

ADEPT

Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport



WE OPEN THE WAY

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Great practice guide





The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) is the voice of place directors in local authorities.

It develops, supports and represents its members to make their places more resilient, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous.



HANNAH BARTRAM
CEO, ADEPT

There are many advantages in working for a local authority. It provides an excellent platform for career development while allowing individuals to make a meaningful difference to the lives of local communities. Local government jobs often provide greater job security compared to private sector roles and frequently come with well-structured pension plans for long-term financial security.

However, retaining staff can present a range of challenges. Local authorities are competing with both public and private sector organisations for skilled talent. However, salaries in local government roles may not match those offered by the private sector and career progression and succession management may not always be as well planned out. The public scrutiny and accountability under which council employees often operate can lead to heightened stress and workload pressures.

Recent research by the Future Highways Research Group (FHRG) found that the sector is facing a human capital crisis with a critical number of vacancies and skills shortages. Proving conducted a survey among local authority FHRG and ADEPT members as well as private sector services. They also organised an under-40

Place directors are at the very heart of place-shaping, delivering universal services and leading partnerships to support their local environment, economy and communities. Place directors deliver solutions locally.

They are responsible for providing day-to-day services such as local highways, waste and recycling, and planning as well as developing the longer-term strategies, investment and infrastructure needed to make their places resilient, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous. Place is where things get done.

roundtable to better understand the situation and find ways to improve it. Research revealed that access to training, qualifications, and professional development is crucial for retaining talent in the sector, along with the quality and availability of suitable mentoring. Flexible working is also highly valued, with some willing to accept slightly lower salaries for this benefit.

Following on from the roundtable, ADEPT and Colas have been working together with colleagues from across the place sector to produce this guide. It includes several case studies of good practice to support local authorities in implementing ideas to encourage retention within the sector.

This is just the start of capturing ongoing best practice across the country, and we hope you find it useful. Please provide feedback on the content and any future areas you would like to see included, so we can make sure ADEPT is providing the best possible support to you, its members, in shaping places across the country.



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Roads foster mobility, shape economies, create SHARING. They build links between communities and between people. We are imagining, building, maintaining and recycling, CARING for people and the environment. The people at Colas, preserve and grow our unique heritage, that everyone benefits from today and which we will pass onto future generations around the world with DARING. We design the roads of the future, and together, we face the challenges of tomorrow in an innovative sustainable way.

Colas opens the way to a world of possibilities.



MARK SAUNDERS
CLIENT DIRECTOR, COLAS LTD

We are happy to be supporting ADEPT in the development of this Great Practice Guide.

In the course of gathering material for the guide, we spoke to a large number of local authorities and their stakeholders, and the issue of staff retention is common across almost every organisation. Having said that, there is a wealth of good practice and some really positive ideas about how to address it.

I was reminded by an article I read from Tony Robbins the entrepreneur philanthropist about 'the 6 human needs'. It describes a person's need for certainty, variety, significance (feeling needed), connection to others, possibility for growth and helping others. It strikes me that if a job role is able to provide these then it will really support staff retention. The fantastic case studies we have included address these needs.

At Colas, we try to work closely with our clients on key topics but also collaboratively in support of the wider place sector.

We hope you find this guide useful and interesting. You may even feel motivated to talk about your own experience or best practice that we can include in the guide to inspire others. In which case, please contact us on:



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CASE STUDIES

The case studies in this guide provide a range of tried and tested ideas to help you with your retention challenges.

- LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TRANSPORT PLANNING APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME
- AGEING BETTER'S AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER PLEDGE
- BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM
- TRANSPORT SKILLS ACADEMY
- TRIALLING & IMPLEMENTING A NINE-DAY FORTNIGHT
- HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD MENTORING SCHEME
- REINTEGRATION TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME
- EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP
- WELCOME MEETINGS
- UNLIMITED SMART LEAVE
- A PERSONAL VIEW OF STAFF RETENTION

CASE STUDY 1 LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TRANSPORT PLANNING APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

89%
retention rate
and apprentices
becoming mentors



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SUMMARY

Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) Transport Planning Apprenticeship Scheme, under the leadership of Richard Garratt, provides LCC and their partner, the Leeds College of Building, a steady flow of new, skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. The scheme offers a structured route giving the apprentice the ability to reach the course requirements. It also allows participating departments to incorporate appropriate demand and resource into their plans.

The ground-breaking scheme is made up of both internal employees and external applicants, to boost new recruitment, promote from within and increase current staff retention rates.

Since the project inception in 2017, the scheme boasts an 89% retention rate, as well as demonstrable increases in promotions for enrolled staff, with a strong pipeline of recruitment for further apprentices. Testament to the scheme's success, apprentices often remain involved with the programme as mentors, which helps the current group of trainees as well as further developing previous apprentices.

THE PROJECT

To promote self-assessment and accountability, apprentices manage their own portfolio of KSBs and are provided with a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) chart of options to identify possible training opportunities.

The typical programme includes:

Placement 1 - Network Data & Intelligence (NDI) providing departmental awareness and a consistent induction and probation with scheme lead.

Placement 2 - Traffic, Safety & Signals providing a direct workstream link to NDI.

Placement 3 - agreed based on departmental requirements but is generally Safe & Sustainable Travel.

Placement 4 - though many have found a permanent position by this point, further placements are aligned with apprentice interests and upcoming departmental positions.

Bespoke training sessions are held to cover difficult topic areas such as modelling.

The scheme has a payment incentive of around £1,000 per annum upon 50% completion of 'Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours' and 20% of the job training. This incentive reflects the level of work they are undertaking at this stage and is designed to enhance the morale and confidence of the individual.

Previous apprentices acting as mentors offer direct experience to new recruits whilst giving them valuable supervisory experience. Cohorts meet monthly to update progress and discuss fresh

learning opportunities. The department also offers a 'Younger Workers Group' made up of staff from the apprenticeship, trainee Civil Engineering and Post Graduate Transport Planning scheme who enjoy a number of collective learning sessions such as Managing your Career, Identifying & Using your Strengths and Positively Influencing Others, Thriving in a Hybrid World and Creativity & Innovation. Additional support is offered to write applications and perform mock interviews

CONCLUSION

Leicestershire County Council has achieved much with this scheme, understanding that by putting investment and support in at the front end, they are building the foundations of a strong, engaged workforce that will provide ongoing resilience in the future.

In terms of recruitment and retention, since 2017, nineteen external and eight existing employees from within the programme enjoyed an exemplary 89% retention rate.

In reflection of that and the overall efficacy of the scheme, apprentices have tended to secure permanent technician roles before the actual scheme end, with many early cohorts securing promotions within the department after their involvement with the apprenticeship scheme.

CASE STUDY 2 AGEING BETTER'S AGE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER PLEDGE

**Better
staff retention
and an
inspiration
to other employers**



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Ageing Better



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**Centre for
Ageing Better**



SUMMARY

Local authorities are taking action to address their aging workforce by signing the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a free programme to improve the hiring, keeping, and training of older workers. Launched late last year, the Pledge is designed to address ageism in the workplace as well as help employers resolve substantial skills shortages and vacancy rates by attracting and retaining talent.

In their first year of signing, employers commit to taking one action towards improving the recruitment, retention and development of workers in their 50's and 60's - increasing engagement whilst breaking down cultural barriers.

By following suggested actions in the Pledge Action Framework, signatories can take action that will retain staff better, attract a wider pool of candidates and, potentially, reduce recruitment costs by placing an extra focus on retention. Local authorities who commit to this work and sign the Pledge, are also in a unique position to inspire and influence other local employers, spreading positive impacts in the community.

Signatories join a network of over 250 other businesses and organisations who are on their own journey towards becoming age-friendly employers. They will benefit from a monthly newsletter, invites to webinars and be the first to receive new tools and resources in production.

THE PROJECT

Thirty local authorities have become the first councils in England and Wales to sign the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, including those serving Lincolnshire, Leeds, Cardiff, the Isle of Wight and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. In addition, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace), the UK's leading membership network for public sector and local government professionals, has also signed the pledge.

Managing Director Graeme McDonald warned councils that with increasing numbers of older workers leaving the workforce, it was vital to hold on to as many talented, experienced individuals as possible.

Local authorities signing the pledge have committed to taking at least one action a year to develop their older workers. Signatories also

commit to identifying a senior sponsor for age-inclusion within their workforce and ensuring that age is specifically named within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. Some councils are already using age-friendly champions to ensure better insight into the barriers faced by our older residents and how access to services can be delivered more effectively.

Local authorities signing the Age-friendly Employer Pledge should, in the first year, gain a higher profile for age-inclusive practices and greater internal support for older staff. This, in turn, leads to more engaged and valued older members of staff who experience personal growth and increased productivity, benefiting both the employees and their employers.

CONCLUSION

Local authorities are demonstrating a real interest and commitment to becoming more age-friendly.

Being an age-friendly employer sends a strong message to their workforce and prospective employees that they value the contribution of older staff and the experience and knowledge they bring to their roles.

By signing, signatories will gain access to a wider pool of workers to help meet skills and labour shortages while also benefiting from increased engagement with their existing employees.

In addition, local authorities' age-friendly initiatives will influence businesses and organisations in their local community, encouraging them to sign up and show their commitment to utilising the skills of older workers.

CASE STUDY 3 BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

90%
implementation rate,
empowering staff
across the MoD



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Behavioural Insights Team



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THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM



SUMMARY

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), together with the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) have explored the effectiveness of a ground-up approach to empowerment and whether that can be effectively scaled across a government department. The hypothesis being that bottom-up initiatives address what really matters to employees.

The BIT assisted 28 teams from the MoD in finding obstacles to empowerment and creating practical solutions for making changes within the organisation to improve well-being and increase staff retention. Through a programme of custom, focused, and practical problem-solving projects, the team has effectively put in place various measures that have genuinely empowered the MoD's current workforce.

After the problem-solving projects were completed, over 90% of participants thought it was likely that they would implement the recommendations they developed and recommend the programme to other teams in the MoD.

THE PROJECT

MoD and BIT teams worked together on problems highlighted by MoD teams as being relevant to their workplace today. Other teams ran surveys and focus groups with their colleagues to understand what challenges they faced. With the programme's focus on understanding employee behaviour, well-being, and retaining staff, we identified and addressed various challenges:

- **Challenge 1** – Roles and Responsibilities: the MoD employs over 250,000 people made up of often geographically dispersed teams with hybrid working. Teams found understanding roles and responsibilities across their business a barrier to getting things done.
- **Solution 1** – My role on a page: many teams adapted a role on a page intervention BIT previously developed for another MoD team. The one-page document summarises basic information about a person's roles, responsibilities and objectives, linked in their email signatures and in organisation charts.
- **Challenge 2** – Knowledge management: teams struggled to have the right information to hand.
- **Solution 2** – STOP, STOP, STOP! Day: we created an innovative digital cleanup workshop where participants learn best practices for organising data to enable effective shared access. Evaluations of the first workshops

showed that participants found the format useful and value the transfer of skills.

- **Challenge 3** – Learning and development: giving staff access to the right people and information makes collaboration easy, offering them the right learning opportunities.
- **Solution 3** – Make learning in the MoD Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST): using BIT's EAST framework, the Learning and Development (L&D) team developed a plan to make the MoD's

L&D offer more accessible and the processes smoother. Shortly after the academy week, the team launched a new L&D hub which included the important functions voiced in the focus groups.

For more information click [here](#).

CONCLUSION

The interventions carried out by the teams improved processes, culture, and policies for over 100,000 MoD staff members. This was accomplished by guiding the teams through their own condensed behavioural insights project, focusing on a five-day empowerment academy.

The academies proved to be a practical and tangible way to put empowerment into practice at a team level. Following the five-day academy, over 90% of participants thought it was likely that they would implement the recommendations they developed and did so within the following weeks.

The feedback we received on the format was very positive. Participants valued the uniqueness of the experience, with 9 out of 10 saying they would recommend the programme to other teams in the MoD.

CASE STUDY 4 TRANSPORT SKILLS ACADEMY

Six
apprentice's have
been internally
promoted within
the year



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SUMMARY

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has successfully created a Transport Skills Academy to enhance the skills, knowledge and capabilities of both their existing and potential workforce within the West Midlands.

Although the scheme is in its infancy, they have already recruited six advanced apprentices, one higher apprentice and five graduates, with a further five higher apprentices and one degree apprentice coming from within their existing employee pool. The Academy is reaching young people in schools, colleges and universities through their expanding work experience programme which currently stands at 230 learners.

This success has already benefitted not only the individuals enrolled on the scheme, but TfWM and employment in the sector across the wider region, by improving engagement, identifying local talent, plugging recruitment gaps and tackling diversity in the network. They have enjoyed significant staff retention among their current workforce as they look to upskill and develop their employees.

THE PROJECT

TfWM has created a learning network, spanning the full organisation, to support the conversation around learning and development and creating opportunities for further training and growth.

The Transport Skills Academy aims to be a one-stop destination building capacity and capability across transport infrastructure. The aim is to target and develop talent from within the organisation, as well as looking to the local community, including those from diverse backgrounds, to build the skills required to enter or progress in the sector. Individuals will gain practical and educational experiences to gain recognised qualifications via work experience programmes, various apprenticeships and graduate training.

Improvements and changes have been made to internal policies and procedures to reflect this fresh approach. Recruitment has been tailored to support gaps in employment and to encourage talent with a mixture of face-to-face and on-line learning.

To support this ambitious training and development path, TfWM has also created further support tools including a new e-learning platform to support Academy participants, enabling them easy access to the tools and information they need from anywhere. TfWM is also creating learning routes for all staff to seek resources,

discuss technical and professional routes with professional bodies, as well as supporting self-assessment in areas such as behaviours, knowledge and skills. This will over time extend to wider partners in the West Midlands transport sector.

CONCLUSION

Parts of this programme have been running for 12 months, with the Transport Skills Academy launching six months ago. Though a relatively new scheme, positive impacts are already being made. Key achievements so far include:

- Recruitment of external candidates to fill the roles of six advanced apprentices, one higher apprentice and five graduates.
- Development of existing employees into roles of five higher apprenticeships and one degree apprentice.
- Involvement with supporting week-long placement work experience programmes in security and policing, data, project management, civil engineering and transport planning.

One of the main lessons learned by TfWM is the importance of a clear communication strategy and strong presence across the organisation to enable wide adoption and encourage involvement of all staff.

CASE STUDY 5 TRIALLING & IMPLEMENTING A NINE-DAY FORTNIGHT

43.3%
increase
supporting
good work
life balance



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SUMMARY

Public Practice is a small not-for-profit social enterprise with a mission to build the public sector's capacity to improve the quality, equality and sustainability of places. Earlier this year, they conducted a trial to see if a reduced working hours - 9-day fortnight (9DF) - approach could work for their organisation. At the end of the trial, the team survey results were unanimously positive*.

Notwithstanding factors external to the trial, the data showed that there was no effect on the team's ability to meet their objectives when working a 9DF schedule, and no negative trends could be seen comparing the company performance metrics.

After the great success of the trial, a 9DF was formally adopted in April 2023. Staff reported an improvement in motivation and a better work/life balance.

THE PROJECT

Over a six-month period, Public Practice trialled reducing their work hours in response to their corporate targets for the wellbeing of all their staff, regardless of role or seniority. In their pursuit of remaining a forward-thinking, progressive organisation, they built upon global research and trials to showcase an innovative approach for enhancing efficiency and simplifying work processes. They offered a more balanced approach for their employees, both to improve their wellbeing and productivity, but also to attract and retain talent in the longer term.

They reduced working hours by 10%. To ensure this was a true reduction and not merely an invitation to overtime, they carefully reviewed the exact changes informed by their team's time tracking data. They opted for a feasible model of every other Friday off work, a reduction of 37.5 to 34 hours a week.

Recognising that this wouldn't be practical all year round, flexibility was built into the approach so that fewer working hours would be scheduled during their traditionally quieter months. To offset some of the impact, holiday entitlement was reduced by 10% (from a 30-day entitlement to 27) and the time and format of some of their team away days were marginally reduced.

Data collected during the trial was compared with the previous six months, focusing on overtime and time spent attending all-team meetings. In summary, the average overtime decreased, indicating

PUBLIC PRACTICE

that reduced working hours had not meant that employees worked more overtime to compensate.

By comparing the team's individual objectives, notwithstanding factors external to the trial, the data showed that there was no effect on the team's ability to meet their objectives when working a 9DF schedule. Also, no negative trends could be seen when comparing company metrics for performance and customer satisfaction before and during the trial.

They concluded that a regular non-work Friday, without any change in pay, is one of the most valued and inclusive policies (according to a staff survey), with clear evidence demonstrating that staff work-life balance improved with no drop in productivity.

Having a 'buffer' within the company resourcing schedule has allowed for pragmatic flexibility to respond to urgent and unplanned events without asking employees to work unreasonable hours or weekends.

CONCLUSION

A survey conducted with their team before the start of the trial was replicated toward the end of the pilot. Although other changes occurred at the company during the same time frame, the conclusion was that the 9DF adjustments were unanimously positively received. The survey showed positive results in all areas with team members reporting a 20% increase in motivation at work, and a 43.3% increase in support of the following statement: 'Do you think you have a good work life balance?'

Furthering the positive impact of the extra time granted to employees, colleagues have used their non-working day for both personal and professional development, with many using their day in voluntary positions, signing up for courses and taking on personal projects.

*Although it's impossible to attribute these changes purely to the 9DF adjustments.

CASE STUDY 6 HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD MENTORING SCHEME

Improving
progression
and retention
of planners
through
mentoring



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SUMMARY

The Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) has developed a free mentoring scheme to support their planners across the district, borough and county, as part of their wider planning resilience workstream.

With additional support and working collaboratively with the private sector, the scheme aims to enhance career progression and satisfaction, and to improve retention of local planners by matching the right mentor with the right mentee.

Since it was launched at their inaugural Planning Symposium in November 2022, the HGB has successfully matched 14 pairs of planners from both public and private sectors across all levels.

This has allowed people to gather in person and online to share experiences, celebrate planning and has encouraged networking.

THE PROJECT

The planning resilience mentoring scheme was created in response to a growing desire by the HGB to better use the skills and knowledge of their current best assets: their people. It also aims to give new entrants improved skills with deeper levels of understanding.

The scheme matches a mentor and a mentee together to provide career advice, support and ultimately, to help the progression and retention of planners across Hertfordshire.

Once matched, participants agree a set out outcomes and sign a form to join the scheme. This forms part of the audit trail which provides a mechanism for recording meetings and outcomes. The HGB team then regularly check in with all parties to assess progress, following up with a survey requesting feedback.

Initial matches were introduced in January 2023, with a second cohort in June 2023. 14 pairs have been matched to date, with others awaiting suitable matches on a waiting list. The scheme remains open.

The workstream has several threads: the development of a clear set of CPD courses based specifically on Hertfordshire needs, the mentoring scheme, a review of validation and potential for shared services, career mapping with further education involvement, an apprenticeship scheme, career fairs, secondment opportunities, and the annual Planning Symposium which celebrates successes in Hertfordshire and shows planners they are valued.

Each workstream has a working group who report to the steering group. The working group comprises officers from district and borough councils, Hertfordshire County Council and a Chief Executive lead. The steering group comprises public and private sector planners, chaired by a Leader of a Council and supported by the nominated Chief Executive.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of the scheme has been measured, using surveys and verbal communication with the participants and employees, to gain specific insights and qualitative information into behavioural changes and attitudes. Participant responses have consistently reported that the scheme has been useful to them, and that both mentor and mentees have gained value from the process.

The Council has found that the scheme has proven simple to run with no financial cost. It allows for personal as well as professional development across all levels of planners, and is a useful tool to have as part of their recruitment offer in attracting planners to Hertfordshire authorities.

CASE STUDY 7 REINTEGRATION TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

**Social Value
employment
scheme drives
employee
engagement**



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SUMMARY

The Reintegration to Employment (RtE) Programme is a collaboration between Colas, local authority partners and local third sector organisations to prioritise vulnerable people who need additional support to gain and remain in employment. Initially developed and piloted with Leeds City Council, the programme facilitated broader collaboration with a range of specialist local charities, colleges, supply chain partners and other council services.

THE PROJECT

This innovative initiative aimed to develop a programme that was person-centred and took into consideration the complex backgrounds and specific barriers that vulnerable people face when trying to secure and sustain employment.

The RtE team engaged St George's Crypt, a Leeds-based charity providing care for the street homeless community. Their innovative Growing Rooms programme provides temporary accommodation and therapeutic addiction recovery for homeless candidates with substance dependency issues. Therapists from Growing Rooms and local social workers collaborated closely with Colas to develop and trial the RtE programme.

Supported by Colas Head of Social Value, the programme has been aligned to promote the long-term retention of candidates that progress through the programme via a structured long-term support system.

Two individuals from Growing Rooms were the first to complete the programme and are now valued permanent employees of Colas. Two care-experienced young people have completed placements with one becoming a full-time Colas apprentice. Alongside two candidates from the Happy Days homeless charity and a prison leaver from HMP Armley are also Colas employees having come through the scheme, in addition to an ex-veteran amputee referred by the job centre.

As Colas endeavours to roll out RtE to other local authorities, its business units are collaborating with each other to share best practice. They're already seeing positive results in Liverpool, working with Nobody Left Behind and South Liverpool Homes. Offering placements to young people aged 16-25 not in employment, education or training resulted in the employment of a female BAME engineering apprentice, Dee.

The approach is designed to be delivered without prohibitive costs, instead relying on each partner

bringing the benefit of their experience and producing collaborative results. In this way, Colas hopes to be able to continue replicating these positive impacts internally as well as across the sector.

The support of Board-level management is reflected in updates made to Colas' Safeguarding policy. This now includes a mandatory employee support plan for care leavers and a Drugs and Alcohol policy that incorporates additional supportive measures for candidates from addiction recovery programmes.

CONCLUSION

According to a recent survey conducted with the Colas Leeds business unit, the programme has increased staff engagement in social value, and improved staff soft skills and retention.

The scheme partners have demonstrated how team working and a shared vision can improve working practices to break down employment barriers and provide fair and equal opportunities to the most vulnerable in the communities we operate in.

Positive results are being seen in Liverpool and Chester, and as the reach of the initiative expands, additional placements are being planned for individuals leaving prison and for veterans.

CASE STUDY 8 EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP

Employee-centric approach boosts retention



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SUMMARY

“If you’re enjoying what you do, you’ll do a good job.” This fundamental principle forms the cornerstone of Derby City Council’s (DCC) Highways Maintenance Team’s approach to staff retention. A critical aspect of Derby’s strategy is to train employees from the grass roots up, ensuring a steady pool of talent and a pipeline for progression. Derby believes that it is the manager’s responsibility to remind employees of their unique strengths, and to foster growth by providing opportunities to refine them. In line with this, management formed a robust support environment to facilitate employee development, a decision that is paying dividends in staff retention.

THE PROJECT

Under new leadership from Steve Danby, the Highway Asset Management Team’s foremost objective was to unravel the unique knowledge, skills and behaviours of its employees in a bid to improve overall staff retention and continue to deliver a full programme of innovative road improvements. Emphasis was placed on achieving a balance between job satisfaction and the responsibilities assigned to employees.

Understanding the diverse strengths within the team was crucial, and to lead effectively, it was important to fully understand the staff, as everyone has different strengths. This prompted a personalised approach, finding what each employee liked with responsibilities assigned accordingly.

The results were transformative. Employee satisfaction and engagement increased. DCC recognised that when people enjoy what they do and understand their personal contribution, it strengthens their roles, and this ripple effect improved the organisation’s overall performance.

Observation played a pivotal role in this transformation, with management understanding that an employee’s skills can be identified simply by observing their day-

to-day activities and approach to given tasks. This supportive approach was complemented by a commitment to providing mentoring and support, particularly in the early days when employees found themselves in a new environment.

Steve emphasised the significance of an organisation’s recognition in the industry, stating that: “When an organisation rises up and gets recognition from the respective industry, it improves employee morale, increases staff retention, and attracts new employees.” His belief was that leading by example

and showcasing the organisation’s strengths would entice people to stay.

To bridge any gaps in employee eligibility, the correct training for each individual was identified to uplift and empower the team. This proactive approach extended to succession planning, ensuring a seamless transition for the organisation. Exposure to different functions was provided to expand employees’ horizons and create well-rounded professionals.

CONCLUSION

Derby invested in employees’ development through apprenticeship, training, mentoring and secondment opportunities, recognising that this not only improved employee skills, but also made them feel valued by the team and the organisation.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Derby’s approach was the resolve to make people comfortable with the uncomfortable, including managing budgets, contractor conflict negotiation and presenting to a wider audience.

Derby provided opportunities to individuals with the ability to progress within the organisation and a drive to excel, aligning employee growth with organisational success.

By focusing on enjoyment, strengths, personalised growth, mentorship, and an employee-centric approach, Derby’s management redefined their path to success, resulting in a more cohesive, satisfied and enduring workforce.

CASE STUDY 9 WELCOME MEETINGS

**Designing
retention as
a consideration
from day 1**



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SUMMARY

South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) developed a new onboarding process via their Place department which focused on staff retention from day one. It emphasised getting to know an employee and giving them close, tailored and personal attention. This helped in developing and informing them about the Council, their role, and their opportunities and development path.

The overall aim was to build in retention thinking from the start of employment by communicating the importance of the jobs new employees were taking on.

THE PROJECT

Since 2019, all new starters have had either 1-2-1 or small group Welcome Meetings with the Executive Director of the Place department within a month of starting and at six-months when they complete their probationary period. Approximately 165 employees, have been welcomed in this time.

For apprentices, (typically between 10 and 20 starting each year), whether newly appointed or established members of staff starting apprenticeships, the process is similar with the Executive Director meeting soon after they start and then at yearly intervals for the duration of the apprenticeship. This approach was introduced to make sure people were onboarded positively to the organisation and/or onto their apprenticeship and understood the importance of all the roles in Place and how they fit into the Council's overall strategic direction.

It also enables SGC to understand the wider skill sets that people bring with them or are developing, inform talent spotting and explore what attracts them to South Gloucestershire, and use that intelligence to inform recruitment. The administration is done by the Director's Personal Assistant who liaises closely with Human Resources and the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator.

To assess the approach, the Council uses data from its annual employee survey. Satisfaction scores for staff in the first five years of their employment are highest in the Place department and well above 7.5 on the 10 point scale used. Qualitative feedback also indicates that people welcome the opportunity to meet the Executive Director outside of the formal induction process.

For apprenticeships, we have the lowest attrition rates in the authority and a high percentage of

participants who ultimately secure full-time jobs with the Council.

The employee survey has shown that satisfaction declines after five years in Place, falling below the organisational average. Therefore, we are currently working on a mid-career review process, to be undertaken in year 3 or 4, again involving the Executive Director, to assist with satisfaction, talent pathways and ultimately retention.

CONCLUSION

The scheme's foundations are based on a personally-led managerial style. Making time available for new staff shows them that if they aspire and put the effort in, the organisation will support them to be the best version of themselves that they can be.

The Council's approach is based on senior leaders taking the time to meet people, not only in task orientated settings or when something has gone wrong, but in a bid to encourage their staff to develop and stay with the organisation. The Place leadership team believe there is no substitute for showing genuine interest in the difficult jobs that their colleagues are doing and in their achievements.

CASE STUDY 10 UNLIMITED SMART LEAVE

50%
reduction in
sick days



Conor Holgate
Business Improvement Coordinator



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SUMMARY

The principal behind KaarbonTech Unlimited SMART Leave is to promote a global work culture. Employees can take time off as needed to rest, recharge, and manage personal matters with no restrictions on the number of days or the location of work.

The aim is to enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction whilst fostering trust and autonomy as generous holiday allowances have been shown to improve overall health and well-being.

KaarbonTech believe the benefits of this approach is increased productivity, better attraction and retention of top talent and an actual reduction in sick days by up to 50%.

THE PROJECT

Recognising the evolving needs of the modern workforce and the importance of fostering a positive work-life balance, KaarbonTech investigated the effect of leave within that balance. Unlike traditional leave policies, their approach doesn't set a cap on the number of days a member of staff can take off. Instead, they trust their employees to decide when they need a break, ensuring they can manage their personal lives without any undue stress. This flexibility extends to where they choose to work from, embracing a truly global work culture.

The concept of unlimited leave might be controversial, but it's rooted in trust and understanding. KaarbonTech believe that when employees are given the autonomy to manage their time, they are more invested in delivering quality work.

This belief is based on extensive research into the subject. According to research by Small Business Prices, additional holiday is a highly valued perk, with 26.28% of employees preferring it over a pay rise. Moreover, a study by Indeed has highlighted that 9 out of 10 employees consider work-life balance more important than salary.

Such policies not only make companies more attractive to prospective employees but also lead to a significant drop in staff turnover.

Furthermore, a study by Each Person emphasises the health benefits of generous holiday allowances. It reveals that holidaying improves well-being, reduces stress levels, and even decreases the risk of certain health conditions. This directly translates to better productivity, as healthier employees are more focused and engaged in their work. The study also found that for every 10 extra hours of holiday, end-of-year company ratings improved by 8%. This underscores the direct correlation between employee well-being and company performance.

CONCLUSION

KaarbonTech's Unlimited SMART Leave is more than just a benefit; it's a culture. It sends a clear message that they value their employees' well-being and trust them to manage their responsibilities.

By providing them with the freedom to choose when and where they work, KaarbonTech are enhancing job satisfaction but also ensuring employees bring their best selves to work every day.

As the modern workplace continues to evolve, policies like these will be instrumental in shaping the future of work, making companies more inclusive, flexible, and employee-centric.

CASE STUDY 11

A PERSONAL VIEW OF STAFF RETENTION

**Trust,
autonomy,
and passion
drives
success**



Sarah Easton
Head of Commercial Street Services



Plymouth City Council



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SUMMARY

Sarah Easton from Plymouth City Council shares her thoughts about why, despite various offers, she came back to Plymouth. She outlines what made the Council somewhere she has chosen to develop her career and what qualities were important to her about Plymouth as an employer.

SARAH'S EXPERIENCE

“Having previously worked for Plymouth City Council (PCC) as a parking manager, I left in 2007 and worked in the private sector for the next 13 years. I then left my role as a South West Regional Head of Sales in the waste sector when an opportunity arose at PCC in 2020. Though initially a temporary role due to ongoing restructuring, I was excited to lead the Council's unprofitable commercial waste service. The challenge interested me, and after a year of identifying many improvement opportunities through investment, the role became permanent. There were several reasons I was attracted to a return to the local authority despite

being aware of the added frustrations it holds compared with the private sector.

Firstly, I had the support of my Director. Secondly, the autonomy and trust that was given to me in terms of being able to restructure and invest. Thirdly, the personal satisfaction of turning a loss-making service into one that has grown significantly over the last three years to become a profitable business with huge potential to grow further still.

I have had job offers from private companies; however, I have invested a great deal of time, effort and passion into my current role. As long as the support continues from Members and management, I will grow the Service and enjoy its improvements and changes. My past local authority experience prepared me for the challenges, which someone coming directly from the private sector would probably find very frustrating. Resilience and perseverance are essential characteristics.

Encouraging and driving a positive attitude, along with constantly pushing exciting opportunities is not only rewarding for myself, but also for colleagues. Being able to build a good team and enable members to acquire a more commercial mindset gives them greater skills and knowledge and allows for development within the team. There are many opportunities available for career progression in a local council.”

CONCLUSION

“What drives me to stay is the Council enabling and encouraging my passion. This comes from Senior Leadership as well as Members.

I'm given the autonomy and trust to manage as I see fit and the decisions I take are always fully supported.

I have buy-in and support from those above and our Senior Management cultivates a culture that empowers me, particularly when dealing with obstacles like Council bureaucracy. I would honestly say that if this support wasn't as positive as it is, I would not have stayed.”

Sarah's Manager, Philip Robinson, the Services Director for Street Scene and Waste: “For me, retaining our best people has always been about investing in individuals and building teams. You want to create an environment and conditions that make this (Street Services) the best option for them and one where they feel valued. This will invariably be different for everyone and that takes time and effort. You have to work at it constantly and get to know your people's strengths and weaknesses.

My management philosophy is akin to ‘mission command’ from the military. It involves giving clear objectives to junior leaders without dictating how to achieve them, while providing the necessary support and resources. Trust and a common purpose empower individuals to innovate and collaborate, resulting in their best performance.

In Sarah's case, it was clear that she would thrive in an environment which she felt she owned and where she could use her quietly competitive nature and commercial acumen to achieve results. She has a far greater technical and professional understanding than me, and so once the foundations were set, my role has been to encourage, support and offer oversight of the daily challenges of working in local government.

In summary, get to know your staff, continue to work at investing in them, take nothing for granted and have a succession plan.”

ADEPT

Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport



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