

**Business Support and Digital
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
24 October 2024**

Employee Engagement Survey 2024 Results

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Summary

The report presents the findings of the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and raise any questions and/or suggestions.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. This report is for information and lies outside the council's policy and budget framework or Council Plan.

3. Background

- 3.1. The annual employee engagement survey takes a snapshot of how employees are feeling about their workplace at a given time, so it's helpful to understand the environment in which they're working at that time, and any significant organisational changes that may be taking place or have taken place.
- 3.2. Since the previous survey (September 2022), the workforce has undergone a number of key organisational changes. At top-level, a new Chief Executive, a new Leader and new political agenda; at workplace level, upheaval for many based at Gun Wharf due to the part closure of the building and the effect this has had on day-to-day working practices and working lives.
- 3.3. This year the survey not only sought employee views about working at the council in general but also measures the impact of the [Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-28](#) action plan. This strategy sets out the priorities for action identified by Corporate Management Team (CMT) following the previous annual survey in 2022. Priority areas included pay, reward, recognition,

wellbeing, communications and engagement, and more, and are measured within the survey. Since the implementation of the engagement strategy, work has been done both corporately and locally across teams to address these areas. Details of this work can be found on [Medspace here](#).

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The survey was open from 1 May to 7 June 2024. 1331 respondents completed the questionnaire - a 58% response rate (the same as 2022). The survey's margin of error is +/- 1.7 to a 95% confidence level.
- 4.2. Directorate response rates:
 - Business Support Department (BSD) 75%
 - Children and Adults, including Public Health (C&A) 58%
 - Regeneration, Culture and Environment (RCE) 48%
- 4.3. The *Our Medway Live* event was launched during the survey period, Where appropriate feedback from this event is used to support or add to findings.
- 4.4. The results were presented to CMT on 24 July together with a number of suggestions/recommendations for further action. A summary of the actions agreed can be found in para. 5.60. These results have also been presented to Employment Matters Committee on 4th September.
- 4.5. All colleagues have been invited to attend a virtual drop-in session(5 held and one for service managers) to find out the results of the survey. These took place during July and August and were reasonably well attended. It was positive to receive feedback from colleagues at these sessions about the findings and also some colleagues shared their own experiences. Some of these comments, together with comments from 'open text' questions are included within this report (where appropriate).
- 4.6. Results have also been shared with the Medway Maker engagement champions network who are currently offering their views on how the priorities/actions identified by CMT can be addressed, and how they would like to be involved in influencing change going forward.
- 4.7. The results
- 4.8. This section highlights the main themes and observations of the 2024 survey. Where relevant, comparisons are made with the results of the 2022 survey and in some instances comparisons are made at directorate level to provide further insight and a better understanding of the bigger picture.
- 4.9. **Section one: Communication and engagement**
- 4.10. **Two-way communication:** It's positive to note that two-way communication between employees and management has improved for most levels in the senior management hierarchy. CMT has seen the greatest improvement, with an increase of 13% (to 52%). To note, feedback from colleagues say this is

largely down to Richard's 'meet the teams day' and the *Medway Live* events. Directors and Assistant Directors have both increased by 7% (to 50% and 56%) respectively, however we still need to increase this. Two-way communication between employees and their Service Managers however has decreased by 1% to 70%, however this is still a good result.

- 4.11. When comparing responses across directorates there are some differences, e.g. the RCE Directorate would appear the least satisfied with how they communicate with their DMT, (nb given the number of locations and buildings within the directorate this would be expected). Respondents working in C&A would appear the most satisfied. These are outlined in table 1.

Table 1.

How would you rate two-way communication between employees and:	BSD	C&A (inc PH)	RCE	Total org.
CMT (%good)	56%	55%	45%	52%
Director (%good)	44%	58%	42%	50%
Asst Director (%good)	51%	65%	45%	56%
Service Manager (%good)	73%	70%	67%	70%
Line Manager (%good)	85%	88%	84%	86%

- 4.12. Respondents were asked to select the two-way communication channels they currently use the most and those they would be interested in using. From table 2 below there is an appetite to connect more with members of their directorate management teams and service managers, using a mix of face-to-face and virtual channels.

Table 2.

Currently use the most	Interested in using
Annual engagement survey (62%)	Webinars with an opportunity to ask questions in real time (50%)
Microsoft Teams (58%)	Directorate drop-ins with Director and management team (50%)
Instant messaging eg What's App (29%)	Service specific drop-ins with Service Manager (48%)
Face-to-face briefing by senior managers (26%)	Virtual drop-ins with Service Managers (47%)
Service specific drop-ins with Service Manager (24%)	Virtual event eg focus group/workshop (47%)

- 4.13. Communicating with Directorate Management Teams (DMT)

- 4.14. **DMT visibility and accessibility:** results indicate communication with DMTs has improved since 2022. 54% of respondents agree they are now able to access their DMTs (an increase of 9% from 2022). Those who agree their DMT's are more visible has improved by 8% (to 55%); and those agreeing their DMT will do what they say they will do has risen by 9% (to 51%).

4.15. Following the last survey DMT's were keen to understand what visibility/accessibility would look like, so respondents were asked to write in their own words how their DMT's were accessible to them and also how they would like their DMT's to be more accessible. Popular responses can be found in table 3 below.

Table 3.

Are accessible	Would like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>face-to-face sessions</i> • <i>attendance at awaydays</i> • <i>staff briefings</i> • <i>physical presence in the office</i> • <i>engagement forum</i> • <i>walk the floor</i> • <i>open door policy</i> • <i>replies promptly to emails</i> • <i>sits in the canteen with us</i> • <i>sends our regular updates showing good practice, and more....</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Virtual drop-ins</i> • <i>attend team meetings</i> • <i>speak informally to staff</i> • <i>monthly Q&A sessions</i> • <i>attend service meetings on a regular basis</i> • <i>be in the office more</i> • <i>be seen to be taking an interest</i> • <i>more regular opportunities for two-way discussions</i> • <i>employee forums, and more....</i>

4.16. **DMT engagement** factors have also improved with 44% agreeing their DMT acts on employee feedback (a 9% increase from 2022) and 54% agree their DMT gives them enough opportunities to express their views to them (an increase of 13%). Comparing these questions across the directorates, BSD rate their DMT's higher in all areas, with RCE rating theirs the lowest. Increases are required across these factors.

4.17. **Feeling informed:** There was a 22% increase in respondents who feel well informed of council plans and progress, with 67% in 2024 feeling well informed, and 87% who want to feel well informed (3% increase).

4.18. **Telling us what you think:** 68% of respondents felt they had enough opportunities to tell us what they think, (an increase of 6% since 2022). Across the directorates, 70% of respondents in BSD believed they had enough opportunities compared to 60% in RCE.

4.19. **The top five communication channels** used to find out about council news and information are:

1. Corporate *Our Medway* newsletter.
2. *HR Monthly* newsletter.
3. Team meetings
4. *Richard's Roundup* CEO newsletter.
5. Global email.

4.20. **Section two: My role and my line manager**

4.21. Results at work level, including relationships with line managers, have historically been very positive. Similarly, the 2024 results are indicating high satisfaction at this level.

Work areas that score highly include:

- 86% agreed their team work together to find ways to improve the service.
- 80% agreed their team are encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.
- 83% agreed their manager encouraged and supported them as individuals.
- 82% agreed their manager recognised when they had done their job well.

4.22. However, it's worth noting that in all of the above questions there has been either a 1% to 2% decrease from 2022. These slight slippages when looked at individually may seem insignificant, but collectively may be indicating a negative shift that may need addressing or investigating if the trend continues.

4.23. Areas that have improved since 2022 include those who:

- feel valued - increased by 8% to 67%.
- have opportunities to develop their career - increased by 7% to 50%.
- feel involved in decisions that affect their work (increased by 3% to 65%).

4.24. **Workload:** 41% agreed they had enough time during their normal working hours to get their work done (no significant change since 2022). Across the directorates 44% of those working in BSD agreed they had enough time, 41% in RCE agreed, and 40% in C&A agreed. It is to be noted at the time of this survey 'rightsizing had not taken place.

4.25. **Induction:** 17% of respondents said they had either joined Medway Council or started a new job in a different service within the past 12 months, of which 77% received an induction, and 96% were made to feel welcome during that induction. Work is already underway to improve the induction experience and is linked to the work force strategy, improving retention.

4.26. **Section three: Working for Medway Council**

4.27. There is a section within the survey called 'Working for Medway'. These questions are repeated in all our annual surveys and cover areas specific to working for Medway Council as an organisation (as opposed to their views of working in their role). Results indicate respondents feel more positive about working for Medway Council and this trend has continued since the previous survey in 2022. Whilst increases in satisfaction are relatively small, they do relate to workplace culture which is traditionally considered to be a slow-to-change concept.

4.28. There was a 5% increase (to 51%) of respondents who agreed the council motivated them to achieve its objectives, and 67% agreed they would recommend the council as a place to work (an increase of 5% from 2022). 85% said they cared about the future of the council (increase by 6% from 2022) and 79% of respondents agreed that one of the main reasons they work for Medway Council is to make a positive impact on society, (6% greater than in 2022).

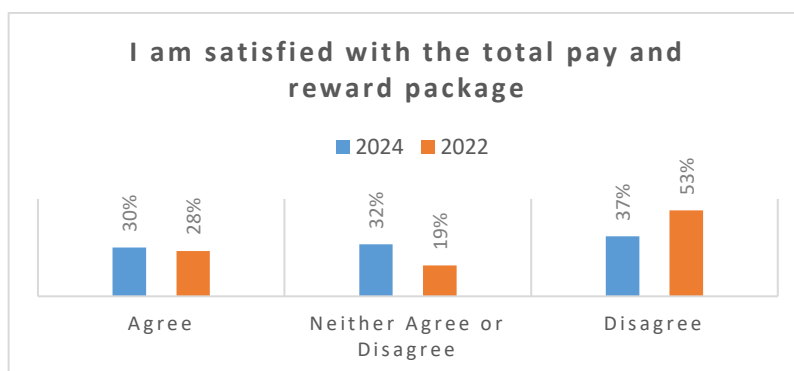
4.29. There was an increase of 1% (to 63%) of respondents who felt proud to work here. Across the directorates, those in C&A felt the most pride (70%), followed by RCE (63%), and BSD (52%).

4.30. **How long do you want to work here?:** when asked how much longer respondent want to work here; 57% said the next three years, 26% said the next two years, 11% said they wanted to leave within the next 12 months, and 3% wanted to leave as soon as possible. These figures are similar across the directorates. It is to be noted we did not ask why someone might wish to leave and further analysis shows almost 50% of those who wish to leave in the next two years are close to retirement age. Further work at team level around succession and talent management is ongoing.

4.31. **Section four: Pay, Reward, Recognition, and career progression**

4.32. **The total pay and reward package:** results show 30% of respondents were satisfied with the total pay and reward package, an 2% increase since 2022. Whilst the Medpay review will not increase pay for all, at the time of this survey a number of teams still had not completed the transition.

4.33. The graph below compares 2024 respondents views on the total pay and reward package to those who answered the same question in 2022. Whilst the increase in those satisfied with the package is small, those who are dissatisfied has reduced by 16%, and those neither satisfied nor satisfied has increased by 13%. This would appear to indicate that respondents attitudes towards pay and reward are moving in a positive direction.



4.34. This subject was discussed at the virtual feedback sessions, it was positive to receive feedback from colleagues as follows:

'In my team, Medpay has made a huge impact on staff satisfaction in a positive way. Also doing the appraisal, and seeing the difference about staff having a choice and empowerment on their career progression. Staff feel more confident and have a sense of direction.'

4.35. **Employee benefits:** employees were asked what benefits from our current benefits offer they valued the most, and to suggest new benefits they would like to see introduced. Table 4. shows the top five responses from each.

Table 4.

Top five most valued employee benefits	Top five most desired employee benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual leave, 2. Local Government Pension Scheme 3. Flexible working 4. Sick pay entitlements, and 5. eye care vouchers. <p><i>Nb Within directorates choices 1st to 4th are the same, with 5th choice changing to car user allowance for both C&A and RCE.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discounts at council owned facilities including leisure centres and events 2. Parking permits and travel discounts 3. Private health care and dental plans 4. Buying and selling annual leave, 5. Payment of professional fees.

4.36. **Recognition:** 82% said their line manager recognises them for a job well done and 65% felt they got enough recognition for the work they do. 67% felt valued for the work they do. Within directorates those respondents working in C&A felt the highest valued (72%), those working within RCE felt the least valued (62%). Following the survey responses a Reward and Recognition Strategy has been presented to CMT with options to take forward a number of benefits.

4.37. When asked what types of recognition respondents would value the most, the top three were:

- 65% additional annual leave (time-off).
- 54% verbal recognition.
- 42% training opportunities to support their professional development.

4.38. **Career progression:** 50% of respondents said they had enough opportunities to develop their career, (increased by 7% since 2022). Within directorates, 54% of respondents in C&A, (compared to 47% within both RCE and BSD) believed they had enough opportunities to do so. 66% agreed their line manager supported them to progress their career, there were no significant differences within directorates in this area.

4.39. **Section five: Employee wellbeing**

4.40. Compared to 2022, 5% less respondents (55%) in 2024 agreed the council provides them with the wellbeing support they needed.

4.41. **Mental health/wellbeing and support:** 58% of respondents described their mental health as good (1% increase from 2022). Across the directorates: within BSD 61% good, 59% in C&A good, and 53% in RCE good. 69% of respondents agreed the council encourages employees to talk openly about mental health problems and 54% agreed the council supports employees who experience mental health problems (a drop of 2% since 2022).

4.42. The percentage of managers who feel well supported to manage staff experiencing mental health issues has decreased by 18% since 2022 to 61%. As part of the Medium Term Financial outlook we have requested an increase to the Learning and Development budget so we can target improvement

across the organisation and at the leadership level. Professional training for mental health is within this request.

- 4.43. Respondents were asked to suggest ways in which the council could improve mental wellbeing for employees, and suggest how it could reduce any stigma around mental health in the workplace. Table 5 gives examples of their suggested.

Table 5.

Ideas for improvement	Ideas to reduce stigma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>free yoga/pilates sessions;</i> • <i>flexitime to recharge without booking in advance;</i> • <i>group activities – not work related,</i> • <i>offer Healthy Mind days;</i> • <i>Awaydays;</i> • <i>stop people feeling isolated at home;</i> • <i>make mental health training mandatory for managers;</i> • <i>wellbeing drop-in sessions;</i> • <i>sensitivity training;</i> • <i>more campaigns like Press Pause.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Senior management to talk about their own mental health struggles and/or offer guidelines on how they cope;</i> • <i>open forum to discuss mental health across the council;</i> • <i>better counselling;</i> • <i>more face-to-face time with colleagues;</i> • <i>hold a Mental Health Annual staff conference,</i> • <i>better training for managers.</i>

- 4.44. **Loneliness:** When asked how often respondents experienced feelings of loneliness within a working week, 13% replied often (monthly), 32% replied sometimes (six months) and 51% replied never – these figures are comparable to 2022. Across the directorates, feeling loneliness most often were C&A (15%), then BSD (12%) and RCE (10%). These results will feed into our ways of working ahead of the GunWharf refit.
- 4.45. **Physical wellbeing:** 43% of respondents agreed the council provides enough support to help employees maintain a good physical wellbeing (down 3% since 2022). 68% have a quiet and comfortable space to work in (down 5% since 2022). Across the directorates 83% of respondents from BSD agreed they had a comfortable space to work in, compared to 65% in C&A and 61% in RCE. These results will feed into our Healthy Mind and Wellbeing Group for further consideration.
- 4.46. **The impact of the *Our Ways of Working (OWOW) Policy* on employee wellbeing:** Respondents agreeing the new ways of working have had a positive impact on their physical wellbeing dropped by 13% to 48% in 2024. Likewise, those respondents who believe the *OWOW Policy* encourages a good work-life balance has dropped significantly by 25% since 2022 (to 50%). It is to be noted that the disagree has not increased, this is more so people have shifted to the neither agree or disagree, however further work will continue to understand this.

- 4.47. **Taking regular breaks:** 48% of respondents agree they were encouraged to take regular breaks from screen based work throughout their working day, 36% agree they feel more comfortable taking breaks since the launch of the Press Pause campaign in January 2024. Across the directorates those respondents who felt the most encouraged to take breaks were from BSD (59%), followed by C&A (47%), and those that feel the least in RCE (40%).
- 4.48. **Section six: Equality, discrimination and declaring equality personal details**
- 4.49. 81% of respondents agreed they felt comfortable to be themselves at work without fear of discrimination. This has dropped 3% since 2022. This is not where we want to be as an organisation. Further work is ongoing.
- 4.50. 47% of respondents felt comfortable sharing their equality personal details on MyView. Those who felt uncomfortable were asked to say why, and what would make them feel comfortable. The top five reasons are set out in Table 6.

Table 6.

Top five reasons given for not feeling comfortable to share:	What would make you feel comfortable to share? Top five reasons
Prefer to keep personal details private. (47%)	Nothing would make me comfortable to share.(31%)
I don't see why you need it. (18%)	If I knew who was going to have access to my details. (20%)
I am worried how it might be used or who will have access to it. (17%)	If I knew how my details were going to be used (19%)
I am worried that by revealing my details may lead to discrimination or bias. (13%)	If I better understood why you need them (17%)
I don't trust Medway Council. (3%)	If I knew how my details would be stored.(12%)

- 4.51. **Experience of discrimination or harassment:** 6% of respondents said they had been discriminated and/or harassed at work within the past 12 months. For those, 33% was by a colleague, 17% by their manager and 22% preferred not to say. Smaller instances were from external partner/provider (8%), a member of the public (7%) and from a client (5%).
- 4.52. The Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010) that were cited were: Disability (21%), Age (14%), gender and race 13%, sexual orientation (6%) and religion/belief 5%. 29% preferred not to say.
- 4.53. Of the 28% who reported discrimination or harassment, 27% of that 28% were satisfied with the outcome. This is not where we want to be as an organisation. Further work is ongoing.
- 4.54. **Experience of bullying:** 8% of respondents said they had personally experienced bullying at work within the past 12 months. 35% of them said

they were bullied by a colleague; 32% by their manager/team leader and 16% preferred not to say. Other instances were 3% by an external partner/provider, 2% by clients or member of the public, and 1% by a councillor or other elected representative. 46% said they had reported the bullying, 18% of that 46% were satisfied with the outcome. This is not where we want to be as an organisation. Further work is ongoing.

4.55. **Section seven: Measuring our Employee Value Proposition**

- 4.56. Our Employee Value Proposition (or People Promise) sets the tone of our organisation in terms of priorities and values. It informs prospective employees, and existing employees the benefits they can expect as an employee of Medway Council in addition to, and including, the regular pay and other contractual benefits. It sets out our approach to areas such as recognition and reward, fairness and flexibility, encouragement and support and releasing potential. Our EVP seeks to attract like-minded individuals who feel a similar purpose to work here, and stay working here. Our EVP is attached as appendix one.
- 4.57. The employee survey is the tool we use to measure whether what we 'promise' is realistic. Only by asking colleagues who currently work within the organisation can we measure whether it is a true reflection and whether or not we are promising what we are not delivering. Survey results are indicating slight slippage in a number of EVP elements when compared to 2022, but also some small improvements. An overview illustration is attached as appendix two.
- 4.58. Open-ended questions
- 4.59. A number of open-ended questions were asked within the survey, inviting respondents to write in their own words about the work-place areas. Open question responses, whilst rich in content may inadvertently identify respondents and/or their colleagues. For this reason a summary is included at Appendix three.
- 4.60. Corporate Management Team feedback
- 4.61. CMT reviewed the survey results on 24 July 2024. From this a number of key actions were agreed. These included:
- (i) Deep dive analysis to be undertaken in the following four key areas:
- How members of CMT can increase their organisational contact by giving greater focus to communicating their champion roles, and/or widening the distribution of divisional newsletters, and DMT's to consider what more they can do to be more visible during working days.
 - What can be done to make colleagues feel more valued and empowered, looking more closely at the findings to determine the interpretation of empowerment by employees.

- The *Our Ways of Working Policy* – further analysis of the results and incorporate this work via the Gun Wharf sub group to feed into the Corporate Landlord Board.
- Employee sickness and management of sickness absence.
- Further work around Bullying and harassment
- Further work to support wellbeing, particularly mental health

(ii) Other CMT recommendations:

- Thought needed on how to improve response rate for next year.
- Results to be shared with Service Managers at a future Service Managers meeting – all Service Managers to attend.
- Split the CEO communication results for future years.
- Prepare for significant older cohort retiring within the next two years – succession planning is key.
- Share the draft Reward and Recognition Strategy with CMT on 2 October 2024 to include a range of new potential employee benefits.
- Carry out more targeted work on discrimination (it is hoped that further embedding of our Values and Behaviours will have a positive impact in this area).
- DMT's/SMT's to discuss their divisional results in greater detail and update action plans.
- Continuous review and discussion and the inclusion of the employee voice through either snap surveys and/or Medway Makers.

5. Risk management

5.1 The risks of not taking employee views onboard can have significant effects on a number of key work areas that affect service delivery.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
A lack of motivation in the workforce, reduction in performance and adverse affect on service delivery and productivity.	Failure to take employee views on board, provide feedback and make changes based on employee views.	Update the Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-28 with the actions agreed by CMT.	BIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic

B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	II Major III Moderate IV Minor
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6. Consultation

- 6.1 The draft employee engagement survey was shared with Corporate Management Team, Service Managers, the Medway Makers and the Disabled Workers and Carers Network. Amendments were made where appropriate.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1 The survey was shared in electronic format available on pc, laptop, tablet and mobile phone. Whilst paper versions were available this was due to accessibility. A number of actions will be considered and aligned to our climate change ambition, for example, cycle to work scheme that reduces emissions.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications.

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Appendices

- Appendix one: The Employee Value Proposition (EVP) or 'People Promise'
Appendix two: Comparisons of EVP survey results (2022 and 2024)
Appendix three: Summary of employee responses to open text questions

Background papers - none