

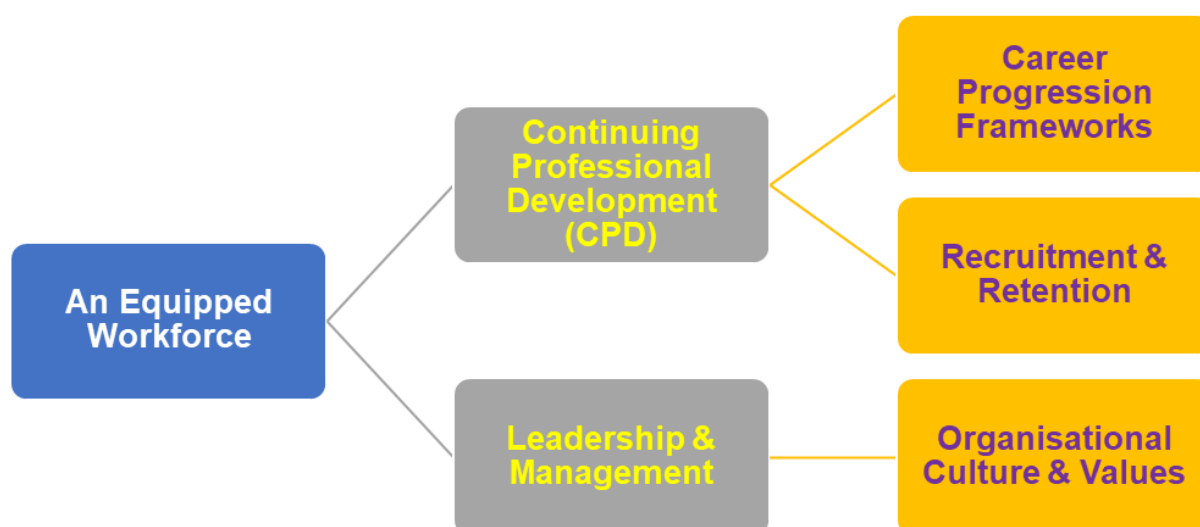
# **Workforce Development Strategy**

**Social Care**

**2021 - 2023**

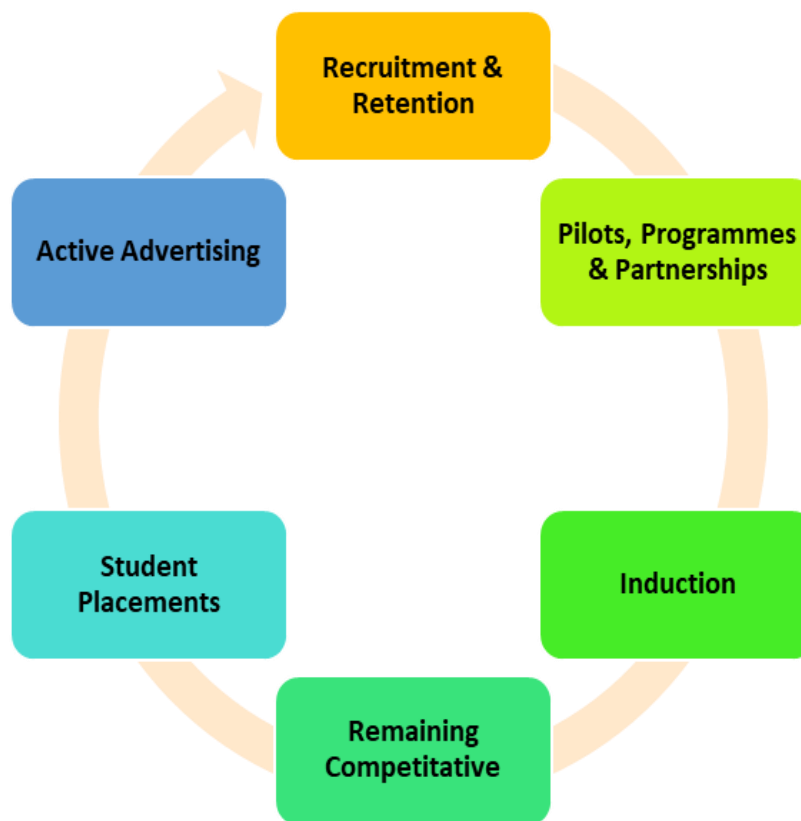
*Families at the heart of our place*

# Building a workforce that is equipped to deliver



**Investing in the workforce** is a top priority in Waltham Forest. Equipping our staff with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours is essential if they are to 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.

The investment in our workforce is wide-ranging and informed by time-tested, but also new and emerging research and practice models. Set out in the following pages is our vision for excellence.



**Recruiting and retaining** a highly skilled and professional workforce is the foundation upon which our success is built. We now have high numbers of social care staff in permanent posts, resulting in a stable and dedicated workforce who establish strong, constructive and collaborative relationships with those who require care and support.

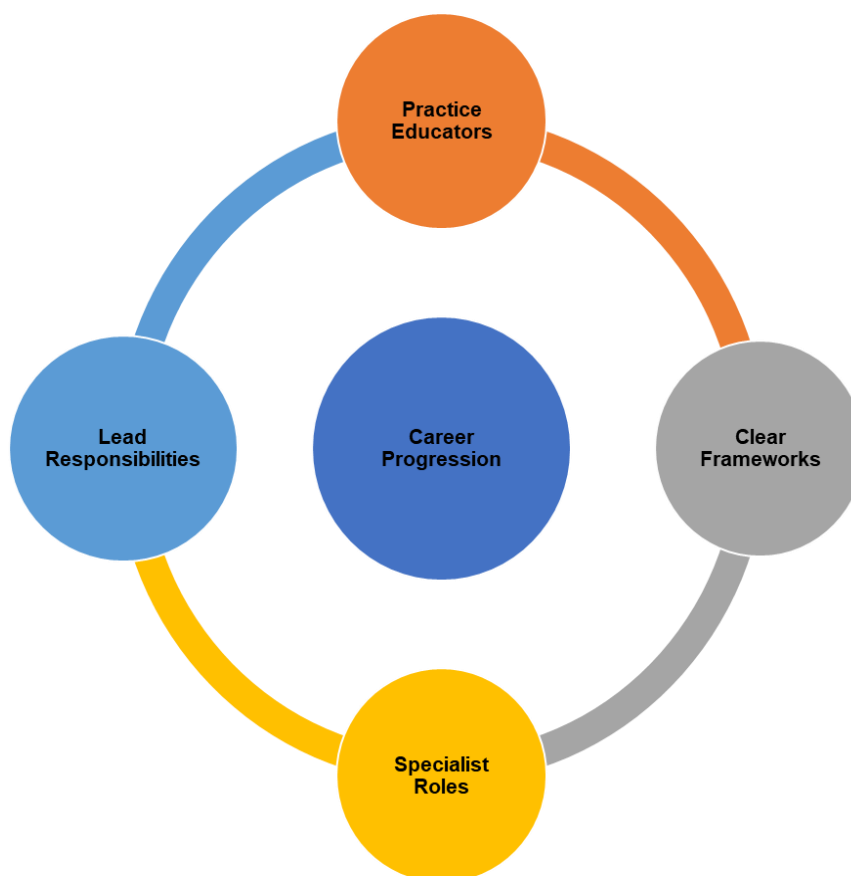
Permanent staffing levels will continue to be enhanced as we further embed a 'grow your own' approach. Our ASYE recruitment programme, combined with our participation in innovative social work programmes such as Frontline, Step Up to Social Work and Think Ahead will form the basis upon which we recruit our future social work practitioners. Our [recruitment webpage](#) includes a selection of video introductions from staff who work in a variety of roles within social care and vacancies are advertised through both internal and external channels. Waltham Forest can also be followed on social media platforms such as [Twitter](#) and [Linkedin](#).

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.

Notwithstanding the importance of recruitment and retention, our approach is holistic and extends into succession planning. We know that investing and expanding the size of the workforce enables us to ensure our staff have sustainable workloads, supporting the continuous improvement in the quality of service provision. A larger workforce creates the context for innovative practice and is the resource that allows us the opportunity to try and do things differently, which is why we have created two additional social work teams within children's social care.

As part of our approach, we continually review our total reward package to ensure that our offer is comparable or greater when compared to other Greater London authorities. All staff across social care have access to a comprehensive, yet flexible; core CPD offer which is responsive to changing needs of both our staff and residents and is based on triangulating information that comes from a key number of sources. These include the annual Training Needs Analysis survey, findings from audits regularly undertaken and outcomes of group discussions at various forums including Managers' Forums and Practice Forums. We ensure that all learning opportunities are based on the latest legislative requirements and ensure that the core offer is based on the refreshed Professional Capabilities Framework and mapped to the Knowledge and Skills Statements as the post-qualifying standard of practice.

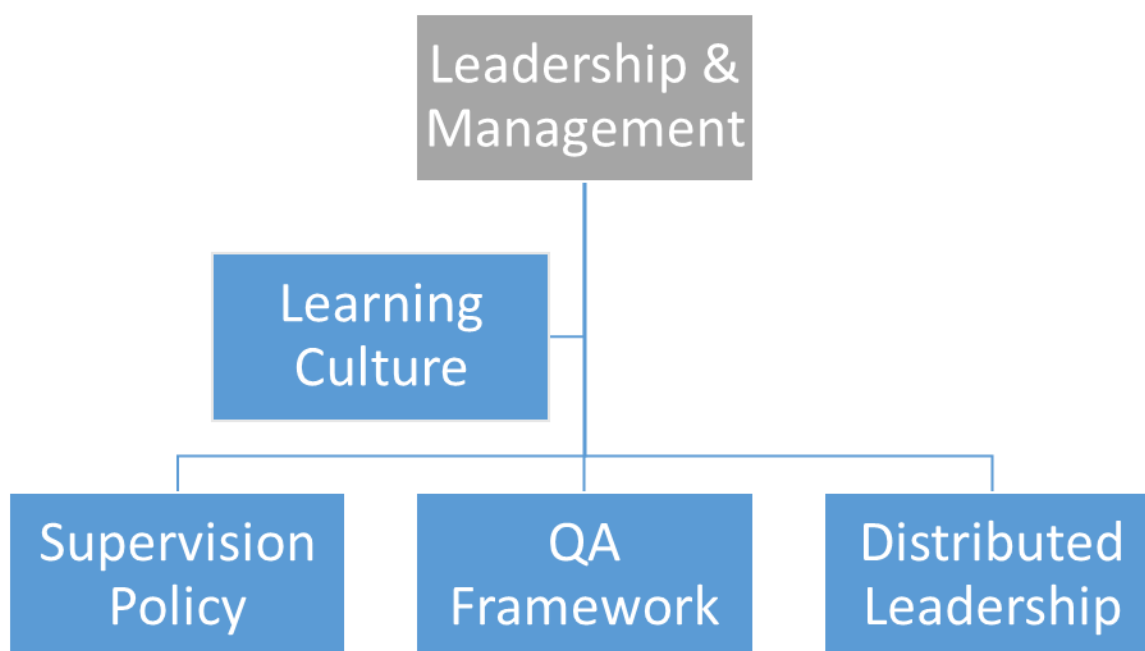
As subscribing members of Community Care Inform and Research in Practice, our workforce also has access to a wide range of journal articles, webinars, tailored training days, podcasts, quizzes, conferences and e-learning modules. Through our participation in the NAAS and North East London Teaching Partnership (NELTP), staff have the option to become accredited and sponsored to complete various post-qualification courses. Some of the most respected HEI and clinical practice organisations in and around London, have offered places to members of our professional workforce.



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. However, we also recognise career progression is not simply synonymous with moving into more senior roles and takes many forms, for instance widening theoretical and practical knowledge as opposed to supervising or managing staff; or leading a service.

Our framework is inclusive and accounts for this; referencing shadowing, coaching and mentoring as just some of the options staff can explore to expand upon their knowledge, skills and practice experience. Whether it is being a Practice Educator supporting the next generation of social workers or staff delivering training to colleagues in their specialist practice areas; Waltham Forest prides itself on the various opportunities available to its workforce.

It is important to acknowledge the variety of professional roles undertaken by our social care staff because inevitably, specialist roles often require specialist or tailored development opportunities which incorporate a core, reflective element. Our tailored development opportunities for specialist roles include a bespoke leadership and management programme designed for both managers and aspiring managers across social care to regular critical reflection groups for our Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child Protection Chairs (CPCs).



Having a **strong learning and leadership culture** is vital because it allows our staff to be a role model for others and embark on a continuous learning journey where they can build the knowledge, skills and confidence required to perform their roles in the most meaningful and effective way.

A learning culture is also important for staff engagement and we know from the numbers of our staff who are participating in learning opportunities at various levels that Waltham Forest has successfully embedded a culture of learning into the workforce. Results from our Organisational Health Check demonstrate this, with 92% of Children’s Social Care staff and 81% of Adult Social Care staff either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement, ‘LBWF is a learning organisation and has a positive learning culture.’

We are committed to offering consistent support, effective leadership and quality management to the workforce and we do this through the implementation of clear policy, processes and frameworks. Our supervision policy and template facilitates reflective discussion whilst our robust quality assurance framework enables us to monitor practice and discern what we do well and the areas we need to improve on. Waltham Forest practices a model of distributed leadership wherein staff are encouraged to enact leadership qualities and behaviours through their everyday practice.



Through the council's new People Strategy, Ethnicity Pay Gap Strategy and associated action 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.

There are a range of employee-led staff networks that form part of our workforce diversity and inclusion agenda. These networks are supported by HR and include the Race Equality Network (REN), LGBTQ+ network, Differently Abled Forum and Women's network. Staff are also well engaged in our various staff consultation sessions within social care which take place in the form of workshops, awaydays, all-staff conferences and forums.

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 Diversity & Inclusion 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. Sessions are recorded on a dedicated Teams channel for those staff unable to attend.



In addition to these initiatives taking place, children's social care has embedded Language That Cares. This initiative changes the way professionals talk about children in care. Language is a powerful tool for communication but sometimes the way that it is used in social care can create stigma and barriers for understanding. Language is power, and we want children and young people to feel empowered in their social care experience.

We encourage staff to communicate with us in ways that promote a strong and inclusive organisational culture. Our values are an integral part of what we do and shape our social work practice. From using language that really cares to working collaboratively with internal and external partners to achieve the best for those families we support, **because it is these families who are at the heart of our place.**

Our promise to stakeholders is that we focus on solutions and not obstacles, and we are fully committed to creating an environment without prejudice or discrimination, where respect and equality resemble the cornerstone of our work with colleagues and residents.