

Employment Matters Committee

2 September 2025

Staff Survey 2025 results

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Summary

The report presents the findings of the 2025 Staff Survey.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 The Employment Matters Committee is asked to note the report.

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 staff survey takes a snapshot of how employees are feeling about their workplace at a given time, so it is helpful to understand the environment in which they are working at that time, and any significant organisational changes that may be taking place or have taken place.
- 3.2 Since the previous staff survey (September 2024), the workforce is still in a state of transition, this is largely down to our constant strive for financial sustainability, ongoing repair and design of our new headquarters and the pending Local Government Reorganisation, and the pay review.
- 3.2 The survey not only sought employee views against our priority areas (including pay, reward, recognition, wellbeing, communications and engagement), it also seeks to understand how people feel about working at the Council in general and measures the impact of the [Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-28](#) action plan.
- 3.3 CMT reviewed the survey results in 2024 and agreed to focus on a number of areas, these included:
- (i) A 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 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.

(ii) Other CMT recommendations:

- 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 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).
- Review of the Equality Board and staff networks with greater senior leadership involvement.
- DMT's/SMT's to discuss their divisional results in greater detail and update action plans.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 The survey was open 30 June to 25 July 2025. 1333 respondents completed the survey which equates to a 55.5% response rate. This was slightly lower than the 2024 response rate of 58%. The survey has a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of +/- 1.8.
- 4.2 Directorate response rates:
- Business Support Department (BSD) was 76.2%
 - Children and Adults, including Public Health (C&A) was 50.8%
 - Regeneration, Culture and Environment (RCE) was 50.6%
- 4.3 The results will be shared with CMT on 3 September together with discussion on a number of themes and recommendations for future action.
- 4.4 A session will be held with Service Managers on the 10 September to share the results and further sessions have been arranged throughout September to share the results with the organisation as a whole.

5. The results

- 5.1 This section highlights the main themes and observations of the 2025 staff survey. Where relevant, comparisons are made with the results of the 2024 survey and in some instances, comparisons are made at the directorate level to provide further insight and a better understanding of the bigger picture.

5.2 Communication and engagement

- 5.2.1 **Two-way communication.** Following feedback from the 2024 survey a 'Chief Executive' option has been added to this question. It is positive to note that two-way communication between employees and management has continued to improve for most levels in the senior management hierarchy. 'Your Director' has seen the greatest improvement with an increase of 3.2% (to 52.9%). Two-way communication between employees and CMT has however decreased by 3.4% (to 49.0%).
- 5.2.2 When comparing response across directorates there are some notable differences. For example, two-way communication between employees and their Assistant Director/Director is significantly higher in C&A when compared against BSD and RCE. These are outline in table 1 below.

Table 1.

How would you rate two-way communication between employees and:	BSD	C&A	RCE	Total org.
The Chief Executive	68.8%	58.5%	62.3%	62.3%
CMT	48.1%	53.1%	44.2%	49.0%
Director	49.0%	57.4%	49.9%	52.9%
Assistant Director	52.5%	67.8%	48.9%	57.9%
Service Manager	72.9%	68.3%	72.3%	70.7%
Line Manager	89.8%	87.2%	86.2%	87.5%

- 5.2.3 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
Microsoft Teams (57.8%)	Webinars with an opportunity to ask questions in real time (52.4%)
Face-to-face briefing sessions by senior managers (29.7%)	Directorate drop-ins with your Director and management team (49.2%)
Regular in person event with the Leader and Chief Executive (27.6%)	Virtual drop-ins with senior management on topical subjects (47.8%)
Instant messaging (26.9%)	At a virtual event (47.4%)
At an event (25.8%)	Service specific drop-ins with your Service Manager (47.0%)

5.3 Communicating with Directorate Management Teams (DMT)

- 5.3.1 **DMT visibility and accessibility:** results indicate that communication with DMT's has continued to improve since 2024. 56.4% of respondents agree that they are able to access their DMT's (an increase of 2.2% since 2024). Those who agree their DMT's are more visible has improved by an additional 3.4% (to 57.8%) and those agreeing their DMT will do what they say they will do has risen by 4.9% (to 56.0%).
- 5.3.2 **DMT engagement** factors have continued to increase with 52.3% agreeing their DMT acts on employee feedback (an 8.0% increase since 2024) and 59.5% agreeing

their DMT give them enough opportunities to express their views to them (an increase of 5.2% since 2024). Comparing these results across the directorates, C&A rate their DMT's higher in all areas bar acting on employee feedback. RCE rates theirs the lowest across all areas.

5.4 Council plans and progress

- 5.4.1 There has been a 6.6% increase in the proportion of respondents who feel well informed about council plans and progress, rising to 73.7%. Additionally, 89.3% of respondents expressed a desire to be kept informed, representing a 2.5% increase compared to the previous survey. These figures suggest a growing appetite among staff for clear and consistent organisational communication.
- 5.4.2 For 2025, two new questions were introduced to assess awareness and understanding of the One Medway Council Plan. While 73.8% of respondents reported being aware of the plan, only 59.2% felt well informed about its content and implications. This gap between awareness and understanding highlights an opportunity to strengthen internal communications and ensure that strategic priorities are clearly conveyed across all levels of the organisation.

5.5 Values and Behaviours

- 5.5.1 A new question was introduced this year to explore respondents' awareness, understanding, and engagement with the Council's Values and Behaviours. While 93.0% of respondents said they were aware of the Values and Behaviours, and 90.0% reported understanding them, only 49.9% agreed that they regularly discuss them within their teams. This suggests that although awareness and understanding are high, there is an opportunity to strengthen team-level conversations and reflection around these principles.

5.6 My job and my line manager

- 5.6.1 Historically, survey results relating to workplace experience - particularly those concerning relationships with line managers - have been consistently positive. The 2025 survey not only maintains this trend but demonstrates further improvement across several key indicators.
- 5.6.2 Areas of strength include:
- 86.2% of respondents agreed that their team works collaboratively to improve the service.
 - 80.6% agreed that their team is encouraged to identify and implement new and improved ways of working.
 - 80.0% felt that their line manager takes their ideas and suggestions seriously.
 - 83.3% agreed that their line manager encourages and supports them in their role.
 - 83.3% also agreed that their line manager recognises when they have performed well.
- 5.6.2 It is noteworthy that, with the exception of one question ("I care about the future of the council"), all items within this section have shown an increase compared to the 2024 results. This reflects a continued strengthening of team dynamics, leadership support, and employee engagement.
- 5.6.3 Staff empowerment has seen a significant rise, with 78.1% of respondents now feeling empowered in their roles - an increase of 15.5% compared to the 2024

survey. This suggests that employees are increasingly confident in their ability to contribute meaningfully to their work and make decisions within their roles.

- 5.6.4 Additionally, 60.2% of respondents agreed that they have opportunities to develop their careers, representing a 10% increase. This improvement is likely linked to the outcomes of the MedPay Review, which has enhanced clarity and structure around progression and reward.

5.7 Working for Medway Council

- 5.7.1 The survey includes a dedicated section titled Working for Medway Council, which is repeated annually to assess employee sentiment about the organisation as a whole, rather than their individual roles. Results from the 2025 survey indicate a continued upward trend in positive perceptions of the council as an employer. While the increases in satisfaction are relatively modest, they relate to workplace culture - an area typically characterised by gradual change - and therefore represent meaningful progress.
- 5.7.2 There was a 6.4% increase in the number of respondents who stated they are proud to tell others they work for Medway Council, bringing the total to 69.6%. Similarly, 74.0% of respondents said they would recommend the council as a place to work, reflecting a 7.6% increase compared to the 2024 survey. These improvements suggest growing confidence and advocacy among staff.
- 5.7.3 There was a slight decline of 0.4% in the number of respondents who said they care about the future of the council, with the figure now at 84.7%. While this represents a minor decrease, the overall result remains high and continues to reflect a strong sense of commitment and emotional investment in the organisation. The small dip may be attributed to ongoing organisational changes or uncertainty regarding future direction.

5.8 Your future with Medway Council

- 5.8.1 When asked how much longer respondents wanted to stay working at Medway Council, 63.8% said the next three years, 24.5% said the next two years, 7.4% said they wanted to leave within the next 12 months, and 2.7% said they wanted to leave as soon as possible. Table 3 shows that when compared to the 2024 survey there has been an improvement in the number of employees wanting to stay working at Medway in the longer term.

Table 3

	2025 results	2024 results
I want to stay working for Medway Council for at least the next three years	63.8%	56.8%
I want to stay working for Medway Council for at least the next two years	24.5%	25.9%
I want to leave Medway Council within the next 12 months	7.4%	10.7%
I want to leave Medway Council as soon as possible	2.7%	3.4%

5.9 Pay, reward and recognition

- 5.9.1 70.2% of respondents feel they receive sufficient recognition for their work, reflecting a 4.9% increase. Additionally, 84.5% said their line manager acknowledges when they've done a good job, up by 2.3%
- 5.9.2 When asked what types of recognition respondents would value the most, the top three were:
- Time off (66.6%)
 - Verbal recognition (53.8%)
 - Training opportunities (45.3%)
- 5.9.3 47.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the council's overall pay and rewards package, with a significant 17.5% increase since the previous survey. This improvement is likely linked to the outcomes of the MedPay review and the council's second consecutive year of awarding a 5% cost-of-living increase and the introduction of new benefits, like the leisure centre discount. Satisfaction levels vary across directorates, with the highest reported in BSD at 52.5%, while C&A recorded the lowest at 44.8%

5.10 Employee wellbeing

- 5.10.1 **Wellbeing support:** Compared to the 2024 survey, 6.4% more respondents (61.8%) agreed that the council provided them with the wellbeing support they needed.
- 5.10.2 **Wellbeing support for managers:** 61.2% of managers reported feeling well supported in managing staff with mental health issues, representing a modest increase of 0.5%. The awareness of the Managers' Wellbeing Support Hub on MedSpace has increased significantly, with 60.6% of managers now familiar with the resource, a rise of 20.1% compared to the previous survey.
- 5.10.3 **Physical wellbeing:** Satisfaction with physical wellbeing support has increased, with 58.7% of respondents agreeing that the council provides sufficient resources to help maintain good physical health - a rise of 15.4% since 2024. Furthermore, 63.1% of respondents reported feeling encouraged to take regular breaks during the working day, reflecting a 14.8% improvement.
- 5.10.4 Following the implementation of the Press Pause campaign, 36.6% of respondents reported feeling more comfortable taking short breaks during the working day. Directorate-level analysis shows variation, with BSD reporting the highest level of comfort at 46.4%, compared to 31.0% in RCE.
- 5.10.5 70.5% of respondents reported having access to a comfortable and quiet workspace. However, there is notable variation across directorates: BSD respondents reported the highest access at 83.4%, while C&A respondents reported the lowest at 64.6%, indicating significant disparities in working conditions.
- 5.10.5 **Mental wellbeing:** 61.6% of respondents rated their mental health as good, representing a 3.7% increase compared to 2024. In addition, a new question introduced in the 2025 survey asked respondents to assess how well the council supports employees experiencing mental health issues. Over half of respondents (54.4%) indicated that the council provides effective support in this area.
- 5.10.6 **Loneliness:** The proportion of respondents who reported never experiencing feelings of loneliness or social isolation has increased by 7.6%, rising from 51.3% in 2024 to

58.9% in 2025. Table 4 below outlines the year-on-year changes across all response categories, indicating a general improvement in social wellbeing among staff.

Table 4

Response	2025	2024
Never	58.9%	51.3%
Sometimes	28.5%	32.3%
Often	9.1%	12.6%
Always	2.3%	3.2%

5.11 Bullying and harassment

5.11.1 82.4% of respondents agreed that they feel comfortable being themselves at work without fear of discrimination. This represents a 1.2% increase compared to the previous survey, indicating a continued positive trend in perceptions of inclusion and workplace culture.

5.11.2 **Discrimination and harassment:** 78.5% of respondents indicated that they would know who to contact if they experienced discrimination or harassment at work. This reflects a 2.5% increase compared to the 2024 survey, suggesting improved awareness of support channels and reporting procedures.

5.11.3 6.7% of respondents reported personally experiencing discrimination or harassment in the workplace within the past 12 months. Table 5 below provides a breakdown of responses by the source of the reported discrimination or harassment.

Table 5

Response	%
A colleague	40.4%
Your manager/team leader	37.1%
I prefer not to say	16.9%
A member of the public	10.1%
An external partner/provider	6.7%
Other	3.4%
A client	1.1%
An elected member	0.0%

5.11.4 Of the 6.7% of respondents who reported experiencing discrimination or harassment in the workplace within the past 12 months, only 33.7% stated that they had formally reported the incident. This represents a 5.9% increase compared to the 2024 survey, indicating a growing willingness among employees to raise concerns through appropriate channels. However, of those who did report an incident, only 23.3% expressed satisfaction with the outcome, indicating that further work may be required to improve confidence in the resolution process.

5.11.3 **Bullying:** 6.2% of respondents reported personally experiencing bullying whilst working here over the past 12 months. Table 6 below provides a breakdown of responses by the source of the reported discrimination or harassment.

Table 6

Response	%
A colleague	47.6%
Your manager/team leader	35.4%
I prefer not to say	19.5%

Other	4.9%
A member of the public	3.7%
An external partner/provider	2.4%
A client	0.0%
An elected member	0.0%

5.11.4 Of the 6.2% of respondents who reported experiencing bullying in the workplace within the past 12 months, 46.3% stated that they had formally reported the incident. This reflects a 2.2% increase compared to the 2024 survey, suggesting a modest improvement in reporting behaviour. However, only 5.9% of those who reported bullying expressed satisfaction with the outcome, highlighting concerns around the effectiveness and transparency of current resolution processes.

5.11.5 These findings underscore the importance of continued focus on safeguarding and organisational culture. While there are signs of progress in awareness and willingness to report inappropriate behaviour, the low satisfaction levels among those who have engaged with formal procedures indicate a need for further review. Strengthening trust in reporting mechanisms, ensuring timely and fair investigations, and improving communication around outcomes as well as general awareness around culture and behaviour standards will be critical to fostering a safe and inclusive working environment.

5.11.6 The council remains committed to promoting a culture where all employees feel respected, supported, and empowered to speak up without fear of reprisal. Ongoing training, clearer guidance, and visible leadership support will be key components in addressing these challenges and reinforcing a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination, and harassment.

5.12 Induction

5.12.1 19.7% of respondents said they had started working for Medway Council (or a new job in a different service) since June 2024. Of these, 83.3% confirmed that they received an induction upon starting. Directorate-level analysis shows variation in induction delivery, with BSD reporting the highest rate at 92.9%, followed by C&A at 80.9% and RCE at 80.3%. Encouragingly, 95% of respondents who received an induction stated that it made them feel welcome, indicating a generally positive experience of onboarding across the organisation.

5.12.2 These findings contribute to a broader understanding of employee experience at Medway Council. A well-structured and welcoming induction process plays a critical role in shaping early perceptions of organisational culture, supporting employee engagement, and promoting retention. The high percentage of respondents who felt welcomed suggests that the council's efforts to improve onboarding are having a positive impact.

5.12.3 However, the variation in induction delivery across directorates highlights an opportunity for greater consistency in practice. Ensuring that all new starters receive a comprehensive and supportive induction, regardless of service area, will be essential in maintaining a positive and inclusive working environment.

5.13 Local Government Review

5.13.1 **Understanding LGR:** As part of the 2025 staff survey, additional questions were introduced to assess awareness and understanding of the Local Government Review (LGR). The findings indicate that:

- 80.2% of respondents confirmed they were aware that the council is being reorganised by central government.
- 64.6% reported understanding what the reorganisation means specifically for Medway Council.
- 57.1% stated they understood the next steps in the LGR process.

5.13.2 These results suggest that while general awareness of the LGR is relatively high, further communication may be required to improve understanding of its implications for Medway Council and the forthcoming stages of the review.

5.13.3 **Desired outcomes of LGR:** When asked about the outcomes of LGR in relation to their job roles, respondents identified the following as the five most important personal priorities:

- Increased financial stability for the council – 67.1%
- More efficient public services – 59.6%
- Continued delivery of high-quality public services – 59.5%
- A continued focus on local communities and their issues – 56.3%
- Maintaining public trust – 44.9%

5.13.4 These findings highlight a strong emphasis among staff on financial resilience, service quality, and community engagement as key outcomes of the reorganisation.

5.13.5 **Updates on LGR:** Survey responses indicate that 64.8% of staff feel well informed about local government reorganisation. Furthermore, 80.1% expressed a desire to receive regular updates regarding the progress and implications of LGR. These findings suggest a continued need for clear and consistent communication to support staff understanding and engagement throughout the reorganisation process.

5.13.6 **LGR feelings:** When asked about the areas where they would like further information, the majority of respondents (78.5%) identified job security as their primary concern. This was followed by future employment terms and conditions (42.2%) and changes to job roles (39.1%).

5.13.7 In terms of overall sentiment towards the Local Government Review, 30.4% of respondents reported feeling positive about the changes. However, the majority (59.3%) expressed a neutral stance, indicating neither positive nor negative views.

5.13.8 These findings suggest that while a proportion of staff are optimistic about the reorganisation, most remain undecided. This highlights a clear opportunity to enhance staff engagement through targeted communications that address key concerns and clarify the anticipated impacts of LGR, which are largely unknown and might be the reason for the neutral stance.

6. Risk Management

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.	Review latest result and align to the continuous implementation the actions and commitments laid out in the Employee Engagement Strategy 2023-2028	BIII
Likelihood: A: Very Likely B: Likely C: Unlikely D: Rare		Impact: I: Catastrophic II: Major III: Moderate IV: Minor	

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Following JCC and EMC, the staff survey results will be shared with Corporate Management Team on the 3 September followed by Service Managers on the 10 September. All staff sessions have been arranged in September to share the results with the organisation as a whole. Further DMT engagement will take place on local results to inform action plans and TBC engagement via BSDO&S and Cabinet members more widely.

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

None

Background papers

None