

THE DESTINATION

Cheshire East Council's ambition is to be a place where staff are proud to work, feel valued, trusted and supported, and understand their intrinsic role in achieving the Council's vision. Following a Local Government Association (LGA) review of organisational culture in January 2018 and the yearly staff survey, it was clear that this was not everyone's experience. There was good practice but it could be inconsistent and this just wasn't good enough for this Council. Recognising a fresh approach was needed, an ambitious programme commenced with a major focus on employee engagement and co-production at the heart. Sticky Change was appointed to be the Council's partner in designing and co-delivering the 'Brighter Future Transformation' Culture Programme.

THE INTERVENTION

From the outset, our mantra was to do change with and not to people; to not just engage as many staff as possible in the conversations around change but also to get them involved – to encourage them to be the agents of change. Some but not all of the interventions we undertook are outlined here.

One key objective was to identify a vision for what they wanted to workplace to feel like and as a result refresh the behaviours that were aligned to the Council's Values. Using workshops and online surveys, we co-produced and set out a vision for shared purpose, well led, valued people who succeeded together. A clear set of 'I will' and 'I won't' behaviours for everyone, a complementary set of behaviours for people managers and for Elected Members. Finally, there was an Employee Deal which clearly outlined what to expect from working at CEC.

To fully engage the staff, we strength recruited a team of 100+ Brighter Future Champions to tell the story of the new vision and behaviours. Their role was and continues to be to: Communicate – Share information and feedback ; Role Model – Live the values and demonstrate the aligned behaviours; Influence – Be a critical friend; Mentor – Support others to engage and translate what it means to live the CEC Values as individuals and teams.

In addition, we worked alongside the HR and

OD teams to deliver a holistic refresh of all the areas connected to the employee journey, from recruitment, induction to reward and recognition, training and development and performance management. To further embed the new behaviours, all people facing managers were trained in how to have both motivational and challenging conversations using the new framework. Toolkits were developed to help with this initiative.

THE 'SO WHAT' FACTOR

A year on from the start of the programme, the Council is reporting the following: the behaviours are now part of all recruitment conversations, an integral part of the Council wide induction programme and performance appraisal conversations. Some significant outcomes include that in a recent staff survey, 81% of everyone responding said that 'my line manager recognises when I have done my job well' and 84% said that they have the opportunity to participate fully and make helpful contributions.' Working days lost due to absence are at an all time seven year low and Make my Day nominations are up 400%. Finally, a LGA Peer Review exercise in January 2020 concluded that "The culture change programme has made a profound difference to the way this organisation functions and the experience of staff."

"Sticky Change were an exemplary partner, with the right amount of creativity, challenge and support. They worked with the organisation to co-produce, co-deliver and jointly engage our workforce, building skills and capacity across the organisation. The outcome has been a significant and positive culture change and a firm foundation for a wider whole organisation transformation programme.

Mary and the team at Sticky Change are a delight to work with and truly engage in a partnership approach with the organisation. They worked brilliantly with elected members, senior managers and front-line staff alike, providing a positive approach to co-production, support and positive challenge.

What we have achieved is amazing, but we could not have done it without Sticky Change!"
Kath O'Dwyer Acting Chief Executive