

Future Ways of Working for Local Government

Prepared by HSM

Foreword:

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Over this past year, as a sector, we have shown how we can pivot and change; redeploy people to respond to crises; and step up and continue to deliver the services people rely on so much. We have learnt how we can transform ways of working – whether shifting the delivery of services to virtual or rethinking what it means to be a leader in the future.

Early on in this crisis, we realised although we were taking these steps, we were not capturing them - either to celebrate our progress or learn valuable lessons. Our sector is often 'written about', but rarely are we able to share our own thinking or actions. To remedy this, twelve months ago we embarked on a piece of work to capture what we are doing at Essex – quickly expanding this to include our peers. During the research, we spoke to HR leaders from 13 councils and conducted focus groups with frontline Essex employees. You can find the stories of these councils and many others throughout this report.

This piece of work is a chance to capture some of these lessons – to reflect on what we have learnt as a sector and our future direction. What is clear is that both organisations and employees want to grasp this moment of change. Whether re-thinking how we communicate, being intentional in building wellbeing or embedding purpose, being active in our response is key to building our future ways of working.

It has been fantastic to hear from peers and share best practice, and we are so pleased to be sharing the actions we can take as a sector. I'm excited that this report is distinctive in involving the views of front-line employees, and HR colleagues from a range of councils - understanding their experiences of this year to showcase the voice of our sector. My hope is that this piece of work is the start of the conversation. As we continue to experiment and adapt, learning together will allow us to move forward collectively – and continue the sense of possibility that has been uncovered over this past year.

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Executive Summary

This past year has seen one of the biggest disruptions to ways of working for a generation and transformed expectations from individuals and organisations alike. We as a sector have had to grapple with these changes. We have experimented, adapted, and pivoted the way we deliver services, how we interact with the community and how we as an organisation work. Much of this was not purely reactive, but instead was built on strategies that were already in place pre-pandemic, demonstrating that we as a sector have been reflecting and thinking about the changes shaping work and how we can respond for some time.

The following report showcases the great insights and actions that we have taken over this past year in response to these shifts. It is a unique cross-sector voice and sets out what our story is at this crucial moment of change. Many of these insights challenge assumptions around what is possible within our sector and provides ideas and actions for us to take forward.

The three main areas for us to build on together are:



Leverage and sustain the great adaptability and agility that we and our people have demonstrated. Whether redeploying employees, implementing new ways of working overnight or re-thinking service delivery, we have seen how much of ways of working previously relied on assumptions, and how rapidly we are able to pivot in a crisis. Sustaining this when out of crisis will be crucial to ensure we do not return to the bad habits that can so easily creep in.



Be intentional in how we re-design work, building on plans already in place and acknowledging the diversity of our workforce. We have integrated new ways of working into our broader people strategies, building out approaches by different workstyles and demonstrating that we can re-think how we work. Continuing with this intentionality as we start to implement will allow us to pivot as needed.



Be purposeful in how we communicate and interact, retaining the lessons from the past year. The ability to connect more widely, feel a sense of wider purpose, and balance time effectively are some of the benefits of working over this past year. Equally, the lack of emotional support and emphasis that some areas of how we work cannot be done virtually mean that we also have to ensure we learn the lessons of what to retain, as well as what to change.

Methodology

This study showcases the ways in which we as a sector have responded to the changes shaping work, and the lessons we have learned around how we want to work in the future. The unique cross-council approach allowed us to include a diverse range of voices – across geographies and rural and urban areas, and provide direction for the future that we want to build. It also includes the voices of employees from across services and the views of leaders on what they feel their key priorities are, ensuring it provides a holistic view of what to consider as we start to craft new ways of working.

These insights have been achieved through external research and interviews with 14 different councils across England, who shared the main lessons they have learned from this past year, what they have found challenging, and how they are planning to work in the future.

This was augmented through a series of 5 focus groups from different services across Essex County Council: Corporate Functions, Frontline Employees, Employee Networks, Adult Social Care and Service Leads. Finally, 7 leadership interviews were conducted within Essex County Council, across services.

This combined approach captures the lessons learned from across the sector, provides fresh insight into the key elements that we need to integrate as we start to implement new ways of working and showcases examples of the bold approach we are taking as we step into the future world of work.



Launch webinar

April



Interviews and
focus groups

May - June



Research and
Analysis



Insights Report

July



Insights Event

September

With thanks to



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What is changing?



The imperative for change

Using technology to transform how we communicate with our colleagues and deliver services, transforming how we work overnight, or redeploying employees - as a sector we have demonstrated our capacity to change over this past year. We need to understand the lessons of this change, and re-design work – or lose out on the opportunities of the future.

Many of the shifts we have seen stem from trends that are not new. Instead this past year has revealed the acceleration of several changes, and the need for the sector to respond – or risk being left behind. Making these changes will not only allow us to be ready for the future but also ensure we continue to deliver for our residents.

There are several key changes driving this change:

We have demonstrated great agility, adaptiveness and capacity to rapidly change over this past year.

We have shown how we can pivot rapidly and step up when faced with a crisis. People were redeployed in days to a new role, changes in processes that would have previously taken years were conducted in a week, and in many cases, decision making was devolved. The way we delivered services was also transformed, such as instant response teams and public health measures.

Technology has impacted how we work with each other and deliver services.

Recent improvements to ICT infrastructure, long-term digital strategies, and existing provisions of equipment like laptops allowed us to pivot quickly to working remotely, we were able to rapidly deliver services, or work with partners virtually, It's much easier to bring in a wide range of attendees to a partnership meeting, or pull in an expert to attend a hearing when that meeting is virtual – opening up the scope of how we are able to work as a sector.

However, technology was also a potential challenge to retaining any future change. It was difficult to hold virtual meetings with families who don't have access to reliable internet, or feel connected when communicating purely via video, meaning that an intentional, purposeful use of technology is needed as we move forward.

People have felt pride in the work that they do and want to continue with a sense of common purpose.

People's assumptions around what was possible shifted over the last year. Ways of working previously seen as impossible were implemented, and people want to retain the improved work-life balance they have gained. Others described the increased sense of collective identify and common purpose, and the sense of meaning it gave the work they do. Ensuring that this capacity for change – whether individual or organisational – is not lost is crucial. Many noted concern that old habits are returning, and the need to keep this mindset of possibility into the future.

“It has really revealed how much process is mindset and culture, not policy and practice”

“We were able to build a hospital in a month... it's incredible”

“We've had to work in a different way that really challenged assumptions we had”

We need to deliver on the expectations of our people

This past year has impacted the expectations our people have of what is possible, and not delivering on this will mean losing out. Learning the lessons of this past year – keeping the positive changes and being clear on what should remain – will allow us to rise to these expectations.

People have taken a nuanced and reflective view of what they would like to see in the future and how they would like to work.

Our people want to maintain the increased choice and opening up of options new ways of working provides.

People noted how quickly we were able to adapt, from switching to Teams to taking part in virtual hearings. They also described the sense of increased collaboration between teams, and the collective sense of purpose many had felt. This was due to feeling part of something bigger through the way they worked within the community, or part of a broader 'whole' within the organisation as people were deployed into different roles.

They want to retain capacity to change from new ways of working in the future.

They strongly noted the adaptability and speed of response - how we transformed how we worked in a space of days, and maintained and in many cases strengthened relationships with colleagues and partners. Others shared the positive impact of virtual working on work-life balance and productivity. Not having to travel between meetings, and having that extra hour in the morning without a commute have allowed people to spend more time with family.

People are clear on which areas they don't want to change.

Feelings of being 'always on' or not having time to decompress were common, and many described how certain elements of delivering children's or social services are not easily replicated in a virtual format.

The question now is what this means for the future. Although acknowledging that this was a crisis and therefore not necessarily easily replicated, this moment was seen an opportunity for change. Taking stock of the lessons – both negative and positive – will allow us to be purposeful in designing work, and bring our people with us.

Questions people have about new ways of working:

- How will the organisation be able to manage this?
- Will there be pressure from the management team to come into the office?
- What will a hybrid setting look like in practice?
- How can we prevent people from feeling pressured to come in?

"We were able to adapt quickly in how we worked, keeping in touch more and focusing on well-being"

"It's amazing to think used to not even have Teams...we've been able to move so seamlessly"



Experiment: Diminishing Core Hours at Devon County Council

To enable greater flexibility and agility in ways of working Devon County Council decided to remove core hours during the pandemic so that staff were able to balance their work and home commitments more flexibly.

Overall the experience was a positive one. Many found it effective in balancing work and home life and allowing them to spend more time on activities outside of work. Others did find it difficult to switch off, and some experienced difficulty working across different hours than their colleagues. Surveys showed that people felt they had been more productive or that their productivity was unchanged.

Overall, Devon found that building in more structure to this flexibility – such as shared hours across teams, and clearer verbalisation of expectations would allow a more manageable approach.

"People say it's brilliant because I can fit it around things that I need to do in my personal life – can go do a dog walk, exercise class etc, caring responsibilities"

How have we responded?

We are already re-designing how we work

When it comes to responding to this opportunity for change and shift in expectations, rather than being purely reactive, many of us are building on changes and strategies already in place. We have been purposeful in thinking about how we want to work in the future, expanding agile or SMART working policies using the lessons from this past year.

Purposefully re-designing work means shaping ways of working around job tasks and outcomes and not assumptions – being clear on which moments require co-ordination or collaboration, and which focus.

Over the past year we saw that:

We have designed work around different working patterns and roles.

The breadth of roles within workforces means a one-size-fits all approach is the wrong approach. Instead, shaping ways of working around different ‘workstyles’, allows a more purposeful application of flexibility - showcasing the inclusive, nuanced view we are taking to designing work. Some have applied this approach to managers and are looking to expand out to other roles, whilst others have mapped out which roles sit under which grouping before experimenting with its application. The challenges to this range from technology distribution to the shift to output-focused management. Staffordshire Council shared how they have used peer-to-peer training of managers to help embed this shift in working styles with their managers (see [Experiment: Peer-to Peer Manager Training at Staffordshire Council](#))

We have been intentional in how we re-design the office.

Moving to new ways of work has allowed us to re-think how offices space is used. Some described how offices could be re-designed to allow council employees to work in shared spaces with partners or the community. Others noted how they were building in activity-based workspaces to their office, such as areas for collaboration, or focused work, or developing ‘hub’ offices to allow people to work in different locations.

“COVID has really accelerated the flexibility and approach that was already in place”

“We’re trying to get teams to really think about whether they need to come into the office”

What are the benefits in new ways of working?

Common benefits gained from shifting ways of working include:

Finance and Budgets:

This was one of the strongest benefits to emerge. In a time of reduced budgets, many shared how the savings from re-thinking how office space is used as important in the shift to new ways of working.

Talent attraction and retention

Attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce, whether in demographics or skill sets was highlighted as crucial in the future of the sector and required shifts in ways of working.

Reducing carbon footprint

More so than in the private sector, environmental concerns were cited as a reason for changes in ways of working. Many councils are integrating new ways of working into their strategies around reducing their carbon footprint, for example.

Work-life balance

The opportunity to embed a more sustainable balance between home and work-life was cited as one of the most important benefits – particularly for high-stress roles .

Agile Transformation

The need for councils to be more agile and innovative in how they deliver services was identified as connected to how people work by some. Many councils have implemented agile working pre-pandemic. Surrey Council, for example moved 1200 employees out of a central office as part of their agile transformation.

And are mapping out future workstyles

Many councils are thinking about how to be intentional in providing flexibility to diverse roles, and have already started crafting their future approach.

This approach integrates both flexibility of place and flexibility of time, and reframes work away from *where* and *when* it is delivered. This includes being purposeful in thinking about the tasks of certain roles and whether they need to be done in the office, encouraging people to be intentional in how they design and structure their week, leveraging time as needed, and offering different working options such as part-time, flexi-time or compressed hours. Many are allowing flexibility at the individual level – allowing people to decide how they want to work, and no expectation of going into the office just because you leader is.

The three groupings that are emerging within many of these approaches are:



Place Based

In this workstyle, roles are tied to a central location, whether an office or work hub.



Anywhere

In this workstyle, there is the option to work anywhere, whether in the office, at home or between locations.



Community Based

This option applies to more community based roles, or so-called 'blue-light' roles. In this workstyles, individuals work within the community, and are connected but not tied to an office location.

"We've made a commitment for work to be seen as an activity and not a place"

Experiment: Distributed Leadership Model at Cumbria Council



As we move to new ways of working, the role of leaders and managers is crucial and requires a more distributed, agile approach from leaders. Realising this, Cumbria County Council have developed a distributed leadership model to support leaders.

This allows the council to shift what is required of leadership and really drive a sense of accountability and self-management within teams.

Through sessions with 650 managers, the council identified what barriers and challenges managers saw in working with remote teams and what they needed to respond. These discussions included how they have adapted and what tools they needed going forward.

This programme allowed the council to better understand the impact this past year has had for managers and how best to provide further support needed for managers and their teams going forward.

Experiment: Developing Hybrid Working at Lincolnshire Council

As part of the strategic approach, Lincolnshire Council have implemented an Agile Working programme to drive SMART working. The key objectives for this programme were

- Managing Work-life balance
- Managing outcomes focused on performance
- Maximising office space for collaborative thinking
- Managing risk to environment
- Becoming employer of choice and driving talent attraction
- Improving connectivity to improve business objectives

Led by the Chief Executive, there is a three year roll-out including implementing smarter working in campus, refurbishing offices and creating small service hubs, and setting up 'Teams rooms' – specific rooms with the technology for hybrid meetings - later this year. The individual makes the decision on where they will work and they won't be expected to be in the office even with their leader.

This will be applied across the county, in order to reduce the property portfolio, achieve savings and drive performance.

All directorates have their own cultures and sub-cultures within their community. We want to allow them flexibility within a corporate framework."



What have we learned about
how we want to work?



We saw how important purpose was to how we work

Purpose at work is a key trend emerging from the pandemic, but it is also a business need. Research shows that organisations with a greater sense of employee satisfaction and purpose outperform peers year on year.* Although not limited to our sector it is an area in which we have an advantage to leverage in any future way of working.

This sense of purpose has an emotional component- a sense of meaning in the work that you are doing and why you are doing it. It is also rooted in action – in clearly seeing the impact of this work you do on those in the community. This is not new, and many people, particularly in frontline roles, noted how it was one of the reasons they worked within the sector. During this past year we saw that:

People felt collective purpose with their colleagues.

Working virtually increased shared purpose within teams with more intentionality in building it - through frequent catch-ups or learning how to deliver a service virtually – although some shared how this could be harder without frequent meetings. Redeploying employees also drove collective purpose – one participant described how they had previously felt disconnected from others in their library role but now felt a greater sense of aligned purpose with their colleagues after moving to a frontline role. Maintaining and leveraging this collective purpose is a unique opportunity we have as a sector, as it is easy to see a clear line between the actions you take and the impact on others, compared to other sectors.

People wanted purpose in how certain tasks are done.

Having to use technology in new ways led to a rethinking of why certain tasks were done that way, and with a more purposeful use of technology needed in the future. This could be rethinking how services are delivered, such as the move to providing children's services in a virtual way for example. (See [Experiment: Transitioning from Physical to Virtual Youth Centres](#)). Retaining this, and not assuming that certain tasks have to be implemented with or without technology will allow the creation of this purpose.

"It has revealed what can't be done virtually, and what really requires sitting across from someone"

"Our purpose shifted. We went from very bureaucratic to getting things done"

"I've really seen the impact of the work I do on the families I work with"

Experiment: Transitioning from Physical to Virtual Youth Centres at Essex Council

- Online games, quizzes and baking sessions
- Video gaming clubs
- Creative writing and performing play

This past year has revealed the differing impact of the pandemic by age, with young people impacted in their development, education and opportunities.. Statistics from UK Youth have shown that conversely there has been a rise and demand of 66% on youth services. To respond to this need, Essex Council were able to provide temporary alternatives by turning physical youth centres entirely virtual.

These virtual centres showed more reach, a with children who had never visited a physical centre joining virtually. It has provided new joiners with a sense of what the youth centres are, potentially pushing them to joining once physically reopened.

Children were given the opportunity to join different virtual groups that provided various educational programs and leisure activities, such as:

"It has really benefited kids as its now going into their territory where they feel more comfortable communicating."



We learned that we need to be intentional in how we connect

The importance of enabling connection – whether social, emotional or information was identified as a key lesson from this past year of working.

Within many of the roles within our sector, being productive relies on how we interact with other – to share knowledge and get work done, and to build those peer relationships that help us learn and grow and sustain us through tough moments.

When it comes to what these relationships and connections looked like, over this past year of working we saw that:

Knowledge was shared effectively across the organisation and externally with partners delivery of services.

Working virtually increased knowledge sharing within teams, as people found collaborating easier, but serendipitous moments where new knowledge is gained were harder to maintain. New joiners also found it harder to gain this knowledge, as they were less likely to reach out or overhear information, and it is harder to shadow someone virtually.

Sharing knowledge with partners and delivering services virtually was easier to arrange, with more people attending, but there remains knowledge that can only be gained in-person, such as identifying neglect, or observing people's body language in social care situations. Having hybrid hearings in social care, and mapping out which areas can be learnt virtually and which in-person can help embed this knowledge sharing.

People missed connecting socially with colleagues.

Remote working made it harder for people feel socially connected to colleagues and a sense joy and fun within work. Although some in frontline roles described feeling more socially connected to those they deliver services to, with much less sense of being on a pedestal or disconnected as a result of the crisis. Building in time for smaller, informal moments or rituals, in addition to structured meeting time would help create that sense of connection internally.

Emotional support and connection was harder to provide.

Embedding emotional connection within new ways of working – particularly those roles exposed to more trauma - is a distinctive challenge of our sector, and was harder to maintain working virtually. After a tough call or meeting when in the office, colleagues are able to spot that you need support and ask you if you're okay. Working from home prevented this, leading to a sense of isolation and disconnection. Being intentional in whether this connection is built virtually or face-to-face is key in any new way of working - with challenging families or situations, for example, it is easier to offer reassurance in person rather than as a box on a screen.

New ways of working can lead to more connection:

- Delivering services and working with partners across a wider geography
- Building employee networks
- Creating relationships within the community

The major pain points in creating these connections are:

- Lack of emotional and social support
- Tasks that require observation to build relationships and knowledge
- Onboarding of new joiners

“I didn't feel as part of the wider team apart from people I worked with until I met them in person”

“When you're in the office and have an abusive call, your colleagues can see and support you. I haven't had that”

And build work that creates flexibility for all and space to develop networks

The importance of taking a holistic view of flexibility, and embedding networks in any new way of working is crucial.

Re-designing working means ensuring that flexibility is used to drive productivity but also help people be innovative and creative. This requires creating time to maintain those relationships with immediate colleagues that we trust, but also providing opportunities for people to reach out to those weaker connections that show us different ways of living and being and spark ideas.

During this past year, we saw that:

A holistic view of flexibility which includes *place* and *time* is needed, with a more expansive view of what flexible work means communicated to our people.

Flexible ways of working have frequently been common within the sector, but not necessarily clearly communicated as such - social workers, for example, often work from their cars between meetings and in the office, and many people use compressed hours or work part-time. Indeed, our people have always demonstrated flexibility from an individual perspective, working many more hours overtime for example, so ensuring we provide flexibility from the organisational side is key.

Having more flexibility on where we can work allows us to work more closely with the community.

Working flexibly allowed us to be closer to the people we serve, strengthening relationships with the community and showing we can be innovative in how we deliver services. Setting up areas for council employees in community spaces, for example, and allowing employees to be visible to the people they work with would continue this.

Virtual working allowed us to reach more people in our networks, but new joiners have found them harder to build.

Networks within teams were strengthened but a siloed view remained across broader networks. Areas like Employee Networks were able to attract more people working virtually, and it was easier to work with partners, due to less travel time. The difficulty of new joiners building these networks virtually was apparent, and the role of leaders in creating these internal networks seen as crucial - whether through providing opportunities or role-modelling behaviours such as reaching out to new contacts across teams, identified as key.

“We’ve really strengthened relationships with our partners...there’s great opportunity there”

“It’s been much easier to access networks and contribute”

“We were able to be much more fluid and flexible in roles, and not so narrowly defined”

Experiment: Workforce Transformation at Surrey Council



In order to anticipate and respond proactively to future changes impacting their work, Surrey County Council focused on identifying the key internal and external 'megatrends' that will shape their workforce and the lives of Surrey's residents over the next ten years.

Speaking to managers across different services helped them identify both the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic and to focus on harnessing the best of these in their approach moving forward. Key to this was understanding how future workforce requirements varied between services. For example in Children's Services there is huge potential to use technology to reduce the administrative burden on social workers, therefore improving retention and ultimately providing more stability for the children and families they work with. Conversely, in IT employment models that encourage a more transient workforce are more applicable to competing with the fast pace of the tech sector.

Therefore rather than a traditional strategy, Surrey decided to focus on defining the ambition and recognising that the approach to getting there will, rightly, vary across the Council. They created a 'workforce transformation model' which outlines these ambitions and provides a framework to support services to identify how the Future of Work may apply to their context whilst retaining a clear connection to the Council's strategic aims.

“We are ambitious as a council and we want to create a new way of working”

We saw the importance of building sustainable work

Ensuring that future ways of working don't deplete people's wellbeing and making any new way of working sustainable is key.

Essex Council - Enabling Hybrid Conferences

Re-designing work not only means focusing on how work get done, but also being aware of how work itself builds or depletes energy. Excessive time on video calls, blurred boundaries between work and home life, or lack of autonomy over time can all diminish the energy and wellbeing of our people.

During this past year, we saw that:

Ways of working were transferred to working virtually, rather than being designed with remote working in mind.

There were many challenges around time. Time gained has been replaced with meetings, leading to people feeling exhausted or isolated. In addition, many noted that time to decompress had been lost – those moments throughout the working day while moving between meeting that allowed people to replenish their energy and be more productive. New habits will need to be created – such as meeting free days, people feeling more able to protect their time, or creation of physical barriers between work and home.

The variety of experiences created a need for a balanced approach to well-being

As with connection and purpose, this variety stemmed from role type or personal situation. For many separating work and home is much harder, or they have had a more traumatic year, in social care, for example. Taking a more personalised and manager led approach to well-being is therefore crucial, and acknowledging that individuals themselves have responsibility in enabling their own well-being.

“People are finding it hard to switch off...sometimes it's just back to back calls”

“People have really talked much more about well-being this past year than they did before”

“We have less down time between meetings to decompress. We used to drive from one meeting to another and those breaks were needed, now we don't have that as much as we're all working from home”

Experiment: Enabling Hybrid Conferences at Essex Council

In order to continue establishing relationships in new ways of working, Essex Council has introduced hybrid conferences, which allows conference attendees (i.e. Social workers, GP, Psychologists, etc) to attend in person or virtually.

This allows people the flexibility they need, but maintain the benefits of face-to-face working with families. Attendances has increased as people have more availability to join virtually, and provided a much smoother transition to new ways of working.



Key challenges are confidentiality and lack of observation. With hybrid conferences people are often unaware of whether parents are in the room with the child or not, and cannot view their environment, and certain confidential conversations cannot take place

“There is a lot that we've learnt about connectivity that we didn't think we could do virtually that we are doing now”

And enabling people to be their authentic selves

Now is an opportunity to create work that allows people to be more open in sharing aspects of who they are, with less hierarchy

The complex and often hierarchical nature of how we work cannot be changed overnight but now is the moment to try and shift some of these old habits, and create inclusive, authentic work. Building this work means being aware of how your people like to work – who is comfortable sharing more aspects of their personal life and who would rather separate these two elements – to ensure that people feel comfortable and open in how they behave.

Over this past year we saw that:

Barriers between leaders and their people decreased.

Working virtually helped break down barriers, with being able to see into a leader's home allowing people to get to know leaders and taking part in a virtual meeting less intimidating it is taking part in a virtual meeting than waiting nervously outside an office before going in. Leaders themselves shared how much more linked they felt to their team, with more time taken to connect, and less sense of 'us and them'. Retaining this into the future means continuing to allow moments for leaders to share more aspects of themselves, and leveraging the egalitarian feeling of virtual meetings.

More inclusive and authentic ways of communicating were created.

Virtual meetings felt less high stakes than in-person, as people were not face-to-face, and meetings were more structured, making it more inclusive. Leading an important meeting from their home allowed people to gain new confidence, particularly for introverts. It was also easier for the visually or hearing impaired, thanks to subtitles and audio cues, although not exclusively. Being aware of the differing impact of virtual versus in-person meetings and providing multiple options for communicating will help ensure this inclusivity remains.

Leadership traits for hybrid working:

Across the research, some of the key characteristics that people felt future leaders should have were:

- Being open, honest and empathetic
- Showing humility and compassion
- Communicating transparently
- Showing learning agility

“Working in this way has led to less feeling of hierarchy ”

“People are now less concerned about kids coming into the room or walking past – it's changed”

Experiment: Peer to Peer Manager Training at Staffordshire Council

To ensure they could lead their teams to adapt to new ways of working, managers needed to be supported to build the skills required for the future. To do this, alongside going out to teams and asking for their feedback, Staffordshire County Council implemented peer-to-peer manager development to enable their managers to learn from each other and implement new working practices with their teams,

After sharing what support they needed, managers were brought together to share examples of how they managed their teams, what worked and what didn't, and which areas they needed further support.

This created the environment for managers to learn from each other using real-world scenarios,, challenge assumptions and have a dialogue about how they wanted to work in the future.

It also helped to identify which managers were uncomfortable the changes and needed more support to help them support their teams to embrace the new ways of working.

“This training made it clear as to which managers were uncomfortable about managing hybrid working, and we were then able to support them through the transition as well as their teams transition.”



What to take forward as we
re-design work



Actions to embed as we continue to experiment

Re-designing work is an iterative, experimental process – one in which we will need to be comfortable adapting and learning together and reflective and nuanced in taking action. This is a journey, in which iterating, trying new things and sharing lessons is needed as we evolve and change.

Stepping up as a sector to the changes we have seen means applying these lessons to build sustainable, balanced work that allows our people to connect and build networks, and feel a sense of meaning and aligned purpose.



To ensure work is an activity and not a place:

Take a **personalised** and **not one-size-fits all approach** to designing work – ensure the outcome, process and interactions of decisions are fair.



To help people feel a sense of purpose and connection:

Be clear and intentional on when to use technology and face-to-face. Don't rely on assumptions but identify which moments require human connection.

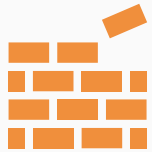


To build connected, networked work:

Ensure **leaders maintain time for informal meetings with people**, and that are comfortable sharing more of their **authentic selves**.

Actions to embed as we continue to experiment

As we start to apply the lessons that we have learned and build sustainable, balanced work that allows our people to connect and build networks, and feel a sense of meaning and aligned purpose, below are the key actions we can take.



To create healthy, sustainable work:

Build in those **rituals and habits** needed to drive well-being – from protecting meeting free days, to ensuring time to decompress.



To help people feel a sense of purpose and connection:

Focus on managers – using peer-to-peer training and real-world scenarios to allow them to learn together and share stories.



To allow people to be their authentic selves:

Don't forget the emotions of work – and ensure time is integrated to provide support and reassurance within teams.

Outcomes to consider as we experiment

As we experiment, there are key outcomes and factors of success that we can consider as we evolve. The below are some of the areas to consider we move forward with new ways of working.



Work Outcomes

- How are we measuring and tracking work?
- Do we have the right outcomes?



Delivery of Services

- Are we innovating how we deliver services?
- How are we engaging with residents?



Attraction and Retention

- How are we retaining good people?
- Are we attracting a diverse range of talent?



Collaboration

- Are people connecting across the organisation?
- How are people using the office?



Employee Inclusion and Wellbeing

- How is the well-being of our employees?
- What do our inclusion metrics show?



Empowered Managers

- Are managers focusing on output?
- Do managers feel comfortable managing remote teams?