, kind and responsible council.

We commit to these principles in the face of the significant financial challenges faced by many local authorities, and a difficult national position as a result of the increased cost of living. These challenges have not only placed increased demand on our services and our workforce delivering them, but also a reduction in spending power meaning that we have fewer employees delivering those services. To address this, we have a programme of work called Outcome Based Resourcing to ensure that we match our resources to the priorities set out in the Council Plan. A critical part of this work is ensuring that we have the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills.

There are also national issues with the recruitment and retention of staff, many of which are reflected at Lancaster City Council. These problems are wide ranging and include difficulties in recruiting due to an increase in competition (more job vacancies than people to fill them); pay expectations not being met due to inflationary pressure and the ongoing cost of living crisis; talent becoming harder to retain; senior roles being difficult to fill; and many more.

2. Our Strategic Vision for Recruitment and Retention

To ensure that Lancaster City Council employs people who share Our Values of Pride, Ownership, Working Together and Ambition, who have the required skills and abilities for its current and future needs, enabling the delivery of the Council Plan, and ultimately the long term success of the council. We will do this in an inclusive way, attracting and retaining talent from both within and external to the council.

Our overall aim for this strategy is summarised in the Local Government Association document, 'Workforce Focus: Taking stock of the local government workforce – sharing HR ideas for the future':

" Local government needs a suitably skilled, well-motivated and engaged workforce that meets the changing needs of its residents to continue its work through challenging times."

3. Why We Need A Recruitment and Retention Strategy

In order to deliver our Council Plan ambitions we need to ensure that we consider our workforce requirements on a continual basis and in an evidence based way. This will support us to plan how we meet those requirements in an inclusive way, and then monitor it. It not only considers how we attract new people to work with us, but how we retain our valued existing workforce. This strategy is based on these simple principles.

This strategy not only runs alongside our Council Plan, but also our People Plan, which sets out our commitment to achieving the following outcomes:

- We are an employer of choice
- We are one team
- We are serious about learning and development
- We are future focussed
- We lead with courage and compassion

Further, it demonstrates our commitment to the Fair Work Charter.

4. Commitment to Inclusion

As a council we recognise the importance of inclusion and diversity. This strategy embraces inclusion as a core principle and is committed to ensuring that it is applied throughout.

5. Our Priorities To Achieve This Vision

The Local Government Association, in its guide on recruitment and retention best practice, suggests the use of the 'Six P's' to create an effective recruitment process, and these form the basis of our priorities:

1. Plan – we will ensure that we understand our workforce needs so that our actions are strategic
2. Promote – we will raise our profile as an employer so that we strengthen our position as an employer of choice
3. Process – we will ensure that our recruitment approaches are both targeted to specific audiences, whilst taking an inclusive approach. Any person interested in working with us will have a positive experience.
4. Partnerships – we will work with partners such as local educational institutions to build a talent pipeline.
5. People – we will balance attracting new talent and retaining our current employees by continuing our work to create a positive working environment.
6. Pledge – we will work with other councils to share best practice and develop a wider pool of potential employees.

Action plan

The below action plan sets out how we will address the 'Six P's' priorities, and has been co-created with colleagues across the council:

Theme	Objective	Action
Plan	Understand workforce needs by workforce planning	We will work to understand the job roles across the council, and the skills needed for each one now and in the future. We will identify gaps and how to plug them.
	Role clarity to ensure skills required are clear	We will develop role profiles based on skills and mapped to apprenticeships. We will remove unnecessary qualification and experience requirements.
	Career pathways defined	We will develop frameworks to hold career conversations that will inform our approach to succession planning.
	Recruitment analytics developed to allow for evidence-based decision making	We will determine the data needed to support decision making related to employee resourcing and work towards gathering it, eg time to fill, time to hire, hiring source efficiency, etc.
	Our jobs are designed well	We will ensure that jobs are designed so that our purpose is delivered, our employees are motivated and fulfilled, and our workloads are sustainable and healthy.
	Hard to recruit to areas identified	We will identify the areas where it is difficult to recruit the people with the required skills, knowledge and behaviours, and will provide targeted support in those areas.
	Early careers strategies identified and developed	We will develop strategies to use apprenticeships, T levels, and early careers opportunities.
	Ensure recruitment policy and guidance is fit for purpose	We will keep our policies and guidance under review to ensure they support seamless and inclusive recruitment.
Promote	Showcase local government and Lancaster City Council as an employer of choice	We are committed to supporting and using the LGA national recruitment campaign. We will work with our communications team to develop an ongoing campaign to promote Lancaster City Council as an employer of choice.

	Employer Value Proposition (EVP)	We will continue to review our employee benefits offer and how it is promoted. Our colleagues report that teamwork is strong and this will be promoted, along with our purpose, values and wellbeing offer. Campaigns will be both internal and external.
	EVP – non office based staff	We will ensure the EVP offer is tailored to all groups of employees. We will showcase the offer for non-office based staff.
	Role flexibility used as a key benefit to attract people	We will review how we promote our flexible working benefits, and how roles that are not suitable for hybrid working still have flexible working benefits
	Strong local employer brand	We will continue to promote our employer brand, including determining where people hear about us, whether there are any other streams to promote it, as well as considering how we can further improve our reputation so people want to work for us.
Process	Positive recruitment and onboarding experience	We will continue to review the process improvement work undertaken to date to ensure it is working and to make further improvements.
	Job adverts are clear and attractive	We will review the job adverts we use so they are attractive and compelling.
	Job adverts reach our target audiences	We will identify our target audiences depending on job role and consider how we reach them.
	Selection methods are flexible according to the nature of the role being filled	We will review our selection methods to support effective, flexible and inclusive selection.
	Manager training in recruitment and selection	We will continue to provide training for managers to develop their skills in recruitment and selection.
	Disability Confident and inclusion	We will ensure that everyone understands the benefits and our responsibilities as a Disability Confident accredited employer.
	Use of AI explored	We will undertake work to start to understand what AI can do to support recruitment.
	Application Tracking System (ATS) use is maximised	We will ensure that the ATS is used to its maximum capability so that applicants have a positive experience, managers have an efficient experience, HR manual input is limited, and data is provided to ensure that our processes are effective.
	Use of available onboarding tools	We will ensure that we develop our HR and payroll system to support recruitment and onboarding.

	Continued move to more manager self service	We will work with managers to empower them to manage their own recruitment and promote manager accountability.
	Guidance tools to ensure high quality applicant experience and selection of best applicant	We will review the tools and guidance available to managers so that selection methods are useful and easy to determine, eg provide example interview questions and selection tests.
	Focus on designing development positions using apprenticeship standards and levy	We will build into our processes a review stage to ensure that every role is considered as to how/whether it can become a development role instead of assuming like for like replacement.
	Sourcing strategies	We will review whether we use the best channels for advertising.
	Review approach to pay	This will include reviewing starting at the bottom SCP of the grade, the grades themselves and how people progress, the potential for career development grades, and use of market supplements. We will benchmark against other local authorities.
Partner	Recruitment pipeline built	Develop partnerships with local educational providers – universities, colleges, schools – to promote the work of the council and to promote local government as a career path.
	Business partnering approach	HR will continue to work with managers to develop individual recruitment strategies when a vacancy arises.
People	Retention of staff	We will continue to deliver our People Plan for approaches to development, wellbeing, engagement, etc
	Engage a wider workforce	We will develop different strategies to develop a wider potential workforce, including an Inclusion Strategy, an Early Careers Strategy, etc.
	Employability programmes	We will develop closer links with the Economic Development team to ensure talent pipelines being developed are suitable for job vacancies at Lancaster City Council.
	EDI	We will continue to develop our Inclusion Strategy, ensuring that recruitment and selection is taken into consideration.
	Exit interviews used and results acted upon	We will use our exit interviews to monitor the reason people leave our employment to help us to determine how successful this strategy is.
Pledge	Work with district councils in Lancashire	We will develop a recruitment action plan with the district councils in Lancashire.

	Network with neighbouring local authorities	We will continue to network with neighbouring local authorities, seeking out opportunities to work together from a recruitment perspective, for example to advertise specific job vacancies.
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