

Recruitment & Retention Strategy

Social Care

2021-2023



Contents

1 Background

- 1.1 Waltham Forest – The Borough & Residents
- 1.2 The Council - The Families Directorate

2 The Recruitment & Retention Strategy

- 2.1 Aims & Objectives

3 Workforce Data

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Workforce Profile

4 Recruitment

- 4.1 Our Approach
- 4.2 Innovative Pilots, Programmes & Partnerships
- 4.3 Remaining Competitive - Salary

5 Retention

- 5.1 Induction
- 5.2 Continuing Professional Development
- 5.3 Career Progression frameworks
- 5.3 Leadership & Management
- 5.4 Diversity & Inclusion
- 5.5 Supervision, Appraisal and other informal support
- 5.6 Exit Interviews
- 5.7 Staff Benefits

6 The Impact we make

- 6.1 What Do Our Staff Say?
- 6.2 Compliments from our Residents

Appendices

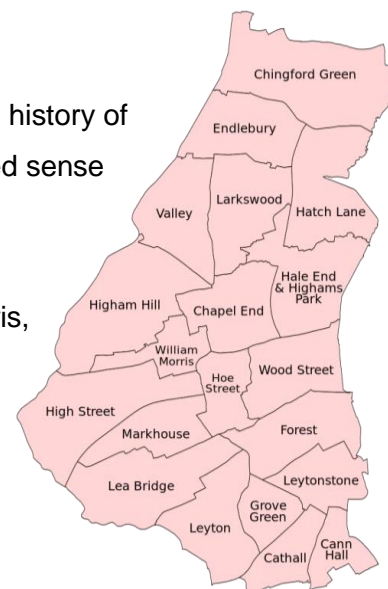
- Career Progression Frameworks
- Families Impact Storybook

Background

1.1 Waltham Forest – The Borough & Residents

Located north of the River Thames and situated in north-east London, Waltham Forest is comprised of 20 wards.

The borough has a strong cultural-led, diverse community with a history of makers and creators whose creativity, radical thinking and shared sense of purpose has helped drive innovation and progress across the borough. The area has played home to many notable cultural figures, both historical and contemporary, including William Morris, Alfred Hitchcock, Grayson Perry, Zarah Hussain, Fleur East and Damon Albarn. Waltham Forest was one of four host boroughs in east London for the 2012 Olympics and was the Mayor's first London Borough of Culture in 2019.



According to ONS figures, Waltham Forest is home to an estimated 277,000 residents and 102,500 households. The median age of residents is 35.2 years compared to the England average of 40 years and the borough is one of the most diverse areas in the country. An estimated 53% of residents are from a Black and Global majority background.

The top six countries of origin for residents born overseas are Romania (11,000), Hungary (6,000), Poland (6,000), Bulgaria (5,000), and Lithuania (5,000) and Pakistan (5,000) and the top five languages spoken locally other than English are Urdu, Polish, Romanian, Turkish and Lithuanian.

As of March 2020, more than 156,000 working age residents (73.6%) are in employment and the median annual earnings for full-time working residents is £35,000. Waltham Forest is currently ranked 82nd most deprived borough nationally according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (an improvement from 35th in the 2015 edition, and 15th most deprived in the 2010 edition).

Life expectancy in Waltham Forest parallels the England average – 79.4 years for men and 83.8 years for women.

1.2 The Council - The Families Directorate

Waltham Forest council provides an array of services to support and improve the community and protect those residents in need of care and support. The council was awarded the MJ Local Authority of the Year award 2019.

The Families Directorate was established in August 2012 and now incorporates the following service areas:

- **Children's Social Care**
- **Adult Social Care & Quality Standards**
- **Learning & Systems Leadership**
- **Integrated Commissioning**
- **Public Health**

The 'Families at the Heart of Our Place' strategy encapsulates how we will work to continually improve standards and to achieve excellent outcomes for residents.

Families at the Heart of Our Place is the strengthened approach to Think Family and is about building on our existing expertise and continuing to deliver an improved and sustainable offer to individuals and families in Waltham Forest. This strategy is of critical importance to the Council and a key delivery arm of the Public Service Strategy.

Our Ambition

Resilient: We want our residents and communities to be able to adapt and recover from whatever challenges may come their way

Well: We want our community to feel as mentally, emotionally and physically well as they can. We will promote healthy behaviours and when people experience ill health, we will help them access the support they need.

Safe: We want Waltham Forest to be a safe place where people can flourish and be free from harm.

Connected: We want our community to feel a sense of belonging to, and pride for, the diverse place in which they live. We want everyone to feel valued, to have strong relationships with their neighbours and be able to contribute to their local community in a way that works for them.

Independent: We want local people to be equipped with the networks, skills, knowledge and resources they need to realise their ambitions.

We want all our residents be resilient and feel well, safe, connected and independent, no matter what your age or circumstances.

You can read through the strategy [here](#).

In a changing context, we will continue to work in partnership to improve life chances and ensure adults, children and their families remain independent, safe, well and resilient.

The Recruitment & Retention Strategy

2.1 Aims & Objectives

The aim and purpose of this strategy is to ensure the organisation has effective measures in place to recruit and retain a highly skilled, highly competent, professional and diverse workforce. Our social care staff are supported to be highly motivated and committed to their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) so they can deliver the Families at the Heart of Our Place vision and work collaboratively with adults, children, young people and their families to ensure they are independent, resilient, connected, safe, well and live the best lives possible.

This strategy should be considered alongside the Workforce Development Strategy and Career Progression Frameworks. It provides an overview of the following areas:

- **Workforce data**
- **Recruitment**
- **Retention**
- **The views of our social care staff & residents**

Workforce data

3.1 Introduction

Recruitment and retention of social workers is a challenge facing all local authorities across the country. Notwithstanding this, there has been a stable increase in the recruitment of permanent staff across social work teams in Waltham Forest.

This can be clearly demonstrated through the agency rate across social work teams within Children's Services which has decreased from a high of 44% in December 2014 to 19% in May 2021.

Agency figures across the Adult social work teams have followed a similar trajectory. In April 2019, 29% of social work staff were agency; this figure has now decreased to 18% as of January 2021.

As the above figures highlight, there has been substantial progress in addressing the affordability challenge associated with high levels of agency staff. Going forward, it is imperative that we continue to build upon our successes and continue to shape our recruitment and retention strategies to ensure Waltham Forest remains an employer of choice.

The next section provides an overview of the workforce profile across the council, including a breakdown of workforce characteristics within children and adult social care.

3.2 Workforce profile

		Waltham Forest profile	Adult Social Care	Children's Social Care
Ethnicity	Asian	14.2%	8.7%	8.2%
	Black	30.3%	49.7%	41.1%
	Other	6.8%	4.8%	10.4%
	White	37.2%	24.4%	25.1%
	Unknown	11.5%	12.5%	15.2%
Age	0-19 years	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	20-39 years	29.2%	15.4%	34.2%
	40-59 years:	55.7%	56.7%	55.8%
	60+:	14.6%	27.9%	10%
Gender	Female	67.9%	81.4%	78.8%
	Male	32.1%	18.6%	21.2%

Turnover	No of Leavers over year	314	25	49	
	Percentage (%)	11.8%	8.1%%	21.2%	

Source: HR Metrics - LBWF Workforce Data (SAP June 2021)

Recruitment

4.1 Our Approach

Our strategic approach to recruitment is predicated upon contextual change and current research. Notwithstanding the national difficulties facing recruitment into the social care profession, the combination of the Covid pandemic and the UK's departure from the European Union has exacerbated the challenge of both attracting and retaining a highly skilled and competent workforce.

Research conducted by the Chartered Institute of Professional Development into public sector recruitment indicates that candidates perceive the following aspects as most important when evaluating employment opportunities:



** Source: CIPD: Resource & Talent Planning Survey 2021*

We want Waltham Forest's social care services to be a career destination and perceived as an employer of choice by prospective candidates. In order to recruit high-quality, permanent staff with suitable qualifications and experience, our approach to recruitment needs to be underpinned by the areas identified above.

Relationships make the difference in all that we do. As far as is possible; our young people form part of the decision-making process to ensure that those who we recruit share our unswerving commitment to improving the lives of our residents who require care and support.

As a borough which celebrates diversity and inclusivity, we believe that our workforce should reflect the community we serve. There are a range of Equality and Diversity initiatives that are being implemented across the council and within the Families Directorate. Further information is contained in Section 5.4 below.

Since the Covid pandemic, social care staff have adapted and worked together to support our residents and in return, the council has committed to investing in the workplace and supporting new, flexible ways of working. In this regard, Fellowship

Square is an innovative space for staff to work in and for our residents to use and enjoy. It is an incredible transformation and the first look video can be viewed [here](#).

Our recruitment webpage includes a selection of video introductions from staff who work in a variety of roles within social care. You can access the website [here](#).

We have a strong online presence and advertise our vacancies through both internal and external channels. Waltham Forest can also be followed on social media platforms such as [Twitter](#) and [Linkedin](#).

4.2 Innovative Pilots, Programmes and Partnerships

Waltham Forest has participated and will continue to participate in various innovative social work programmes such as Think Ahead, Step Up to Social Work, Frontline, social work degree apprenticeships and the National Assessment & Accreditation System (NAAS). Newly Qualified Social Workers develop their skills, knowledge and professional confidence through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment programme (ASYE).

Waltham Forest are also an active member of the North East London Social Work Teaching Partnerships (NELSWTP). The partnership is funded by the Department for Education to improve standards in the social work workforce and aims to:

- Create progression pathways for staff and plan for future workforce needs
- Improve digital literacies amongst social workers and support staff to develop their practice, disseminating good practice in social work nationally

4.3 Remaining Competitive - Salary

As part of our recruitment strategy we will continually review our total reward package through benchmarking exercises to ensure that our offer is comparable or greater when compared to other Greater London local authorities.

Recent benchmarking activity in children's social care, demonstrates that Waltham Forest ranks:

- 14th highest in terms of team manager salary
- 11th highest in terms of social worker salary

Recent benchmarking activity in Adult social care, demonstrates that Waltham Forest ranks:

- 10th highest in terms of team manager salary
- 3rd highest in terms of social worker salary

There are also a range of staff benefits available, these are outlined in Section 5.7 below.

Retention

5.1 Induction

A comprehensive, well-rounded induction is invaluable because it ensures that all new staff receive a warm welcome, have a full understanding of their role and are therefore fully integrated into the organisation from the onset.

New employees are made aware of the council's policies and procedures (Tri-X), the way we work as a local authority and the tools, resources and facilities available to support them to perform their roles to the best of their ability. To this end we have developed induction handbooks at two levels for social care: one for all staff and a supplementary handbook for those joining the organisation at managerial level and above.

In addition to receiving a comprehensive induction within social care, new starters are also invited to our corporate induction during their first few weeks. This induction starts with a welcome from the Chief Executive or another member of the Management Board, who will tell you about council-wide priorities, achievements and challenges.

5.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

At Waltham Forest we recognise that high-quality service provision relies upon on a well-trained, supported, and motivated workforce. We believe that all staff should have the opportunity to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) regardless of what stage of their career they are at.

A strong, [core Learning & Development offer](#) is just the beginning. This blended offer across social care is underpinned by the Workforce Development Strategy, this strategy and career progression frameworks. Learning interventions are aligned to the Families at the Heart of Our Place strategy and Professional Capabilities Framework. They are also mapped to the Knowledge and Skills Statements as the post-qualifying standard of practice. Furthermore, Waltham Forest has good partnership links with neighbouring local authorities and frequently exchange training opportunities.

We utilise available funding to ensure our social care staff have access to high quality development opportunities, whether this is post-qualification study at one of our partnership Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), courses funded through the Apprenticeship Levy or bespoke learning programmes developed collaboratively with one of our trusted, high quality learning providers.

CPD is well embedded across the organisation to support career development for every staff member within social care. All staff who engage in learning interventions are encouraged to reflect on the impact this will have on their practice going forward and this data is captured in the Waltham Forest Learning Survey.

The following principles guide our approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

- Creating long term stability in the workforce through opportunities for progression and development
- A recognition that people learn and develop in different ways, highlighting the importance of identifying and meeting individual learner needs
- A robust commitment to cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- Identifying and supporting all staff in the workforce who would like to 'progress' whilst recognising that progression is not synonymous with higher levels of seniority
- Members of the workforce who find a level at which they prefer to operate are equally supported and offered appropriate developmental opportunities

5.3 Career Progression Frameworks

To ensure that career pathways and opportunities for development are available to all staff we have developed several Career Progression Frameworks. These frameworks provide a central point of reference for employees who want to become familiar with developmental pathways and the milestones required to achieve them.

You can view the Career Progression Frameworks in the Appendices.

5.4 Leadership & Management

Every organisation requires effective leaders. Strong leadership promotes co-ordination among employees and encourages effective working and attainment of organisational goals. Leadership also acts as a motivational tool as employees are clear how they fit into the organisation and are supported to undertake their role with confidence and professionalism.

Managers Forums take place regularly and provide a collaborative space for managers across social care to come together and engage in collaborative practices, problem-solving and developing joint strategic priorities.

A selection of newly appointed, first-time managers in children's social care benefit from our annual participation in the Practice Supervisor Development Programme (PSDP). Waltham Forest also participate in The Supervising the Supervisor (StS – PSDP) programme which is aimed at managers of practice supervisors. Both programmes are delivered by Research in Practice and funded by the Department for Education.

In response to the Training Needs Analysis undertaken in 2020/21, we have developed a tailored Leadership and Management programme for both managers and aspiring managers across both adult and children's social care. This six-day programme will commence in September 2021 and covers the following topic areas:

- Holding difficult conversations and managing performance
- Coaching & mentoring
- Leadership development
- Emotional intelligence for managers and aspiring managers
- Managing pressure and increasing resilience
- Strategy & actions which champion and utilise diversity in the workplace

5.5 Diversity & Inclusion

Through the council's new People Strategy, Ethnicity Pay Gap Strategy and associated actions plans; the aim is to deliver a stronger, more diverse and connected workforce to meet the future needs of the borough.

We want to be an 'Employer of Choice' and to achieve this it is imperative to lead the way, live our values and adapt to meet the needs of our workforce to deliver public services of the future.

In addition to the D&I initiatives taking place across the council, the Families Directorate has introduced Families Hour. This is a regular forum and safe space where social care staff can come together to discuss pertinent issues within D&I and agree a set of actions to take away and implement. It is hosted by the strategic director of Families, Heather Flinders and is well attended and valued by staff. All sessions are recorded on a dedicated Teams channel for those staff unable to attend.

"Diversity and inclusion being promoted is more visible since introduction of REN - Race Equality Network and the Families hour led by Heather Flinders -amazing space for staff to share their stories and get their voices heard."

(Source: Exit Interview Survey - May 2021)

5.6 Supervision, Appraisal and other informal support

It is an expectation that regular, reflective supervision sessions and mid and end-of-year appraisals complement continuous, informal supportive and guiding discussions on a daily basis. This approach ensures staff members feel supported in the requirements of their role and their performance is managed effectively and in a collaborative way.

Supervision and Personal Development Plans (PDP) contribute towards measuring the impact of training and inform both current and future learning needs in addition to identifying areas for further development. Staff are also encouraged to use 360 feedback models as part of their appraisals.

High quality supervision should result in positive outcomes for people who use services as well as similar outcomes for the worker, the supervisor and the organisation. An example of a positive outcome would be an improvement in the quality of life for a person, while for the organisation a similar outcome would be an improvement in the quality of the service provided.

Waltham Forest has a robust Supervision policy in place, which outlines expectations but also offers a range of tools and approaches to ensure that supervision is a highly valued, collaborative practice valued by all participants.

The vast majority of social care staff report that their supervision promotes effective workload management and that they feel confident raising any concerns with their manager (Source: *Organisational Health Check 2019*).

5.6 Exit interviews

Exit interviews provide a unique opportunity to receive valuable feedback from employees. This is crucial for identifying ways in which the service could improve.

For this reason, all leavers, regardless of whether they are permanent or agency, are encouraged to complete an exit interview. This can be in the form of a survey or an in-person interview with the Practice Support Manager.

5.7 Staff benefits

We value our staff and are committed to providing them with excellent benefits that complement their Health & Wellbeing. This includes family-friendly policies, flexible working, various staff discounts, discounted gym memberships, purchasing of additional annual leave, free financial advice, counselling services in addition to free employee assistance programmes. Further information on staff benefits is available [here](#).

The Impact we make

6.1 What do our staff think?

Organisational Health Check Surveys are undertaken where social care staff are provided with the opportunity to share their views across several 'health check areas.'

Summary findings from the most recent OHC Survey are included below:

- ✓ 93% of all social care staff either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training provided allows them to meet their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Needs.
- ✓ 93% of all social care staff either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the training organised helps them to understand and effectively meet the needs of residents.
- ✓ 86% of all social care staff either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that Waltham Forest is a learning organisation and has a positive learning culture.

The Families Directorate is one where the connectedness of individuals works to bring together as a whole, outcomes for families and residents.

As part of World Social Work Day in March 2021, staff were asked why they came into the social work profession. Their comments can be found in the 'I am because we are' document in the appendices.

6.2 Compliments from our residents

Our residents are at the forefront of everything we do; and their views not only help us shape our services to meet their care and support needs but also tell us whether we are delivering on our commitments.

Some feedback from our residents is included below:

“I just wanted to say thank you for arranging this so efficiently and taking the time to listen to our needs. Really grateful for your hard work and efforts for blessing us with additional ease and comfort, it is life changing for her.”

“I know what a terrible strain you all are under, and you are working in exceptional circumstances. At no time was this evident with the time you gave me and the way I was treated. Can you please pass on my thanks to everyone involved!”

“On behalf of my family, we wanted to thank you and the team at Dementia Day Care Centre for the support and care provided to my father. Thank you, for everything that you and the team continue to do for dementia support your roles are so important.”

“I wanted to sincerely thank you for supporting myself and the children and helping us to move away and gain the opportunity to start living a more peaceful life. I have no doubt that this will be (and already has been) a great fresh new start for us. Thank you so very much for this.”

“I have just completed a case audit on one of your social worker’s cases and I must say that your Manager’s recording is excellent. They are written to a child and are a delight to read.”

“Without her help it would have been much more difficult for us and she made the whole overwhelming process as easy as it could have been. I highly recommend her work and any families who are in a situation to need social workers would be lucky to have her.”

“You spoke to her in an age appropriate way and included her in decisions. In the short time you supported us you always kept to your word, didn’t lead her on with false promises and went above and beyond to make her feel listened to, safe and supported.”

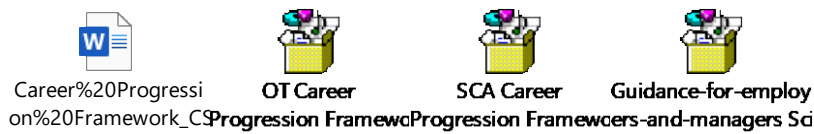
“I am so grateful for everything you have been helping me with and being so understandable about my situation, taking a massive weight out of my shoulder,

leaving me to spend more time to improve myself to my little girl, helping with college and housing.”

(Source: Social Care Compliments & Complaints Reports 2021)

Appendices

Career Progression Frameworks:



Families Impact Storybook: Over the course of 2020, we heard incredible stories from our service users and staff of how they have kept themselves and each other going throughout the covid crisis. The ‘storybook’ document below brings together a selection of those stories and demonstrates the significant impact our work has on the lives of the residents we serve.



I am because we are:

