



# WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Our Workforce, Our Foundation

2021 - 2024

WORCESTERSHIRE  
CHILDREN FIRST



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# Introduction

Our workforce is our most valuable asset in successfully delivering services that make a positive difference for our families in Worcestershire. We strive to be the 'employer of choice' for children's services staff, and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children's lives. We have high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish.

As a company our overall aim is to build a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times, to develop our staff, give them clear career pathways, and provide them with the leadership, skills and knowledge they need now and, in the future, to deliver excellent services to the children, young people and families in Worcestershire.

We are delighted to see that Worcestershire is ranked 1st in the region and 12th nationally in a survey completed by social workers against the refreshed 2020 employer standards, in the review commissioned by the Local Government Association in 2021.

Our Workforce Vision ensures that, as a service, we continue to have strong front-line management and that we have the capacity and ability to flex in response to changes that are inevitable, whilst keeping a good level of stability and quality. Our strategy will be managed and monitored through our WCF Workforce Board and is supported by financial investment and through staff feedback and performance reviews.

In 2021/22 we will focus on the following workforce foundations:

- Health & Wellbeing;
- Diversity & Culture;
- Building Skills for our Future Workforce.
- Recruitment & Retention;
- Leadership & Management; and

Ultimately, we are focused on building a performance culture and the right working conditions, where employees are valued and supported to perform at their best.



**Tina Russell**

**Chief Executive,  
Worcestershire Children First**



**Rob Morrison**

**Chair,  
Worcestershire Children First**

# Our Current Workforce

6% of our workforce have a disability

There are over 1000 staff that work in WCF - 33% work part time and 67% work full time

Employees took an average of 5.77 sickness days last year - this is a reduction from 9.6 days last year

We are proud to encourage workers from all backgrounds. 5.6% of our workforce are from Black, Asian and other ethnic groups compared with 4.3% of the population in our Worcestershire community

58% of our staff deliver front line support to children, young people and families

76% of our management roles are held by women, with 15 women in the top 20 highest paid roles

Overall the average length of service is 6 years, with 33% of staff having less than 2 years service. We have a great mix of long serving and new staff within WCF

We have 140 different job roles that make up our workforce, and all play a vital role in our work

At the end of 2020/21 we recorded a 13% turnover of staff, down from 15% in the previous year

69% of our managers have attended management and leadership courses in the last year

We employ 56 frontline managers and 629 frontline workers who directly work with children, young people and families



In the last 12 months our staff accessed 2264 training courses

# Vision, Mission & Values

## OUR VISION

Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up.

WORCESTERSHIRE  
**CHILDREN FIRST**



## OUR MISSION

Supporting children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe.

## OUR VALUES



### CHILDREN AT OUR HEART

We will keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do.



### VALUE FAMILY LIFE

We will support and empower parents to care for their own children.



### GOOD EDUCATION FOR ALL

We will value education as the best start in life for all children and young people.



### PROTECTION FROM HARM

We will act in a professional and timely way to protect children from harm.



### EMBRACE DIVERSITY

A progressive culture of championing equality, diversity and inclusion.



## Workforce Vision

### Our workforce vision is that we will be an employer of choice and will have:

- A culture where our employees embrace our vision and values, working together to deliver the outcomes we want to achieve.
- A culture where our employees are committed to our mission of making a positive impact on the lives of our children and young people, and their families, by providing outstanding, innovative, child and young people-focused services.
- An environment where our employees perform at their best.
- A workforce which has personal and collective resilience by putting employee wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.
- Visible leadership at all levels from leaders who have the freedom to act; making us a high performing organisation.
- The right people, with the right skills, in the right roles who are empowered and supported to succeed.
- A flexible workforce which is responsive to the needs of the children, young people and families of Worcestershire both now and in the future.
- An environment where practice and practitioners flourish and we maximise life opportunities for all.
- An environment where we celebrate diversity and encourage equality and inclusivity amongst all of our workforce.

# Our Shared Commitments

We are all essential for the successful delivery of our workforce strategy and together we will achieve our goals and ensure that WCF is a great place to work and achieve great outcomes for our children, young people and families in Worcestershire.

It is up to all of us to take personal responsibility for what we need to do to support the delivery against our Workforce Foundations.

## To do this we need to all commit to:

Taking part in regular 1:1s and supervision, engaging with a performance related conversation with our line managers at least twice a year.

Ensure we look after everyone's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing using active listening and supporting teams as needed.

Always being inclusive of others, encouraging equality and celebrating diversity.

Adhering to the Company's Code of Conduct and all standards, policies and procedures relevant to our roles.

Participating fully in all training identified and making sure we then use what we have learnt in our roles.

Representing our Company positively in everything we do, by supporting our vision, mission and values on a daily basis.

Ensure we look after our own physical and mental wellbeing by using our annual leave entitlement, taking regular breaks and utilising our flexible benefits offer when needed.

Taking accountability and ownership for our actions. Positively challenging and making suggestions about how we can improve.

Working to the best of our ability every day to perform our jobs to the required standard. Taking ownership of our own performance and doing everything we can to make sure our objectives are met. Always listening to feedback and using it to improve how we do things.

Taking the time to acknowledge and thank each other for our contributions and efforts.



# Workforce Foundations



Health &  
Wellbeing



Recruitment &  
Retention



Diversity &  
Culture



Leadership &  
Management



Building Skills for  
our Future Workforce





## Health & Wellbeing

**Our aim is to build a workforce which has personal and collective resilience with physical and emotional health and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do.**

**We will explore different ways to seek your feedback so that you can speak openly about wellbeing and inclusivity and we can understand the views and experiences of our staff as employees. We will achieve this by:**

- Holding regular staff forums and ensuring we have regular staff surveys and health checks so we can hear what our employees are telling us.
- Creating physical and virtual confidential spaces so that everyone has a place to talk and ask for support for their mental, social and physical wellbeing.
- Having a WCF annual conference for all employees to ensure the whole company is working together, giving us the opportunity to listen to staff and celebrate our successes.

**We will develop our wellbeing offer so we understand what support or adjustments our employees need to thrive and be safe in their role. We will achieve this by:**

- Developing our offer to include wellbeing days, wellbeing champions and mental health first aiders in all areas of the Company.
- Regular communications to make everyone aware of our flexible benefit offering which includes physiotherapy, mental health support, gym membership and annual flu vaccinations.
- Providing a comprehensive employee assistance programme (EAP) with access to services to support all aspects of wellbeing.
- Flexible and agile working approaches with the right equipment to work safely, and the introduction of a workplace adjustment passport.
- Ensure that in all 1:1s and supervision sessions we have a wellbeing conversation



# Recruitment & Retention

**Our aim is to have the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles and we will empower and support them to exceed expectations.**

**We know that stability, capacity and the experience of the workforce provide a fundamental foundation on which to build good practice, and we will achieve this by:**

- Developing creative ways to attract new employees who share our values whilst focusing on inclusion, equality and diversity
- Providing a great candidate experience through an improved recruitment process, including digital recruitment and onboarding.
- Creating an inspiring induction for all new employees which is tailored to their role.
- Creating an environment where staff feel supported, challenged and empowered to enable them to work with confidence in a child-centred way.

**We want to retain talented and high performing employees and we will achieve this by:**

- Offering a flexible total reward package which recognise the skills, capabilities and achievements of our employees and can be personalised to their needs.
- Creating an employee benefits portal which is linked to performance and is flexible to adapt through employee life changes.
- Developing clear and flexible generic job descriptions.
- Recognising and celebrating the achievements of our amazing employees.
- Offering a career pathway for all employees, with diverse roles, including opportunities to work in multidisciplinary settings and teams.



# Diversity & Culture

**Our aim is to develop a WCF culture where our employees embrace our vision, mission and values, diversity and inclusion through everything they do.**

**We will celebrate diversity and encourage equality and inclusivity amongst all of our workforce, and we will achieve this by:**

- Promoting the work of our Diversity and Inclusion Collective, and:
  - » challenge oppressive and discriminatory practice
  - » be sensitive to the needs of our colleagues, and the children, young people and families we are working with, understanding the diversity and culture of our communities
  - » make best use of the specialist knowledge and interests of our workforce
  - » promote the role of our Diversity and Inclusion Champions
- Developing our understanding of the characteristics that make humans unique and how we embrace these differences in our professional practice through our calendar of key events.

**We will build our performance culture by:**

- Providing Learning & Development of the workforce to understand the diversity and culture of our communities.
- Promoting anti oppressive and anti discriminatory practice through education, challenge and support to ensure our practice is inclusive and progressive.
- We will give our staff the tools to do this through high quality training, information and leadership modelling.
- We will support the children we work with and care for to understand their identity and celebrate their individuality.
- We will welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds to join our workforce across all roles.





## Leadership & Management

**Our aim is to demonstrate strong, visible leadership and compelling engagement at all levels from leaders who have the freedom to act.**

**We know that management stability and capacity is a fundamental foundation on which to build a stable workforce where staff feel supported, challenged and empowered to do the best thing for children and families. We will achieve this by:**

- Continuing our robust and consistent management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by the public, the company and external scrutiny, that will inform and improve the development and delivery of support, care and protection to children and young people.
- Continuing to support and strengthen our managers and ensure our workforce have the support, guidance and tools to deliver best practice.
- Listening to our employees and providing clear information about their role, our goals and what we expect.
- Developing career pathways which will identify and support individuals as part of succession planning.
- Enabling and empowering our workforce to have the freedom to make decisions, to offer challenge and to develop creative ideas to improve practice and develop services.

**We need clear career pathways for existing and aspiring leaders, and we will achieve this by:**

- Setting and maintaining expectations of what good leaders are and the competencies and behaviours we expect.
- Launching a new Management and Leadership Development Programme alongside best practice learning materials.
- Promoting our performance coaching and mentoring scheme which enables leaders to provide support to grow and develop their teams.
- Recognising that leadership in the future will be different, encouraging innovation and distributed leadership.
- Seeking all opportunities to showcase our employees, at a local and national level.
- Developing workforce plans and succession planning across the Company to ensure future needs are anticipated and met.



# Building Skills for our Future Workforce

**Our aim is to build a flexible workforce which is responsive to the needs of the children, young people and families in Worcestershire both now and in the future as demand and complexity increase.**

**We know that as a workforce we must all work together to embrace and flexibly respond to new demands. We will achieve this by:**

- Providing a supportive and comprehensive performance review and supervision process.
- Investing in new people technology which enhances the employee experience. This includes performance management, leadership management and recruitment.
- Developing new systems and a data culture where insight about our workforce is consistent and enables effective management, high performance and a productivity focused environment.
- Sharing skills and strengthening risk management through effective partnership working.
- Valuing diversity of roles, skills and knowledge that make up our workforce and will evolve to meet the needs of our communities.

**Our training offer must be fit for purpose and we will achieve this by:**

- Completing an annual Learning Needs Analysis and developing a robust training plan to support all staff development, accessing corporate training, social care and social work through the social work academy.
- Cascading evidence-based practice, resources, learning from Quality Assurance and research across our services to inform our practice
- Investing in academic research and practice portals. E.g. Research in Practice
- Supporting high quality statutory social work placements through our Positive Outcomes Project
- Strengthening the internal sales, training and conference team offer to deliver current, effective support to education and early years settings.
- Promoting apprenticeship programmes which develop our future workforce and provide management qualifications at all levels.

# What will our workforce strategy achieve for our children and young people?

Our Workforce Strategy will be underpinned by our robust Quality Assurance programme

## Our Quality Assurance Framework has three dimensions:

### Feedback from Children, Young People and Families

We are committed to understanding and learning from the experience

of our children young people and families. We have a comprehensive service user

feedback programme in each area of business and a WCF compliments and complaints service.



### Key Performance Indicators

Analysis of our business and performance information on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

### Audit Activity

Completing thematic and case-file audits (multi-agency included).

We will use each of these dimensions to understand how our workforce strategy is supporting us to deliver good quality services to children and young people in relation to:

- Staffing stability – permanency and sickness
- Voice of the child – quality of practice through audit
- Participation and inclusion – recruitment and service development
- Compliments and Complaint - outcomes and learning

# Delivering against the vision of our Strategy

The five workforce foundations will be delivered and success will be monitored through the following framework.

The **Workforce Board** chaired by the Assistant Director of Resources and Principal Social Worker that will review and monitor progress against all elements of the strategy.

The **Monthly Staffing and Finance Leadership meetings** that are chaired by the Chief Executive of WCF and will discuss and progress all workforce initiatives against the Strategy.

The Diversity and Culture foundation will be led by the **Diversity and Inclusion Collective**.

**Human Resources Management** meetings that are chaired by the Assistant Director for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Engagement that will lead on delivery of the Workforce Plan on behalf of the company through our Support Service Contract arrangements.

Workforce plans around all of the workforce foundations will be included in the

## directorate business plan and the HR business plan.

Workforce Foundations	Evidenced through	
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Feedback</li> <li>Average sickness levels</li> <li>Return to work interviews</li> </ul>	
<b>Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR metrics and workforce data</li> <li>Staff Feedback</li> <li>Levels of staff turnover</li> </ul>	
<b>Diversity &amp; Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Feedback</li> <li>Employee engagement levels</li> <li>Performance reviews</li> </ul>	
<b>Leadership &amp; Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance reviews</li> <li>Career pathways and succession plans</li> <li>Employee engagement levels</li> </ul>	
<b>Building Skills for our Future Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Plans</li> <li>Learning &amp; Development course feedback</li> <li>Staff Feedback</li> </ul>	

# Associated documents & Strategies

- WCF Business Plan April 2021 to March 2022
- WCC Workforce Strategy Delivery Plan 2021 to 2024
- **Social Work Academy offer and website**
- **Social Work England**
- **BASW**
- **Staff Handbook**
- Professional Practice Standards
- The Standards for Employers of Social Workers - report commissioned by LGA (2021)





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