

# **‘People First’**

## **Our People Strategy**

**Empowering our people to make a difference**

**Sandra Sidgwick**  
**Organisational Development**

**VCSE Assembly Meeting**  
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# My Introduction

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## Who am I?

Sandra Sidgwick – Team Manager within People and Culture and I lead the work on our People Strategy.

## Why am I here?

Diana has been meeting senior leaders within DCC and has been talking about shared priorities and the areas I am most connected to is the work I lead around the People Strategy. This was described in the context of workforce planning and organisational development in the presentation shared in the last Assembly meeting.

It is about building relationships and getting to know each other, and I am starting this by sharing some of the key work I have been leading within DCC. I met with Diana, and we felt there were some shared areas of work we might want to collaborate on.

# Introduction to the People Strategy

In April 2023, a governance review report was presented. Which made a recommendation for a clear strategic focus on putting our “People First”. The council needed to make significant progress as a matter of urgency to develop a people strategy

A key priority for the People Strategy is to outline how we will ensure that we have the appropriately skilled and talented people we need to deliver services to our communities and ensure that our Council is fit for the future, in a highly competitive market

This is about what is happening internally with our DCC workforce, and the Strategy includes our collective role as corporate parents and our responsibility to our care leavers as part of a child friendly Devon

We are trying to set a culture around kindness and caring. Putting people at the heart of everything we do

It was approved at Cabinet in June 2023 and ratified at Full Council in September 2023

We regularly report on the progress and impact the actions are having

# Our Six Themes





# Voice



To create an effective ongoing dialogue between leaders and the wider workforce, to engage, listen to and gain clarity about what is important to them. We will feedback on what we have heard and deliver actions.

## What have we achieved?

- ❖ Directly engaged through our People Survey 2024 with a record over 2,700 responses (51% of our workforce).
- ❖ Delivered 5 online staff briefings over the year which 69% of the workforce have engaged with.
- ❖ Delivered 11 manager events which included 726 managers of all levels sharing a space to learn about ambition, relationships, and change
- ❖ Delivered 9 Directorate events across the county which brought together 1500 senior leaders, elected members and employees

# Belonging



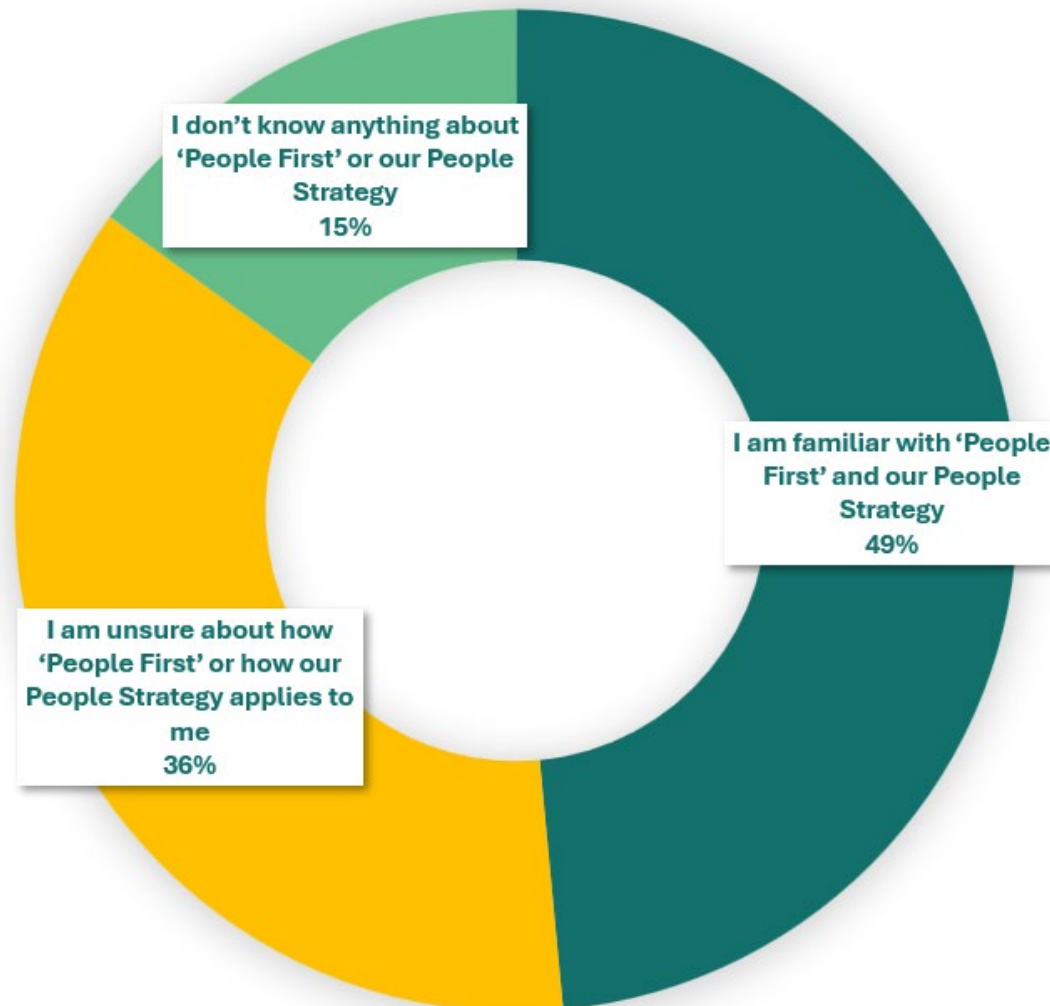
To have an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity, where everyone can feel safe, well and able to be themselves. To grow and retain a workforce that feels it belongs and is supported to thrive.

## What have we achieved?

- ❖ Listened to employee feedback to reshape our Equality Diversity & Inclusion training
- ❖ Updated several HR policies to be more restorative in their approach and to include employee voice with lived experience
- ❖ Engaged with our workforce to understand what is important to them to thrive, belong and feel safe at work. This has led to the creation of rooms at County Hall, Great Moor House, and now Taw View in Barnstaple for prayer and contemplation.

# Measuring Impact

Which of these statements best describes how you feel about the 'People First' approach?



# Measuring Impact – Belonging & Voice

96% of our workforce report experiencing kindness in their teams

Our workforce report an improvement in usage and familiarity of our Core Principles and Behaviours (increase of 7% since 2022)

Our workforce report an improved percentage in whether they would recommend DCC as a good place to work (increase of 5% since 2022)

There is stability in the workforce in terms of their future career plans - these scores have remained the same since 2022 despite the pace of change within the organisation

Through a structured approach to engagement and consistent involvement of SLT, the response rates for the people survey are improved by 19% from 2022. This saw an increase of over 800 responses

68% of our workforce report feeling valued and recognised



# Measuring Impact – Wellbeing & Reward

A steady improvement in absence rates for the organisation.  
In 21/22 the average was 9.6 days lost per employee and in 23/24 it has **reduced to 8.9 days**

In support of their financial wellbeing, we are supporting 488 employees to plan for their retirement investing **£176k** a month into retirement savings

The introduction of the benefits platform has enabled employees to purchase discounted gift cards leading to a saving of £32k in the period April to June 24

**7918** applications have been made to salary sacrifice schemes enabling employees to purchase at discount and spread the cost (with no interest applied) of home and electronic items

148 employees have increased their annual leave allowances through purchasing additional leave. This has generated a **saving of c£150k** for the first purchase window

**75%** of gift cards purchased have been for use in supermarkets which delivers a direct benefit to mitigate against the cost-of-living concerns employees raised in 2022

Through the mid-life MOT programme, we have supported 244 employees to consider their work, wealth and wellbeing

# Measuring Impact – Recruitment & Learning

Focussed work in CYPF to create a more stable workforce by increasing the number of permanent staff. This includes our 'grow our own' approach which has led to a record high of **28 ASYE's joining in Sept/ Dec 2024.**

In response to feedback from the workforce a revised EDI mandatory training programme has been launched in the Autumn

We have been successful in agreeing terms with 13 agency colleagues who have or are imminently joining the service on a permanent contract

A revised career progression route for Social Workers is now in place to attract a wider breadth of Social Workers by introducing a step between ASYEs and Experienced Social Workers which is more reflective of their level of experience

**104** employees have undertaken Insights training to date

# Next Steps

- LGR – Significant time being spent on the proposals
- Voice and Wellbeing are the focus for 2025

I regularly meet with colleagues from Local Government Association to learn about what is happening in other local authority on areas such as Workforce Planning

I meet with Devon colleagues for system wide thinking so ICB, NHS trusts, other councils to see how we can jointly work on workforce related matters such as learning systems, coaching, leadership development



# DCC & VCSE

Look at how we can progress the quick wins identified in the strategic discussions:

- The Assembly to map out current provision incorporating DCT's Village Hall mapping – sharing that within DCC for booking venues
- How can we work together to revitalise our volunteering programme and work together
- Facilitate late cancellations for training to be offered to the VCSE to fill the vacancy free of charge – consider how any internal training or knowledge about external opportunities can be shared with you all?

# Final Thoughts

## My Ask

I am interested in whether this is something that you recognise, whether you experience care and kindness from the people you work with? Or it could be that you are working on something that sits within the themes, and you have some thoughts about whether it resonates with you?

## My Offer

Is this something you feel you could influence / contribute towards in the future as we look to develop our relationships with you as assembly colleagues? If you are working on something you would like a conversation with me about how I approached it / did I encounter something similar?