

# connected



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## Is your OD function match-fit?



**By Pam Parkes,  
Commissioner,  
Birmingham City  
Council and PPMA President**

As president, one of my priorities is to champion the critical work HR delivers. This month, I'm focusing on colleagues that enable workforce and service transformation. The following case studies, both winners of the PPMA Excellence awards, highlight the impact of organisational development (OD) to drive service improvement.

First, Walsall Council shows the importance of using data, combining cultural and wellbeing insight to improve outcomes for colleagues.

The 2021 staff survey revealed significant issues hindering team culture and performance. Staff felt a lack of empowerment, insufficient career development opportunities, and low morale.

To address these issues the OD team designed Connected Working. A mix of learning and coaching for people managers, the programme is designed to cultivate an inclusive, psychologically safe environment. One where staff feel valued, empowered, and continuously developed.

Unlike traditional training, the programme incorporates short, actionable sessions interspersed with coaching sessions for managers to clarify and effectively implement learning.

The use of coaching held managers accountable for embedding changes and drove sustainable managerial changes and culture change across the organisation. Team cultures were transformed, and a culture of trust and respect established around a shared vision, positively impacting workforce well-being and resident services.

Another example of the power of OD is the workforce transformation and change initiative delivered by NHS North West London Pathology (NWLP).

Following the amalgamation of three NHS trusts in 2018, NWLP emerged as a cohesive entity spanning seven London hospitals, conducting more than 40 million medical diagnostic tests annually with a workforce of more than 1,000 employees.

Disparities in operational practices, cultural norms, performance metrics, and systems among the trusts led to isolated departments that lacked a unified identity or culture. Fragmentation that hindered employee experience, development opportunities, and operational efficiencies across sites.

To address these challenges, NWLP embarked on a transformational journey aimed at unifying staff and systems while standardizing patient care quality. The initiative began with an overhaul of induction training, catering to both new and transitioning staff members, to establish a consistent learning framework fostering a singular NWLP culture and enhancing cross-departmental

collaboration. This was complemented by the implementation of a centralised system, consolidating multiple legacy platforms.

The outcomes of this transformation include a more consistent learning experience and an efficient, widely utilised system facilitating unified training, staff mobility, and cultural cohesion across NWLP. Significant cost savings on training and legacy systems have enabled investment in new technologies and enhanced learning resources. Most importantly, staff unity and engagement have improved, ensuring optimal care delivery for patients.

A match-fit OD function, one that can drive workforce and service transformation, is critical to the effective delivery of public services. Now is a good time for organisations to assess what skills HR and OD need to support transformation, make better use of data and technology, and achieve more with less funding build capability to fill any gaps. ●●●●●



## INSIDE:



- View from the Top: Shokat Lal
- PPMA's talent programmes in focus
- A new HR and digital toolkit is launched



# The heart of Sandwell's engine room

Sandwell Council's 'One HR' vision has been taking shape, and its people strategy is proving a template many organisations can learn from

By **Victoria Lee**, HR Director at Sandwell Council



It's a hugely exciting time to be leading the HR and organisational development (OD) team at Sandwell. The agenda is as challenging as anywhere, but as a natural optimist it's obvious to me that this presents incredible opportunity. And where better to be enabling, supporting and delivering change from than HR and OD.

## Our People Strategy for 2023-26

A key delivery mechanism for our Council Plan is our new three-year people strategy. The people strategy is fully aligned to our aspiration to becoming an outstanding council while remaining flexible enough to respond to inevitable change over its lifespan. We're setting our priorities under three broad themes: Employer of Choice, Culture and Transformation, and Ways of Working – incorporating dedicated priorities around attraction and recruitment, skills and potential, wellbeing, values, equality, diversity and

inclusion, leadership, organisation design, strategic workforce planning and connected workforce (hybrid and digital).

**Embedding our values and behaviours**  
We're really proud of how far we've come with rebuilding our desired organisational culture. We've developed a set of values and behaviours that articulate our shared 'We are Sandwell' expectations. These were built from the bottom up and across the organisation, and the strong foundation we've created was an important element of the council successfully coming out of government intervention earlier this year. But there is still more to be done – we all know that organisation culture doesn't change overnight, and our values can't and won't just be a virtual poster on a wall.

Further embedding of our values and behaviours is a core feature of our new people strategy. This year we're giving particular focus to leadership living the values, alongside the development of a new recruitment brand build around those values. As part of this we've asked our fantastic Local Government Association National Graduate Development Programme cohort to undertake a project to inform our approach to attraction and recruitment of future talent, including Gen Z and emerging Gen Alpha.

## Implementing Oracle Fusion

Many Sandwell employees already have access to self-service, but implementing Oracle Fusion will propel the organisation forward in terms of the data and day-to-day processes available to people in the system. This includes some basics (but new for Sandwell) like recording hours and booking leave on the system (which people will also be able to access on their personal smartphone). Not only should this be easier for everyone than emailed documents, but also will enable us to accurately measure certain key people processes for the first time.

Implementing Oracle Talent will also provide us with tech to support workforce planning and people performance. Implementation this year is just the first step in a process of transformation – not just transition to a new system, but how we can do things really differently using this technical platform, and linked to other tech tools, such as Power BI, to drive efficiency and thereby free capacity for more creative and value-added work.

## Developing our team culture.

A personal priority for me this year is the development of our HR and OD service. This means working together as one HR team; fully exploiting our collective experience, skills, and talent in a cohesive, connected and customer-focused way, in

line with our new organisation values and behaviours. It's about being agile and responsive, less risk averse and more open to change and innovation – and also empowering everyone to try new things and make decisions without fear of reprisal.

HR sits in a privileged position at the heart of the organisation. We're part of the 'engine room' and 'the moral compass of our organisation' as our Chief Executive describes it. Taking time out to fine tune this engine by prioritising service development while we are implementing Oracle Fusion, kicking off our new People Strategy, and supporting significant organisation change, is really difficult for everyone, so we're having to be smart.

Whole service away day events are not viable just now, so our fortnightly whole HR service virtual briefings are even more important to ensure everyone is connected with service and people updates, along with an awareness of the big picture as it develops. We've realigned our HR and OD team and are encouraging people to get involved with new or different things, and giving them confidence to lead the change from within.

Little by little, day by day, we're working to bring our One HR vision to life – shaping our part of the organisation on the journey to being an outstanding council. 🌈



With **Shokat Lal** – Chief Executive, Sandwell Council

## Could you tell us a little bit about Sandwell?

Sandwell is a brilliant place to live and work and I am extremely privileged to be its Chief Executive.

Sandwell has a proud history at the centre of the industrial revolution and today it has a rapidly growing, young and diverse population and is the gateway between Birmingham and the Black Country. The council was established in 1974, bringing together our six towns and this year the council celebrates its 50th birthday.

The council has an extended workforce of around 5,500 serving a population of more than 340,000.

Having succeeded in coming out of government intervention earlier this year, we recognise that we still have much work to do to ensure our residents receive the best possible services. We are very proud of the improvements we have made over recent years. There has been a huge

amount of work to get us to this point, and we have now set our ambition to become an outstanding council.

Having built the foundations we are now embarking on a significant programme of transformation with a focus on becoming a more modern and agile organisation, and improving the customer experience; ensuring we embrace the technological developments available that will enable us to drive further digital transformation.

## You have enjoyed a varied and successful career – did you have a specific plan you followed that enabled you to become a Chief Executive?

I have worked in local government for nearly 35 years, and had the privilege to serve at seven different local authorities. My career journey could perhaps be described as rather unconventional as my first role at Derby City Council was as a clerk in the revenue and benefits team in 1989.

It took me a further five years before I started on what you could describe as a formal career pathway. During this period I was offered an opportunity to support a training officer to facilitate a leadership team event and this was a turning point as it resulted in me embarking on a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification study programme. I discovered during my study and development that HR complimented my personal strengths and skill set and I believed I could add value and make a positive difference to my organisation by being part of this noble profession.

I am passionate about life-long learning and therefore any career move I have made has always been with the clear intention of expanding my responsibility and providing me with the opportunity to learn more about how local government operates. Having achieved one of my goals to be appointed to an HR director role (Coventry City Council) my next step was to move into an Assistant Chief Executive post at Rotherham MBC, a very challenging and interesting role on many levels as at that time the council was in government intervention. After a move to Barnsley as an executive director I joined Sandwell Council in 2023 as Chief Executive.

One of the challenges I experienced throughout my career was the notion of 'time served' promotions and as a result councils can miss out on opportunities to develop talented colleagues who are capable and willing to fast track their career – so I want to make sure we remove any such barriers at Sandwell and allow our ambitious colleagues the chance to flourish and thrive across all levels and service areas.

## Do you believe your route to the top via the HR profession was a help or a hindrance to your career progression?

This is an interesting question and I believe it is connected to a moment in time. Looking back perhaps eight years it was probably a hindrance as it appeared Chief Executive appointments were being made to leaders emerging with a finance background, reflecting the time of austerity and the need to make significant financial cuts across local government. However, events and priorities have changed and it appears we are now in a different moment in time when a greater importance is placed on the ability of leaders to be able to drive cultural and behavioural change across the organisation in order to ensure we can fully engage our workforce to deliver their best work every day and continue to support the modernisation of our services.

I do believe my experience and expertise gained during my time working in HR was instrumental to me being appointed to the role here in Sandwell. While part of our improvement plan during government intervention was about fixing our governance processes; fundamentally we know it's not simply new policies, strategies or procedures that help you deliver excellent services – it's about people and our organisational culture, and making sure we're all working together to make a difference and help change people's lives for the better.

## Given your connection to HR and OD, does this help or hamper your team that covers this service area?

In some ways I do feel rather sorry for the

team as perhaps I set the bar of expectation far higher than other service areas and maybe I do, on occasion, challenge more than I perhaps should. I do this from a place of good intention, but I am sure there may be times when the HR team will feel like saying: 'Oh here he goes again!'

I am however extremely mindful to ensure the leadership community understands I am not the people professional for the council, and we do have a talented team led by Victoria Lee (see above) and I seek to ensure that space is created to enable Victoria and her team to have their own voice and positively influence the shaping of our future.

I want the HR team to be insightful and help us to see ahead and look round corners, continually keeping the council on its toes and ensuring we are prepared for what is coming next rather than being reactive or passive to those external forces. HR for me can be a positive disruptor challenging busy managers to think differently rather than manage for them.

I also seek support from the team to ensure we have a culture across the council where colleagues feel able to speak 'truth to power', knowing it is safe to do so and that the issues raised are followed up and acted on. I have a massive responsibility to ensure the foundations are in place that will enable colleagues to feel able to do so. At Sandwell we still have more work to do however I am proud of the progress we have made around engagement, collaboration and allowing everyone to be able to speak up- and more importantly for us to follow up on what they are telling us. There is more great stuff on the way!

## How do you see the HR profession and the services it offers needing to change over the next three to five years, especially given the development and pace of technological advancement?

As I mentioned earlier, it is essential our HR and OD team is ahead in this fast paced and dynamic emerging world. I expect they are able to understand what tools are available that will enable them to deliver their services to the highest standard in the most efficient way and create a brilliant experience for our workforce. This will necessitate the team to look up and out from the council and beyond local government by embracing learning from the commercial sector as well as at global developments.

This can only be achieved through brilliant networking, partnering, peer reviews, and allocating appropriate time to research, reflect and to continue to learn individually and collectively. I will support our HR team to be ahead of our time and to be a world class community of people services.

## One of your ambitions as Chief Executive is to drive the council from a position of intervention to excellence – can you share your plans around how you intend to achieve this ambition?

I often come back to the '21st Century Public Servant' research and report, and I strongly believe public services must always be the best they can possibly be and enhance the lives of our residents and communities. I do believe we have in the past let our residents down here in Sandwell, but there has now been a huge amount of work to achieve the

improvements necessary to take us out from 'government intervention'. We've had a real focus on becoming brilliant at the basics, laying the foundations for improvement across all council services and functions.

By making these essential changes we can then ensure that our young people get the best start in life, our elderly residents are well supported and cared for, and there is respect in our local communities and our towns are places where people feel safe and be part of – by addressing essential basic issues such as pot holes, signage and fly tipping this will allow our residents to feel safe and have a vested interest about the place where they live.

To continue to learn and improve across the council will necessitate colleagues to commit to delivering the best work of their lives everyday – that is my expectation and ambition.

## Being a Chief Executive is challenging and can be stressful – how do you take care of your mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and who provides you with the buoyancy to keep your head above the water when the going gets tough?

There is something about knowing your own wellbeing trigger points that can tip you out of 'my best self'. For me, I get great support from my professional network and they allow me to share, learn and reflect without judgement. My family is very important to me and a great source of support, and my mother ensures that I am kept firmly grounded!

I take time out to cheer on my football club Derby County (I have been a lifelong supporter following their ups and downs)

and this escape allows me to switch off from my work challenges. I do love to immerse myself into a great box set (top tip *Ozark* – my current favourite – *The Sopranos* and *The Wire* are regularly watched too because they focus so much on organisations, structures and behaviours).

## What advice could you give to HR and OD professionals who have ambitions to be a Chief Executive?

Always go the extra mile and don't ever give up on learning. Keep on asking questions and be curious and interested in the people you work with and serve. Broaden your CV, take on additional tasks outside of HR & OD that will enhance your skill set and capabilities.

Finally, strive to add value to your executive colleagues and understand their world and challenges – and find out how you can support them. You don't have to have a place at the top table to shine.

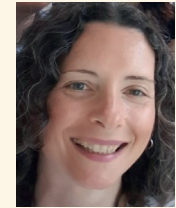
## Your top tip for a summer read?

If I could only recommend one book it would be *Humankind: A Hopeful History* by Rutger Bregman. This is a fascinating read and sets out the basis for the hypothesis that it is realistic, as well as revolutionary, to assume that people are good. Bregman sets out evidence that as human beings we have an instinct to cooperate rather than compete, trust rather than distrust, and this behaviour has an evolutionary basis going right back to the beginning of Homo sapiens. It connects with my own value base, and I found it an absorbing read – so if you pick up a copy I would love to know what you thought about it! 🌈

# PPMA: Developing talents

Chrissy Diaz and Hannah Mason share their transformative journeys through two of the PPMA's talent programmes

**Chrissy Diaz is Strategic Workforce Transformation Lead at Sutton LBC and PPMA Apprentice of the Year 2024**



When it comes to my experience of the PPMA Apprentice of the Year Programme, I didn't know what to expect. Most of my time is spent thinking about how to help my team and organisation.

- Focusing on myself was a refreshing change. Meeting everyone and hearing their journeys left me hopeful for public services in the future.
- There were three key impacts that this process had on me:
- Personal reflection – I now have a clearer understanding of my strengths, values, and career goals, allowing me to target aligned opportunities.
  - Strategic communication – learning to communicate my personal brand helps me stand out and articulate my value confidently
  - Continuous development – the programme emphasized continuous learning. By managing my brand and contributing to a positive legacy, I'm motivated to keep acquiring new skills.

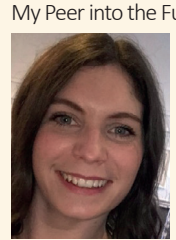
By applying these learnings, I am confident I can achieve my career aspirations and make meaningful contributions in my field.

Winning was incredible. It made me proud of my journey and encouraged me to hold my head high.

To anyone considering the next programme, go for it. It offers personal growth, learning, and development. Embrace the challenges, celebrate the victories, and immerse yourself in the experience.

This opportunity expands your horizons, builds valuable skills, and connects you with like-minded individuals. Approach it with an open mind and a commitment to growth. Each step forward brings you closer to realizing your potential. Take the leap and make the most of this incredible opportunity.

**Hannah Mason is Head of HR Resourcing and Relations at Central Bedfordshire Council and PPMA Peer into the Future winner for 2023-24**



My Peer into the Future experience started a new era for me. Initially, I hesitated – I didn't feel comfortable owning my ambition for senior HR leadership roles. I thought I should focus on my current role. But joining the Peer programme was perfect timing.

It empowers, motivates, and encourages introspection. The programme gives time for reflection, stepping back from daily issues, and thinking bigger.

It's not a fast track to career steps but a curated experience that connects participants, introduces new concepts, and allows different thinking. Inspired by others'

candid reflections, my self-belief and sense of belonging grew. I now have a deeper connection to my profession and am more confident. The relationships built through the programme endure.

Winning the Peer accolade was a huge honour. It opened new opportunities, including joining the extended PPMA board and speaking at a conference. Taking the stage was a 'pinch me' moment.

To anyone considering it – for themselves or their team – I can't recommend it highly enough. Peer was a turning point and a career highlight. I encourage you to pass on the nudge that I received and have that conversation in your team. It could make all the difference.

**Our joint conclusions:**

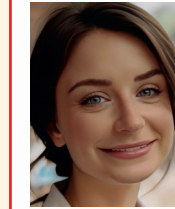
Reflecting on our journeys, both the PPMA Apprentice of the Year and Peer into the Future programmes have been transformative. They provided personal and professional growth, a sense of belonging, and pride in our achievements.

These experiences have left us better equipped to contribute meaningfully to our fields and more confident in our capabilities. For anyone considering these paths, we encourage you to embrace the opportunity. It can truly be a pivotal moment in your career.

If you think you have what it takes to be the next Peer into the Future, applications for the PPMA 2024-25 cohort are open now. Please visit the PPMA website for more information at [www.ppma.org.uk](http://www.ppma.org.uk)

## On the rise

Victoria Jordan offers her experience of this year's One to Watch programme



**Victoria Jordan is an Assistant Business Partner for Manchester City Council and PPMA's One to Watch 2024**

Originally from the Wirral, I have lived

and worked in Manchester for eight years and recently bought my first house with my partner here – so Manchester is definitely considered home.

I recently completed the HR Rising Stars programme, and the activities really pushed me out of my comfort zone. I met some amazing people in the cohort who were so supportive. The facilitators and judges also provided really constructive feedback throughout so we could continue to grow and get as much out of the two days as possible. I feel like I unlocked hidden strengths and I really enjoyed trying new things in a safe environment.

When it was announced that I was this year's One to Watch, I was completely shocked. Having spent the two days with



Diane Nelson (see right) and Victoria Jordan

everyone, I felt so proud of seeing how far everyone has come and truly expected someone else to be announced. Once it had sunk in I was extremely proud that even though I found some of the tasks daunting, I still gave them my best shot.

Now that I am back to the day to day, I can already feel myself putting some of the skills and techniques to use. My perception of myself, and how I feel about putting myself out there has completely changed for the better. I feel like I have found a new drive to push myself and grow. I am going to continue to seek out opportunities that will push me outside of my comfort zone and help me to develop as a HR professional.

## A star turn

Diane Nelson is this year's PPMA's HR Rising Star – here she tells her story



**Diane Nelson is an HR Advisor at Sheffield City Council and PPMA's HR Rising Star 2024**

HR Rising Stars is an amazing programme which

tests your ability to think under pressure, builds your self-confidence and teaches some great techniques to turn nerves into excitement.

There was so much positivity and constructive feedback after each task that made you feel stronger and more confident for the next.

I really enjoyed the whole experience and discovered that you can actually deliver something meaningful and impactful in a short space of time.

In terms of how I felt when announced as the winner, the judges spoke about why they made their choice before revealing any names, and as I listened I thought how it could



have been any one of the truly talented and influential people sat alongside me in the room. Everyone who took part in the programme, gave it their all – so when they announced it was me, I was completely shocked and humbled.

I will definitely use this experience for your personal growth. I came away from the programme feeling uplifted and with a new found confidence to just 'go for it'. So I am going to continue using the techniques to turn nerves into excitement and keep the positive momentum going.

In terms of what lies ahead, I want to continue my career within the public sector, as people are what matter to me. I'm excited to get cracking on putting some of the new techniques I've learnt into practice and continuing to network with the great people I've met because of the PPMA HR Rising Star Programme!

# A firm gear change

Connected looks at how Hackney LBC's parking services have been transformed, ultimately being acknowledged at the latest edition of *The MJ Achievement Awards*

By **Kevin Keady**, Assistant Director of Environment and Climate Change at Hackney LBC



In a significant move after 23 years of outsourcing, Hackney's parking services has transitioned its enforcement service in-house. This strategic shift, led by myself and the team, focuses on enhancing customer service and public safety through innovative changes and community engagement.

Overseeing this transition has been pivotal. The shift emphasizes treating customers fairly, getting things done right the first time, and simplifying our ways of working. This approach has profoundly transformed our team culture, highlighting positive customer interactions, rewarding helpful behaviours, and driving efficiency.

Replacing the traditional civil enforcement officer with the 'ambassadorial' road and traffic enforcement officer role, new uniforms, and eliminating lone working has drastically improved public perception and reduced officer

abuse and attacks by 92%. Implementing a four-day working week saved £500,000 annually, tripled productivity, and enhanced the wellbeing of our colleagues.

Strengthening community engagement has been key. Our diverse team provides fair warnings and equitable enforcement, resulting in higher engagement and reduced staff turnover and sickness. Our agile team now responds to demand rather than rigid daily quotas, ensuring fair and efficient parking management for Hackney's residents, businesses, and visitors.

Team leaders spend 80% of their time in the field, actively supporting colleagues and promoting a culture of helpful customer interactions.

Collaboration with union representatives has been critical to our success, addressing workforce concerns and building trust.

Our efforts were recently recognized at *The MJ Awards* in London, where we received the PPMA-sponsored Workplace Optimisation award. This rare accolade for parking services has bolstered team pride, underscoring their dedication and valuing them as integral members of Hackney.

**This approach has transformed our team culture, highlighting positive customer interactions, rewarding helpful behaviours, and driving efficiency**



## Elevate Your Career with PPMA's Peer into the Future Programme!

Join our modular programme designed by PPMA, and supported by industry experts. This programme is for HR & OD professionals at a strategic level aiming to become Directors.

- You will:
- Develop leadership and forward-thinking skills to lead innovation.
  - Learn from top leaders in the private and public sectors.
  - Expand your network.

Take this opportunity to step back, reflect on key business and workforce issues, and grow alongside your colleagues.

Don't miss this chance to elevate your career!

**APPLICATIONS OPEN NOW!**  
[www.ppma.org.uk/talentprogrammes](http://www.ppma.org.uk/talentprogrammes)



# The case for IT and Digital

A look at why great user centred design should matter to us all

By **Adrian Barlow**, Executive Search Director for Digital, Data and Technology – Local Government and Health, at Veredus



used and efficiently and fairly collect payment for these services, so that they can be adequately funded and continuously improved. A virtuous circle. These are services we engage with and experience on a day to day basis, and so, it really, really matters that they work, first time, every time in meeting our collective needs.

Because we are all users, consumers and ultimately, funders of public services at local, regional and national level, it's in our mutual interest to come together to make them as good as they can possibly be. For me, local government is really where 'the rubber hits the road' in digital terms.

Too often though, when it comes to IT and digital, we can rest in a complacent belief that we already know what our 'customers' and staff – 'want' from us. We can't complain then, when this sometimes leads to IT and digital being viewed as an expendable, back-office function and at best, a nice-to-have.

These are essential products and services which define, shape and protect the places in which we live, visit and work; contribute to community health and wellbeing, give residents a voice in where and how scarce resources should be best

If we sit back and are passive, it's a label and perception we invite and deserve. It goes without saying then, that the services we all need and rely upon, should be front facing, inclusive and digital by default, with residents needs at the heart of service



design thinking and doing, considering their needs as the starting (not the end) point, and working backwards from there.

By doing so, it's more likely that the digital services we help deliver, will work, are intuitive, and in their ease of use, subconsciously build support for the value


of technology in delivering a great customer experience.

At the heart of it all lies the need for brilliant, simple to understand, business processes. Often overlooked as being the less glamorous part of service design, great business process and clear, outcome based,

collegiate thinking and working, is the engine room of success. IT systems which help by consolidating, automating and integrating complex business processes, have a key part to play in delivering this outcome, as the glue that that holds it all together.

IT providers shouldn't be the first or the last thought in designing great public services – they need to be involved all the way through the design process – working in partnership for the public's benefit.

Only when we come together to reimagine the future of public services,

leaving our badges and job titles at the door, can we really begin to make great, rapid progress in tackling some of the wicked problems that face the local government sector and the residents it serves, in delivering business change that sticks and benefits us all. 

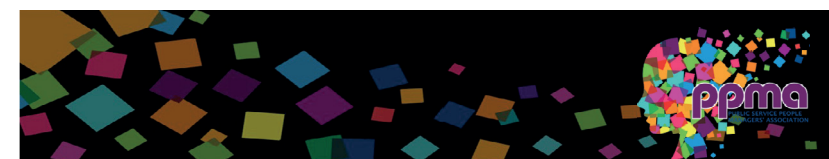


Exciting News: PPMA Virtual Conference Returns 25th September 2024!

We're thrilled to announce that this year's **Virtual Conference** is back this September! This one-day online event is **free for all PPMA Members** and promises a diverse lineup of inspiring speakers.

Stay tuned for more details coming soon!

[www.ppma.org.uk](http://www.ppma.org.uk)



# Embracing the future together

Digital transformation is more important than ever for HR, but a ready-made toolkit is here to help – as Anil Passi, Managing Director of Fusion Practices outlines

Running a council means handling countless tasks every day. What if you could streamline these tasks, making everything run smoother and faster? Do you want to automate your routine processes, reduce manual work, and save valuable time? Are you seeking to upskill your employees to modernise the council?

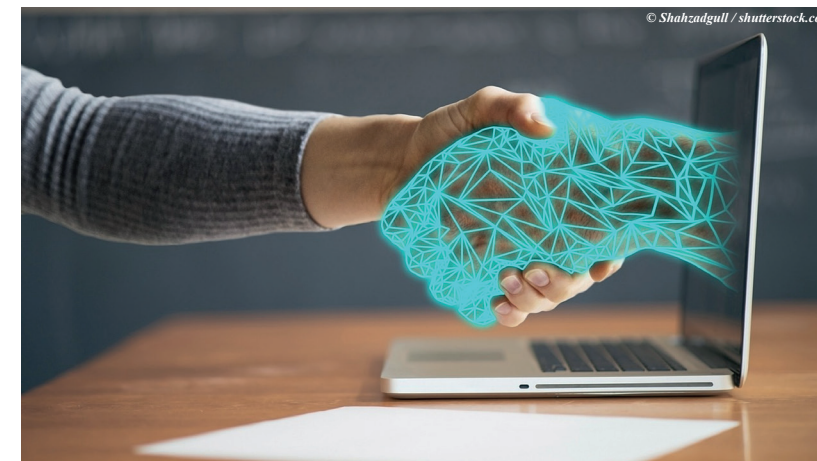
In today's digital world, simplifying and digitising processes is essential. Imagine accessing everything you need with just a few clicks. This not only reduces errors but also makes it easier to manage and track tasks, ensuring nothing falls through the cracks. You can stay on top of all your essential tasks – notifications can be created and sent to your employee and line manager's inbox, and not having to rely on one person to send reports. Automated reconciliation for cash and bank statements has increased accuracy, speeded up financial close processes, and reduced errors.

Employee experience is everything, and using the latest cloud technology can enable you to improve the speed and relevance of your employee communication, encourage effective collaboration, bring rigour to project

management, and allow your employees to do the things they need to do in a simple and intuitive way, promoting flexibility and work-life balance. Features like virtual team-building activities, automated workflow systems, and real-time feedback mechanism create an engaging and efficient work environment. By streamlining processes and fostering a connected culture, this tech solution significantly improves employee satisfaction and productivity at a low cost.

The pandemic has sped up how quickly we use digital technologies. With more people working from home and needing to stay connected online, businesses have turned to digital tools like video calls, online collaboration platforms, and cloud services. These technologies help people work together, stay in touch, and keep things running smoothly, even when they can't be in the same place. As a result, we've seen a big jump in how much we rely on and use digital technology in our daily work lives.

Join the future of local authorities  
Fusion Practices and Oracle are collaborating



to make it easier to modernise your support services and maximising the benefits of the technology. Our solution for local authorities is a ready-made toolkit designed to meet the specific needs of the council's operations. Instead of building everything from scratch, these solutions come with pre-built features and settings that are tailored for common council tasks, making them quicker and easier to implement.


Our pre-configured solution handles 60% of the work for HR and finance implementation tasks right from the start. It's a proven method that has already worked for many UK councils. Instead of starting from

scratch, we offer a ready-made blueprint. We then tailor the remaining 40% to meet your specific needs. This means we adjust our solution based on your council's unique requirements, ensuring it fits perfectly.

With 60% of the work already done, the implementation process is faster and more affordable. This approach significantly reduces overall costs, making it a budget-friendly option even for smaller district councils.

The areas we pre-populate for you include statutory absence policies and pension fund reporting. By choosing our solutions, you're investing in a brighter future for your council. Enhanced efficiency, happier employees, simplified processes, and modernised services are just the beginning. Experience the difference that our affordable, cutting-edge technology can make.

Ready to transform your council? Contact us today and discover how we can help you achieve your goals with our compelling and affordable solutions.

Let's work together to create more efficient, modern, and effective local authorities. 

## Start your journey!

Oracle and Fusion Practices are hosting a webinar on 24 July from 11.45 to 12.45, where leading organisations and guest speakers will share their journey of digital transformation. Scan in the QR code to find out more.



## Servant leadership: An idea whose time has come again


By **Professor Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe**, Founding Director of Real World Group and Emerita Professor of Leadership Studies at the University of Leeds

The idea that leaders exist to serve their people, rather than vice versa, rocked the world of leadership when *The Servant as Leader* by Robert Greenleaf was published in 1970. In 2024, modern approaches are typically critical for organisations to stay on top of an ever-changing and challenging context. However, despite servant leadership being almost 55-years-old, increasing organisations are recognising that it has never been more relevant.

At its core are the moral and ethical principles of serving others before oneself, particularly one's direct reports. This is achieved through empathising, encouraging, empowering and developing them, so that they can perform to the best of their ability. It is an approach that emphasises creating value for multiple stakeholders, both internal and external, as well as the community.

While leaders are tasked with developing the individuals working with them, they have to also have an eye on enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion; protecting the planet, and taking corporate social responsibility more seriously. Servant leadership provides a potentially invaluable contribution to this.

Servant leadership is a philosophy. There is no definitive behavioural model. Augmenting its key principles with evidence-based behaviours that reflect its morals and ethics when applied to day-to-day organisational activities – such as guiding teams effectively through change, creating a safe and learning culture, and undertaking more effective recruitment and appraisal – can strengthen the foundations of an organisation's sustainability in an era of disruption.

In other words, assessing and developing servant leadership through a closely paralleled, contemporary model such as Engaging Leadership or Transformational Leadership can offer an important opportunity for organisations to revive an idea from the past to create a thriving future. 

# A 'plain sailing' approach to coaching

Vermillion Coaching is a group of highly experienced coaches offering training and coaching courses in all areas of communication – Kate Bowes Renna, founder, talks about her journey and what they can do for your team



Apart from a disastrous sailing course aged ten, I'd always been very much a *terra firma* type of gal. Then in 2019 my husband came home from a run down at the canal by Kings Cross and suggested we get a canal boat. Did he have any experience of boats, you ask? No, none whatsoever, but that didn't stop us.

We had been looking for a place to invite coaching clients from my company, Vermillion, as well as people from different charities. A boat seemed like the perfect answer, a moveable platform on which we could entertain people. People get to experience beautiful countryside and there's also the relaxing element – it's the antithesis of our society's culture of speed. It's not about the destination but about the experience of the journey. And that journey is going to be slow!

Since the initial inspiration we've managed to realise our dream. We first rented a narrowboat to see if we could (a) do it, and (b) enjoyed doing it. Then in lockdown we took the plunge and bought a wide beam canal boat which was fitted out completely.

For the past year we've been inviting people onto it – young people from the inner city who never normally leave Zone



1; foster carers for a day out and different charities for their off-site visits.

I've also run coaching away days for clients who want to get out of the office with their teams and bring a fresh perspective to things; the other day we had a group of HR directors on board for a four-hour sail with a delicious Italian lunch and coaching included. These corporate days out then help to fund the charity work that we do.

I've come to agree with my husband – I'm sold on messing about in boats and the peace and joy that it brings. So much so that we're threatening to go and live on it! 🌈🌈🌈

● For information about my coaching company please visit [www.vermillioncoaching.com](http://www.vermillioncoaching.com). And if you'd like to find out more about our boat, go to [www.widebeamproject.com](http://www.widebeamproject.com)



## Goho – your 'go to' team

By **Stacey-Rebekka Karlsson**, Founder and Managing Director of Goho



For those of you who don't know me, let me introduce Goho, a boutique, award winning, PR, Marketing & Events Agency. I've been working with the public sector for over 15 years now. Starting with being Head of Government & Public Services at *The Guardian*, to my current role, running Goho.

We do everything, from delivering State of Nature Events, to Staff retreats, away days, conferences and awards, we also deliver top quality copywriting for job ads and media-buy and design everything from recruitment adverts to OOH campaigns. I love supporting the PPMA team. There's nothing I enjoy more than working with organisations that make a difference.

Goho strives to make a difference in everything we do too. From working with companies who share our values, to carbon offsetting our work, offering fully flexible working for our team, and all the while delivering top quality work for our amazing clients. Goho has built a reputation for being the best at what we do, at an affordable cost, we're also great fun to be around too.

Goho started with just me as the Girl on Her Own (that's where the name comes from, get it?) and are now a thriving team of 12. We're a diverse bunch, representing and speaking for our communities, and for others with voices not as powerful as our own.

We're proud to offer all our public sector clients 20% off our fees. Working with us means you get top quality work and experience, at a fraction of the cost of the big west end agencies.

Get in touch to see how we can help make a difference to your organisation. [stacey@thisisgoho.com](mailto:stacey@thisisgoho.com) 🌈🌈🌈



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