

First steps to understanding employee engagement better

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Aim and Scope

To share the experience and learning of implementing an employee survey and actioning results survey approach within a large County Council and the Fire & Rescue Service

- Employee Engagement describes the relationship between an employee and their employer and includes concern for an employees' well-being as part of the relationship
- Increased engagement contributes to improved performance
- Also called Employee Experience or Employee Satisfaction

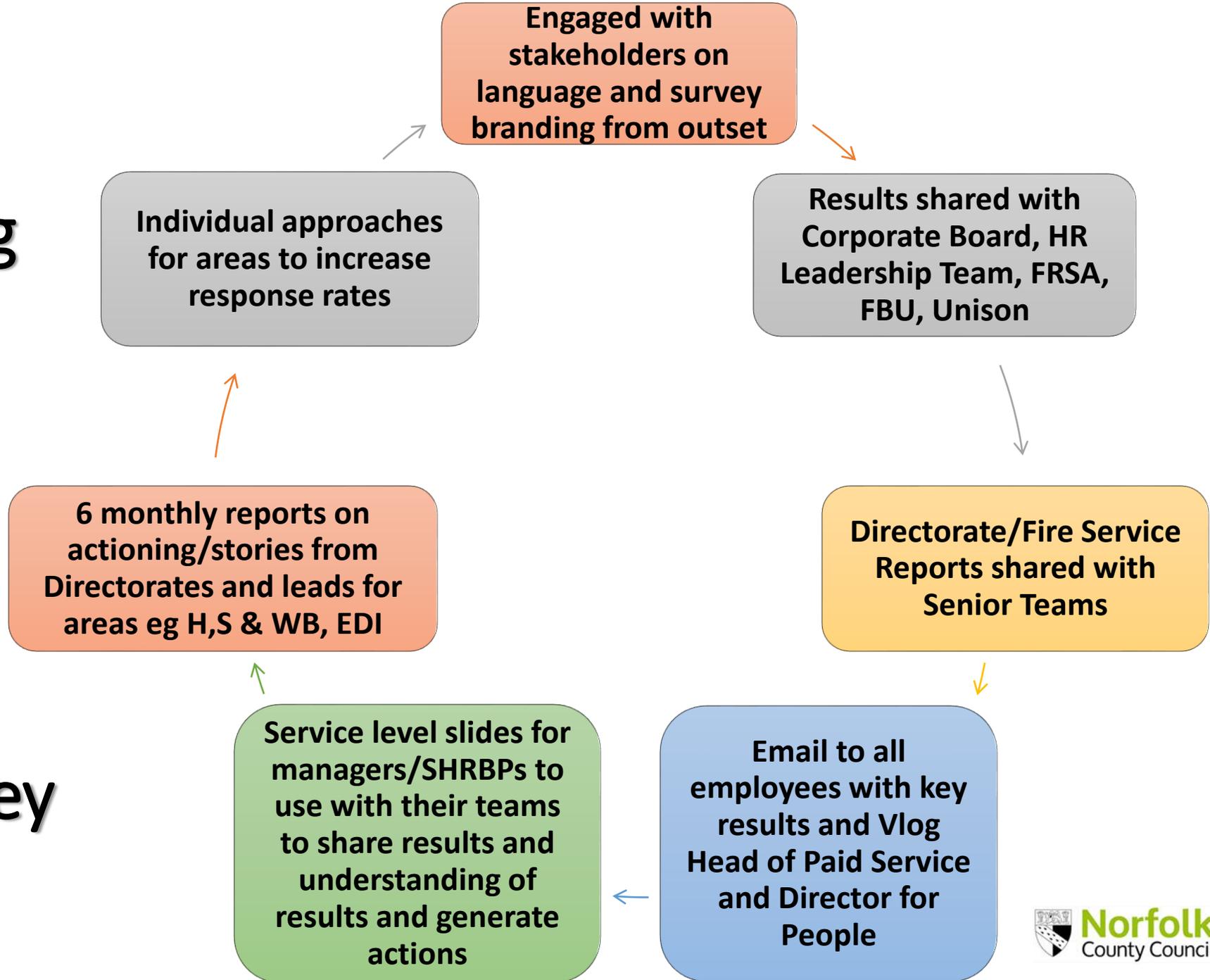
Our context and 'ask' of a survey

Norfolk County Council (NCC) delivers local government services to 870,000+ Norfolk's residents and businesses with 7,000 + employees

Norfolk Fire & Rescue is part of NCC responding to 7215 incidents annually with a budget of £27.7m with 719 employees

- To be underpinned by research that answers the question what is distinctive about engagement in the Public Sector?
- Well-being is seen as one part of engagement
- Key Driver analysis – to support managers' understanding of what makes the biggest difference to employees
- Analysis of narrative and quantitative as part of the survey
- Tight and secure survey design to encourage people to respond
- Build credibility and value in staff surveys and the confidentiality trust bond
- LGA Sponsored research collaboration 2011/12; Kinetiq led research, survey design survey and results analysis

The growing journey of engaging with managers, employees and unions on the survey



Key Drivers at Norfolk Fire Service

↑
IMPACT

Key Driver	2021	2020	2019
1. Overall, I am satisfied with the employment deal (what I receive and what I am expected to give in return) provided by NCC	57	52	61
2. NCC's Directors and Heads of Service Inspire me to use my own initiative	45	40	53
3. My employer invests in building my capabilities through all forms of learning and development	60	53	62
4. My manager recognises that speaking openly about work related issues provides an opportunity to improve things	74	72	79



The Balance of the Deal for Norfolk Fire Service

The Balance of the Deal <i>The difference between what employees see the employer putting in and what they see themselves putting in</i>	Psychological Contract	Perceived Organisational Support	Employer Contribution	Job Engagement	Capability	Organisational Engagement	Employee Contribution	Balance of the Deal 2021	Balance of the Deal 2020	Balance of the Deal 2019	Satisfaction	Number of Response
Norfolk Fire & Rescue 2021	62	54	58	84	79	71	78	-20			57	252
Norfolk Fire & Rescue 2020	55	50	53	84	76	70	77		-24		52	65
Norfolk Fire & Rescue 2019	63	58	61	84	79	74	79			-18	61	156



(75+)

Good score / outcome to be celebrated.



(51-74)

Moderate score / outcome. Capable of improvement.

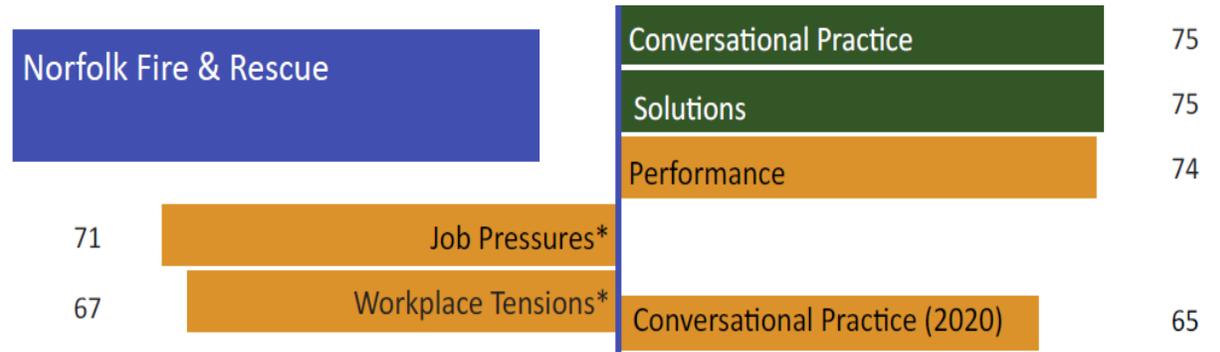


(50 or less)

Relatively poor score / outcome A clear sign to take steps to improve.



Conversational Practice and Organisational Personality at Norfolk Fire Service



*Reverse logic – i.e. lower score is a better outcome

Year	Conversational (e.g. Respectful, Good listener)	Innovative (e.g. Inspiring, Exciting)	Capable (e.g. Competent, Resilient)	Trustworthy (e.g. Honest, Reliable)	Supportive (e.g. Compassionate, Appreciative)	Directive (e.g. Authoritarian, Controlling)*	Developmental (e.g. Coaches, Learning)
2021	57	53	59	57	59	63	57
2020	49	49	57	50	50	61	49
2019	58	56	62	59	61	61	58

Note: Our research reveals a strong negative correlation between ‘Directive’ and the ‘Innovative’ and Developmental’ dispositions. As such, a lower Directive score supports higher scores for Innovative and Developmental.

Recognising the engagement challenge

- The Fire Survey response in 2020 (run either side of the pandemic) was 8% (64 employees)
- **Our assessment of barriers to completion**
 - Apathy (survey fatigue, poor feedback)
 - Available time / access to IT (on-call / other part-time workers, patterns of email use)
 - Relevance (County council branded survey rather than specifically fire, despite Fire being involved in initial engagement)
 - At the start of pandemic training night were suspended – key for messaging
 - Not having ‘corporate’ systems, meant that ‘corporate’ messages were not accessed



We worked on / what happened.

What went well:

- Gained increased support from FRSA (logo on survey) and Unison Fire Rep
- Communicating message – we are part of the County Council / Fire specific feedback provided to senior leadership team and using Fire ‘What’s Hot’ to reach audience
- Several newly promoted senior managers creating opportunities to explain the importance of the staff survey
- Middle managers deliberately giving staff time to complete at watch night meetings

Opportunities Created:

- Several newly promoted senior managers creating opportunities to explain the importance of the staff survey

Result:

- 34% (264) survey completions, a 21% increase from 2020

Stories from the Norfolk Fire Service

They always help work around and find the best way of working my development within the restrictions of my personal life.

Open and honest discussions about resource constraints and budget pressures have resulted in a change to budget monitoring and budget management.

Cross-organisation working is very limited in NCC compared to other organisations that I have worked. Over the past year there has been numerous examples of people working long hours because they are the only one in our division who can do the role and no support.

Our staffing levels are so squeezed that we cannot assign resources to drive proper improvement.



You told us and we worked on

Cross-organisation working is very limited in NCC

- Corporate shared service transition for enabling functions
- Building relationships with wider county council, celebrating joined up working and greater efficiencies
- Delivering efficiencies through IT upgrade, joined up policy, expertise within teams

Our staffing levels are so squeezed

- Concept of operations – reviewing structures, realigning resources to risk and pressure
- Greater engagement to ensure we are ‘telling the story’

Learning Points

- This good work was happening but we didn't link back to survey. We need to invest at ‘the end’ as well as the beginning
- Need to tell the story in a way that is understood, otherwise employees' fill the gaps in their own words

During and Post Pandemic changes in practice

- Weekly middle managers briefing (on-line video conferencing) – established during pandemic, very effective, bringing middle managers together from across the county to hear emerging and current issues.
- Middle managers forum (face to face and on-line video conferencing) – pre-pandemic in-person meeting, during pandemic using Teams. Presentation is helpful on-line but lacking depth of conversation, but better than nothing
- This was reflected in Conversational Practice increased from 65 (2020) to 75 (2021)
- Later On-line engagement sessions, despite reducing travelling but as they lacked personability – returned to SLT meeting face-to-face with teams across county.



What's happened in other services?

Denise Saadvandi, Head of Adult Learning

"Since 2019 we have been doing a lot of work to try and reduce workplace tensions that was scored at 72 in 2019 and has since dropped to 60 in 2021. A cornerstone of addressing these tensions was the creation of a communications plan across Adult Learning. We also hold termly team discussion and feedback sessions, which gives all staff an opportunity to be involved in improving the service.

Another area was the introduction of a wellbeing team to help support staff with any issues, this included a wellbeing email box that was confidential, and regular staff wellbeing each month, with dedicated work time to do this."

Jill Terrell, Head of Libraries and Information Service

"Communication has been an area that we have tried to work hard on, we have a weekly staff newsletter and encourage staff to carefully consider who's copied in on emails to reduce mailbox pressures. Visibility of managers was also an important area for us to improve on, and managers now work regularly from different libraries so frontline staff can interact with us."

Sarah Shirtcliff, Director for People

"we used your feedback to re-prioritise where work was needed from Parental Carers to Working Carers, and a Deaf, Hard of Hearing and BSL User group to support and engage with colleagues with hearing loss. The results have been used re-design the induction for new staff and bespoke workshops on speaking openly for some services"



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