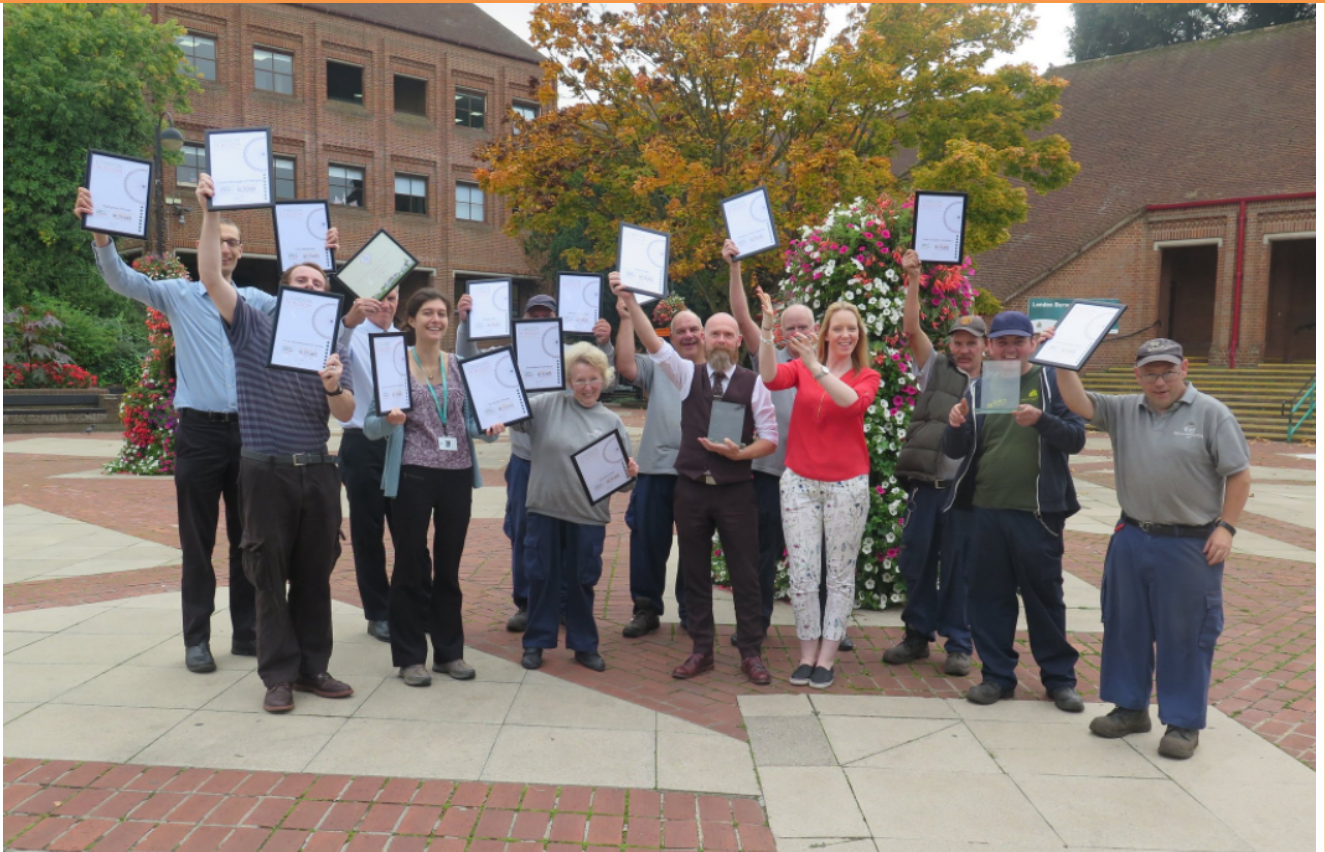# Employee Induction and Retention in Hillingdon

A Review by the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

Councillors on the Committee: Scott Seaman-Digby (Chairman); Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman); Wayne Bridges; Jazz Dhillon; Beulah East (Labour Lead); Duncan Flynn; Raymond Graham; Henry Higgins; and Robin Sansarpuri

Date here

HILLINGDON
LONDON

Chairman's Foreword

Last year, the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee carried out an in-depth review into recruitment at Hillingdon Council. As part of this review, we touched upon the importance of the retention and induction of staff at the Council, and recognised the good work that was being done in this regard.

Staff induction and retention is vital at any organisation, and the Committee agreed that following the review into recruitment, the natural progression would be to launch a follow-up review into these areas at Hillingdon.

By better understanding both the Council's own induction process and the way that high-performing staff are retained, and comparing and contrasting those processes with other organisations, the Committee were able to fully examine and understand best practice. This evidence allowed for recommendations which will continue to help the Council retain high performing staff and ensure that the staff induction process is modern, engaging and successful.

The Committee called upon witnesses from within the Council to discuss staff induction, and this, along with the evidence from the Council's Human Resources Department and private sector organisations on current practice for both induction and retention, helped shape the recommendations that are outlined in this report.

These recommendations will allow the Council to help employees settle into their new roles at the Council quickly and efficiently, encouraging them to remain an employee, and in turn, helping Hillingdon Council to remain a successful local authority employer, with a wealth of talented staff members who are able to deliver the organisation's services to residents at the high standard they deserve.

Councillor Scott Seaman-Digby
Chairman of the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

Contents

Summary of Recommendations to Cabinet

Through the witnesses and evidence received during the detailed review by the Committee, Members have agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1	**Officers continue to review the induction process where necessary, and make improvements as required to ensure that the induction process remains suitable for new employees.**
2	**Review the current staff benefits package offered to employees with Employee Forum, to ensure it remains competitive and relevant to staff interests.**
3	**Human Resources work with the Employee Forum to further develop the Health and Wellbeing activities available to staff.**
4	**Refresh the Council's mobile and flexible working policy to indicate how we support technology enabled working practices, targeted within appropriate services.**
5	**Provide clarity around the Council's culture and values, including focus on professional development, which are key to candidates' decision-making when choosing a new employer.**

Background to the Review

In March 2017, the Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee review into "Recruitment in Hillingdon" was heard and approved by Cabinet. This review was designed to identify any potential improvements to the current recruitment practices to allow the Council to continue to attract high-calibre staff and progress the Council's attractiveness as an employer.

Following the conclusion of that review, Councillors suggested a further review that focused on staff induction and retention, a topic that was touched upon in the previous report. By revisiting this issue, it allowed the Committee to comprehensively consider all aspects of staff recruitment and retention in greater detail.

It was agreed to focus on the Council's staff induction and staff retention policies, two areas that can have a direct impact upon employee turnover at the organisation. To best understand the areas that the Committee reviewed, it is first necessary to understand how they are defined.

Staff induction is considered the process for bringing new staff members into an organisation, providing an introduction to the new working environment, and training the new employee for their work assignment.

Staff retention is defined here simply as the ability of an employer to retain its employees. The rate of retention can be calculated as the proportion of employees with a specific length of service, expressed as a percentage of the overall workforce numbers.

Before it was able to look deeper into both staff induction and retention, and better understanding how the Council can improve these aspects of the organisation, it was first necessary to understand the Council's rates of employee turnover, and how employee turnover has an impact on an organisation.

Employee Turnover

Staff turnover refers to the proportion of employees who leave an organisation over a set period of time, usually monitored on a year-to-year basis, expressed as a percentage of the total workforce number. At its broadest, the term encompasses all leavers, both voluntary and involuntary, including resignations, retirements and redundancies, however, it is possible to calculate more specific staff turnover data, such as resignation levels, which is useful to assess the effectiveness of staff retention in the organisation, and understand the reasons behind voluntary departures from the Council. This can help address any potential problems that arise in retaining staff within the Council.

There are a number of positives that can be found in a turnover of staff, and the Council recognise that there is a healthy level of turnover that can benefit the organisation. However, it is important to also keep a close eye on the challenges that resignations can pose.

There is no set level at which employee turnover starts to have a negative impact on the performance of an organisation, and it is widely accepted that a moderate level of staff turnover can be beneficial for organisations, with new staff bringing new ideas and approaches with them to the role. However, it is important to retain high-performing staff, and this review sought to find ways to encourage staff to remain employees of Hillingdon Council.

The retention of staff was looked at in depth by the Committee, but it was also important to understand the costs, both monetary and otherwise, that are an effect of staff turnover. To ensure staff turnover remains at an acceptable level, the benefits of new employees must outweigh the costs of employees leaving the Council, and to ensure that these costs are kept to a minimum, it is crucial that Hillingdon Council monitors staff turnover and the reasons that are behind an individual's decision to leave the organisation.

It is possible to plan for retirements, efficiencies and redundancies, but voluntary resignations can cause problems for any employer. The added costs that come with advertising, recruitment and training are coupled with interruptions to the flow of work as a handover ensues, which can lead to decreased performance and a disruption to productivity and services. In turn, this can potentially cause poor customer service and damage an organisation's reputation, in addition to the burden that falls on colleagues who pick up work as a replacement is found. This can then lead to stress and an unsettled work environment, which can result in lower staff morale and dissatisfaction, which if not checked, could ultimately result in further resignations.

Nationwide, surveys suggest that the median rate of staff turnover has increased recently, following a decline since 2005, but the levels vary based on geography, with highest rates usually found in areas where unemployment is low, thus it is easy for people to find a different job.

Hillingdon Council monitors both voluntary and involuntary turnover on a quarterly basis, and turnover of staff is beneficial to an organisation as new staff members can bring with them new ideas, which improves innovation, while a low turnover rate can lead to stagnation.

Staff turnover is monitored for a number of reasons, but the financial implications of staff turnover cannot be ignored. Costs include administration of the resignation, advertisement and recruitment costs, selection costs, covering the post during the period that it is vacant and induction training for the new staff, and many of these costs also include staff time. At a time when tough financial decisions are being made across local government, it is therefore more important than ever that the financial implications of turnover are kept to a minimum.

Measuring the levels and costs of employee turnover can be vital to the organisation when it comes to putting aside resources for staff recruitment and retention purposes, and prepare for the financial challenges that come with it, but in addition to the financial repercussions from staff turnover, the importance of organisations monitoring staff turnover in departments or roles that it more difficult to recruit for cannot be underplayed, and this helps to ensure that at no time the department becomes understaffed or overstretched.

As such, it is important for the Council to look at levels of turnover across departments to help with its recruiting strategy, and the organisation uses staff surveys and exit questionnaires to help achieve this. Ensuring a good induction and welcome to the organisation is also imperative in ensuring new employees are willing to stay at the Council, as the highest rate of turnover is among staff who have been at the organisation for under a year.

In the 2016/17 financial year, the Council's total employee turnover was 17.7%, with 503 staff leaving the organisation across the year. At the end of the year, the employee headcount was 2,840.

However, employee turnover in that period can broadly be categorised as voluntary, where the employee resigns, and non-voluntary, where the contract of employment is terminated for a reason such as redundancy, dismissal, retirement or death in service. The Council's voluntary turnover for 2016/17 was 10.3% (293 resignations) while the non-voluntary departures accounted for 7.4%. The Council's

Workforce and Organisational Development Manager informed the Committee that it was expected these figures would remain broadly similar over the next four to five years.

Overall, there were 210 non-voluntary leavers, which represented 41.8% of all employees who left employment in 2016/17. The following table categorises these departures by leaving reason:

Reason for Departure	Number of Employees	Percentage of Leavers
Retirement	4	0.8%
Health Retirement	7	1.4%
Death in Service	6	1.2%
Dismissal	17	3.4%
End of Contract	33	6.6%
Redundancy / Efficiency	137	27.2%
TUPE	6	1.2%
Total	**210**	**41.8%**

It was confirmed that the target for voluntary turnover within the Council is 10%. This year, it stands at around 11%, although the period that has historically seen the most turnover has already passed, so this figure may yet decrease, although if involuntary turnover is included, this figure rises to roughly 18%.

As indicated above, the highest non-voluntary reason for employee turnover is redundancy and efficiency, which is a consequence of the ongoing requirements to meet financial challenges through service reviews and restructures. Such re-organisations are undertaken with the focus on improving service delivery models and streamlining ways of working through the Council-wide Business Improvement Delivery (BID) transformation programme. In this instance, efficiency is explained as the dismissal of a staff member unable to adapt to changing requirements of the role, rather than due to the removal of the role itself.

It is more likely that an employee will leave in their first year of service than at any other point, with 23.7% of leavers having less than one year's full service. However, this figure does also include seasonal workers, such as grounds maintenance staff. Additional work was needed to understand why this was the case, though it has been suggested that it may be due to specific roles or the Council's culture being incorrectly described during the recruitment stage.

The Council has subscribed to an 'exit interview' tool called "Last Opinion", and this will be available from January 2018 to provide voluntary leavers with an opportunity to explain why they have chosen to resign. This interview tool, once live, would provide additional data that may help to answer questions such as why more staff leave a role in the first twelve months of their employment.

Members were informed by the Workforce and Organisational Development Manager that staff leaving the organisation was not always a negative factor, and it often it allowed the Council the opportunity to undertake further staffing and efficiency reviews. In addition, if more staff leave their roles voluntarily, then less staff would need to be asked to leave on a non-voluntary basis, while an overall aging workforce could result in stagnation, a regular influx of new staff, with fresh viewpoints and new ideas, is regarded

as healthy for any organisation.

Staff Induction

Staff induction programs are critical for the effective integration of staff into an organisation, and helps provide an introduction to the organisation, with information on everything from the working environment and culture, to the role that the new employee will have. A successful staff induction programme is the best way to help a new staff member settle into their role in an organisation, building off the positivity and enthusiasm that usually comes with starting a new job.

Induction, training and development plans can help to improve the happiness of new employees, as well as ensuring that they are suitably challenged in their new roles.

While recognising employee turnover is necessary in any organisation, it remains essential that the Council avoid unusually high staff turnover rates, and as new starters have a higher rate of resignation than long-serving employees, the importance of a strong staff induction process cannot be understated.

When leaving a role in the first few months of employment, recruitment and selection is often considered the issue. However, this is not always the case, and sometimes it can be a result of a poor induction programme. More often than not, a personal decision to leave an organisation is made within the first few weeks of employment, even if the staff member in question does not formally leave at that time.

The recruitment process has the potential to cause these problems, with expectations raised too high or staff accepting roles that, ultimately, they are not suited for. Nonetheless, the Committee's previous review into '**Recruitment in Hillingdon**' recommended that "the Council introduce constant interview questions associated with each job description, suitable selection techniques and values-based interview techniques to ensure employees are a culture-fit, and occupational testing for recruitment to key and relevant roles". This recommendation, along with the Council's increased focus on developing an employer brand, was seen to provide a solution to concerns that the selection process was resulting in unsuitable candidates, and as such, it was then possible by the Committee to change the focus towards the induction of new employees.

A good staff induction process is a powerful tool to ensure employees are physically and mentally able to perform in their role, and allow them to learn those skills they still require as soon as possible from their early experiences and training in the role.

It allows the employee to meet their immediate colleagues and other workers they may have contact with in the future, as well as succinctly outlining the procedures and practices that are most important to the organisation and role. Furthermore, less job-specific issues, such as health and safety requirements and the management structure should be explained early in the employee's new role, along with the more simple issues that affect new staff, such as the office layout and whereabouts of facilities like toilets and the canteen. Overall, however, the induction itself may take several days or weeks before it is completed.

It is important that managers recognise that each individual employee is different, and may require a slightly altered induction.

For example, more experienced and confident employees might require a different induction from someone working in local government for the first time, and managers might require an altered induction from someone at an entry-level job. By being flexible and tailoring inductions to the employee, the organisation will be able to provide a more suitable, and ultimately, successful induction for its employees.

The Induction Process

The Council uses an online e-learning system for the induction process, which can be accessed by employees through the 'Learning Zone' section of Horizon, the Council's Intranet. Three levels of induction packages are available for new permanent staff, agency workers and manager level.

An induction checklist helps to monitor the delivery of essential information and the completion of required activities, while also stating which information and activities should be covered on the first day of employment, within the first week of employment, and within the first month. The checklist is used primarily to help ensure that all the induction actions are taken consistently across the organisation, and includes a range of actions that recruiting managers should complete prior to the new employee's first day of service; for example, ensuring ICT equipment and network access is available.

Induction includes a variety of orientation activities, such as a tour of the premises, together with familiarisation of key policies. Requirements such as health and safety arrangements, including a workspace assessment, are also covered in this orientation, while data protection procedures are also included in the induction e-learning packages. Furthermore, managers cover risk management, governance (Member/Officer protocol) and disability & equalities modules.

Employees also have the opportunity to meet the Chief Executive, and higher-graded officers are given a formal introduction to the Hillingdon Improvement Programme (HIP). Some new staff have also taken up the opportunity of 'Lunch with the Leader' sessions to better understand the role Members play in governing the Council.

Due to the specific challenge of recruiting and retaining permanent children and families' social workers, which has improved significantly over the last couple of years, an enhanced induction has been introduced in the Children and Young People Services. A one-day, face-to-face induction is included to ensure that all new social workers meet the Corporate Director of Social Care and the Deputy Director of Children's Services.

Induction events are confirmed to be on a timed schedule, so some new starters would need to wait longer than others for certain activities, such as meeting the Chief Executive. Meetings held as part of the induction process are also initially held within teams or departments, before widening to include colleagues in other service areas.

E-Learning / Online Induction

In addition to the hard copy of the checklist and the induction actions that it details, there are also a number of E-Learning modules which the employee must complete.

The Council's E-Learning system has recently been updated, and Members were given an introduction to the system at a recent Committee meeting. The new system includes Hillingdon-specific information and facts regarding the Council and its vision, as well as the residents it services.

Links to Google Training and online Google sessions were included in the new system, as well as a number of E-Learning modules and short tests to ensure that employees had suitable levels of understanding for relevant subjects. Furthermore, the system allows staff members to book a place at sessions in an efficient online way to meet both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive via the intranet.

As the majority of voluntary departures from an organisation take place during the first year of employment, the increased importance of an induction process cannot be ignored. It is therefore vital that

the induction processes and E-Learning induction system at Hillingdon Council are to a high standard, to increase the retention rate of employees.

Staff Retention

Employees can resign for a number of reasons, such as the attraction of a new job or challenge, or alternatively, as a result of being dissatisfied in their current role. A lack of career progression or staff benefits (including pay, pension and leave) can also have a bearing on decisions to resign or remain at a job, and it is important to take all of these aspects into account when considering staff turnover.

The most common reasons that staff resign or leave an employer are widely agreed to be poor salary and benefits, a lack of training and/or development opportunities, dissatisfaction with managements, not getting along with colleagues, the journey to work, and a lack of work/life balance.

While a successful staff induction process can increase the Council's ability to retain new employees, it is vital to also focus on the retention of long-serving staff too, as work efficiency is only reached after a period of learning and adjusting to a new work environment, so experienced employees are vital to the success of any department.

A flexible approach to staff retention is a necessity. Similarly to staff induction, one method may work for some employees, but not others. Therefore, it was important that the Committee considered all the different facets of both of these areas before it was possible to reach any conclusions and propose any recommendations.

Evidence & Witness Testimony

Scoping of the review

In scoping and agreeing the review's Terms of Reference, which is set out in the appendices, the Committee sought to gain a in-depth understanding of the Council's employee induction process and how the Council seeks to retain its high calibre staff.

During its call-for-evidence sessions, the Committee considered it important to take into account a selection of views from both the public and private sector to compare processes and best practice. The Committee also called on a specific witnesses to help with the review, and this section will outline those testimonies.

Members understood that both staff induction and staff retention were intrinsically linked, but for the purpose of the review, felt that the two aspects would best be considered separately to provide focus. Although naturally, it was understood there would be some overlap.

The Committee viewed these topics as a natural progression from the previous review into recruitment, with a strong expectation that any findings from the review would not only assist the Council to continue to deliver a high standard of services for residents, but also help the organisation remain a successful public sector employer with a bright future.

Staff Induction

The Council's Workforce and Organisational Development Manager introduced the Committee to the organisation's staff induction procedures, including an in-depth presentation on the Council's new e-learning induction system.

Members were in agreement that the new e-learning system was visually much more appealing and engaging that the previous system, and it was confirmed that the site can still be edited internally, to allow for any further improvements which may arise. These improvements have taken place where required over the previous two years, and Human Resources will continue to monitor the system and make changes where necessary.

In addition to the Workforce and Organisational Development Manager's evidence on staff induction, the Committee called on the evidence of a new starter, who had been employed at the Council for fewer than six months, to better understand the Council's induction processes from the perspective of a staff member who had recently undertaken this training.

The Council's Trainee Internal Auditor was willing to attend a Committee meeting to address Members as a witness, and discuss his experience of the induction process. Having been employed at London Borough of Hillingdon for four months, the Trainee Internal Auditor had completed several stages of his induction, including familiarising himself with the organisation and layout of the building and meeting colleagues within his team on the first day, and completing a number of relevant e-learning modules on the intranet over the first week in the role. Details on the Code of Conduct and benefits of the role, along with other basic information on the organisation, were received from the Line Manager on the first day of

employment; these included modules on the role of local authorities, the Council's responsibilities, health and safety and the Data Protection Act. Members considered, in this specific case, the information that was received by the Trainee regarding the role of a local authority was very comprehensive.

Having met with colleagues, the Trainee Internal Auditor engaged in further job-specific training, involving a mock internal audit and shadowing of colleagues to learn more about the role. The Committee was informed that there were weekly one-to-one meetings with managers, alongside the Performance and Development Appraisal (PADA) system; there was also an in-depth review scheduled following the probation period of six months. On a more personal side to the induction, the Audit Department was praised for introducing new starters to the team over coffee, which Councillors agreed was a welcoming, informal gesture that would help integrate new employees within the team.

Members noted that it was not always easy to network with colleagues who worked outside of an employee's respective department, but agreed that this was an organic process, and that networking outside the department was likely to improve with longevity at the organisation, as contacts were made in other departments through contact through work, intermediaries or social events.

The Trainee Internal Auditor also confirmed that an understanding of the politics of the Council comes largely from discussions with team members, colleagues and line managers, although there was enough information in the e-learning system for new starters.

Members were given login details for the E-Learning modules so that they could use the system themselves and better understand what exercises new employees completed during their induction period.

The Committee noted that a review of the employee's induction period takes place after six months of employment, when the probation period ends. There were suggestions that moving this review to three months may allow new employees to make adjustments or improvements that could help them in their role earlier in their employment, but it was agreed that regular updates and meetings with line managers and colleagues would allow for these adjustments to be made, without needing the formality of another meeting.

The system also generates feedback forms and retains the results, allowing the organisation to have an easily-accessed record of comments on the induction process, which can be used to make improvements to the processes where necessary.

Staff Retention

A report presented to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2009 found that 87% of employees were less likely to leave their employer if they felt engaged in their role.

Factors that can influence engagement include clear leadership, feeling able to contribute to their employment, decision-making opportunities, and allowing employees a forum to voice views and concerns.

It is commonly accepted by organisations that longer serving employees are more likely to remain with an employer, as they become used to the work culture of an organisation and establish stronger relationships with their colleagues. However, it should be noted that staff turnover tends to be higher in large organisations, urban areas, and around Christmas and summer holidays, as people look for "a new start". With turnover much higher among young people, it is also worth considering that the overall turnover rate might reduce in the future with the aging UK population. Retention difficulties are on the rise though, and the graph below (published in CIPD's survey report on "*Resourcing and Talent Planning 2017*") illustrates the increase or decrease in staff retention over a number of categories over the last few years.

This highlights that professionals or specialists have the highest turnover rates, which provides a
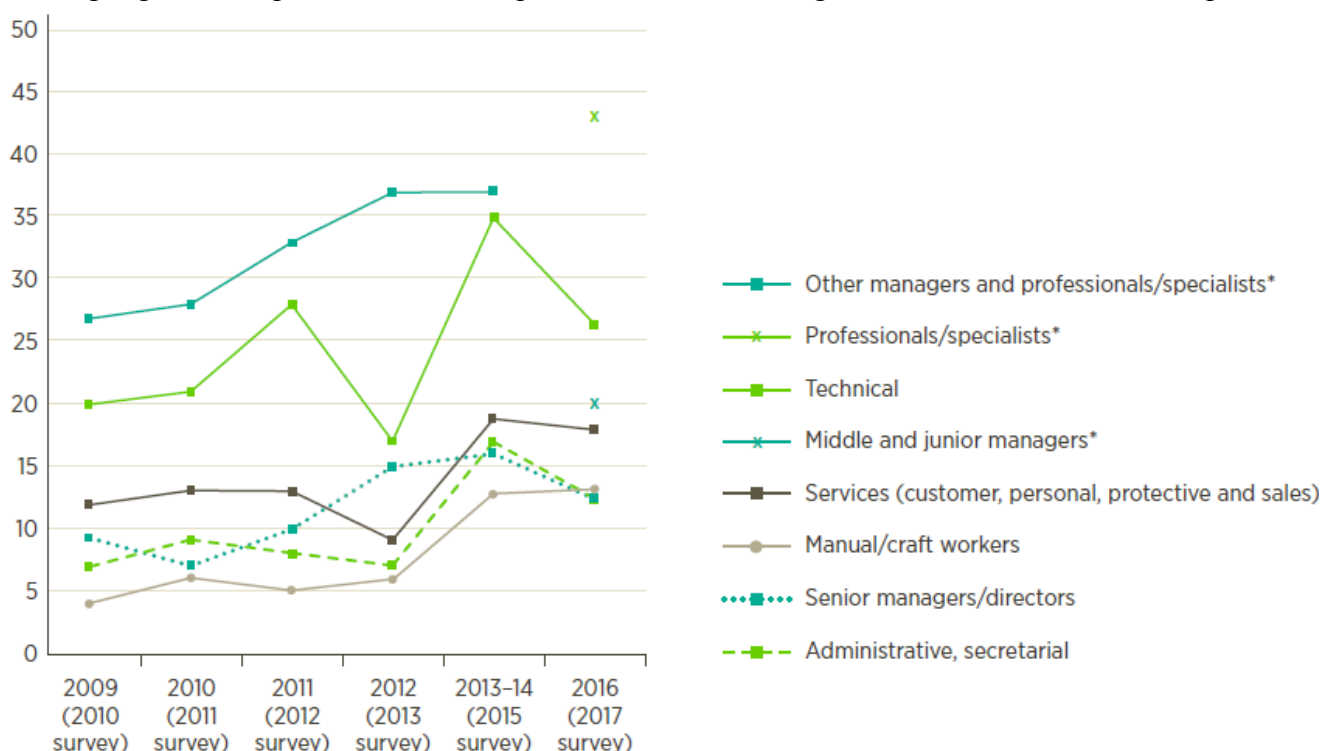
Base: 663 (2017 survey); 280 (2015 survey); 426 (2013 survey); 491 (2012 survey); 601 (2011 survey); 451 (2010 survey)

*In the 2017 survey, the 'Other managers and professionals/specialists' category was split into two separate categories: 'Professionals/specialists' and 'Middle and junior managers'

challenge of its own. Where specialist skills are required, particularly when the market is scarce, turnover can become problematic. In these instances, a resignation can be damaging and staff difficult to replace, which in turn affects performance of an organisation. However, in contrast, where it is relatively easy to find and train new employees quickly, it is possible to sustain high performance in these service areas despite a high turnover.

Reasons for resignation include, but are not limited to, poor salary or benefits, a lack of training and/or development opportunities, dissatisfaction with management, not getting along with colleagues, or a lack of work/life balance, equal opportunities (the Council remains an "equal opportunities employer"), communication and consultation on developments within the organisation, management skills, the handling of grievances at work, working conditions, working hours (flexible working), performance management, personal development plans, stress, and the chance to submit ideas for improvements.

However, on occasions there are factors outside of the Council's control that may also lead to an employee voluntarily leaving, and these can range from the offer of a new role at a different organisation, to personal circumstances or a difficult commute to work. These factors are more difficult to overcome, and as such, it must be accepted that some employees may leave an organisation and cannot be persuaded to stay.

According to the CIPD's 2017 survey, the public sector is more likely to have difficulty retaining specialists, senior managers, and administrative staff than other sectors, as set out in the graph overleaf, which illustrates 'retention difficulties, by occupational category and sector by percentage of survey respondents'.
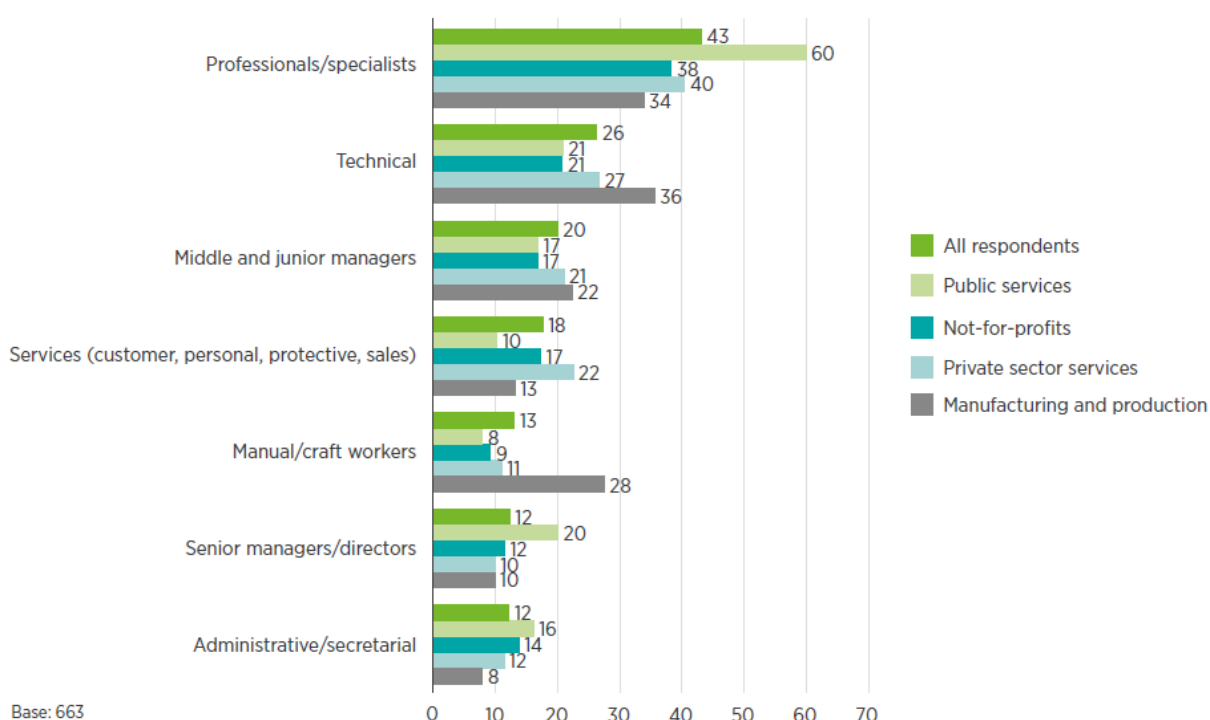
One such sector where specialists or professionals are currently in demand is Children and Young People's Services. Due to the market scarcity of experienced children's social workers, the Council currently monitors staff turnover in this area to ensure that the organisation does not suffer high turnover that results in being understaffed.

HR concluded that the Council's projected turnover compared favourably with national statistics. The positive retention rate was attributed to a number of factors, one of which was the new induction programme. However, the service also had a stable management team, was London's leading payer of social work salaries, and had introduced a new career progression scheme, including rolling out a bespoke management development programme. These factors all play an important role in staff retention, and other services can learn from the success of the Children and Young People's Service when retaining staff in a very competitive recruiting environment.

Members heard that staff turnover in specific areas of the Council was monitored and reported on a monthly basis. This allowed the organisation to implement retention schemes in areas of concern to ensure the Council did not see higher rates of staff turnover than desirable. One such scheme took place in Children's Social Care, an area which nationally saw a higher turnover rate than the average. This scheme involved financial remuneration for those employees who confirmed that they would remain at the Council for a specific period. This "tie-in" period was one year, as it was agreed that this time frame

worked better than two years, which was previously used.

These retention payments were also used for critical employees who were halfway through delivering a project. In these cases, a retention payment could be placed on an employee based on a percentage of their salary and post, and this payment would be repaid in full if the employee left the organisation before delivering the final project.

A two-year "tie-in" period was also enforced when staff members undergo Professional Education Training that was funded by the organisation. This period ensured that the Council was rewarded for its investment, while also maintaining Hillingdon's commitment to professional development and access to training.

Statistically, increasing learning and development opportunities was the most popular step taken by organisations who undertook specific initiatives to improve staff retention (as displayed in the chart by the percentage of respondents whose organisations undertook specific initiatives; below).
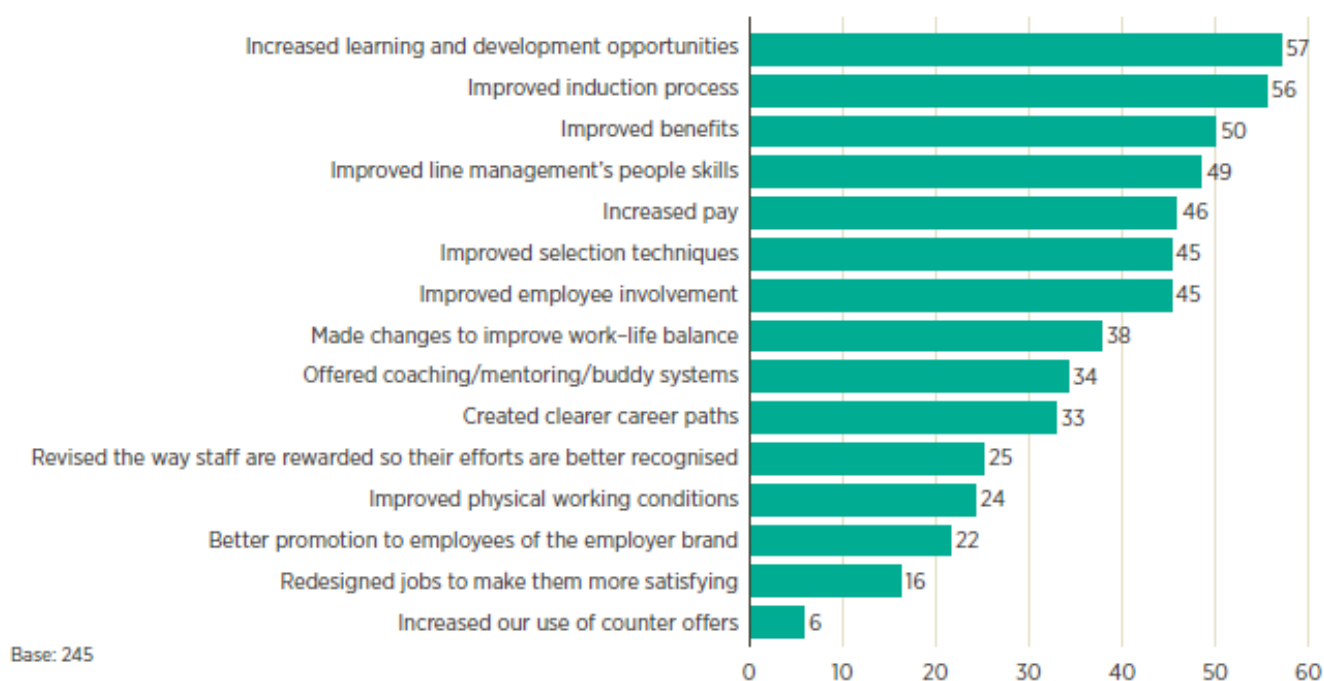
Around 40% of organisations surveyed by CIPD in 2016 attempted to improve staff retention using specific schemes, and the offer of increased training and professional development opportunities became more common, as improved pay was previously the most popular strategy.

Retention strategies were used more frequently in the private sector than the public sector, but were considered by employees to have an effect on retention, with around one-third of those surveyed supporting certain measures that were used. The effectiveness of each individual method was considered, and the table below outlines this, (by the percentage of respondent who believed retention methods were

Most effective methods (top 3 chosen)		Least effective methods (top 3 chosen)	
Improved benefits	32	Improved induction process	16
Increased learning and development opportunities	32	Improved selection techniques	11
Increased pay	28	Improved employee involvement	10
Improved line management's people skills	26	Offered coaching/mentoring/buddy systems	10
Improved induction process	24	Improved physical working conditions	10
Improved selection techniques	24	Increased learning and development opportunities	9

most of least effective).

It is worth noting that although an improved induction process received mixed results, a larger percentage of employees considered it more effective than ineffective.

The evidence also supports an argument that improved pay can be responsible for the retention of staff. However, the Workforce and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that the overall package received by staff at London Borough of Hillingdon was very competitive. The pension contribution was unmatched, staff received better annual leave that the average, that increased after five and ten years of services, while employees also received four days of free parking, which was very rare in London authorities.

The Committee's previous review into **Recruitment at Hillingdon** recommended that the Council offer new employees a "Total Reward", that not only involved remuneration, "*but also the total worth of the recruitment package*", and this is an area where the Council currently excels, offering competitive salaries, a good pension, and flexible working hours to ensure staff are able to enjoy a good work / life balance.

The Committee were informed that, with regards to remuneration, the benchmark salaries in key policy areas where monitored to ensure that neighbouring authorities did not increase pay and challenge the organisation for key employees. As such, the Council remained in the top quartile of social care payers, which eliminated money as a potential hurdle when employing, or retaining, staff in these key roles.

64% of current Council employees are on permanent contracts, but there were trends to suggest that agency staff are actively looking to remain as agency workers, and not look for permanent employment. The Committee heard that, nationwide, workers are choosing higher pay rates over better job security, and despite not being eligible for pension contributions, agency staff were still able to receive annual leave and other benefits, while also having pay parity with permanent employees. However, the Workforce and Organisational Development Manager confirmed that long-term employees preferred the overall benefits package they received over the hourly rate, and instances of permanent employees looking to become agency workers were rare. This demonstrates the appeal that a strong benefits package can have for employees.

Members also heard that discussions were ongoing with the Employee Forum to review other staff benefits, such as online discounts and reduced ticket prices for events.

The staff intranet provides information on healthy living and employee wellbeing, both physically and mentally. The information includes activities that staff can undertake both inside and outside the office, and advertises and informs employees of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and how it can impact upon work life, and the provision of wellbeing activities at the Council, such as yoga or cycle schemes, are considered beneficial for work culture.

Furthermore, the Employee Forum was involved in allocating money to improve the Civic Centre work environment such as upgrades to kitchens. A appealing work environment is considered a contributing factor to staff members' happiness, and it was important that staff had a say in where this money would be best allocated.

Despite the appeal of a strong benefits package, this alone will not lead to the retention of all staff. It is, therefore, vital that the Council understands why high-performing staff may wish to leave the organisation, and the easiest manner to do this is by conducting exit interviews to better understand why a member of staff has left the organisation. This was outlined in the previous review, whereby it was stated that the Council would begin conducting exit interviews in 2017, as well as monitoring feedback left from former staff members on 'Glassdoor', a website that allows former employees to review their old employers.

The Committee heard that the Council's new 'exit interview' process was ready to be implemented in January 2018, and data will be collected from March 2018 onwards, helping the Council to understand if there were any specific trends in resignations. It must, however, be noted that while companies conduct exit interviews to understand the reasons behind a departure, these responses are often toned down or not wholly truthful, as former staff members require a good reference from their previous employers. However, anonymous feedback gives a more reliable record of feedback, and Glassdoor can provide this for an organisation.

One effective form of staff retention is succession planning and the promotion of successful staff members, which also has the advantage of building on existing staff members' skills and training, and therefore getting a return for investments in training and professional development for both the organisation and individual. This policy was highlighted in the previous review, which recommended that "*the Council introduce and develop a workforce succession plan for all key roles within the organisation*". This idea allows staff to see a clear path of advancement in their role and prevent them from becoming frustrated, or feeling like a job has become stale, while also rewarding high-performing staff and allowing them to see a bright future at the organisation.

In the light of increased competition for recruitment and competition for talent, organisations must now continue to develop their focus on staff retention to ensure high-performing talent are both retained and rewarded for their hard work. The development and career progression of officers achieves this, while also fostering a culture of loyalty within employees.

Loyalty towards an employer is a very positive aspect of staff retention, and this positivity will improve the culture of an organisation. Furthermore, it was important to further this positivity with a focus on the work of the Council, and ensure that employees have a level of self-fulfilment that comes with working for the organisation and engaging with, and helping, local residents.

Work culture is an undervalued aspect of staff retention, and the ability for employees to work within the boundaries of cultural values and ideologies is vital to any organisation. A positive work atmosphere leads to a happier workforce and employee satisfaction, which in turn encourages productivity. The London Borough of Hillingdon prides itself on putting residents first, and by encouraging this culture within the organisation, employees can recognise where their work has a positive impact on the lives of

residents.

Many staff members work with local residents off-site, not in an office environment. Those staff members who travel from place to place to work with residents or local organisations have very different working days from many employees, and it was important to ensure that they are able to be as productive as possible in, what can sometimes be, a challenging atmosphere.

Many roles, including social workers, receive very flexible working proposals at other local authorities, and that by also offering more flexible working arrangements, the Council could improve competitiveness, both when attracting and retaining staff.

With new technological trends and ways of working, organisations can ensure that they modernise with the workforce, and flexible working can provide an important tool for retaining talented employees. Happy staff members are more likely to be engaged, more productive, and more inclined to remain at an organisation, and flexibility continues to play an important role in the worklife of the newest generation of workers.

Research from Page Personnel into the differing expectations of younger workers suggest that nearly 60% of 18-27 year olds expect flexible working to be offered by all employers to all employees, rather than being seen solely as a benefit, while 80% believe that flexible working would be fairly or very important to them when considering a role. Some reports suggest that millennial employees will make up half the workforce by 2020, so the need for organisations to modernise to attract and retain employees becomes even more crucial. Furthermore, survey results that same age range of employees would choose flexible working options over an increase in salary. Flexible working is more popular in today's digital age, and can impact on workers of all age, from young millennials to older employees with families.

It is accepted that allowing flexible workers is not viable and many employees will not need the opportunity to work in this manner. However, for some employees, such as social care workers, mobile and flexible working can be very beneficial and allow for increased productivity as it decreases travel time and therefore can allow more visits or help to be given to residents, thus improving the service that can be provided by the Council.

Private sector perspectives

To gain further evidence, the Committee agreed that short survey regarding staff induction and retention practices should be sent out to local private companies in the Borough of a medium to large size, to better understand the approaches taken by them to staff induction and retention.

The complete survey is in the appendices, but key responses are detailed below.

- Organisation's success are the result of talented employees and it is essential that new starters feel fully integrated into the business and culture from their first day;
- A combination of face-to-face and online training is used in staff induction, and it is constantly refined based upon staff feedback;
- Staff induction can be tailored to different roles. Although the foundation of the induction can be the same for all staff, managers can tailor the training to suit the employee;
- Staff retention is achieved by rewarding high-performing employees, and these rewards can be financial or non-financial, including training career development, training opportunities, or healthy and wellbeing incentives.
- Staff must be kept engaged and informed on what is happening within the organisation.

Findings & Conclusion

Councillors believed that the induction processes were fit for business, and any changes were continuing to move the process in the right direction. It was agreed that the new e-learning system was a notable improvement, the recent changes to the induction system made for a much more well-rounded and suitable induction system for new staff members, and there was good balance between the less glamorous, but fundamental information required in an induction process, and the flexibility needed to tailor the induction system to an individual's needs as necessary. Therefore, it was recommended that:

1	**Officers continue to review the induction process where necessary, and make improvements as required, to ensure that the induction process remains suitable for new employees.**

In the tough economic climate that currently faces Local Government, the Committee agreed it was difficult to currently offer pay increases or improved financial terms to staff regularly, and as such, it was important that the Council considered other approaches to promote the wider staff benefits on offer. It was considered that the Council must continue to offer popular and enjoyable benefits that interest staff members, and thus continue to help create a work atmosphere that appeals to employees. As such, it is recommended that the Council:

2	**Review the current staff benefits package offered to employees with Employee Forum, to ensure it remains competitive and relevant to staff interests.**

In addition to those staff benefits that were available, it was also considered important that the organisation provided enjoyable and helpful activities to ensure that staff members were engaged and aware of the importance of both mental and physical wellbeing. Members agreed that employees should have offers of activities to allow them to encourage healthy living both inside and outside the workplace, and developing these offers to ensure they were relevant and helpful to staff members would be beneficial, while also ensuring that the offers of activities were also popular with employees. Having considered all the evidence, Members recommended that:

3	**Human Resources work with the Employee Forum to further develop the Health and Wellbeing activities available to staff.**

Members noted the importance of modernising the Council where necessary, not just to continue to compete with neighbouring authorities and organisations for staff, and the move towards flexible working was considered important in this regard. Flexible and mobile working could be beneficial to employees in certain roles and departments and aid productivity in these areas, and further exploration of suitable flexible and mobile working methods should take place to understand whether these measures could help improve the service provided by the Council.

Councillors recognised that the flexible working hours at the Council were appealing to many employees, but also noted that flexible working was becoming more common in many work places, and that both flexible and mobile working were considered very attractive to new employees in today's society.

The Committee, therefore, recommended that:

4	**Consideration be given to refresh the Council's mobile and flexible working policy to indicate how we support technology enabled working practices targeted within appropriate services.**

Members recognised the importance of the work employees do to put residents first, and deliver services to a high standard. These services impact on the lives of thousands of local residents, and it was important that staff were aware of the impact they are having on the people of Hillingdon.

If employees feel valued and proud of the work that they do, it will not only improve the employer branding strategy, a recommendation from the previous review, but it will also improve the staff turnover rate.

Furthermore, it was vital for staff to understand the culture and values of the organisation from their first day, but they must also be supported throughout their time at the Council, and Members recognised that the loyalty and support was a two-way relationship between employees and the employer.

As such, the Committee felt that the Council must continue to support employees who wish to further themselves and support their development where possible. This opportunity for further training or support allows staff members to feel valued and gives them an opportunity to development in both a personal and professional capacity that benefits both staff members and the Council.

With this in mind, Councillors recommended that:

5	**Provide clarity around the Council's culture and values as an employer, including focus on professional development, which are key to candidates' decision-making when choosing a new employer.**

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee from the outset of the review:

1. To review the current employee induction process at both junior and senior levels and how employees become a culture fit within a democratic organisation;

2. To review the retention rate / turnover of staff and activity currently in place to support the retention of staff;

3. To seek out examples of best and novel practices from the private, public and other sectors in both induction arrangements and how organisations seek to retain high calibre staff;

4. To make positive recommendations to the Cabinet on any improvements in working practices or operations.

Witnesses & Committee Activity

The Committee received evidence from the following sources and witnesses:

Witness Session 1 - 25 July 2017	**Mr Mike Talbot, Workforce & Organisational Development Manager, London Borough of Hillingdon**
Witness Session 2 - 21 September 2017	**Mr Luke Broome, Trainee Internal Auditor, London Borough of Hillingdon**
Witness Session - 7 November 2018	**Mr Mike Talbot, Workforce & Organisational Development Manager, London Borough of Hillingdon**
Survey	**A survey into views on staff induction and retention conducted from 28 November 2017 to 1 January 2018 to 30 local businesses**

References

TBC

Appendices

TBC