

Children's Services

Employee Voice Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Employee Voice Group is for individuals to communicate and engage with opinions and ideas to support the wellbeing, effectiveness and job satisfaction of Children's Services employees by:

- Providing an open forum for employees to come together, share their strengths and support one another in the challenges they face in the workplace. The group may report their views, findings and suggestions to CSLT/xCSLT
- Improving the cascade of information from the leadership team to front line employees
- Planning and delivering 3 Diagonal Slice events each year
- Producing a monthly Team Brief for all Children's Services employees
- Evaluating employee survey results and proposing further survey areas
- Carrying out consultations and other projects requested by CSLT or xCSLT
- Proposing projects and improvements to CSLT or xCSLT

2. Membership

- 2.1 Every team in Children's Services (operational and support teams) will be asked for a minimum of one representative for the Employee Voice Group. The representative(s) should not be a member of CSLT, xCSLT or the Front-Line Managers' Forum. The Team Manager should seek nominations at a team meeting and employees which would like to join are to complete the [Employee Voice Group – Joining Form](#)
- 2.2 Representatives should prioritise attendance at Group meetings. Where an emergency or absence from work prevents a representative from attending, they should nominate another member of their team to attend, and they should send their apologies and reason for absence to the meeting organiser.

3. Frequency and venue

- 3.1 The Employee Voice Group will meet once a month. Dates for the calendar year will be agreed at the first meeting, and thereafter at the November meeting each year for the following year.

- 3.2 Meetings will be in hybrid format. Whilst representatives are encouraged to attend in person in order to develop networks with their colleagues, we recognise that time and travel requirements may mean that some can only attend virtually.
- 3.3 Papers will be sent out at least one week before the meeting, to give representatives the opportunity to consult their colleagues concerning agenda items.

4. Workplan

The Employee Voice Group will adopt a workplan aligned to its purpose and objectives and update this at each meeting.

5. The Chair and other roles

- 5.1 The Change Management Lead will chair the first meeting of the Employee Voice Group. This meeting will arrange the appointment of an elected Chair and Vice Chair chosen by secret ballot. All eligible employees of Children's Services will be made aware of the opportunity to nominate themselves. Once the closing date for nominations is passed, if there is only one nomination, that person will be duly elected Chair. If there is more than one nomination, the Change Management Lead shall arrange a secret ballot of all representatives to the Group. The ballot will be held on the principle of one person, one vote, and the person with the highest number of votes shall be deemed to be the elected Chair.
- 5.2 The Chair will hold office for one calendar year and is responsible for arranging the election of their successor in accordance with the process set out at 5.1 above. If no candidates come forward, the Vice-Chair will become Chair for the following year.
- 5.3 The Chair may propose to any quorate meeting of the group the creation of further posts to assist the Group in its work. Appointments to any such posts shall be by the process of nomination and secret ballot of all Group representatives set out at 5.1 above.
- 5.4 The Chair will act as Access Champion for Employee Voice Group. They will seek to ensure that all meetings and communications of the Group are inclusive and accessible and will act as first point of contact for any Group member who has concerns regarding inclusivity or accessibility.

6. Role of the representative

The role of the representative is key to achieving the purpose of the Employee Voice Group. Representatives should ensure that they are an effective conduit between their team and Group meetings. This will require that they

use team meetings not only to feedback key items from the Group, but to discuss current and potential future Group agenda items with their colleagues.

7. Inclusivity

- 7.1 We want the Employee Voice Group to connect with and strengthen other service-based and corporate work that promotes inclusivity within Dorset Council. We will therefore share all Employee Voice Group agendas and minutes with the Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, who will have a standing invitation to attend meetings of the Group.
- 7.2 We will encourage representatives from the Breaking Down Barriers Group to liaise between that group and Employee Voice.
- 7.3 We will pro-actively seek, from these contacts and others, news items relating to inclusivity for the Team Brief.

8. Quorum and agenda

- 8.1 The meeting shall be quorate when ten or more teams are represented at the meeting.
- 8.2 The agenda for each meeting will comprise:
 - i) Approval of minutes of the previous meeting
 - ii) Review of the action tracker
 - iii) Items agreed at the previous meeting, and decisions required
 - iv) Items requested by any representative not later than 2 weeks before the meeting
 - v) Items requested by CSLT or xCSLT
 - vi) Reports from any sub-group (see below)

9. Decision-making

- 9.1 Meetings of the Employee Voice Group will take decisions that support completion of the objectives set out in its workplan. However, it is not an executive meeting.
- 9.2 Wherever possible, the Chair will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, they will arrange a vote by show of hands of those attending. Where a vote is necessary, the Chair should summarise carefully what the meeting is being asked to vote for or against. The numbers voting for or against any proposal, but not the names of voters, should be recorded in the meeting minutes.

10. Delegated work

A quorate meeting may decide to appoint representatives to sub-groups to which more detailed pieces of work may be delegated. Any sub-group will meet the following requirements:

- i) It will have a Chair appointed by the main Group meeting.
- ii) The Chair or a sub-group member appointed by them will report to each main Group meeting.
- iii) No sub-group shall be of more than one year's duration.

11. Notes and actions

- 11.1 Notes of each Group meeting shall be prepared by a representative of the group on a rotation basis. The draft notes shall be reviewed by the Chair and then presented to the next Group meeting for formal approval.
- 11.2 The note taker will also be responsible for updating an action tracker, which will be reviewed at every meeting.
- 11.3 Sub-groups should keep notes of their meetings, but formal minutes are not required.

12. Reporting

Some items may require more in-depth reporting than minutes alone can provide. With the meeting's prior approval, the Chair will prepare an additional report on the item and send to xCSLT and CSLT, copied to Group members.

13. Review of Terms of Reference

These terms of reference will be reviewed by the Employee Voice Group 6 months after implementation, and annually thereafter. The Project and Policy Officer, Quality Assurance and Partnerships will remind the Chair as reviews fall due. Any revisions to the Terms of Reference will be presented to Practice Policy and Procedures Group for approval.