

PEOPLE STRATEGY

2023 TO 2028



Introduction



Lawrence Fitzpatrick
Leader of the Council

West Lothian Council delivers a wide range of essential public services to our growing community with a clear vision to transform, improve lives and make West Lothian a great place to live, learn, work and do business.

We have long been known as one of the top performing local authorities in the United Kingdom and have been recognised as an outstanding performer across all sectors in the UK and Europe in prestigious external assessment and benchmarking exercises.

The next five years will see many challenges and opportunities. To respond, we will continue to put people at the heart of what we do, embrace change and transform the way we work so we deliver services that have the most positive impact on our community.

We recognise that our people are our strength and that a diverse, skilled and engaged workforce is critical to the delivery of quality services that make a difference to our community.



Graham Hope
Chief Executive

Our People Strategy sets out what we will do over the next five years, through our people, to rise to the challenges we face and ensure our workforce is empowered and motivated to deliver the priorities and actions in our 2023/23 to 2027/28 Corporate Plan.

Building on our last strategy, it reaffirms our commitment to being an employer of choice by providing a great place to work, with a positive and inclusive culture, where people feel empowered and proud to deliver for our community. Every one of our people play a role in delivering our People Strategy.

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I. Strategy Purpose

Scope of the Strategy

Our People Strategy is a corporate strategy and adopted across the council. It has been subject to consultation with the key stakeholders and approval by Council Executive.

The strategy is aligned to the council's Corporate Plan and covers the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. It has been developed to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the other key plans and strategies.

Outcomes

Our People Strategy is part of suite of strategies in place to ensure we continuously deliver efficient and high quality services that have the greatest positive impact possible for our community. It sets out how we will support the Corporate Plan through our workforce, with four key outcomes:

1. An employer of choice
2. An empowered and effective workforce
3. A positive and supportive culture
4. Effective Leadership

Reporting on Progress

Our People Strategy will be progressed under the direction of the relevant corporate board. An annual update on progress in the outcomes and actions will be reported to Corporate Policy and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel and published on the council website.

An end of strategy report will also be published in 2028.

Purpose

The People Strategy sets out our aspiration to be an employer of choice with people who are skilled and engaged in delivering services that have a positive impact for the people of West Lothian.

2. Strategy Overview

	Strategy Outcome An employer of choice	Strategy Outcome An empowered and effective workforce	Strategy Outcome A safe, supportive and positive work culture	Strategy Outcome Effective leadership
Description	The council is a desirable place to work, attracting the best candidates for vacancies and retaining experienced and skilled employees.	Our employees have all the skills and knowledge they need to deliver high quality services, whilst providing them with sufficient autonomy to enhance customer outcomes.	We have embedded an inclusive and supportive workplace culture where people have confidence that their wellbeing is a priority.	All employees are effectively supported and motivated to deliver high quality services.
Challenge	The council must attract and retain talent in an increasingly competitive labour market facing a greater demand for flexible working practices, career development and organisational values aligned to personal values.	Transformation of the way we work will require changes in the skills of our people, a focus on addressing digital skill gaps and a consistent approach to customer service. A focus on learning and development and career progression across leaner structures will also be critical to attract and retain talent.	To attract talent and maximise workforce performance the council must address any barriers to work including equality related barriers and poor employee health. An increasing prevalence of mental health problems, seen at a local and national level, may impact on productivity.	The council is going through a period of transformation, developing new skills and ways of working, while continuing to deliver quality services. Maintaining employee engagement, performance and satisfaction levels will be critical.

	Strategy Outcome An employer of choice	Strategy Outcome An empowered and effective workforce	Strategy Outcome A safe, supportive and positive work culture	Strategy Outcome Effective leadership
Opportunity	There are opportunities to develop a stronger employer brand, reach new candidate pools and promote the benefits of working for the council as well as improve the recruitment and on-boarding experience.	There are opportunities to for the council to ‘grow its own’ talent, digitally upskill the workforce and incorporate the council values into everything we do.	The council has an established framework for supporting employee well-being and a robust Equality and Diversity framework to identify and overcome barriers to work and council services.	High levels of employee engagement drive high performance. Leaders can build engagement by creating a clear line of sight to the corporate priorities, empowering people to deliver services that positively contribute to the community, supporting people to reach their full potential and recognising individual and team performance.
Action	Review our approach to the promotion of careers in the council and the candidate experience, while seeking to build employee pride and advocacy amongst the workforce.	Implement innovative approaches to talent management, incorporate the council values into development discussions and foster a digitally proficient workforce through digital training initiatives.	Deliver our Equality mainstreaming objectives and review the approach to supporting employee well-being with a focus on supporting mental well-being and embedding health and safety best practice.	Review the council’s approach to performance and development reviews, implementing a framework that gives people ownership of their development, embeds the council values in the work they do, encourages and enables continuous improvement and recognises the work people do.
Measures	Candidate experience and employee engagement survey.	Employee engagement survey and digital maturity assessments.	Employee engagement survey and regular health, safety and wellbeing monitoring.	Employee engagement survey and service performance monitoring.

3. Supporting the Corporate Priorities

The Corporate Plan and Budget Strategy were created to address the most pressing challenges for the council in the next five years, ensuring we meet our statutory obligations sustainably and protect the most vital and impactful services for local people.

Looking ahead, 2023/24 to 2027/28 is expected to bring fundamental change as we seek to transform council services to continue to meet customer needs, take advantage of opportunities, such as new technology, and bridge a funding gap of £47.6 million.

Corporate Priorities

The council has identified five priorities for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. These reflect the areas that are the most important for the community and improving the quality of life for all living, working and visiting West Lothian. In the next five years, the council will focus on achieving outcomes in each priority.



The priorities have been set through consultation with our community, staff and partner agencies and identify and address the most pronounced, collective needs of the local area. They will also provide a focus for decision making and resource prioritisation in the next five years, ensuring that we target our efforts towards the issues that matter most to the community.

Our workforce has a vital role in delivering the outcomes for each priority and the People Strategy sets out how we will ensure we have people with the right knowledge, capability and customer focus to transform the way we work and deliver services that positively impact our community.

Council Values

As part of the development a new strategic direction and the Corporate Plan 2023/28, new organisational Values were identified that better reflect the character and ambitions of the council.

The council wants to work with customers, staff and partners to make services better and deliver our Purpose and Vision of a *Thriving West Lothian*. In addition to a refreshed strategic direction, it was determined that the council needed Values that reminded staff and customers what the council stands for and the type of behaviours we want to promote across the organisation.

Our values



**CARING &
COMPASSIONATE**



**OPEN, HONEST &
ACCOUNTABLE**



**COLLABORATIVE,
INCLUSIVE & ADAPTIVE**

Through our people, we will thread these values through the work we do, creating the right conditions for change and customer service excellence.

4. Operating Context

In seeking to build the workforce we need to transform for the future, the People Strategy takes account of key challenges and opportunities we face in our operating environment.

Changing Labour Market

The UK has seen the emergence of large-scale skills shortages and a significant increase in unfilled vacancies. In addition to resourcing challenges in the health, social care and education sectors, the rapid adoption of technology and automation means many jobs now require digital skills and there is increasing demand of IT and data skills and knowledge. Upskilling and re-skilling the current workforce is therefore critical, as is attracting and retaining new talent.

Evolving workforce expectations

Alongside labour shortages are indications that a growing number of workers view work as transactional, but feel confident about their ability to finding new posts and seek increasing work-life balance. Consequently, employer branding, a positive candidate experience and adapting to the needs and expectations of the workforce has become increasingly important for talent attraction and retention.

Employers must also meet increasing expectations for socially responsible policies and practices that support mental health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, career progression and professional development. And with a large share of the UK workforce having caring responsibilities, supporting flexible working has become an increasing priority.

Mental health impacts

An increasing prevalence of mental health problems has seen high levels of mental health related absenteeism and attrition. The workplace is an important setting where action can be taken to support and protect mental health through proactive and holistic interventions that support people to remain at, or return, to work. A robust approach to risk management, reflecting best practice Health and Safety management standards, also remains critical for minimising work-related stress.

Cost of living crisis

The increasing cost of living has put further strain on mental health, with many falling into financial hardship. Alongside skills shortages, this has led to a greater focus on pay and conditions in many sectors and a growing Fair Work agenda in Scotland including promotion of the Real Living Wage.

Local population

West Lothian is expected to continue seeing fast growth in the local population, with particularly high growth in the number of people aged between 65-74 and over 75 in the next five years. This will generate increased demand for essential services. In addition to the ageing population, the school age population continues to require investment in education infrastructure.

With the majority of the West Lothian population between 16 and 64, and a projected increase of 5.5% in the number of 16-24-year olds and 7.7% in 25-44 year olds between 2018 and 2028, there are opportunities to improve local talent pipelines and support community wealth building plans.

5. Outcomes

Our People Strategy sets out our aspiration to be an employer of choice with people who are skilled and engaged in delivering services that have a positive impact for the people of West Lothian.

The strategy has four outcomes that we will work towards with clear goals, actions that link directly to our corporate plan and performance indicators, where appropriate, to measure our success

Outcome 1

To be an Employer of Choice

Ensuring the council is a desirable place to work, attracting the best candidates for vacancies and retaining experienced and skilled employees.

We recognise the positive difference our people make to the everyday lives of West Lothian citizens and the importance of a workforce that puts the customer at the heart of everything they do. Recruiting and retaining people with the right attitude, skills and capabilities will remain a critical focus for us to deliver for the future.

We will attract and retain the right people by continuing to build our reputation as a great place to work with an inclusive culture that values diversity and wellbeing, supports and engages its people, and recognises employee contributions.

As the largest employer in West Lothian, we will also support the local employability agenda, addressing barriers to employment and building pathways to employment within the council for the local community.

Through our People Strategy we will:

- Develop and promote an engaging WLC Employer brand that reflects our values, with greater online presence
- Promote a positive employee benefits proposition
- Ensure user-friendly recruitment and on-boarding processes, maximising digital channels
- Support the youth into employment agenda through co-planning with employability services

We will measure our success through:

Key Output	Key Indicator	Target
Employee engagement	Percentage who would recommend WLC as a place to work	70%
Employee engagement	Percentage of employees who believe the council is working to make West Lothian a better place to live, work and learn	67%
Employee Onboarding	Percentage rating excellent or good overall experience of the Recruitment process	96%

Outcome 2

An empowered and effective workforce

Ensuring our employees have all the skills and knowledge they need to deliver high quality services, whilst providing them with sufficient autonomy to enhance customer outcomes.

Transformation of the way we work will require changes in the skills of our people, greater workforce agility and a mindset of continuous improvement and development. Supporting people to develop and achieve their potential is also a key mechanism for talent attraction and retention.

Addressing digital and analytical skills gaps will remain a critical area of focus, as will implementing innovative approaches to learning and development and career progression across leaner structures.

Through the period of the strategy we will:

- Grow our own talent, supported by the use of succession planning and talent management tools
- Promote a coaching culture across the council and harness opportunities for mentoring
- Review the provision of learning and development to maximise the benefits of e-learning and ensure employees have core skills to innovate and embrace new ways of working
- Review workforce plans annually to identify and address critical skill gaps and future needs
- Foster a digitally proficient workforce through identifying skills gaps and providing appropriate digital training
- Organise, plan, monitor and review health and safety systems and outcomes to ensure employees are practically supported in their delivery.

Performance will be monitored through:

Key Output	Key Indicator	Target
Effective workforce	Percentage of employees who strongly agree or agree that they get the training, learning and development to do their job effectively	75%
Effective workforce	Mandatory e-learning complete by calendar year	100%
Effective workforce	Percentage of employees who strongly agree or agree that they receive clear feedback on their work from their line manager/supervisor	75%
Digitally proficient workforce	Improved Digital Maturity (Digital Maturity Assessment)	Level 3

Outcome 3

A safe, supportive and positive work culture

Embedding an inclusive and supportive workplace culture where people have confidence that their safety and wellbeing is a priority.

We remain committed to tackling inequalities and championing diversity, supported by policies, procedures and practices that are inclusive and fair. Workforce health, safety and wellbeing also remains a priority, ensuring a working environment that minimises risks to our people's physical and mental wellbeing, assists work-life balance and supports people to make positive health choices.

During the period of the strategy the council will focus on:

- Embedding a proactive and supportive approach to employee safety and wellbeing, including physical, mental and financial wellbeing, underpinned by a compassionate leadership approach
- Embed health and safety best practice into our mental health and well-being strategy
- Championing fair work practices and an inclusive workplace where all employees are able to participate fully in all aspects of work
- Ensuring effective employee voice and positive engagement with trade union colleagues
- Deliver our Equality Mainstreaming outcomes and regularly monitoring workforce demographics

Performance will be monitored through:

Key Output	Key Indicator	Target
Positive work environment	I believe the council provides a good working environment for employees	70%
Safety at work	Percentage of Health and Safety incidents not reportable to the HSE in the financial year	100%
Fair and inclusive work practices	Percentage of employees who, in the last 12 months, strongly agree or agree that they have not experienced discrimination at work	100%
Safety at work	Percentage of employees who feel safe at my place of work	95%

Outcome 4

Provide effective leadership

Ensuring all employees are effectively supported and motivated to deliver high quality services.

Our leaders and managers will drive performance through employee engagement, setting out clear purpose and expectations for our workforce through line of sight to the corporate priorities, and effective performance management practices. Our leaders will ensure we build the skills, behaviours and mindset needed to achieve our outcomes, role model the standards expected, and empower our people to take forward change through a coaching approach and promotion of best practice change management principles.

Through our strategy we will:

- Implement a new approach to performance and development review, with regular conversations that empower employees to take ownership of their development, innovate and make appropriate decisions to achieve customer satisfaction
- Embed a competency and behavioural framework that supports performance and development discussions
- Deliver leadership development to support the delivery of corporate objectives
- Review the framework for employee engagement and recognition, ensuring we recognise and celebrate our successes.





Performance will be monitored in this objective through:



Key Output	Key Indicator	Target
Clear performance expectations	Percentage of employees who strongly agree or agree that they know what is expected of them at work	95%
Employee engagement	Percentage of employees who strongly agree or agree that they are encouraged by their line manager to improve their own performance	72%
Employee recognition	Percentage of employees who strongly agree or agree that they feel valued and recognised for the work they do	70%
Employee engagement	Percentage employees who feel that, in their role, they are contributing to making West Lothian a better place to live, work and learn	85%





6. Performance and Transformation Actions





Corporate Services will undertake a number of actions in support of the Council’s Corporate Plan, Budget Strategy and other Council strategies. We will focus on actions that will improve the customer experience, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services and advance or use of technologies that will increase choice and/or reduce costs. Actions under the People Strategy will ensure we have an engaged workforce that is fully equipped, supported and empowered to deliver customer service excellence.

Key This action should have the following intended impact:

 Improve services for customers	 Improve performance and/or process efficiency	 Reduce the cost of delivering our services	 Increase the use of technology
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Action	Description	Planned Outcome	Responsible Officer	Start	End	Links
Attraction and on-boarding	Review of the approach to attraction, recruitment and on-boarding, identifying opportunities to better promote the council as an employer and streamline recruitment processes including the use digital channels.	Greater online employer presence with streamlined and user-friendly recruitment and on-boarding process.	HR & Support Services Manager	Nov 2023	March 2025	Outcome 1 
Flexible working	Review policies for flexible working to support the needs of a diverse workforce.	Annual plan for policy review and new suite of policies for Flexible Working and Supporting People who Care.	HR & Support Services Manager	April 2023	March 2025	Outcome 1 and 3 

Action	Description	Planned Outcome	Responsible Officer	Start	End	Links
Equalities mainstreaming	Activities that ensure West Lothian is a Positive and Inclusive Place to Work including training and maintaining accreditation as a disability level 2 Employer in the Disability Confident Scheme.	Delivery of the mainstreaming activities set out in the council's Equality and Diversity Framework, which support the Equalities Mainstreaming Outcome 4 – West Lothian is a Positive and Inclusive Place to Work.	Head of Corporate Services	April 2023	March 2025	Outcome 3  Equality-Mainstreaming-and-Equality-Outcomes-Framework-2021-2025
Strategic talent management	Using succession planning framework and talent management tools to ensure development and retention of critical skills and knowledge, and identify future leaders.	Implementation of a new Succession Planning Framework across services with annual review.	Heads of Service	April 2023	March 2028	Outcome 2 
Workforce Planning	Workforce planning each financial year to forecast future needs, minimise skills gaps and maximise opportunities for improved local career pathways into the council.	Produce service led workforce plans and review each financial year with clear actions to address skills gaps.	Heads of Service	July 2023	Dec 2027	Outcome 2 and 3 
Performance management	Review the current framework for performance and development reviews and implement a new framework.	A new streamlined performance and development review framework, linked to corporate values and competencies, with regular developmental conversation that empower	HR & Support Services Manager	April 2024	March 2025	Outcome 2 and 4 

Action	Description	Planned Outcome	Responsible Officer	Start	End	Links
		staff to reach their full potential.				
Supporting well being	Review attendance management and wellbeing strategies and plans, ensuring alignment to Health and Safety Executive priorities and a focus on promoting wellbeing, supporting mental health and preventing work related ill health.	HSE best practice is embedded into wellbeing strategies and plans with effective promotion of wellbeing resources through the Four Pillars of Wellbeing and an on-going proactive approach to attendance management.	HR & Support Services Manager	April 2023	March 2025	Outcome 3  
Effective workforce	Review current methods for the identification and provision of health and safety training.	Implementation of core competencies and training provision across all levels and ensuring training opportunities are available.	Health and Safety Manager	April 2024	March 2025	Outcome 3  
Employee engagement	Support employee voice through regular employee surveys and engagement with trade union colleagues.	Bi-annual employee survey, in addition to regular Conditions of Service Joint Working Group meetings and Health and Safety Committee meetings with trade union colleagues.	HR & Support Services Manager / Health and Safety Manager	April 2024	March 2028	Outcome 3 