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New beginnings at the PPMA



By Gordon McFarlane,
Assistant Director,
Leicestershire CC and
Outgoing President, PPMA

Spring and the possibility of change hangs in the air. On a personal level, following two immensely enjoyable years, I am handing my chain of office over to new president, Pam Parkes, at the PPMA conference.

As a former Vice President, Pam is a well known figure in the PPMA community and to public services colleagues for her work as Executive Director, People and Transformation at Essex CC and as a Commissioner at Birmingham City Council.

Pam will be supported in her role by our VP team – Sandra Farquharson, Director of HR and OD at Hackney LBC, Steve Walker-Whitehead, Director of People, Equality and OD at Hounslow LBC, Natasha Brown, Director of HR at Waltham Forest LBC and Nichola Mann, Acting Director of People and Governance



Incoming: Pam Parkes is incoming President

at Brentwood Borough and Rochford District Councils. Together they will bring their considerable knowledge and experience to lead the PPMA through what will likely be a period of change for local government.

Whatever that change looks like, Pam's team will remain steadfast, continuing to drive a number of key goals.

First, championing the people that lead and support our workforce. Public services is nothing without its people and people managers. Sometimes, the connection between good public services and the people that deliver them is not recognised or appreciated. It can be tough being on

the receiving end of criticism from people who don't fully understand the daily challenges that our colleagues on the frontline face as they deliver services.

Second, growing our PPMA membership. A fantastic year of growth in 2023 has meant more people sharing best practice, solutions, ideas, and supporting one another. Our size enables us to increase our visibility and influence.

Third, promoting the PPMA's talent development programmes and celebrating the impact they have on participants, enabling them to flourish and grow. Whether participants are early career or aspiring to operate at director level, all benefit as much from the peer support network they develop as the formal learning content. Without exception, participants have gone on to achieve great things.

Fourth, encouraging the continuous exchange of learning between members. While there's no blueprint to respond to the ever-evolving challenges we face, the willingness of our community to share, adapt and learn from best practice is our

strength, whether that's through PPMA webinars, newsletter, roundtables or entering for the PPMA awards.

Fifth, strengthening our relationships across other public sector membership bodies – West Midlands Employers, SOCITM, HPMA, UHR, CIPD. These connections enable us to broaden our thinking, reach and collective power and will be increasingly important as we embrace AI, new technology and transform public service delivery.

Sixth, urging ongoing investment in workforce development. We are delivering services in the toughest financial environment I have seen. With the current focus on cost control, we must not lose sight of the need to develop our people and skill base.

Seventh, speaking truth constructively to power both to counter unwarranted, negative narrative in the media, but also to seek to preserve workforce morale and positively impact public perception.

I look forward to celebrating the new team's achievements. The future of the PPMA is in safe hands. ●●●●●

INSIDE:



- **NHS Foundation Trust's Zara Airey Q&A**
- **Two-page focus on the role of AI**
- **'We must tell better stories of our sector'**



Zara Airey –
Senior HRBP at Royal
Free London NHS
Foundation Trust

Q&A

Can you tell us about an important area of change in HR?

I think a key development is the increasing incidence of the ‘squiggly career path’ (scp). Jobs for life are disappearing. Young people in the workforce, rather than following preset career paths, are making their own, often involving radical changes in their work and work patterns.

The pandemic has made this more obvious – the NHS has benefitted from staff who shifted to us from careers in hospitality and airline services, and from increased use of flexible hours and working from home.

And there will be more disruptive developments on the way – AI is one obvious example. This decisive shift towards scp affects basic HR like mentoring, creative recruitment, developing staff, retention.

How effective is scp as a career development strategy compared with traditional formal career paths?

Very effective, if done properly. If not done properly it becomes merely drift and following a path of least resistance.

Have you personally benefited from scp?

Yes. On leaving school I trained as a secondary school teacher. In my twenties I decided to retrain as a lawyer and work abroad. On arrival in the UK, while studying first for my degree and then my postgraduate qualification in legal practice, I supported myself by working as a crew member at McDonald’s, as a paralegal and then trainee solicitor, then taking a job as a band three recruitment assistant at Royal Free Hospital.

This initial exposure to HR was accidental and was only intended to be temporary before returning to the legal field and qualifying as a solicitor. However, this was not to be as I realised my knowledge of employment law and the training, mentoring and organisational skills I gained as a teacher gave me important strengths in a career that was appealing to my core values. Five years later I went on to take my MSC in HR management.

How would you advise people to pursue and develop their own scp?

The keys are targeted reflection,

continuous development and building support networks. I am not talking about classical career networking but about building networks for yourself – which can include colleagues, mentors, friends and family – to support you in developing your own scp. Support, for example, in reflection – helping you to identify your strengths and to determine how to tease out and utilise your current skills to build in and redesign your new career path.


Support in ethical development and appraisal of your core values. Support of your personal confidence – to combat imposter syndrome, and to resist gaslighting, while avoiding defensiveness and maintaining a healthy attitude to constructive criticism. You need different people with different perspectives in these different groups.

Your aim is to build a more effective you, develop the skills you need now but also invest in the skills and knowledge you will need for your future. Above all, your attitude needs to be to embrace change, new challenges and opportunities.

How will the increased embrace of scp by new entrants to the workforce affect HR?

In too many ways to cover here. Mentoring and development will be key – companies that neglect these areas will face retention problems. Internal development and training programmes will proliferate, as they are already doing in the NHS, to escape from the rigidity of established career paths which need constant revision in this time of increasing change.

I am currently on one of these programmes myself, the Future People Leaders Programme which is a national programme in England. Employers can develop the skills of their staff and retain them if they can facilitate their employees’ scps and provide at least some of the support functions I mentioned above. But young people entering the workforce will no longer settle for a stagnant but safe career in which they rise at a steady pace for the first half of it and then coast on to retirement for the second half.

HR and my earlier career steps in teaching and in law have these in common: to empower people, and enable them to reach their full potential. 



A look at several ways in which PPMA programmes have been addressing workforce challenges

By Julie Biggs,
PPMA Talent
Programmes and
Awards Manager



Recent research from PwC confirms workforce capacity as one of the biggest challenges facing councils, with retention, career growth, future skills and attraction topping the bill. Ambitious employees are hungry for growth and won’t hang around in an organisation that doesn’t push for their development.

While the report recommends councils focus on providing training and career development opportunities, amid cost cutting exercises, it can be a challenge for HR directors to find high impact programmes that deliver results for little financial outlay.

Whether you are a HR director considering talent management solutions or an HR and OD employee at any career stage looking for growth, here are five reasons to explore our

development programmes, described by one HR director as ‘the hidden gem of the PPMA’.

First, our programmes have a proven reputation for developing talent. The programmes have been run successfully for a number of years and always receive positive feedback from those participating. Past participants recommend their own team members, keen to reap the positive impact on employee retention, performance, career development and morale. This year alone four, Peer into the Future participants have secured promotions while attending the 2023-24 programme.

Second, our programmes drive employee retention. When the going gets tough and the grass looks greener elsewhere, our values driven programmes remind participants why they do the work they do, reigniting their passion and dedication to public service.

Designed to equip participants with critical skills to successfully deliver and transform services, while navigating a



tough economic climate, our programmes offer participants a third benefit – resilience. The ability to move on from knock backs, think under pressure and respond to scrutiny. The power and confidence to be comfortable with discomfort.

Related to this point a fourth, our programmes are delivered by expert facilitators and speakers that have real life experience, knowledge and expertise addressing HR and OD challenges in local government and public services. They can share best practice and innovation from organisations across the UK.

Speaking of best practice, one of the top benefits ranked by past participants is the connections formed. Many report making friends on the programme that over the years have become trusted advisors with whom they can explore approaches and discuss potential solutions to knotty issues. Participants also say the programme expanded their network, providing them with access to a wider pool of subject matter experts, mentors, and leaders to draw on their expertise.

The fifth benefit – the headspace to

focus on informed career planning. The opportunity for participants to reflect on their future aspirations and develop a plan to achieve their career goals with support and advice from experts.

Check out the PPMA website (www.ppma.org.uk) for further details of our full range of talent development programmes, including our Apprentice of the Year, open to all service lines – not just HR and OD. Alternatively, contact me at julie.biggs@ppma.org.uk

I'd like to draw your attention to two HR and OD talent programmes now open to applicants, and the Peer programme which will be launched in the summer. We welcome applications from PPMA and non-PPMA members.

- One to Watch is open to early career HR and OD colleagues.
- HR Rising Star is suitable for mid-career colleagues who have been operating as an HR and OD professional for a while and are looking to take the next step into a senior role.
- Peer into the Future is aimed at senior HR and OD leaders already operating at a strategic level, aspiring to operate at director level (next programme due to start in Autumn 2024).



Dalton Stokes –
Apprentice at
Lincolnshire CC

Q&A

Tell us about yourself?

I am 17 years old and currently doing a level three civil engineering apprenticeship with Lincolnshire CC. As I am at the beginning of my career, there's nothing more thrilling to me than embracing my passion for learning which involves expanding my understanding of the professional world.

After leaving school an apprenticeship wasn't the easiest option however it is an opportunity I am so grateful and proud to have been given. Two weeks before my GCSEs back in May last year, I lost my mum, my best friend. I was given the option to do my exams or get the predicted grades from my teachers. I knew the predicted grades wouldn't be a reflection to how much effort and time I had put in to doing well. So after only two weeks I decided to go back and sit my exams.

I know that's what my mum would've wanted and she would be so proud of the grades I came out with. The grades which have enabled me to go down this career path.

What are you most grateful for in your apprenticeship?

When I first started at Lincolnshire, I was filled with a mix of excitement and nerves. The idea of diving into a field as vast and complex as civil engineering was both exhilarating and daunting. However I am grateful because from day one, my manager (Nathan Whitfield) and mentor (Natasha Gault) both went above and beyond to make me feel comfortable and welcomed.

Instead of expecting me to possess a wealth of knowledge right from the start, they recognised my status as a newcomer, patiently guiding me through the ropes and offering invaluable insights along the way. They haven't only helped navigate me through the start of my apprenticeship but also instilled in me a sense of fulfilment and purpose.

Why did you choose a civil engineering apprenticeship?

Throughout my journey as an apprentice engineering technician in the public sector, my aspirations extend beyond the technicalities of the role. I aim to obtain a degree in civil engineering and eventually become a chartered engineer leveraging my skills to make a lasting

impact on the community.

Every project which is carried out now has the potential to shape the future of our communities for many years to come. Making a lasting impact on the younger generation, the future generation, a generation I am proud to be a part of.

I want to be a part of developing the infrastructure of our county, whether it's designing eco-friendly infrastructure or discovering innovative techniques to the way things are done, I'm driven by the desire to make a noticeable difference. Knowing that my work today could positively impact the environment and society in the long run fuels my passion for civil engineering and motivates me to continuously learn and grow in this field.

Building a legacy isn't just about leaving your mark on the world; it's about being a part of creating a better world for future generations to thrive in.

What do you want your legacy to be?

As for my legacy, I envision it as a testament to the positive influence one can have in the public sector.

I want to be remembered as someone who dedicated their career to serving the community, ensuring that essential infrastructure not only meets technical standards but also aligns with the social and environmental well-being of the people it serves.

Ultimately, my legacy is intertwined with a commitment to develop the accessibility, sustainability, and community empowerment.

Although I wasn't victorious in the recent PPMA Apprentice of the year, I will continue to be an ambassador for apprenticeships across the public sector, I want to advocate for the benefits that come alongside them.

I hope that my journey from apprentice to engineer serves as an inspiration for future generations, encouraging them to pursue careers in engineering, through an apprenticeship with a genuine desire to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Remember where there's value in HR

By Heather Watt, an independent consultant and coach

What scares HR most of all – the notion that technology could replace jobs, or their out-of-date processes will be discovered? Sharing what I know leaves space in my head. Isn't it time to let technology take the strain of repetition leaving space for original thought across HR?

Where's the value in doing what you've always done if you're not attracting talented people who love your brand and your values to join? At my most disruptive I grab a blank canvas and rehearse my vision to get the fewest number of great people (with diverse talents) to want to join. Why spend hours wading through applications from non-swimmers for life guarding roles when swimming is a prerequisite? Leave the system to ask, "how far can you swim?" while you design a safe assessment.


I've a heightened sense of adventure (but no head for heights) although I recognise that others prefer the comfort of cosy slippers. They're not up for leading the charge in stilettos, although their organisations are all about innovation. Just like olive oil and lemon juice, the two don't mix. So, to all the HR dinosaurs who try to change systems to replicate out-of-date processes (with disastrous consequences) trust me, simplicity is powerful.

Time to face the conversation about what HR does best; what needs human input or judgement, and what needs a bot?

Recruitment should satisfy organisation needs and motivate people to join; easy to read, bias free JDs that tell it how it is. Who wouldn't want the success of a system that combines critical elements of jobs with team goals, then compares them with similar roles across the organisation?

I disliked paddling my canoe around the mountains of Norway (not my best VR experience) although I'd love to wear a headset and take a tour of a new organisation design. Imagine the potential.

Embracing technology can be scary so why not give your HR colleagues a virtual hug, recognise the potential, then brag about powerful HR transactions and visible results?

What's your vision? 

'If we want the best tal

Local government is facing a lot of 'grim stories' at this moment, but with so much genuine positivity to champion within the sector, isn't it time to Love Local Gov?

By Chris Twigg, Founding Director of Inner Circle Consulting

Using the London Underground 20 years ago used to feel like running the gauntlet. Entering a tube station you'd hear announcements about all the delayed lines and closed stations. Connections across the city felt fractured. Bendy buses prompted traffic jams. Then Transport for London rebranded itself as an innovative company for a hyper-connected, responsive world city. Its announcements started with where service is good. Its posters told commuters how it was improving access, emissions, cycling



infrastructure. Sure, there are still problems. But they are no longer the main story.

Local government's main story right now is grim. Councils are portrayed as poorly governed, bleeding cash, unable to fulfil

Celebrating collaboration connecting HR across

On 29 March, a momentous occasion unfolded at the iconic Fortnum & Mason, London, as representatives from public sector's prominent HR professional associations gathered to celebrate the renewal of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) first signed in 2017. The event, hosted by Oracle and graced by esteemed guests, marked a significant milestone in fostering collaboration and synergy among key influencers in the public sector HR landscape.

The evening commenced with a captivating panel discussion moderated by Leatham Green, Transformation Director at Oracle. The panel featured

distinguished figures including Gordon McFarlane, President of the Public Sector People Managers' Association (PPMA); Tracy Hill, Interim CEO of the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA); Helen Scott, Executive Director of Universities Human Resources (UHR); and Adam Stanbury, Head of Employer Solutions at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The engaging debate shed light on the common challenges faced across different sectors and underscored the shared commitment to collaboration and collective action. It served as a platform to showcase the fruitful partnerships already underway, such as the collaboration

between PPMA and UHR in developing mutual talent programmes (HR Rising Star and Trailblazers), and the joint working between CIPD and HPMA in Northern Ireland. These initiatives exemplify the power of collaboration in harnessing the depth and breadth of expertise to drive positive change by sharing, learning and connecting.

A highlight of the evening was the announcement of the aspiration to introduce the first Public Sector Oracle Academy. This ground breaking ambition aims to address the ever-growing digital skills gap by providing free access to learning opportunities through the UK's university network. By leveraging the



ent, we must tell better stories'



But you won't hear anyone talking about how much they love their council, or hear any doorstep clapping for service officers. There are no recruitment campaigns in cinemas calling bright young men and women to step up to their Councils, as there are for the Army and Navy.

What's getting in the way of local government telling a better story about the work it does? For starters, enormous pressure from growing, complex demand and squeezed finances. Councils' ambitions to tackle deep problems and rebuild communities is kept in check by the daily necessity of a crisis response to numbers of people falling into poverty and poorer health. But local government leaders can no longer ignore a reputation so poor that it is preventing them from hiring and retaining the talent they need to tackle deep-rooted challenges. Last year's Local Government Association (LGA) workforce survey found more than nine in 10 councils experienced staff recruitment difficulties and a recent survey by County Councils' Network indicated that 28% of young recruits planned to leave government.

At Inner Circle Consulting, we strive to create a regenerative consultancy model – one that digs much deeper to answer the challenges of our lifetimes and advocate more assertively for public sector support, policy change and people-centred

basic functions like bin collection and fixing potholes. They touch more lives daily than any other public service including the NHS.

models of sustainable, place-based growth. Our success lies in the success of future leaders to maintain their organisations' relevance and viability in a world marked by inequalities, and inadequacies in the public response.

Making change happen means building a movement of people who share the same purpose and want to see the same change

As part of this work, we launched our 'Love Local Gov' campaign some 18 months ago to help councils get the message out about all the brilliant work they do every day, and increase the pool of people who want to do it with them.

A key part of this campaign suggested creating a local government recruitment drive to attract the next generation of talent – and we are delighted that the LGA will be unveiling just such a campaign at our Love Local Gov event at the PPMA's conference (ongoing as you read this).

During that session, we'll be sharing the best stories about working for local government, the funniest moments and

the most inspiring ones too. We'll be discussing purpose-driven recruitment, and hearing from the LGA about the extensive research behind its new campaign.

Making change happen means building a movement of people who share the same purpose and want to see the same change. Be part of building a new story about local government with us and our Love Local Gov partners. We'll be sharing the campaign and ideas for how you too can use it and share it in your work, in your shared conversations and on your social media platforms.

Together we can build a positive and consistent message that councils are vital partners in policy delivery, and encourage central government to feel the same way. We can work together to show the public what strong and effective partnership looks like and the difference it can make to local communities. And together, we can create and share a nationally coordinated recruitment campaign to inspire the next generation of talent we so desperately need to build a functioning, financially sustainable public sector that can really deliver for the people it is there to serve.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the PPMA conference, and to connecting with even more of you as we share our campaign in the following days and weeks. 🌈🌟

ation: Oracle public service

resources and expertise of both public and private sectors, the Academy will seek to empower HR professionals and public sector workers generally with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the evolving digital landscape effectively.

The event was not merely a celebration of partnership but also a testament to the collective vision of building a brighter future through collaboration. In an increasingly interconnected world, where challenges transcend boundaries and disciplines, the need for cross-sectoral cooperation has never been more pressing. By coming together, the signatories to the MOU have

demonstrated their unwavering commitment to driving innovation, fostering talent, and shaping the future of work.

As the evening drew to a close, amid clinking glasses and heartfelt conversations, a sense of optimism and possibility filled the air. The MOU celebration served as a powerful reminder that by joining forces and pooling resources, we have the potential to overcome even the most formidable challenges. It was a celebration not only of past achievements but also of the boundless opportunities that lie ahead, fuelled by the spirit of collaboration and collective endeavour. 🌈🌟



Unlock Your Potential: Join Our Prestigious Development Program Today and Elevate Your Career to New Heights!



Ready to Rise? The PPMA HR Rising Star program is your gateway to senior HR leadership. Tailored for HR professionals with 5+ years of experience, this immersive program challenges your personal qualities through a variety of activities, fostering confidence & resilience along the way.

CLOSING DATE 14TH MAY

Ready to Shine? The PPMA One to Watch program is your opportunity to kickstart your HR career. Tailored for early-stage HR professionals, this dynamic program challenges your personal qualities through various activities, fostering confidence & resilience along the way.

CLOSING DATE 28TH JUNE

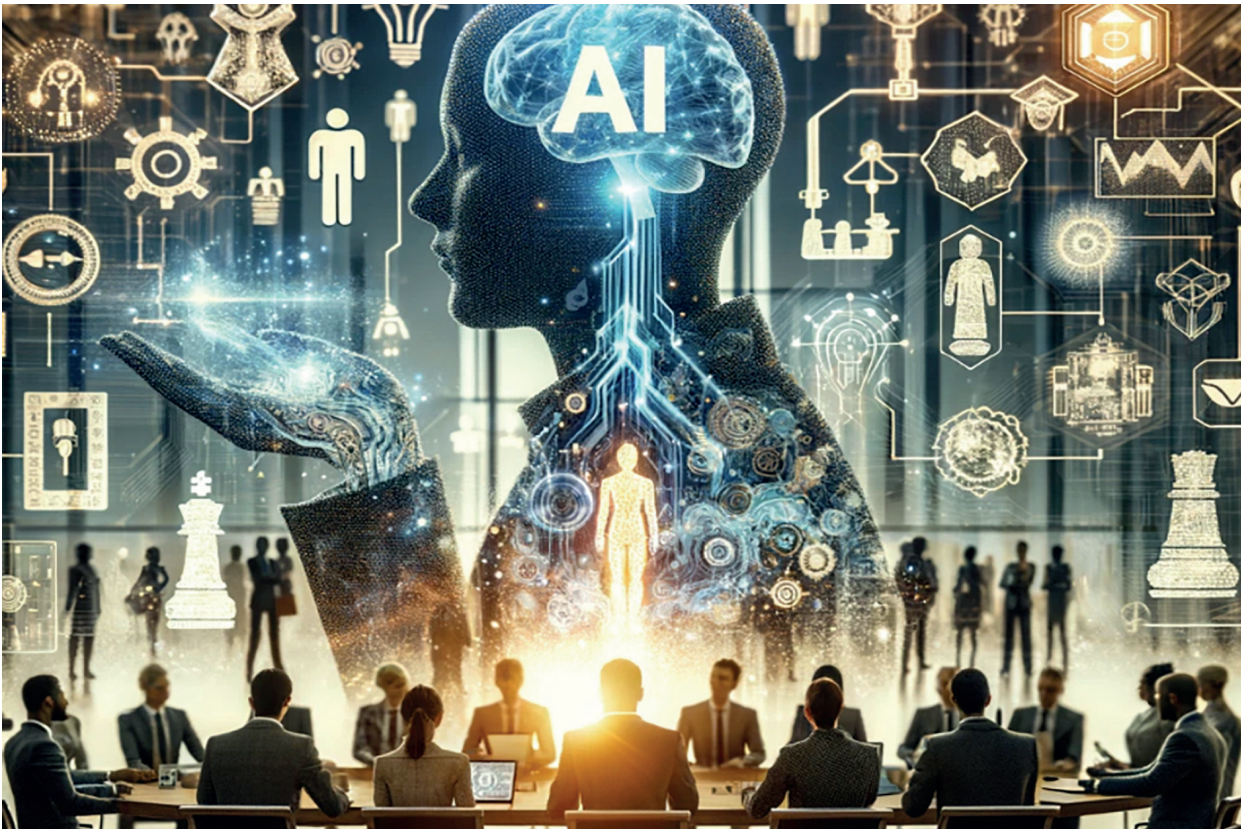


MORE DETAILS ON THE PPMA WEBSITE

www.ppma.org.uk



Unleashing the power of AI



There are ways of elevating strategic impact and driving organisational success in HR within local government if we fully embrace artificial intelligence

By **Max Blumberg**, Founder of Blumberg Partnership and Expert in AI-Driven Analytics and Organisational Strategy

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Oracle is proud to partner with PPMA

Celebrating the great achievements of the critical role HR & OD play in the delivery of our public services.

To find out how Oracle can enable your HR team to maximise its potential please contact

Leatham Green
Transformation Director
leatham.green@oracle.com



As local government HR professionals, you ensure your organisations have the right people and workforce capabilities to deliver on strategic objectives. However, the challenges you face, from recruitment and retention to workforce planning and diversity and inclusion, can often hinder your ability to be strategic partners and drive organisational success.

At the PPMA Conference – which will be in progress as you read this – I will explore how AI can help HR professionals overcome these challenges and elevate their strategic impact. By leveraging AI to automate repetitive administrative tasks and provide data-driven insights, HR can free up time and resources to focus on the strategic work that truly matters.

Strategic workforce planning is one key area where AI can make a significant difference. Gathering and analysing the data needed to develop a comprehensive workforce plan can be time-consuming and complex. However, AI solutions like skills ontologies, scenario planning tools, and decision-support systems can automate much of the data collection and analysis, allowing HR to focus on the strategic implications of the insights generated.

For example, an AI-powered skills ontology tool can automatically scan and analyse employee data to create a comprehensive skills inventory, identifying gaps and areas where upskilling or reskilling initiatives are needed. Similarly, an AI-driven scenario planning tool can generate multiple workforce scenarios based on demographics and industry trends, enabling HR to develop proactive, data-driven strategies aligned with organisational goals.

Another critical area where AI can drive strategic value is in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). With 64% of PPMA survey respondents expecting to spend more time


on DEI initiatives, it's clear this is an essential priority for local government HR. AI solutions like DEI dashboards, sentiment analysis tools, and culturally intelligent recruitment platforms can help HR professionals gather and analyse diversity data, identify areas for improvement, and measure the impact of DEI initiatives.

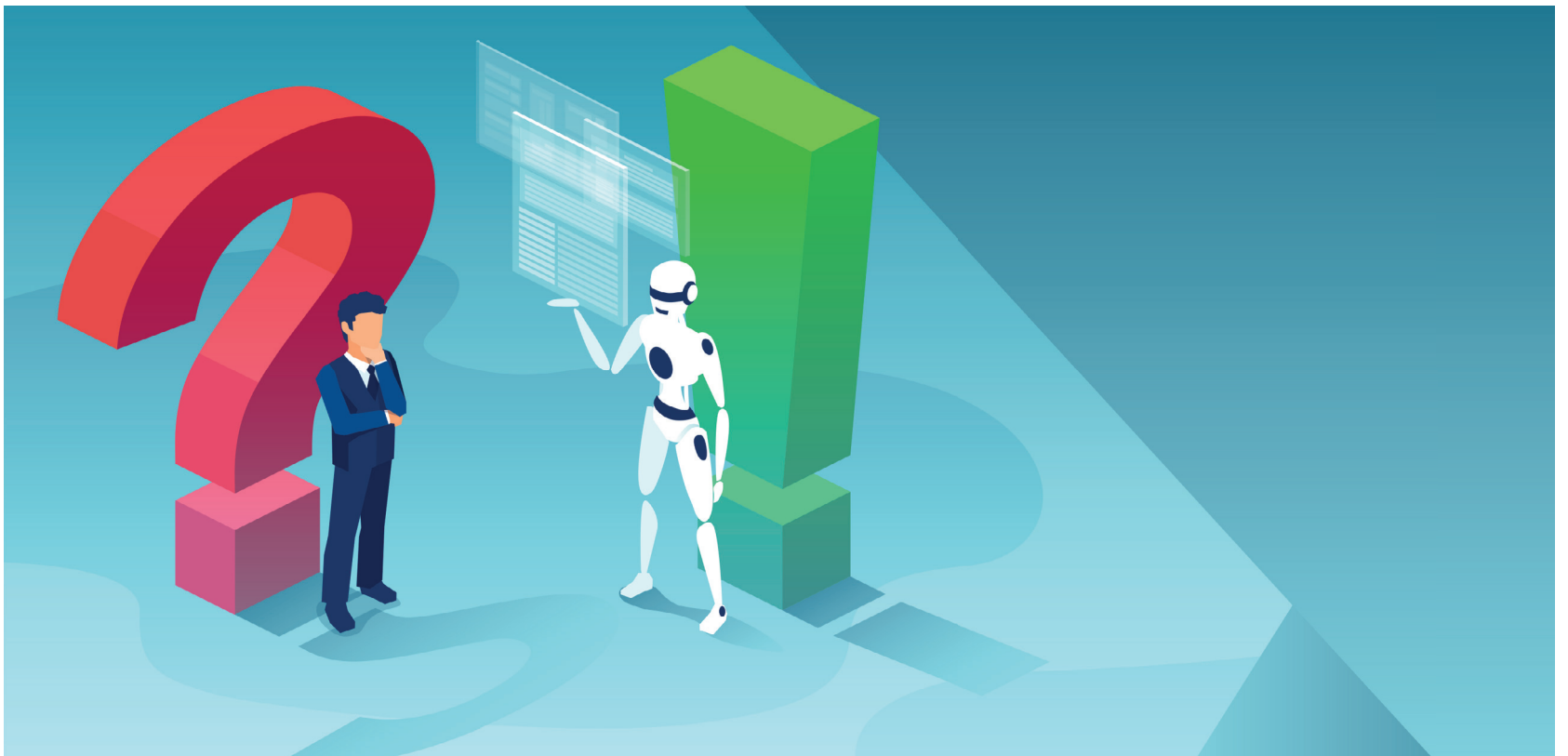
By automating these processes and providing actionable insights, AI can enable HR to take a data-driven, strategic approach to building a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects the communities they serve.

Of course, embracing AI in HR is not without its challenges. Funding constraints, IT limitations, and the need to upskill HR teams can all present obstacles. However, by starting small, experimenting with AI tools, and collaborating across departments, HR professionals can demonstrate AI's value and build a stronger case for investment.

Ultimately, the power of AI lies in its ability to transform HR from a transactional function to a strategic driver of organisational success. By leveraging AI to automate administrative tasks, generate data-driven insights, and inform strategic decision-making, HR can play a vital role in shaping the future of local government.

At the PPMA Conference, we will explore these topics in-depth, sharing real-world case studies and practical strategies for embracing AI in local government HR. Together, we will envision a future where HR professionals are empowered by technology to build the diverse, adaptable, and high-performing workforces needed to deliver exceptional public services and drive meaningful change in our communities.

I look forward to sharing more insights and engaging in meaningful discussions with you at the conference. Together, let us unlock the power of AI and elevate the strategic impact of HR in local government. 



AI: What stance to adopt?

Artificial intelligence is developing at breakneck speed, creating a serious dilemma for public service leaders. They cannot simply licence the widespread adoption of a technology that cannot explain itself, but neither can they ignore the potential productivity and analytical benefits. But maybe there is a sensible middle ground where they are both bold and careful?



By **Andrew Laird**, Chief Executive and a co-founder of Mutual Ventures

Until relatively recently you could have been forgiven for thinking that artificial intelligence, that vague and distant concept, was something you could opt in or out of. I don't think anyone thinks that is the case now.

The past 18 months have seen a huge advance in the technology which has been made available to the public. Against this rapidly evolving backdrop, there are several key reasons why public service leaders need to get on the front foot.

The first is of a practical nature. Staff are already using these tools whether there is a policy in place or not.

The second reason is more fundamental. There are two emerging factions in the AI debate. The 'utopians' and the 'doomers'. The utopians are convinced that AI is overwhelmingly positive and that even if AI ends up smarter than humans it will be a good thing. This group seem generally relaxed about AI becoming more powerful and influential than humans. In the pursuit of ever more powerful AI, there is often huge pressure on companies and developers to release products which have undergone only limited vetting.

Then there are those (the so called

'doomers') who are more cautious and want to ensure AI is always ultimately there to serve the humans, is regulated and that the risk is contained. They also believe in the need for AI to be more transparent and explainable.

The naming of these groups is obviously overly sensational, and as with everything, there is a sliding scale – but you get the point.

For public services, there can be only one side of this argument to come down on. Public services need to be accountable and where a decision impacts an individual, it needs to be transparent, explainable and challengeable. At the minute all most AI models can do is point to the billions of pieces of data it has consumed and say that this is the most probable answer to your question.

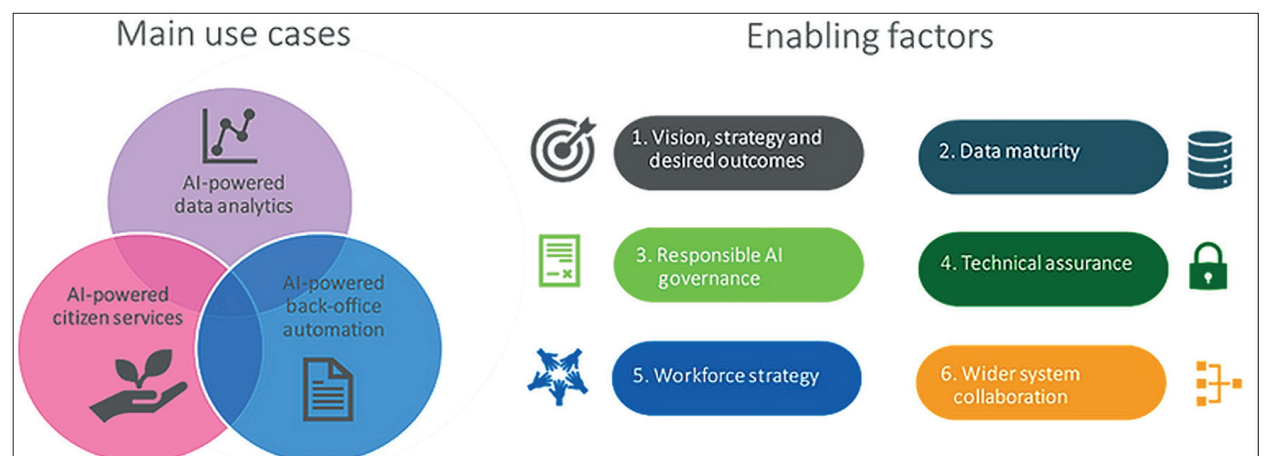
So how do we proceed?

Mutual Ventures have been doing some of this work with Newcastle City Council which has given them a full grounding in AI basics as well as an ethics and values basis on which to develop their AI journey. For sure, public services cannot afford to ignore the potential benefits of AI in terms of productivity and data insight- but this must be from a position of understanding the risks and limitations as well as the exciting bits.

Through this work, we have developed a framework to support public service organisations to assess the opportunities and risks as well as understanding their baseline readiness. It focuses on the key potential use cases of AI in public services and organisational enabling factors to fully harness its potential:

AI can have multiple uses across public service delivery and organisational functions. You need to be strategic about how you want to use AI, identifying the potential use cases that would deliver the best value for your organisation and your local communities. This first part of the diagnostic framework investigates a starting position on your AI transformation journey and where your focus should be going forward.

You also need to act holistically to harness the power of AI. The enabling factors described in the second part of the diagnostic framework represent the key conditions for change. Drop me a line at andrew@mutualventures.co.uk if you want to hear more or discuss your own AI journey. 🌈



Unleashing potential: My Trailblazers journey

Earlier this year, the Universities HR community partnered with Oracle to launch its own version of HR Rising Star called Trailblazers. Here is how one participant found the experience

By **Allyson Chernouski**, People and OD Partner at Abertay University



What is a HR Trailblazer?

I contemplated the same question when I first heard about this exciting new talent development programme from Universities Human Resources (UHR), sponsored by Oracle. It promised to identify and showcase emerging talent in HR and OD within higher education. Little did I know, the true essence of a Trailblazer could only be understood by experiencing it first-hand. It's not just a great experience; it's an adventure in self-discovery that everyone should dare to undertake.

I was thrilled to hear of my successful application and was filled with excitement and enthusiasm, yet alongside the excitement came some nervousness. What was I letting myself in for? Would I measure up and leave a lasting impression? Over the two-day programme, those doubts were replaced by exhilaration, enthusiasm, and self-belief as I delved into engaging activities and insightful discussions. I uncovered layers



of my own potential that I never knew existed.

Surrounded by a dynamic blend of individuals in diverse roles and backgrounds, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery. The diverse cohort provided a unique learning environment that enriched the experience, broadened my perspective on various HR practices and challenges, and fuelled my passion for HR.

Participating in Trailblazers has been an eye-opening experience that has taught me invaluable lessons and equipped me with skills that will shape my future. It's not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about honing practical strategies to navigate challenges with poise and determination. This

newfound resilience is a valuable asset in today's fast-paced and unpredictable work environment.

From discovering my strengths to embracing my weaknesses, Trailblazers provided a nurturing environment for personal growth and development. This self-awareness is not only empowering but also serves as a solid foundation for future endeavours.

In terms of practical skills, Trailblazers sharpened my ability to influence senior-level decisions and drive meaningful change within my organisation. By honing my strategic thinking and communication skills, I feel better prepared to advocate for innovative solutions and lead initiatives that contribute to organisational success. Already,

I've witnessed the tangible impact of the programme in my professional life.

The unpredictability of this programme is what makes it such a fantastic opportunity. So be prepared to dive headfirst into the unknown and dance with uncertainty. You'll be amazed by the revelations about yourself, and the unique perspectives your fellow HR professionals hold about you. Additionally, Trailblazers opens doors to various other opportunities, providing access to a vast network of professionals and resources. It is a brilliant example of how UHR and PPMA have shared learning and experience to bring the best in developing talent across the HR profession.

Trailblazers and HR Rising Star aren't your average talent development programmes – they are about creating a community, a support network, and a platform for unleashing your full potential. They are an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, explore new horizons, and embark on a journey of growth and discovery. So why wait? Applications will soon be open for you to join the ranks of HR Rising Stars and embrace the adventure that awaits! 

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Digitally Disrupting HR

Event: 21 May 2024

Location: Moorgate, London

Featuring: Lucy Adams – Disruptive HR

Let's shine a light on the digital possibilities and positively disrupt HR together!

To find out more or to register to attend this complimentary session, simply scan the QR code

