

Local Government People Strategy 2026 – 2031

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Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



LGMA

An Ghníomhaireacht
Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil
Local Government
Management Agency

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Forward

The Local Government People Strategy 2026 – 2031 was developed by the People Strategy Steering Group and the Performance Management and Organisational Development Committee (PMOD), following significant work completed on strategic workforce planning for the sector. The 2026 Strategy acts both as a workplan for the sectoral strategic HR initiatives undertaken by the Steering Group and the LGMA, and also as a template to be used by individual local authorities to develop their own local HR strategies.

It is noted that the sectoral strategy is a high-level document and that priorities, processes and outcomes may vary from one local authority to another. It is further acknowledged that there are resource requirements and challenges locally, particularly in resourcing additional work in the areas of human resources, learning and development, and equality, diversity and inclusion. The LGMA will seek to include outputs from the sectoral workplan which will assist in the development and support for the local people strategies. Local authorities can also build on the research and engagement already carried out and the information collated as part of the development of their own Strategic Workforce Plan.

Information and Consultation

As part of the work to develop the sectoral strategy, constructive consultation took place with unions through the Local Authority National Council (LANC). Local consultation, through agreed information and consultation mechanisms, should take place in each local authority, similar to the process adopted for the development of strategic workforce plans. Any sectoral template policies/procedures will be the subject of consultation with the unions through the LANC.

Arising from the discussions at LANC, a number of observations were made by staff representatives which are outlined below, and which should be taken account of at local and national level during the engagement process for policy review/development elements under the People Strategy. Issues raised by the unions are already included in the People Strategy or the sectoral workplan at a high level, however, in order to adequately reflect the observations received through the LANC, we wish to ensure that each local authority has regard to these.

Sectoral Workplan

The sectoral workplan will be informed by the following:

- Job Evaluation – the LGMA and its relevant committees will seek to finalise and roll out the job evaluation process.
- Blended working – it is recognised that the new working environment since the introduction of blended working has brought benefits for organisations and employees, and as one of the early public service adopters, the sector will continue to keep this model of working under review.
- Energy and Climate – in line with a focus on sustainable HR practices, the LGMA and its relevant committees will seek to identify how blended working is supporting our organisations climate actions goals.
- PMDS – a review of the performance management and development system currently agreed for the sector will be reviewed as an action under the sectoral People Strategy and any revised model will be agreed with staff representatives nationally as has previously been the case. The quality of the employee/line manager conversation and the benefit of clarifying roles and responsibilities will be emphasised in any revised approach.

- Workforce Agility and Transfer Policy - as part of the People Strategy Steering Group workplan, it is recognised that an agile workforce equipped for the challenges in an evolving workplace, particularly in the AI arena, requires significant upskilling, training and development and the ability to respond to new areas of work. The feasibility or otherwise of a mobility policy for the sector will be examined by the Steering Group in consultation with the unions.
- AI policies will be developed in line with best practice in this area and will be informed by the work of the sectoral AI Enablement Group in conjunction with consultation with the staff side of the LANC as appropriate.
- Discipline and Grievance Policies and Procedures- the sector will revise the grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures and implement supports for implementation for HR personnel to support implementation at local level.
- Policy on Neurodiversity – as part of ongoing work to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, a template policy on neurodiversity for the sector will be developed as part of the sectoral workplan.

Local People Strategies

When developing their own people strategies and workplans, local authorities will wish to consider the following:

- Workforce agility has been identified as a priority and challenge within strategic workforce plans and the benefits for career and personal development for employees should be noted.
- The LGMA has recently developed a template for a 100-day induction for new employees. Local authorities should include information on union membership and local union representatives as part of this induction programme.
- The values and principles of equality, diversity and inclusion on all nine grounds, set out in the Equality Acts (gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the traveller community), should be emphasised in any local strategy.
- Interview boards should continue to be provided with the training and information necessary to ensure equality of opportunity for all candidates.
- Coaching and mentoring of personnel on an ongoing basis should be built on to assist career development and retention across the local authority.
- As an effective mechanism to improve staff engagement, local authorities may wish to consider best practice in relation to annual staff surveys and learn from existing approaches in the sector.

LANC role

A number of other issues were also discussed, and it is agreed that sectoral or national issues which currently are outside the scope of both the sectoral and local people strategies will be addressed as usual as part of the LANC agenda.

Introduction

Local government is at the heart of local community, economic and social life in Ireland. The thirty-one local authorities are independent statutory bodies with their own democratically elected councils and management structures which provide a forum for local democratic leadership, offer 1,100 individual public services and have a mandate to take action to support the interests of the local community. With approximately 32,000 employees, the sector is responsible for expenditure of €7.8bn and estimated capital expenditure of €7.42bn (2025 figures).

Local government has evolved and adapted in response to changing circumstances over its history. The profile of the services we deliver, the way they are delivered, and the profile of our workforce has changed accordingly, but the core role and values of local government remain the same – to serve the public and the local community, and to act with honesty, impartiality, integrity and in the common good.

The Strategic Framework for Workforce Planning for local authorities, agreed in 2024, identified a number of challenges - democracy, public service and trust; delivering on priorities; evolving operating model; leadership in local climate action; funding of local government; and technology, innovation and new ways of working.

The Framework also sets out a vision for a future-ready local government system that provides strong civic leadership, excellent public services and actively promotes the community interest to improve quality of life for all, supported by a committed, engaged, agile and skilled workforce.

The development of an updated People Strategy for the sector evolved from the work completed on the Framework, including responding to the challenges and opportunities arising in a changing work environment. The Strategy has been developed through extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders across the sector, including local authority Directors of Services, HR Officers and HR personnel. It is also informed by local authority corporate plans, employment legislation and government policy priorities.

The Local Government People Strategy 2026–2031 sets out a renewed vision for human resources and people development. It builds upon the foundations of the previous strategy and responds to a rapidly evolving operating environment, shaped by digital transformation, demographic shifts, legislative change and new expectations around work and public service delivery.

The strategy aims to enhance the capacity and capability of the local government sector to deliver high-quality, citizen-focused services. It provides a roadmap for building a resilient, inclusive and future-ready workforce, aligned with the values of public service and the unique role of local government in Irish society.

The strategy is structured around three pillars—Attract and Recruit, Engage and Retain, and Develop and Upskill - with objectives and actions under each pillar clearly outlined.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles underpinning this strategy are drawn from extensive sectoral consultation, good HR practice, key insights from the strategic workforce planning process and feedback from the sector’s HR community. These principles guide both strategic objectives and tactical actions across the pillars of the strategy.



- Strategic alignment** - the strategy is rooted in the priorities of the Strategic Workforce Planning Framework, local authority corporate plans and national government policy.
- Employee-centric design** - initiatives are designed to improve the lived experience of employees, from recruitment to development and retention.
- Inclusivity and accessibility** - actions in the Strategy aim to reduce barriers and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Evidence-based practice** - the strategy is informed by research, a metrics-based approach, legislation and best practice models including Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) standards.
- Collaboration and engagement** - stakeholder input is central, with ongoing consultation through the sector Human Resource networks, Directors of Services and employee feedback mechanisms at sector and local level.
- Uniqueness of local government** - the three pillars are designed recognising the unique features of local government – 31 independent local authorities, each with their own unique circumstances and considerations, operating as a local government system to develop shared and consistent approaches where there are common issues. The Local Government People Strategy enables a sectoral, shared, consistent approach and also for specific local authority tailored approaches to suit local circumstances, as appropriate.

Capacity and Capability to Deliver

The successful delivery of the People Strategy 2026–2031 relies on key enablers and the building of capacity and capability to support strategic workforce development across the local government sector.

Strategic workforce and business planning is central to aligning organisational design, service innovation and future skills with corporate objectives. This is supported by the sector's Strategic Workforce Planning Framework and the use of skills audits, capability mapping and performance data.

Digital transformation is a key enabler, with the sector embracing digital and ICT strategies to enhance service delivery and employee development.

Policy development will be continuous to support existing and new employment legislation.

Training and support for policy implementation will aim to ensure compliance, accessibility and alignment with corporate planning and organisational culture and values.

Our HR teams will be working in an increasingly digital environment requiring stronger analytics capability and more rigorous ways of measuring skills, performance, engagement and work patterns. At the same time, local authorities will be navigating a diverse, multi-generational workforce with varying needs and expectations. HR capability is a priority, with investment in HR skills, data analytics and future use of digital and ICT for improving how we work. The Strategy supports the delivery of HR leaders' programmes to support senior HR personnel in their roles, and the identification of further skills supports sessions.

Partners and Stakeholders

The successful implementation of the Local Government People Strategy 2026–2031 depends on strong collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders across the sector and externally. These relationships are essential to the co-design and delivery of the People Strategy initiatives, delivering learning and development and ensuring alignment with national policy and organisational goals.

Sector stakeholders include employees, line managers, senior management teams, HR personnel, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and national and local employee representatives.

Sector engagement with our stakeholders is critical to shaping and delivering initiatives that reflect the needs and values of the sector. The People Strategy also emphasises ongoing consultation with staff unions and alignment with departmental priorities.

Key external delivery partners include, for example, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), AHEAD, One Learning, Regional Training Centres, third-level institutions, government departments and professional bodies such as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Our partners provide expertise, training resources and strategic input into programmes such as leadership development, digital readiness, apprenticeship programmes and coaching.

Technology and systems providers play a vital role in enabling accessible, modular learning and HR systems and data analytics.

Collaboration with Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and Occupational Health services support our wellbeing and inclusion objectives.

Governance and Review

The Local Government People Strategy 2026 -2031 was developed by the sector's People Strategy Steering Group which will report on its implementation and outputs to the sector's Performance Management and Organisational Development Committee.

Pillars	Attract and Recruit	Engage and Retain	Develop and Upskill
Strategic Objectives	We will strengthen our sector employer brand by streamlining and improving our recruitment processes so that we engage with diverse talent pools to ensure we attract and recruit the best candidates.	We will foster a positive work culture, which reflects our values and supports organisational performance, employee engagement and employee wellbeing.	We will support and promote L&D for all our employees to provide for accessible and relevant L&D pathways, to future proof our workforce and to strengthen organisational capability across the sector
Enablers and Tools	<p>STRATEGIC WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS PLANNING – organisation design, innovation in service delivery, future skills, change management and business agility</p> <p>ICT & DIGITAL STRATEGY – digital workforce, digital skills, digital workplace, maximise digital and emergent technology</p> <p>POLICIES, PROCEDURES – effective and transparent organisational policies, compliance (e.g. Official Languages Act, Public Sector Duty, Disability Strategy), efficient HR systems and processes</p> <p>HR CAPACITY TO DELIVER –HR skills development, business partnering, HR digitisation and optimisation, HR metrics and data, CIPD membership pathways</p>		

Pillar One – Attract and Recruit

Our Aim

We will strengthen our sector employer brand by streamlining and improving our recruitment processes so that we engage with diverse talent pools to ensure we attract and recruit the best candidates.

The Attract and Recruit pillar focuses on positioning local government as an employer of choice and enhancing the sector's ability to attract diverse, skilled and motivated talent.

Central to this is an emphasis on employer branding, marketing and communications that highlights the unique value of working in the local government sector and individual local authorities, including the opportunity to improve quality of life for citizens, public service ethos and values, learning, development and career opportunities and work life balance, including wellbeing programmes and flexible work policies. A unique selling point for working in local government is that its values centre around public service, the common good and sustainability.

Innovative recruitment pathways which include graduate programmes, apprenticeships, internships and student placements will help us respond to hard to fill vacancies and provide for our future workforce requirements.

Our approach will focus on the candidate experience and accessible, inclusive recruitment, utilising digitisation, automation and responsive application processes to ensure our policies and procedures are fair, open and support our public service values and obligations.

Supporting the sector and local authorities to reach and go beyond the minimum statutory employment target for persons with disabilities by availing of effective and inclusive recruitment processes will be a priority.

Effective onboarding and induction during an employee's first year is important, supported by learning and skills development, including effective coaching and mentoring of new joiners to ensure they gain structured support.

The Attract and Recruit pillar is supported by learning and development, strategic workforce planning, digital transformation, policy alignment and evidence-based research and practice.

Delivery is enabled through partnerships with Public Jobs, AHEAD, apprenticeship providers, schools and third-level institutions, training providers and other potential stakeholders.

Pillar One - Objective 1:

To promote the sector as an employer of choice, including implementing the local government recruitment communications strategy to increase branding, and raise awareness of the diverse, impactful and valuable work of the local government sector, as part of the wider public service.

Actions:

- Improve Employer of Choice marketing and brand, including through unified messaging and sectoral recruitment assets, including use of localgovernmentjobs.ie and our local government social media channels.
- Develop approaches to support communication of the unique values and purpose of local government.
- Develop digital recruitment marketing assets, including employee profile videos for marketing communications, clearer descriptions of job roles and targeted messaging for different cohorts.
- Develop national recruitment communications supports to increase branding and raise awareness of the diverse, impactful and valuable work of the local government sector and to promote job and career opportunities and the potential for development and progression offered by working in local government.
- Engage and build relationships with partners such as AHEAD, Business in the Community, Junior Achievement and key educational institutions to support placement programmes and TY work experience programmes in the sector.
- Develop assets for job and careers fairs and student school and college outreach.
- Engage proactively with the Public Sector Apprenticeship Plan and the Public Sector Apprenticeship Leadership Group, with a view to developing further opportunities for apprenticeships in the sector. Explore career pathways and opportunities for those completing apprenticeships.
- Continue to progress graduate recruitment and its potential in the sector and explore development pathways and opportunities for those completing graduate placements.

Pillar One - Objective 2:

To streamline and improve recruitment processes, including standard templates and inclusive application and selection stages.

Actions:

- Disseminate learnings from national recruitment campaigns to inform sectoral strategies.
- Integrate candidate experience data from user-centred design research into recruitment process improvements, policy reviews and development.
- Design engaging and accessible user-centred candidate booklets, advertisements, job specifications and other recruitment materials clearly outlining our jobs and the benefits of working in a local authority and our sector.
- Deliver a consistent approach to interviewer skills training and develop recruitment personnel to support inclusive recruitment and selection in the sector.
- Identify hard to fill roles and examine sectoral initiatives or responses for implementation.
- Develop exit interview templates and guidelines and use exit interview data to inform turnover statistics, particularly in areas of high turnover.
- Support sectoral compliance with Irish language (Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003–2021), Disability Act 2005 and other statutory employment targets and requirements.
- Develop standard metrics and indicators for recruitment processes and outcomes.

Pillar One - Objective 3:

To establish consistent, supportive and effective onboarding, induction and probation processes across the sector.

Actions:

- Develop guidelines, e-learning tools and other supports for standardised 100-day induction programmes, building in a coaching and mentoring mindset approach and sharing effective examples already in the sector.
- Facilitate sector-wide training for managers and team leaders to foster inclusive onboarding and to embed workplace culture.
- Create mentoring guidelines to support new joiners.
- Develop sectoral probation guidelines.

Pillar Two – Engage and Retain

Our Aim

We will foster a positive work culture, which reflects our values and supports organisational performance, employee engagement and employee wellbeing.

The Engage and Retain pillar focuses on fostering a positive, inclusive and purpose-driven workplace culture that supports delivery of high-quality services to the citizen and the achievement of our organisation's objectives, and which promotes employee wellbeing, motivation and retention. It recognises that a committed and engaged workforce is essential to delivering high-quality public services and achieving organisational goals.

Key strategic opportunities include strengthening organisational culture through clear values, effective communication, continual learning and development and meaningful performance management and development.

The strategy promotes a collaborative environment where employees feel valued, supported, and heard. Team leaders and line managers play a central role in modelling behaviours, providing feedback, and managing and supporting employees in a blended working environment.

The strategy has regard to the LGMA's Wellbeing Strategy template, so as to address the four pillars of wellbeing in the workplace – physical, mental, social and financial – with appropriate strategies, structures and action plans.

Work-life balance and wellbeing are prioritised through initiatives such as health promotion, psychological safety, resilience programmes, and proactive engagement with Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) and Occupational Health Services.

The Engage and Retain pillar is supported by employee engagement and involvement, strategic workforce planning, digital transformation, policy alignment and evidence-based research and practice.

Delivery is enabled through partnerships with key stakeholders to foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture.

Pillar Two - Objective 1:

To foster a positive workplace culture, responsive to our changing environment and aligned with organisational values, which reflects the uniqueness of local government and puts the public at the centre of how we work.

Actions:

- Research and share examples of where organisational values and culture are articulated, communicated and understood and behaviours are demonstrated and modelled.
- Support ways to promote employee voice and participation in open and informed communications, across the organisation, ensuring effective information and consultation on key organisational activities and plans.
- Develop guidelines and other supports on engagement strategies and practices, including innovative use of technology, employee recognition and appreciation, and supporting social and inclusion networks at work.
- Support wellbeing and resilience strategies such as wellness frameworks, EAP access, health checks and information, and a range of policies and procedures to promote work-life balance and psychological safety. Develop metrics to measure outcomes.
- Foster and develop skills for collaborative Employee Relations with unions and staff representatives, respecting established Industrial Relations mechanisms.

Pillar Two - Objective 2:

To support and value effective people management in a changing work environment, underpinning delivery of corporate goals and objectives, while encouraging employees at work to be connected, engaged and motivated to provide high-quality services.

Actions:

- Review the model for performance management within the sector to reflect the evolving operating environment and local government values and to make PMDS more meaningful, ensuring effective feedback and highlighting recognition and achievement, while setting standards for individuals and teams and addressing skills gaps.
- Review use of the current competency framework in performance management and examine potential of a new capability framework model.
- Ensure the organisation and employees gain from the benefits of blended working (work life balance, retention, environment, employer offering) and that these are balanced with business needs, individual and team engagement, high customer service standards and organisational needs.
- Develop employee and line manager training and other supports, including the use of technology and innovative workspaces, to ensure collaboration, creativity and communication in a blended working environment.
- Review and update sectoral HR policies and procedures, identifying gaps or areas for development to ensure that they are effective, up to date, accessible and easily understood by employees and line managers and aligned with organisational and employee needs.
- Examine different delivery methods for HR policy information, for example digital, to support engagement, accessibility and understanding and to encourage appropriate delegation of decision making.
- Embed the use of standardised HR metrics to support policy review and development and evidence-based decision making.
- Continue to embed strategic workforce planning as part of our corporate planning and budgetary cycles, including sharing examples of effective or innovative approaches.
- Enhance and improve the provision of regular HR workforce planning data and reports and linking to sectoral learning and development strategies for future skills identified.

Pillar Two - Objective 3:

To enhance and maintain an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace culture and environment which supports the delivery of accessible services in co-creation with our employees lived experience.

Actions:

- Develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion framework for the sector, which builds on other public service models and practices and support its application to existing strategies, in accordance with the Public Sector Duty.
- Foster psychological safety in our workplaces and ensure dignity at work is embedded, with supporting policies & procedures and learning and development support.
- Provide leadership and commit to modelling an EDI work culture, visible role models and inclusive stakeholder consultation.
- Provide training and other supports for EDI, disability awareness and universal design.
- Support and promote an increase in recruitment and retention of people with disabilities and communicate support available such as reasonable accommodations.
- Support implementation of workplace Age Friendly Guidelines and Age Friendly Recognition Process with the sector.
- Continue to promote a safe and healthy working environment, in compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act and other relevant legislation.

Pillar Three – Develop and Upskill

Our Aim

We will support and promote learning and development for all our employees to provide for accessible and relevant learning and development pathways, to future-proof our workforce and to strengthen organisational capability across the sector.

The Develop and Upskill pillar focuses on building a resilient, agile and future-ready workforce through accessible, inclusive and on-going learning and development. This pillar recognises the need to equip employees and managers with the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to meet evolving service demands and organisational priorities.

Key opportunities include the development of sector-wide learning frameworks in leadership, digital readiness and business agility, emphasising accessible learning development pathways and supported by modular and flexible training which is tailored to individual roles and development.

The sectoral approach to coaching and mentoring will be key by making coaching and mentoring more accessible and embedding a coaching mindset to support employees.

Future skills identification is a priority, with actions to conduct skills audits and to support mobility through a skills-based approach.

Knowledge management, succession planning and customer-focused learning are also central themes, supported with formal coaching and mentoring.

This pillar will underpin our new joiners gaining structured support and providing our employees and managers with development frameworks, coaching and a shared language to develop staff.

The Develop and Upskill pillar is supported by strategic workforce planning, digital transformation and a learning and development strategy with an emphasis on in-person and digital learning.

Delivery is enabled through partnerships with the Institute of Public Administration, learning (IPA) and development providers, Regional Training Centres and third-level institutions.

Pillar Three – Objective 1:

To support sector-wide identification of future skills, including developing guidelines for skills audits, learning and development needs assessment and competency development.

Actions:

- Review approaches to skills audits and share good practice in this area on a sector-wide basis.
- Review emerging approaches and themes from strategic workforce plans and develop key areas for skills development, learning and development content and curriculum development, focusing on future skills needs, including in the area of digital skills and AI.
- Examine potential for programmes focusing on innovation and creativity and change management.
- Review and update the local government competency framework to ensure it identifies the skills and capabilities appropriate for the sector's evolving operating environment and resource requirements and to deliver on existing and future service needs.
- Develop accessible learning and development pathways for employees, including elearning, blended learning, apprenticeships, continuous professional development and other avenues for development and upskilling.

Pillar Three - Objective 2:

To develop a sector-wide learning and development strategy with the aim of making learning and development content in accessible formats.

Actions:

- Co-design and develop content and/or pilot programmes sector-wide for team leaders and line managers with the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG) and other relevant sectoral committees.
- Develop leadership training curriculums in partnership with the sector and training providers, supported by formal coaching and mentoring.
- Develop standard legislative and technical training such as GDPR, FOI, Irish language etc. working with the national training services groups and regional training centres.
- Develop accessible learning and development pathways for employees.
- Explore options for enhancing workforce agility and mobility within the sector, and the wider civil and public service and state agencies.
- Explore and develop further approaches for knowledge management and succession planning, with the support of digital learning, coaching and mentoring.
- Develop standard metrics and indicators for learning and development processes and policies, including training attendance data and learning and development evaluation.
- Co-design and develop content for equality and inclusion training for employees and line managers to support the embedding of our equality, diversity and inclusion framework.
- Continue to support comprehensive Health and Safety training in the workplace.

Pillar Three - Objective 3:

To continue to implement and embed coaching and mentoring in the sector to support employee development, people management and to support a positive workplace culture in a changing environment.

Actions:

- Design and evaluate the mentoring programme for graduate planners in partnership with the relevant training suppliers and develop national guidelines for mentors applicable to other areas of the local authority.
- Embed coaching and mentoring in the sector through a benefit led 100-day coaching and mentoring model for new employees, leadership coaching programmes including senior manager specific coaching, and workshops for HR and Learning and Development personnel.
- Enable the potential for knowledge management and transfer through coaching and mentoring and knowledge transfer tools.
- Continue to support the roll out and training for accredited coaching and mentoring in the sector.