

2026–2028

**DELIVERING**  
the Future Together

# Our people and culture strategy

Together, we are the moment makers – delivering the future for Oxfordshire

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**moment makers**

 **OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

# Creating an environment where *everyone* can thrive and perform

Our collective strength at Oxfordshire County Council comes from how we live our values through the dedication, commitment, and resilience we show each day in our work. Together, we all play a part in delivering service excellence for the residents of Oxfordshire, whilst building and enhancing our culture – every manager, team, leader and colleague contributes.

We offer diverse services and we have colleagues from a wide range of professions and vocations. These include over 300 social workers, 280 firefighters, more than 200 support workers, as well as registrars, solicitors, planners, tree surgeons, librarians, archaeologists and many more. It's a fascinating place to work.

The Our People and Culture Strategy is about creating an environment where everyone can thrive and perform. It is our ambition

to continue to be an 'employer of choice' in Oxfordshire – by working together, we can make our council a welcoming and inspiring place for all, where diverse strengths and perspectives are celebrated and everyone can succeed.

Our 'Including Everyone' framework for 2025–29 sets out our vision for achieving an inclusive workplace, inclusive service delivery and inclusive communities – demonstrating our commitment to reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion in all that we do.

The year ahead brings big changes for all of us – from preparing for local government reorganisation and devolution, to navigating some real financial pressures. But change also brings opportunity.

Together, we have a chance to reimagine how we serve Oxfordshire, transform our services, and to create a more connected, supportive

and ambitious culture across our communities. To deliver this, we need to stay flexible, resilient and responsive so we can shape the change that lies ahead.

Our ideas, feedback and experiences have shaped this strategy. Through open conversations and collaboration with colleagues from all service areas, our inclusion networks and unions, enabling us to focus on what matters most to us all.

This strategy will help us make a difference for Oxfordshire and its residents. Are you ready for the challenges ahead? Find out more in the following pages.

# Highlights of what we've achieved together 2024–2026

## Lead

- We've increased our focus on developing leadership capability across the organisation. During 2025, more than 100 hours were invested in development activities, including monthly leadership sessions and bi-annual awaydays.
- The reciprocal mentoring scheme has also continued to grow, now with 60 co-mentoring pairs, all sharing their lived experience, helping us strengthen inclusive leadership behaviours.

## Thrive

- The Oxfordshire Connects event brought together more than 700 colleagues, with 89 per cent of feedback saying it was useful and helped them feel more connected and supported.
- We have undertaken a cultural review and introduced a new, shortened pulse survey to gauge how everyone is feeling about working at Oxfordshire County Council – listening to your voices and shaping our engagement approach.

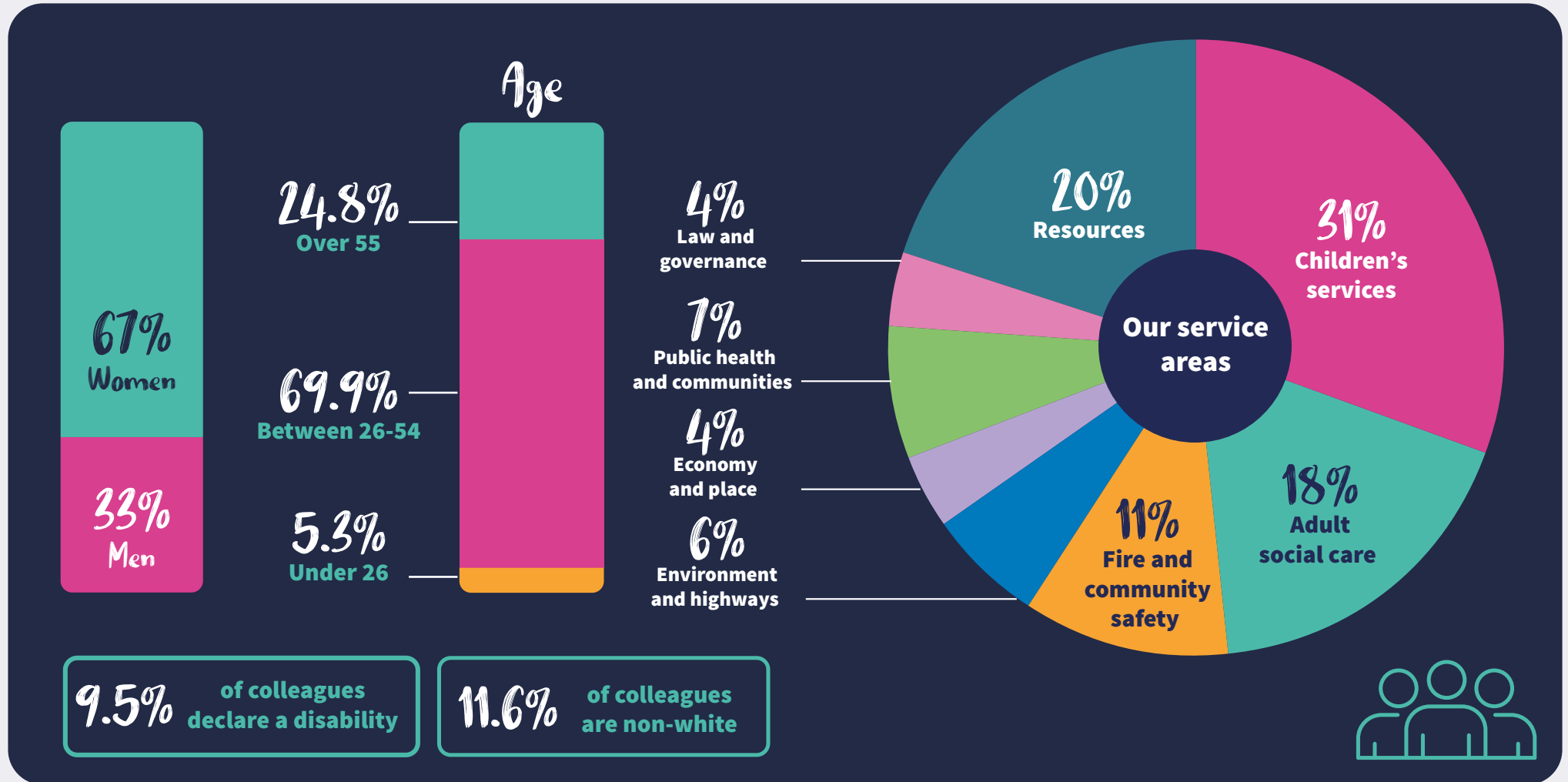
## Grow

- Apprenticeships are an important way for us to recruit and develop future talent. More than 340 colleagues are currently on apprenticeship programmes.
- Facilities management are recruiting significant numbers of apprentices and developing clear talent pipelines, while legal services and both adult's and children's services continue to grow strong apprenticeship cohorts – including many social work apprentices.
- Apprentices are bringing fresh skills, progressing into permanent roles, and helping to fill hard-to-recruit posts.

## Attract

- Children's social care legal team has been strengthened by working closely with the talent team to attract candidates into hard-to-recruit roles.
- The team successfully recruited five new full-time colleagues – including newly qualified solicitors – which means there is less reliance on agency support and resulted in a significant reduction in agency spend over the year.
- This has improved stability, strengthened continuity for children and families and enhanced the overall quality of support delivered across the service.

# Over 5,000 colleagues delivering diverse services in Oxfordshire



# Our people: Culture

- Our shared values shape our culture, guiding how we work together and support each other.
- Our Delivering the Future Together Champions work closely with teams to bring these values to life on a daily basis.
- We work closely with recognised unions – including UNISON, the Fire Brigades Union and others representing education and specialist staff – to ensure every voice is heard and everyone feels supported.
- Our ‘Including Everyone’ framework sets our vision and commitment to lead the way in creating a fair and inclusive Oxfordshire, by building an inclusive workplace culture, delivering inclusive services and tackling inequalities in the communities we serve.
- Colleagues describe Oxfordshire County Council as a kind, supportive and purpose-driven place to work, with strong relationships, inclusive leadership, teams who look out for each other, and the flexibility that helps people do their best work.
- At the same time, colleagues say the experience isn’t always consistent and that clearer priorities, simpler processes, more joined-up communication and well-managed change would help everyone feel more confident, informed and supported across all teams.



# Our vision and priorities

## Our vision for people and culture in Oxfordshire County Council

A fair, inclusive, and forward-thinking workplace where everyone can thrive, collaborate and deliver outstanding services for our communities. We lead with integrity, compassion and agility, celebrating diversity and putting inclusion at the heart of everything we do. Together, we are ready for the future.



- Leading by example at every level, living our values every day.



- Creating a supportive, inclusive environment where everyone can do their best.



- Help everyone build the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for the future.



- Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented, diverse people.

# Where we focus next – together

## Lead

- Strengthen our shared vision and culture and further embed our values into everyday practice.
- Invest in leadership development to help us succeed in a period of rapid change.
- Identify and develop future leaders, from a more diverse pool of candidates, and build succession pipelines.

## Thrive

- Make people data, policies, and systems clear and easy to access for all.
- Run engagement activities that put equality, diversity, and inclusion at the centre, and keep everyone informed and involved as we change.
- Promote healthy working practices and provide proactive support so colleagues can thrive at work.

## Grow

- Improve the learning and development offer and make this more accessible for everyone.
- Invest in our managers, helping them to understand their responsibilities through targeted learning and equipping them to lead teams through change.
- Open up career pathways and prioritise opportunities for care leavers.

## Attract

- Develop workforce plans to fill key roles and secure future talent.
- Strengthen our brand and identity to make the organisation a welcoming, rewarding place for all.
- Improve recruitment and talent management to build diverse pipelines.

# How will we know we're successful?

## Diverse and inclusive workforce

- Colleagues reflect Oxfordshire's communities at all levels, including senior roles, and we continue to diversify our workforce.

## Engagement and culture

- Colleagues are engaged and supported, with a strong sense of belonging and trust. Regular pulse surveys help us listen and respond, measuring how we lead through change.

## Career growth and social mobility

- Colleagues have clear opportunities for progression, the apprenticeship levy is fully utilised, and we support social mobility—for example, by providing 30 care leaver work placements.

## Fair and competitive pay

- Colleagues know our pay is fair, and pay gaps are low and clearly reported.

## Retention and turnover

- We retain talented people, maintain healthy turnover, and celebrate those leaving as well as those progressing.

## Operating efficiently and sustainably

- We make best use of our workforce by converting more temporary roles to permanent, ensuring efficient use of resources and achieving financial sustainability.

## Positive onboarding and induction

- New colleagues join quickly and smoothly, with a positive onboarding and induction experience.

## People thrive and feel well

- Colleagues are healthy, supported, and able to perform at their best. Sickness absence is reduced, and employee relations cases are resolved promptly, helping boost productivity and morale.

## Delivering LGR together

- We successfully deliver local government reorganisation, working collaboratively and staying focused on public service for Oxfordshire's residents.

# Organisational people and culture KPIs

<b>Employee engagement</b>	Colleagues recommend Oxfordshire County Council as a great place to work.
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Average working days lost and stress related absence reduces.
<b>Retention in hard to fill roles</b>	Retention of talent within hard to fill roles.
<b>Workforce diversity</b>	Diversity that matches our Oxfordshire community. Improved diversity mobility rate.
<b>Apprentices and care leavers</b>	Use the apprentice levy to support hard to fill roles and care leaver placements.
<b>Organisational redesign</b>	Successful redesign which achieved the savings target.
<b>Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps</b>	Maintain low pay gaps.
<b>Time to hire</b>	Quicker recruitment and successful hires.
<b>Agency spend and usage</b>	A reduction in spend on agency workers.

We will provide six-monthly updates to track and share our progress against these KPIs.