
Report to: Audit & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Thursday 25th August 2022

Subject: Staff Survey 2021

Report by: Team Leader – Workforce Development & Learning

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides the Audit & Scrutiny Committee with details of the 2021 Clackmannanshire Council Staff Survey, and gives further information as to how results will be communicated, and used to inform future work.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the report, commenting and challenging as appropriate.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. Clackmannanshire Council undertook its most recent staff survey in November to December 2021
- 3.2. Over this period, 676 responses were received, giving a council wide response rate of 26%. Whilst this remains a statistically valid result, it does represent a 1 percentage point reduction on last year (27%), and a significant fall from a pre-covid high of 43%.
- 3.3. Analysis suggests that the low response rate across the Council may be linked to the ongoing challenges with hybrid working, which, whilst now fairly well embedded across the organisation, does limit on the ability to engage, and maintain engagement with staff across the period of the survey.
- 3.4. It should however be noted that as with previous years, managers at all levels were provided with frequently asked question documents, toolbox talk scripts, and a promotional materials pack for their individual areas. Additionally, regular reminders about the survey were issued via management cascade, all staff emails and the clacks.gov.uk/staff site, in addition to c600 paper surveys being issued directly to staff home addresses (where these otherwise would have been distributed directly via managers).
- 3.5. The survey report (attached at **Annex A**), provides detail on the engagement levels of our employees, both at an organisational and directorate level. Direct comparisons are made to the 2019 and 2020 survey results.

- 3.6. For 2021, the overall staff engagement level for the organisation is 68.4%, which is a small reduction from the 2020 level of 69.9%, but remains above the initial 2018 survey level of 62.5%.
- 3.7. Feedback from staff is most positive with regards to having a sense of achievement for the work they undertake, and being treated with dignity and respect (at a Council wide level).
- 3.8. However, views become more mixed with consideration to themes such as feeling valued and supported, with 25% of respondents not feeling valued for their work, and a similar proportion (24%) not feeling supported to undertake their work. Additionally, less than half of respondents (44%) reported good mental wellbeing (a 10 percentage point decrease since summer 2020), and more than a third (37%) describing their mental wellbeing as only 'fair' or 'poor'.
- 3.9. In terms of more generalised (free text) feedback, nearly a third of respondents gave more detailed written feedback. Themes within this feedback included experiences of homeworking and the lack of appropriate IT kit and support, the impact of homeworking on relationships with colleagues, a lack of effective communication and engagement at a corporate level, and the impacts of hybrid working on mental health (both positive and negative).
- 3.10. The full range of feedback is included within the Staff Survey report, which is attached at **ANNEX A**.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1. The results outlined at **Annex A** of this report will be pivotal in supporting the ongoing work to develop the Council's approach to themes such as employee health and wellbeing, internal communications, and future ways of working.
- 4.2. In particular, the results of this survey will be instrumental in feeding the development of the Council's Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-25, in addition to guiding the annual work plan for the Council's Workforce Development and Learning team.
- 4.3. We also recognise the need to provide feedback to staff and trade unions on these results. As such, directorate specific results have been provided for discussion at Bipartite meetings, as well communications material being issued via the Keeping Staff Connected staff magazine, and through video content developed by the HR & WFD team.
- 4.4. Members of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee should also note that this survey represents the final iteration of the current contract with providers Craigforth.
- 4.5. As such, a review of how we engage with staff, and the effectiveness of these surveys across years 2018-2022 will be undertaken by the Workforce Development & Learning Team with a view to presenting a revised way forward to the Strategic Leadership Group in August 2022.

5.0 Sustainability Implications

5.1. None.

6.0 Resource Implications

6.1. *Financial Details*

6.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate.

Yes

6.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report.

Yes

6.4. *Staffing*

6.5. None.

7.0 Exempt Reports

7.1. Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all

Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life

Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential

Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

None.

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes No

9.0 Legality

- 9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

10.0 Appendices

- 10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

ANNEX A: 2021 Staff Survey report

11.0 Background Papers

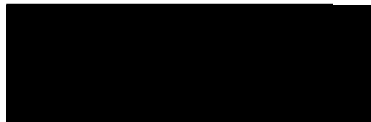
- 11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes (please list the documents below) No

Author(s)

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Approved by

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Clackmannanshire Council

Staff Experience Survey 2021

Lead author: Chris Thornton
February 2022



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Clackmannanshire Council

Staff Survey 2021



Employee views are positive across most aspects of their working lives, especially feeling a sense of achievement, being treated with dignity, and their experience of homeworking

Ratings have deteriorated since the start of the pandemic for some indicators – most notably mental health, communication and support



Employee engagement also showed a small decrease this year, the first in the last four surveys

This report presents results from a survey of all Clackmannanshire Council employees. Results are based on 676 responses, a 26% response.

Survey Themes

Employees are positive across most aspects of their engagement with the Council as an employer. Views are most positive about having a sense of achievement and being treated with dignity and respect. Around three quarters have a positive view on these aspects of their work.

Views are mixed on whether staff feel valued and supported. A quarter (25%) do not feel valued for their work, and a similar proportion (24%) do not feel supported to undertake their work. Views were also less positive on employee mental wellbeing. Less than half (44%) reported good mental wellbeing (a 10-point fall since summer 2020) and more than a third (37%) described their mental wellbeing as only ‘fair’ or ‘poor’.

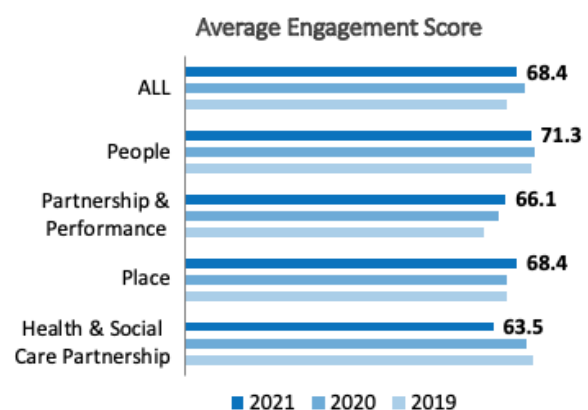
More than two thirds (69%) feel supported by their manager (69%) and that they have enough contact with their manager (68%), but only around half (53%) feel they are kept up to date by the Council. However, all of these measures show a deterioration since summer 2020.

Employees generally feel that they have the tools they need to work effectively from home, and feel that homeworking has not had a negative impact on their productivity. Results also show an improvement in views on the productivity of homeworking – less than 1 in 10 of those currently working from home feel this has negatively affected their productivity.

Consistent with these views, many employees commented positively on their experience of homeworking. However, a range of potential improvements were suggested to help employees be more productive when homeworking. These focused primarily around access to technology and a suitable workspace, the reliability of Council systems, support from managers, and the quality of communication with colleagues. Some expressed strong interest in moving to ‘blended’ home and office working, and there was a view that the Council has been slow to clarify plans for future working arrangements.

Employee Engagement

A score of 68.4 (out of 100) represents a small reduction since the 2020 survey, but remains 10% above the 2018 survey in terms of employee engagement. Engagement is strongest for People employees and weakest for HSCP employees. Ensuring employees are treated with respect, feel a sense of achievement, contribute to decisions and get the support they need would have the most positive impact on employee engagement.



INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents results from a survey of Clackmannanshire Council employees conducted in late 2021.

Survey approach

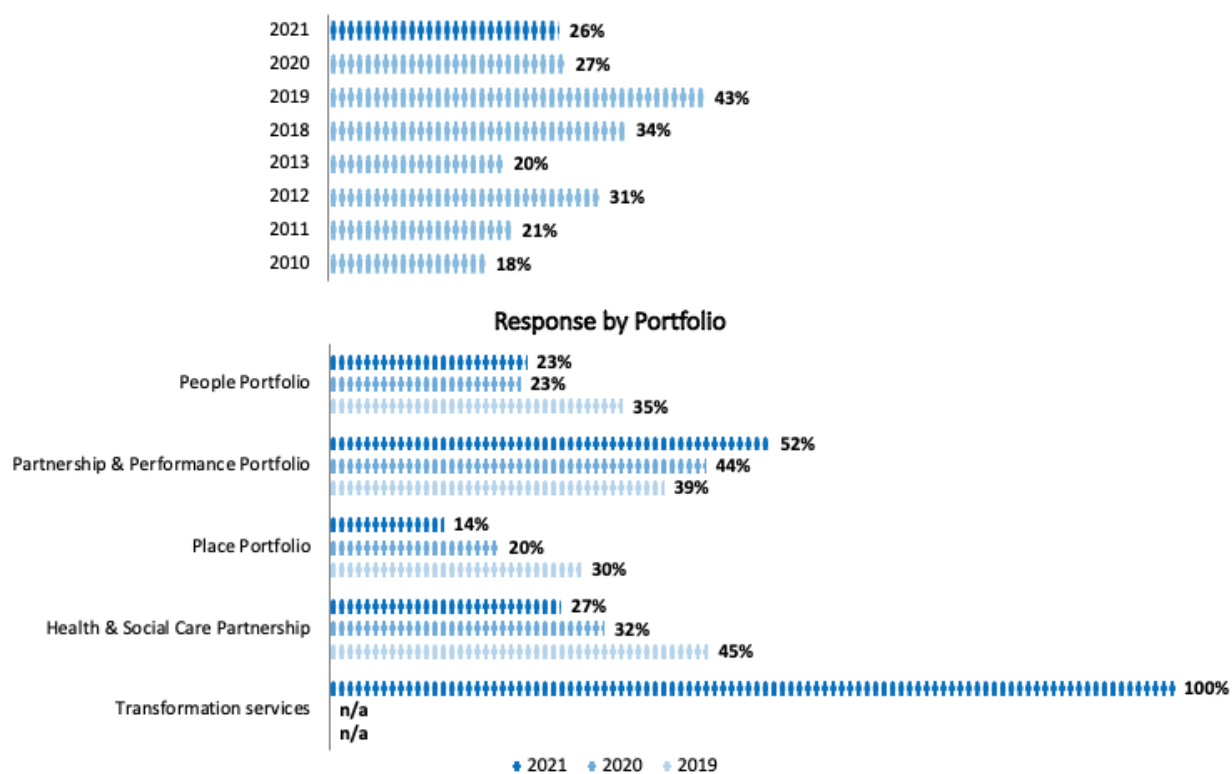
2. This is the fourth Council-wide employee survey since the Council refreshed its engagement survey approach in 2018 (with previous surveys conducted in 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010).
3. Survey content was maintained from the previous survey, including new questions first introduced in 2020 reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's workforce and working arrangements. Specifically, the survey asked employees to indicate their views on a series of statements relating to their engagement with the Council as an employer, on their mental health and wellbeing, on communication and support from their manager, and on homeworking.
4. The survey was administered through a combined web-based and postal survey approach. The survey was issued in November 2021 and closed on 23 December 2021. All postal and online survey responses were returned direct to Craigforth to maintain confidentiality, using reply-paid envelopes for direct return of postal surveys and Craigforth's survey platform for web responses. Survey materials made clear that the Council did not have sight of any individual responses, nor information on which employees had or had not responded to the survey, and that reporting would avoid disclosure of any individual's views.
5. Survey fieldwork was designed to maximise accessibility. All employees had the option to respond via the websurvey or request a hard copy questionnaire, or to complete the survey by phone with a member of Craigforth's research team. Survey resurvey response was also supported by communication from the Council to employees emphasising the importance of the survey in assessing employee experience.

Survey response and robustness

6. Against the 2,578 survey packs issued to Council employees, a total of 676 responses were received - equivalent to an overall response rate of 26%. This response is very similar to the response achieved to the 2020 survey but represents a 17-point fall from the response achieved by the 2019 survey - likely to at least in part reflect continuing pressures on services and staff as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, 26% remains a strong response for a survey of this kind, and is broadly in line with that achieved by Council staff surveys prior to 2019.

7. As Figure 1 shows, survey response rates varied across Council portfolios. With the exception of the small Transformation Services portfolio (which achieved a 100% response), response was strongest for Partnership & Performance portfolio staff (52%) and was lowest for Place staff (14%). This variation in survey response is not unusual for employee surveys, and is likely to reflect in part the impact of varying working environments. For example, the lower Place portfolio response is primarily due to a lower response from Property and Environment employees who are less likely to have a dedicated office working space. However, it is notable that response from Place portfolio staff has continued to decline over the last three surveys, while the Partnership & Portfolio response has increased year on year.
8. Survey responses were weighted against the profile of all Clackmannanshire Council employees prior to analysis to minimise the impact of response bias.

Figure 1: Survey response



9. As a result of the strong overall response, the volume of survey responses is sufficient to produce robust survey results. Confidence intervals are the standard means of expressing the extent to which survey results are representative of the wider population (in this case all Council employees). The overall confidence interval for the survey is $\pm 3.8\%$. As an example, this means that if 50% of respondents feel valued for the work they do, we can be 95% confident that the true value is between 46.2% and 53.8%.
10. Figure 2 presents an overview of the profile of survey respondents in terms of portfolio, working environment and length of employment (based on respondents' self-reporting). This is broadly in line with that reported by the 2019 survey, with a

large proportion of respondents (29%) continuing to work from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 2: Profile of survey respondents (n=676)

Portfolio	Number		%	
People Portfolio	369		55%	
Partnership & Performance Portfolio	78		12%	
Place Portfolio	79		12%	
Health & Social Care Partnership	64		9%	
Prefer not to say/no response	6		1%	
Working environment	Current		Pre-Covid 19	
Working from home	198	29%	19	3%
An office	89	13%	277	41%
A school	265	39%	247	37%
A depot or facility	25	4%	26	4%
Outdoors or a vehicle	10	1%	11	2%
Visiting people's homes	7	1%	9	1%
Prefer not to say	27	4%	24	4%
Time...	with Council		in current job	
Less than 1 year	47	7%	69	10%
1-4 years	127	19%	213	32%
5-9 years	95	14%	93	14%
10-19 years	164	24%	142	21%
20+ years	155	23%	65	10%
Prefer not to say/No response	88	13%	94	14%

This report

11. The remainder of this report sets out key findings across the main survey themes, including comparison with previous surveys where relevant. All questions have been cross tabulated across key respondent subgroups such as portfolio and working environment - we highlight significant variation where relevant.
12. We have also used five statements from the first survey question to produce an 'Engagement Index' score for each employee, reflecting their level of engagement with the Council as an employer. These scores are discussed at 'Engagement Index'.
13. We round percentages up or down to the nearest whole number. This may mean that percentages do not sum to 100%. Similarly, aggregate figures presented in the text (such as the combined percentage of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses) may not sum to results presented in figures and tables due to rounding. We present some direct quotes from written survey responses in the body of the report – these may be lightly edited for brevity.

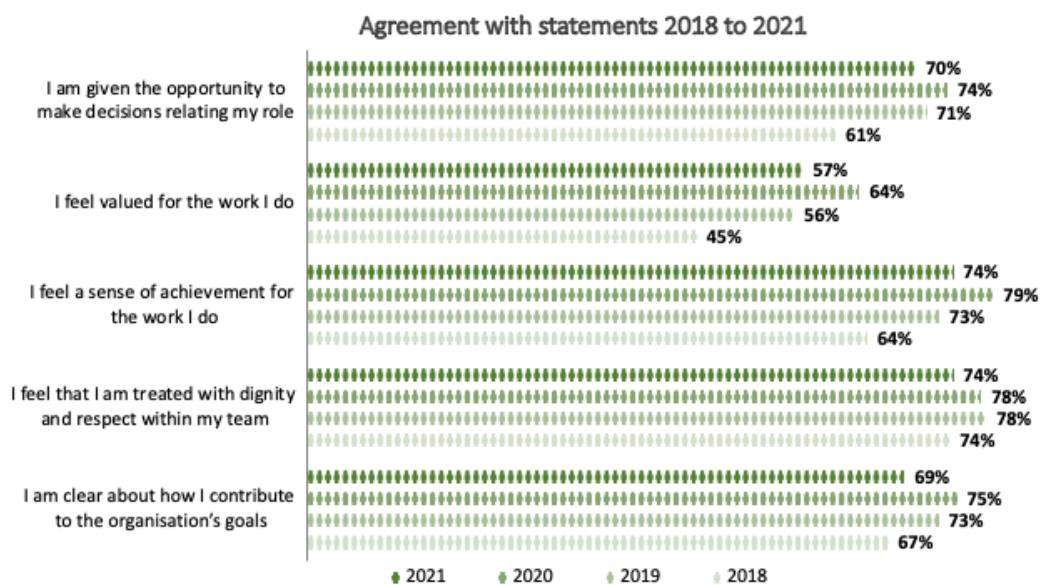
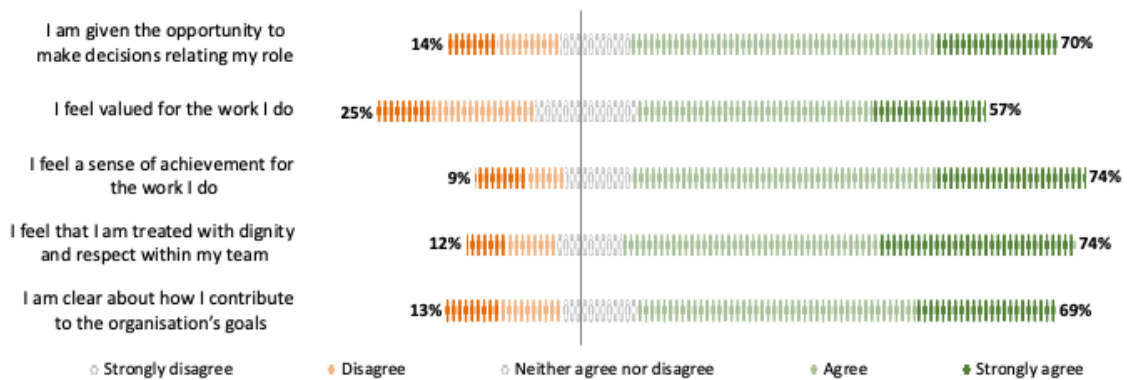
SURVEY THEMES

14. The survey asked for employees' views on a range of issues relating to their work and workplace, across the following themes:
- ❖ Employee engagement;
 - ❖ Mental health and wellbeing;
 - ❖ Communication;
 - ❖ Homeworking; and
 - ❖ Council vision and values.

Employee engagement

15. The survey first asked employees to consider a series of five statements under the theme of 'Employee engagement'. As Figure 3 over the page shows, employees are positive in their views on most aspects of this theme, with a majority of employees agreeing with each of the statements.
16. Views are most positive in relation to employees feeling a sense of achievement for the work they do, and feeling that they are treated with dignity and respect:
- ❖ 'I feel a sense of achievement for the work I do' - 74% agree.
 - ❖ 'I feel that I am treated with dignity and respect within my team' - 74% agree.
17. Employees are also positive about being given the opportunity to make decisions, and how they contribute to the organisation's goals:
- ❖ 'I am given the opportunity to make decisions relating my role' - 70% agree.
 - ❖ 'I am clear about how I contribute to the organisation's goals' - 69% agree.
18. Views are somewhat more divided on whether staff feel valued for the work they do. More than half of respondents (57%) are positive on this measure, but a quarter (25%) do not feel valued for their work.
19. These findings are broadly consistent with the 2020 survey; while results for all five indicators have declined since 2020, none of these changes are statistically significant. Views are also consistent across the four portfolios, although there is some variation in views dependent on employees' current working environment. For example, those working in a school or from home are most positive about feeling valued for their work and being clear about how they contribute to the Council's goals. In contrast, those working in a depot or facility are least positive on these measures.

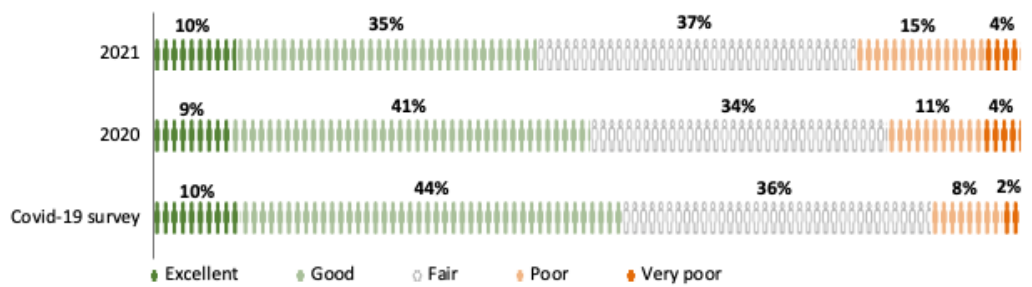
Figure 3: Employee engagement staff views



Mental health and wellbeing

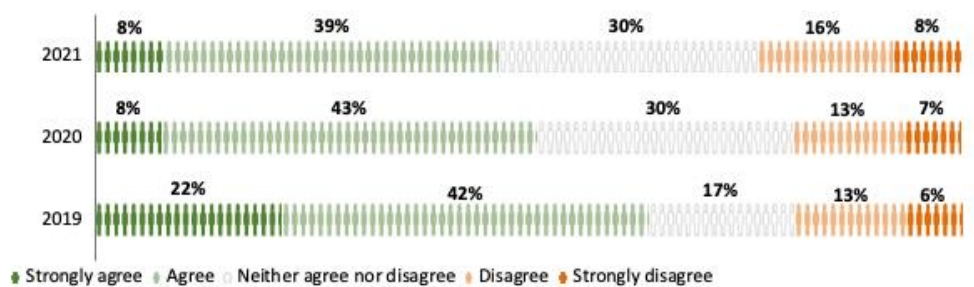
20. The survey asked employees a series of questions relating to their mental health and wellbeing at present, and support from the Council around their wellbeing.
21. As Figure 4 over the page shows, employees are somewhat mixed in relation to their mental wellbeing at present. While 44% of respondents described their mental wellbeing as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, more than a third (37%) described this as only ‘fair’, and 19% as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.
22. These ratings are broadly similar to the 2020 staff, but there has been a gradual deterioration in how employees rate their mental health; ratings are now 10-points lower than the Covid-19 survey conducted in summer 2020 (44%, down from 54%). Mental health ratings are consistent across portfolios and other key respondent groups.

Figure 4: Rating of mental wellbeing right now



23. A little less than half of employees (47%) feel supported by the Council to undertake their work effectively (Figure 5) and nearly a quarter (24%) do not feel supported. This balance was broadly consistent across key respondent groups, and there has been no significant change since the 2020 survey. However, these findings represent a 17-point fall from the 2019 survey, where 64% of respondents indicated that ‘I get the support I need to do my job well’.

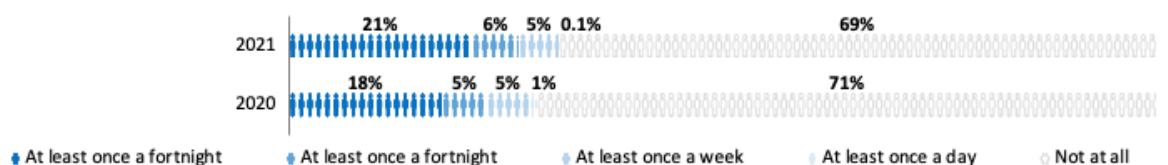
Figure 5: Whether feel supported by the Council to undertake work effectively

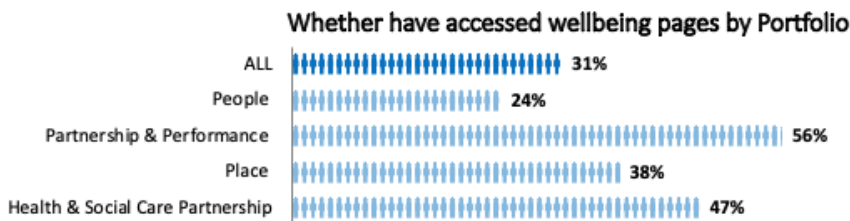


24. The Council provides information to support staff wellbeing through its website. As Figure 6 shows, nearly a third of employees (31%) have accessed these webpages. This includes a tenth (10%) who accessed these webpages at least once a fortnight.

25. Survey results are very similar to the 2020 survey, but show some variation across key respondent groups. In particular, HSCP and Partnership & Performance employees, and those who currently work from home are most likely to have accessed the Council’s wellbeing pages. People portfolio employees, those working in schools and those working outdoors, in a vehicle or visiting people’s homes are least likely to have accessed this information.

Figure 6: Whether have accessed the staff wellbeing pages on the Council website

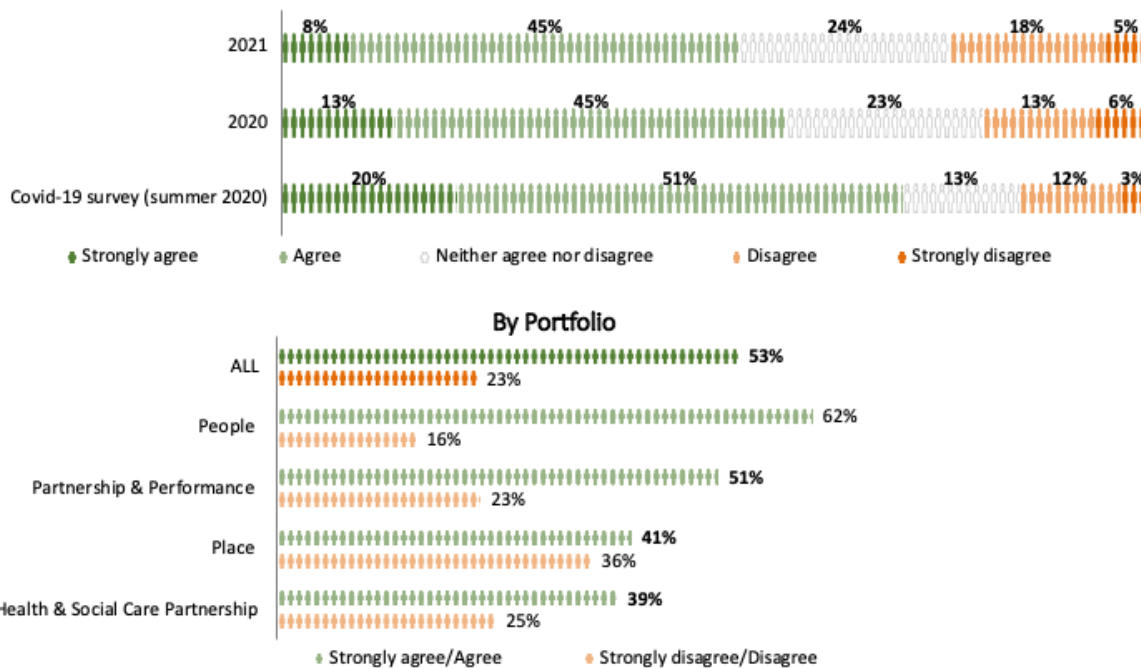




Communication

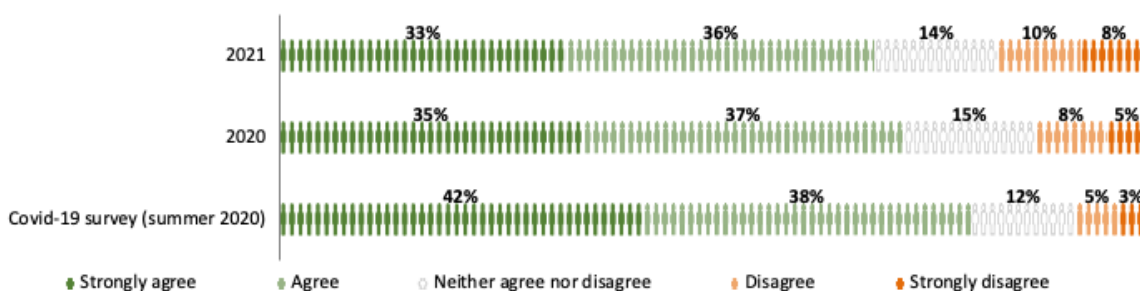
- 26. The survey also asked a series of questions around communication between employees and their manager, supervisor and/or the organisation more widely.
- 27. As Figure 7 shows, a little more than half of employees (53%) agree that they are kept up to date with the latest information from around the Council. These findings are similar to the 2020 survey, but represent a decrease of 19-points since the Covid-19 survey. Views also vary across key respondent groups; People portfolio employees and those working in schools or at home are most positive about being kept up to date. In contrast, Place and HSCP employees and those working outdoors or in vehicles are least positive.

Figure 7: Whether feel kept up to date with latest information from around the organisation



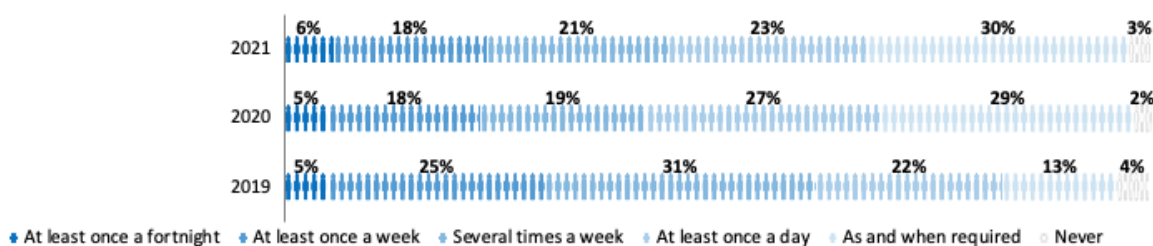
- 28. Employees are more positive about support from their manager or supervisor. As Figure 8 shows, more than two thirds of employees (69%) feel supported by their manager or supervisor, although 17% disagree. This finding is similar to the 2020 survey, but represents an 11-point reduction since the Covid-19 survey. Views are also broadly consistent across key respondent groups.

Figure 8: Whether feel supported by manager/supervisor



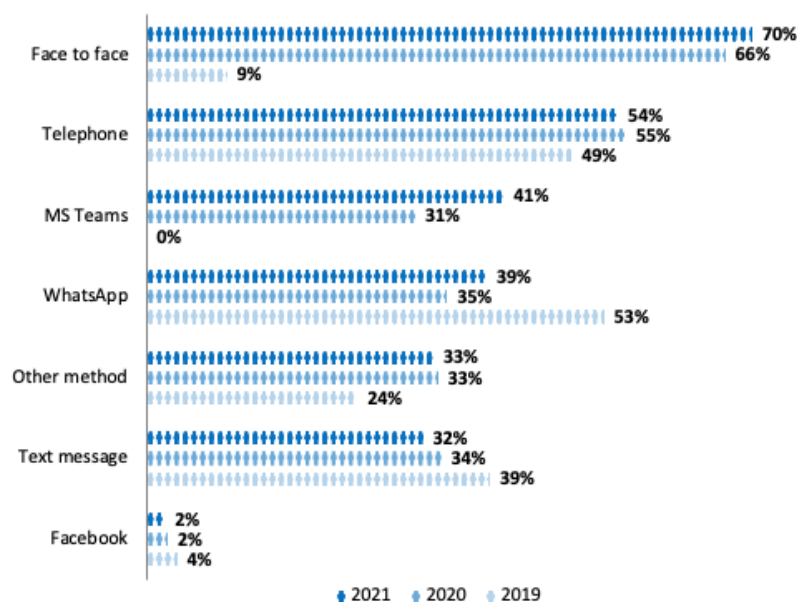
- 29. The frequency and nature of contact between employees and their managers continues to be significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and in particular the proportion of employees across working from home. The survey asked a series of questions around how managers keep in contact with employees (Figures 9 and 10), and the extent to which employees feel they have had enough contact with their manager (Figure 11).
- 30. Survey findings indicate that the majority of employees (62%) are contacted by their manager at least once a week, including 44% who receive contact at least several times a week and 23% who receive daily contact. These findings are similar to the 2020 survey, but represent a 16-point reduction since the Covid-19 survey (conducted in the summer of 2020) in the proportion of employees who have weekly contact with their manager.
- 31. Survey results also show some variation across portfolio, with HSCP employees generally having less frequent contact with their manager.

Figure 9: Frequency of contact with manager



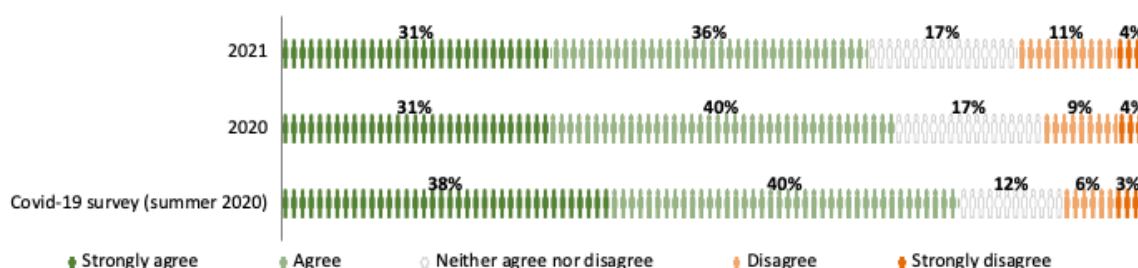
- 32. In terms of how managers keep in contact with employees, this is most commonly face to face (mentioned by 70% of employees) or by telephone (54%). Digital options such as MS Teams, WhatsApp and SMS are also used by a substantial proportion of employees (by 41%, 39% and 32% respectively). This mix of communication methods is broadly consistent with the 2020 survey, although there has been a 10-point increase in use of MS Teams in the last year.
- 33. Survey results again show some variation dependent on employees' working environment. For example, face to face contact is more common for those working in a school, office or other Council building, while MS Teams is more common for those working from home.

Figure 10: Communication methods used by managers



- 34. As Figure 11 shows, the majority of employees (68%) feel they have enough contact with their manager, and only 15% disagree. These findings are similar to the 2020 survey, but represent a 11-point fall since the Covid-19 survey in the proportion of employees who feel they have enough contact with their manager. Results are broadly consistent across portfolios, but those working in a depot/facility, outdoors, in a vehicle or in people's homes are least positive about the level of contact with their manager.

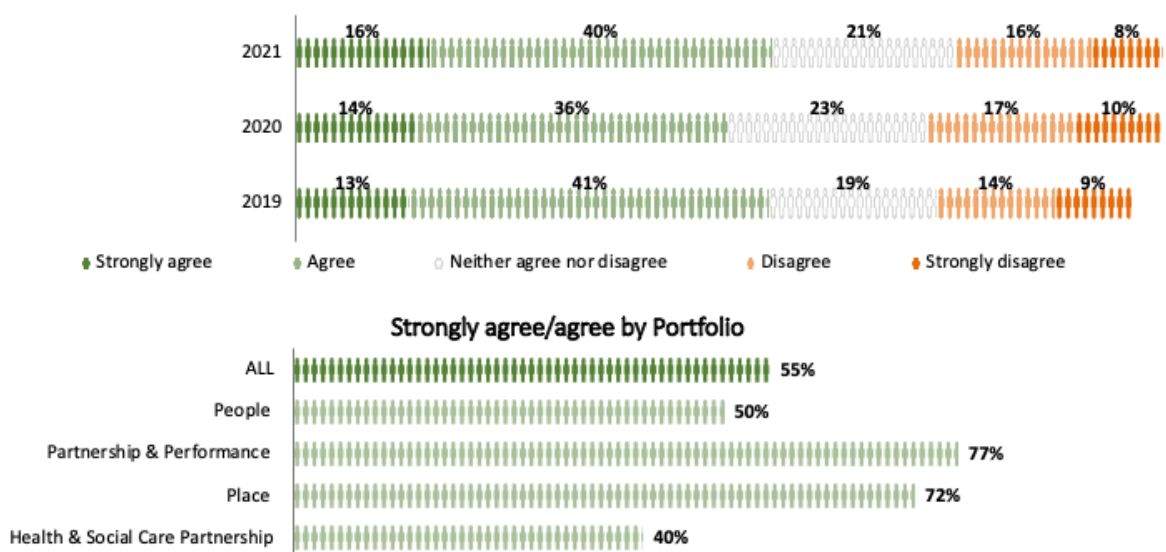
Figure 11: Whether feel have enough contact with manager



Homeworking

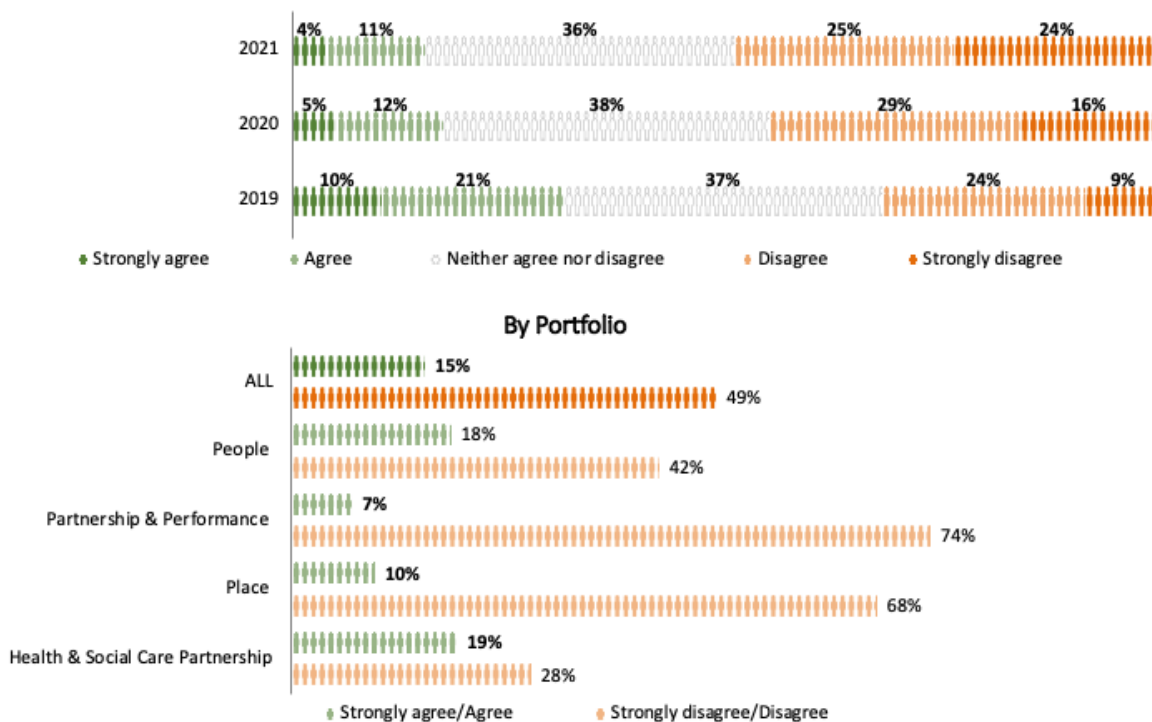
35. As noted earlier, survey findings show a significant increase in the proportion of employees working from home at present, primarily as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey asked a series of questions around employees’ experience of homeworking.
36. As Figure 12 shows, employees generally feel that they have the tools they need to work effectively from home, with more than half (55%) agreeing that this is the case. However, nearly a quarter (24%) do not feel that they have the tools they need for homeworking, and this is broadly consistent with findings of the 2020 survey.
37. There is some variation in views across key respondent groups, with HSCP and People portfolio employees least positive about having the tools they need to work from home. There is also a significant difference in views dependent on employees’ working environment; 8% of those who currently work from home feel that they do not have the tools that they need, compared to 35% of other employees.

Figure 12: Whether feel have the tools needed to work effectively from home



38. As Figure 13 shows, employees generally feel that homeworking has not negatively affected their productivity; 15% feel there has been some negative impact. This represents a significant improvement from the Covid-19 survey, which showed that 32% of employees felt homeworking had negatively affected their productivity.
39. Survey findings also indicate that Partnership & Performance and Place employees are most positive about their experience of homeworking. It is also notable that less than 1 in 10 (8%) of those who are currently working from home feel that this has negatively affected their productivity.

Figure 13: Whether feel homeworking has negatively affected your productivity



40. The survey also gave employees the opportunity to add written comments regarding any changes that could help them to be more productive when working from home. A little more than half of those currently working from home provided comment here.
41. Some of these respondents used the opportunity to comment positively on their experience of homeworking. This included suggestions that home working has had a positive effect on their productivity, including reference to having less distractions at home, and saving time previously spent commuting to a workplace. However, most of those providing written comment identified at least one area where changes could improve their productivity while working from home. Below we summarise the key points raised.
42. Challenges around **access to technology, software and connectivity** are by far the most common issues for those providing comment. This includes difficulties with technology and connectivity in employees’ homes, but also with access to Council systems. Specific issues raised were:
 - ❖ The reliability of the Citrix system, with reference to connection difficulties and unexpected downtime, and the amount of time that employees spend dealing with these issues.
 - ❖ Difficulties with the speed and reliability of employees’ home broadband, including particular frustration where Teams meetings are interrupted by connection issues.

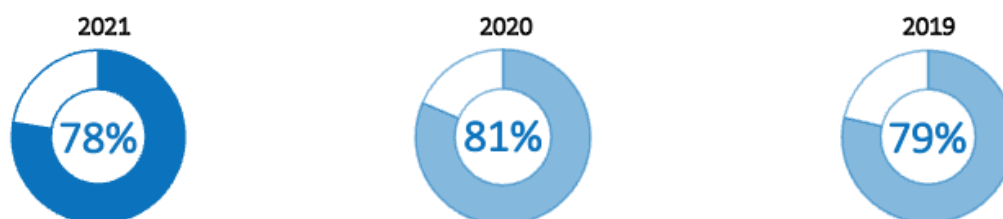
- ❖ Access to and use of MS Teams. This is most commonly in relation to integration of Citrix, email and MS Teams, but some employees also referred to not having full access to MS Teams and/or requiring training.
 - ❖ Reliance on outdated software, with specific reference to use of Lotus Notes.
 - ❖ A need for more modern, reliable and powerful technology at home, with reference to more modern laptop/pc or mobile phone, accessing to printing facilities, a need for more or larger computer screens, and access to a webcam. This includes examples of employees being unable to use specific software on their current laptop/PC (e.g. MS Teams). A number of employees feel that the Council should provide financial support to employees who have been required to invest in technology and other equipment to enable them to work from home – especially where this will be an ongoing part of their working arrangements.
43. **Workload and maintaining a work/life balance** are concerns for a number of employees who are currently homeworking. These employees wish to see changes around:
- ❖ Difficulties in separating work and home life where employees are dealing with a heavy workload and/or do not have a dedicated workspace. Some feel that they have been working significantly longer hours since they moved to homeworking.
 - ❖ Ensuring breaks between Teams calls to give employees time to complete other work and to allow some screen-free time during the working day.
 - ❖ A small number of employees have concerns around wider staff wellbeing for those who are still home working as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
44. Employees also raised a range of issues around their **workspace and working environment at home**, where they felt that change is needed. These include:
- ❖ A need for a better workstation, including larger desk and larger screens.
 - ❖ A lack of private space for work, including employees having to work in a shared living space. As noted above in relation to work/life balance, some employees are struggling with the lack of a dedicated workspace.
 - ❖ A number of employees see a need for financial support to cover the additional costs associated with working from home – such as energy and heating costs, and broadband services.
45. **Balancing home and office-based working** was also raised by a number of respondents. Some wish to see quicker progression towards ‘hybrid’ working, with greater flexibility around use of offices (for example, depending on the sustainability of individuals’ homeworking arrangements). However, some are also concerned about the risk of employees being pressured into a return to the office where they have proven effective in homeworking – these respondents would like greater flexibility to choose how they divide their time between home and office.

46. Employees also have some concerns around **communication with managers and other colleagues**, including suggestions for some specific changes. These include more regular engagement with supervisors and managers, particularly to assist with work planning – for example ensuring employees are clear on their work requirements. Some also wish to see more frequent contact between team members and other colleagues, for example through regular Teams meetings. In relation to wider communication, some also feel there is scope to make better use of the staff intranet as a means of sharing information with employees, through more frequent updates.

Council vision and values

47. The survey asked employees whether they were familiar with the Council's vision and values. As Figure 14 shows, a large majority (78%) of employees are aware of the Council's vision and values, while 22% feel they are not familiar with these. This finding is consistent with previous surveys, and is broadly similar across portfolios. However, those working in a depot/facility or outdoors, in a vehicle or in people's homes were least likely to be aware of the Council's vision and values.

Figure 14: Employees aware of the Council's vision and values



Variation in views by portfolio

48. Over the preceding pages we have highlighted statistically significant differences in survey findings across key groups, including the four Portfolio areas. Figure 15 over the page provides an overview of variation in survey results across the Portfolios.
49. This indicates that there is no significant variation in employee engagement across portfolios, but there is some variation in views around communication and homeworking in particular. While survey results do not show a clear pattern of more positive or negative views within specific Portfolios, it is notable that HSCP employees are less positive than others on four indicators, while Partnership & Performance employees are not less positive than others on any indicators.
- ❖ **People portfolio** employees are more positive than others in relation to feeling that they are kept up to date, but are less likely than others to have accessed the Council staff wellbeing pages and are less positive about maintaining their productivity while homeworking.
 - ❖ **Partnership & Performance portfolio** employees are more positive than others about homeworking and are most likely to have accessed the Council staff wellbeing pages.

- ❖ **Place portfolio** employees are more positive than others about maintaining productivity while homeworking and are typically contacted by their manager more often than others, but are less positive about being kept up to date.
- ❖ **HSCP portfolio** employees are more likely than others to have accessed the Council staff wellbeing pages, but are less positive in relation to home working, being kept up to date, and generally have less contact with their manager.

Figure 15: Significant differences in employee views by portfolio

Employee engagement	People	Partnership & Performance	Place	HSCP
I am given the opportunity to make decisions relating to my role	71%	77%	78%	61%
I feel valued for the work I do	63%	53%	54%	51%
I feel a sense of achievement for the work I do	79%	69%	69%	77%
I feel that I am treated with dignity and respect within my team	75%	65%	82%	62%
I am clear about how I contribute to the organisation's goals	74%	68%	61%	58%
Mental health and wellbeing	People	Partnership & Performance	Place	HSCP
I have excellent/good mental wellbeing right now	45%	53%	50%	36%
I feel supported by the Council to undertake work effectively	47%	47%	54%	44%
I have accessed Council staff wellbeing webpages	24%	56%	38%	47%
Communication	People	Partnership & Performance	Place	HSCP
I am kept up to date with the latest information from around the organisation	62%	51%	41%	39%
I feel supported by manager / supervisor	71%	62%	73%	61%
I am contacted by my manager at least once a week	61%	60%	70%	48%
I have enough contact with my manager	72%	62%	67%	59%
Homeworking	People	Partnership & Performance	Place	HSCP
I have the tools needed to work effectively from home	50%	77%	72%	40%
Working from home has negatively affected my productivity	18%	7%	10%	19%

Green Significantly better result

Red Significantly poorer result

Other comments

50. The survey also gave employees the opportunity to add any further written comments regarding their wellbeing, communication, or homeworking.
51. Nearly a third of survey respondents provided written comments here. A substantial number of these respondents used the opportunity to comment positively on their experience over the last year, particularly in relation to homeworking. This included employees who feel they are more productive working from home for example due to reduced travel time and fewer “distractions”, and who had established effective new ways of working with colleagues and managers. Written comments also highlighted the benefits of homeworking and (more recently) blended working for their wellbeing, including achieving a better work/life balance. This included particular benefits for those with health or mobility-related conditions, for whom homeworking was described as “a game changer” in enabling them to better manage their condition and minimise absences.
52. However, most of those providing written comment identified issues or concerns, and suggested changes to address these. Below we summarise the key points raised.
53. While many of those providing comment highlighted positives around their experience of **homeworking**, a range of issues and concerns were raised, including a view that the Council could do more to identify and respond to these.
 - ❖ A number of specific challenges were identified for homeworking. These included limited access to IT equipment (such as a sufficiently modern computer, monitors rather than relying on a laptop, printing facilities, and a work mobile phone), other equipment such as a suitable desk and work chair, and sufficient workspace (including particular issues for those without a dedicated workspace at home). A number of those highlighting these issues referred to the impact on their health and wellbeing, for example where they do not have a suitable workstation at home. Some acknowledged that they had to ‘get by’ initially with the best home working arrangements they could manage. However, it was suggested that as homeworking has become a long-term arrangement for many, the Council must recognise that some employees are unable to comply with recommendations regarding workstation setup etc at home.
 - ❖ Homeworking has had a negative impact on relationships with colleagues for some. This was primarily linked to limited communication with colleagues, with some referring to a lack of remote face-to-face contact, and others highlighting the loss of more ‘informal’ day-to-day communication (even where they do have regular virtual meetings). This has had an impact on how engaged some employees feel with their team, and in some cases the Council as a whole. Some referred to the wider impact of this loss of communication for their mental health and wellbeing, reporting that they often feel isolated or lonely.

- ❖ The importance of effective communication was also highlighted in relation to support from managers for homeworkers. Employees reported a mix of experiences here, with some reporting more limited or less meaningful contact with their manager while homeworking, and indicating that this had contributed to feeling less engaged. This included a small number who felt that communication has become less professional during the extended period of homeworking, for example with references to some managers giving what were seen as “dismissive” responses to queries from employees.
- ❖ Some reported difficulties managing their workload while working from home. In some cases this reflected an overall increase in their workload, while others referred to reduced contact with managers as limiting their capacity to plan around their workload. Some homeworkers also reported struggling to “switch off” and maintain a distinction between work and home life.
- ❖ The above challenges were reflected in calls for the Council to put in place more permanent blended home and office working arrangements. Respondents referred to other public sector organisations having made more progress on this, and there was a perception that the Council should do more to set out a coherent approach to home and office-based working. While respondents highlighted the positives of greater flexibility provided by homeworking, many expressed an interest in having the option for more office-based working to overcome some of the challenges noted above. This included including positive feedback from employees who currently have blended working arrangements.
- ❖ Some also saw a need to ensure that working arrangements are put on a more sustainable footing, in terms of providing employees with greater certainty around future working arrangements, and ensuring that employees have access to suitable workspaces in their home. Some were of the view that there has been insufficient management support to ensure homeworkers have access to an appropriate workspace in their home, or to address the other challenges noted above. This included a perceived need for the Council to provide funding to ensure staff have a safe home working environment, for example to purchase suitable chairs, desks, IT equipment, etc. Some noted the financial benefits of homeworking for the Council and wished to see some of this used to facilitate homeworking.
- ❖ Most of the above issues were raised by those currently working wholly or in part from home. However, some of those who are primarily office-based referred to the impact of continuing homeworking on their workplace. This included descriptions of workplaces as “cold and unwelcoming”, and calls for the Council to work to make office spaces more hospitable for employees - some appeared to feel that their needs have been ‘forgotten’ amongst the work to enable homeworking.

54. **Communication and support** from managers was also a common issue for those providing comment. This included the following points raised in relation to employees' direct supervisors or managers, and senior management more widely.
- ❖ Reduced communication with managers – and with other colleagues, as noted above – was a commonly raised issue. This was especially so for employees who indicated that their communication with colleagues and managers is primarily via email; some of these respondents reported having very little face-to-face contact with others, virtually or in person. However, some suggested that, even with regular virtual team meetings, employees still miss the option to discuss smaller day-to-day issues with colleagues. In this context, some reported having established informal communication with team members via messenger apps. The importance of more informal communication was also reflected in positive feedback from some of those who have moved to a blended working arrangement, who suggested that engagement with managers and colleagues had improved as a result.
 - ❖ Some also suggested that the quality of engagement with managers and colleagues has reduced during the pandemic. This included perceptions that regular virtual meetings, while initially welcome as a means of sharing experiences and “letting off steam”, have become less productive over time. Some described these meetings as now being dominated by issues or concerns which they felt should be raised directly with managers, rather than meetings being used as a constructive means of work planning, etc.
 - ❖ A perceived lack of support from managers was highlighted by a number of respondents. Some linked this to managers' workload, suggesting that increased workload has left their manager without the time to properly support employees or respond to emerging issues. Some also felt that support from managers is “very piecemeal” as a result of vacancies not being filled, or temporary appointments. This included examples of employees not having received any performance review or appraisal in the last 24 months, and of employees not having met their supervisor. Respondents also cited examples where they felt that managers had been “flippant or dismissive” about employees' experience or views, or where colleagues regularly use intimidating or confrontational language without any action from managers.
 - ❖ A small number of employees referred to what was seen as bullying behaviour from managers, colleagues and elected members. In some cases this was described as a long-standing problem, but some suggested that these issues had worsened during the pandemic, for example as a result of increased pressure on services. These employees indicated that a lack of management response to inappropriate behaviour had left them feeling “disempowered and undervalued”.
 - ❖ Some suggested that their experience of poor communication and support was reflected across the Council as an organisation. These respondents raised concerns that intra and inter-service communication has reduced with the result that “people seem to be reverting to working in silos”. Some also expressed a view that senior leadership had been lacking in the last year,

including for example a perceived lack of clear direction on future working arrangements. There was a feeling that staff have been “left to get on with it...with little or no effort from management to improve things”.

55. **Employee health and wellbeing**, including mental health, was also a common focus for those providing written comment. As noted earlier, a number of respondents indicated that homeworking and/or blended working had benefited their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This included reference to a calmer working environment, more privacy, and a better work/life balance. However, others highlighted a range of issues having a negative impact on their health and wellbeing.

- ❖ As noted above, a lack of a suitable home workspace was an issue for some. This was especially so for those who do not have access to a dedicated workspace, but also for others for example who do not have access to suitable chair, desk and other equipment. These respondents highlighted the impact of an unsuitable workspace on their physical health in particular.
- ❖ Feeling isolated was an issue for some. This was linked to more limited communication with colleagues, and the loss of wider social contact involved in working in an office or other shared working environment. Some suggested that this has been a cumulative impact of the extended period working at home, even where effective communication and support is in place. Some expressed strong interest in moving to blended working with the option for at least some office-based working. This was also evident in feedback from some of those currently using blended working, who had found this helped them to feel more engaged with their team and the Council as an organisation.
- ❖ Feeling devalued and demotivated was also linked to more limited communication, but also a perceived lack of support from managers and senior management. This included examples of a lack of support to enable employees to fulfil their role and to manage workload. A range of employees referred to struggling to manage an increased workload, with some of the view that a lack of support had contributed to this. Some employees also felt that issues raised with managers (including about challenges related to homeworking) have been dismissed, leaving them feeling undervalued. Some also expressed anxiety about the future, with particular reference to continuing uncertainty regarding future working arrangements.
- ❖ A small number of employees indicated that an unhealthy ethos and communication in their team had impacted their health and wellbeing – including some who felt that homeworking had generally been a positive for them. This included examples of colleagues using a manner and/or language which was seen as intimidating, and concern that managers (including senior management) have not done enough to address this.
- ❖ The above issues were seen as having contributed to what some employees described as “very low” staff morale. This was most commonly linked to a lack of effective communication and support for employees, and ongoing workload pressures (including as a result of increased staff absence). However, some also

felt that planned change under the Transformation programme had ‘stalled’ during the pandemic, leaving employees unclear about service structures and management arrangements. A feeling of disengagement appears to be a particular issue for a number of those working from home, but was also highlighted by some who work in residential care and other non-office environments, with these employees indicating that they feel “undervalued and forgotten”.

- ❖ In the context of the above issues, the Council’s focus on mental health and wellbeing was specifically welcomed by some. However, others felt that wellbeing seminars had failed to have a meaningful impact for employees in terms of addressing the factors having an adverse impact on their wellbeing.

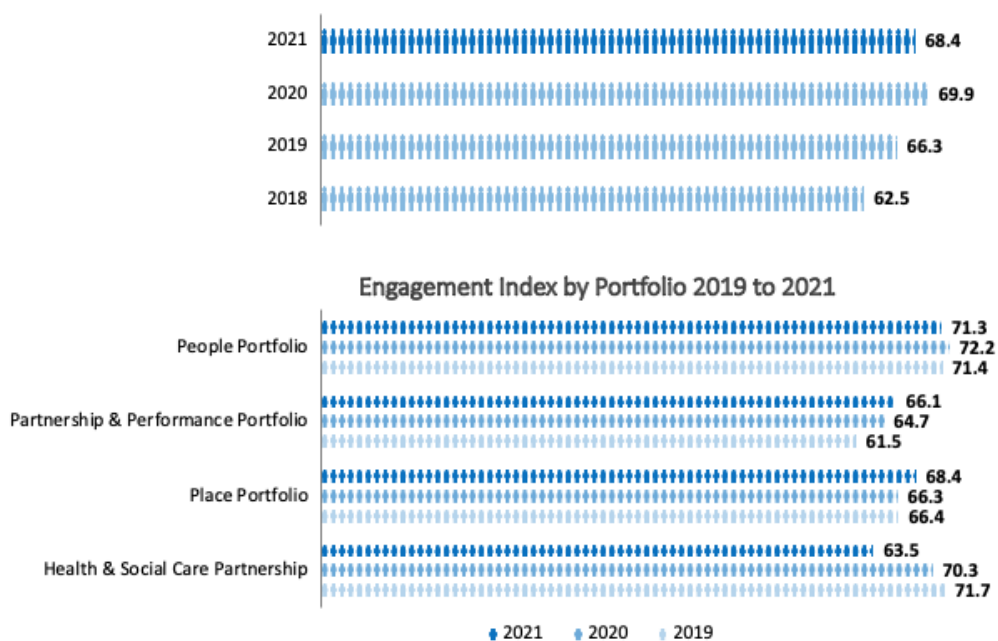
ENGAGEMENT INDEX

56. The previous section considered employees’ views across a range of themes relating to their working lives. This included a series of statements relating to employee engagement with the Council. Survey analysis used responses to these statements to calculate an aggregate ‘Engagement Score’ for each respondent, as an indication of individuals’ level of engagement and commitment to the Council as an employer. The Engagement Score is out of 100, and is based on responses to the following five statements:¹

- ❖ “I am given the opportunity to make decisions relating to my role”.
- ❖ “I feel valued for the work I do”.
- ❖ “I feel a sense of achievement for the work I do”.
- ❖ “I feel that I am treated with dignity and respect within my team”
- ❖ “I am clear about how I contribute to the organisation's goals”.

57. As figure 16 shows, the average Engagement Score across the Council as a whole is 68.4 out of 100. This is a positive overall finding, but the score is most useful as means of comparing employee attitudes over time or across employee groups. In this context, the overall average represents a small (2%) reduction since the 2020 survey, although this remains above the 2018 survey (by 10%). It is also notable that employee engagement appears strongest for People employees (71.3), and weakest for HSCP employees (63.5) – the latter equating to a fall of 10% since 2020.

Figure 16: Engagement Score (averages out of 100)



¹ The calculation is structured such that an individual scores 0 if they strongly disagree with all five statements, and scores 100 where they strongly agree with all statements.

Key drivers of engagement

58. While there is some variation in employee engagement scores across portfolios, survey data indicates that engagement is more likely to be linked to an employee’s views on specific aspects of their work rather than, for example, the portfolio they work in, current working environment or length of employment with the Council. Specifically, survey analysis has identified the following as having a particularly significant impact on employee engagement:
- ❖ Being treated with **dignity and respect** and feeling **valued**;
 - ❖ Feeling a **sense of achievement** for their work;
 - ❖ Having the opportunity to **make decisions**;
 - ❖ Being **clear on their objectives** and how they contribute to the Council’s goals; and
 - ❖ Getting the **support** they need to do their job well.
59. By combining the above analysis with employee views on specific statements, we can identify those aspects of employees’ work where there is scope for improvement, and where this would have the greatest impact on employee engagement. Specifically, the table below identifies the areas currently having the most positive impact on employee engagement, and those where improvement would have the most positive impact on engagement.

Figure 17: Aspects of employees’ work having the greatest impact on engagement

Currently having a positive impact – areas to maintain performance Strong correlation with employee engagement, and positive employee views
I feel that I am treated with dignity and respect within my team
I feel a sense of achievement for the work I do
I am given the opportunity to make decisions relating my role
I am clear about how I contribute to the organisation’s goals
I feel supported by my manager / supervisor
Currently having a less positive impact – potential improvement priorities Strong correlation with employee engagement, but less positive employee views
I feel valued for the work I do
I am kept up to date with the latest information from around the organisation
I feel supported by the Council to undertake work effectively

ANNEX: TABULAR RESULTS

Employee Engagement

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
I am given the opportunity to make decisions relating my role	70%	14%	20%	50%	16%	10%	4%	674
I feel valued for the work I do	57%	25%	18%	39%	18%	17%	8%	670
I feel a sense of achievement for the work I do	74%	9%	25%	50%	17%	6%	3%	667
I feel that I am treated with dignity and respect within my team	74%	12%	32%	42%	13%	8%	4%	668
I am clear about how I contribute to the organisation's goals	69%	13%	23%	46%	18%	10%	3%	670

Mental health and wellbeing

	EXCELLENT/ GOOD	VERY POOR/ POOR	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Base
How would you rate your mental wellbeing right now?	44%	19%	10%	35%	37%	15%	4%	674

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
Do you feel supported by the Council to undertake your work effectively?	47%	24%	8%	39%	30%	16%	8%	674

	AT LEAST ONCE A FORTNIGHT	HAVE ACCESSED	More than once a week	At least once a week	At least once a fortnight	At least once a month	Not at all	Base
How often do you access the wellbeing page on www.clacks.gov.uk/staff?	10%	31%	21%	6%	5%	0.1%	69%	676

Communication

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
To what extent do you feel you are being kept up to date with the latest information from around the organisation?	53%	23%	8%	45%	24%	18%	5%	671

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
Do you feel supported by your manager / supervisor?	69%	17%	33%	36%	14%	10%	8%	672
	AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK	At least once a fortnight	At least once a week	Several times a week	At least once a day	As and when required	Never	Base
How often does your manager keep in contact with you?	62%	6%	18%	21%	23%	30%	3%	671
	Face to face	MS Teams	Facebook	WhatsApp	Text message	Telephone	Other method	Base
What communication options does your manager use to keep in touch with you? Select ALL that apply	70%	41%	2%	39%	32%	54%	33%	664
	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have enough contact with your manager?	68%	15%	31%	36%	17%	11%	4%	671

Homeworking

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have the tools you need to work effectively from home?	55%	24%	16%	40%	21%	16%	8%	637
	AGREE	DISAGREE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base
Do you feel that working from home has negatively affected your productivity?	15%	49%	4%	11%	36%	25%	24%	622

Council values

	Yes	No	Base
Are you familiar with the Council's vision and values?	78%	22%	630