



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

South  
of England

# INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT

## HARROW COUNCIL- HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Presented by Kate Baker

Investors in People Specialist On behalf of Investors in  
People South

October 2014

The following report sets out the findings from the 3 year review against the Gold Standard Investors in People recognition which it originally obtained 3 years ago. The Department is now also working towards the Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award, which is to be commended,

From the review, it was very evident that, not only has the Housing Department continued a firm commitment to all the processes and ethos of the Investors in People Standard, but that it has also placed a strong emphasis on continuous improvement. There is a range of examples to demonstrate this, not least of which is the People Ambition Plan and the People Ambition Group.

Moreover, the continuing commitment to involve staff and obtain their feedback remains impressive, again particularly through the Housing Ambition events, to which all staff are invited and which it was evident people really enjoy

Interviewees also confirmed that management was both supportive and encouraging and ensured that development opportunities were available, as needed. IPADS also remain an important part of the performance management process and the new process is being rolled out.

It was also evident that, despite the challenges all departments face, people enjoyed working in Housing and felt that their work was both rewarding and appreciated,

People clearly take a pride in their work and are also very grateful for the ability to work flexibly, where appropriate, which helps support their personal life.

Therefore, as a result of all the feedback from the review, the Assessor would like to recommend that Harrow Council Housing Department continues to be recognised at Gold Standard level and that will it retain this until the next review in a maximum of three years' time.

Finally, the Assessor would also like to thank all those people who took part in this assessment and to Gary, in particular, for all his help in organising the interviews.

■ **Just a Few of the Many Examples of Good Practice:**

- Learning and development is seen as key to ensuring that the Department is able to meet its targets and objectives.
- There is a continuing commitment to ensuring all staff feel involved in what the Department is aiming to achieve.
- Induction for new staff remains a very rigorous process with corporate induction and any on-the-job induction and training needed.
- There are excellent communication mechanisms across the Department
- .A firm commitment to supporting the work life balance of staff through offering flexible working, homeworking, part-time and job shares, where appropriate.

- The Housing Ambition events for all staff are excellent and really valued by staff. These ensure that staff feel involved and are able to contribute their ideas and suggestions.
- Managers at all levels are seen as very approachable and supportive and encourage the progress and development of staff.
- There are regular IPADS and mid-year reviews which also provide staff with the opportunity to discuss any development needs and progress.
- Role models of excellent leadership from the top.

#### ■ Areas where development could be considered

- Ensure those in care worker roles are also included in all the key Department processes and procedures.
- Ensure that all those who are working off-site in lone worker roles are part People Safe.
- There are some concerns from staff that by having to adopt generic roles, they will lose their particular specialisms/skill areas.
- Ensure that people do take lunch breaks and that if they choose not to for any reason, they are not recorded as such.
- Staff often feel that there is too much information and that information such as Purple pages is not always discussed at team meetings so that people can ask questions and put the information in context.
- Ensure people do not feel that they are not expected to work extra hours
- Caretakers do not have access to computers on-site and therefore do not always receive all the necessary information.
- Ensure that workloads continue to be monitored, particularly when there are less staff.
- Ensure that people have the time to take any TOIL that they are owed.
- There appear to be issues around the on-line recruitment application process which does not allow candidates to go back and check what they have submitted.

**ASSESSMENT FINDINGS****The Organisation's Strategy**

**“We are very target driven.”**

**“We have a clear vision and this is now supported by a much longer term plan.”**

**“There is a very firm 2020 vision.”**

**“We want to be the housing provider of choice,”**

- Being the provider of choice is one of the cornerstones of the Department's vision and mission and this is exemplified by the HAP logo which reinforces and integrates the identity of the various by services provided.
- The Department now has a long term plan till 2020, “The Housing Ambition Plan” (HAP) which sets out the objectives and targets for Housing, which, in turn support those of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- The Department remains strongly committed to its mission and vision which permeate its whole culture. This is also reinforced by its continuing commitment to the Council's CREATE values which underpin its ethos
- This is also being supported by the People Ambition Plan which is overseen by the People Ambition Group (PAG).
- There is also a strong emphasis on ensuring both staff and other stakeholders are involved in feeding into the Housing strategy through a range of mechanisms including: the People Ambition Group, Ambition Plan events, tenants and residents associations and various team meetings, to name but a few examples.
- There was also no lack of evidence to demonstrate the rigour of the targets and goals for Housing, using tools such as the Balance Score Care and Housing Dashboards to enable clarity of reporting.
- Targets then cascade down through teams and team meetings and ultimately to individuals through their IPAD and it was evident that there was no lack of understanding as to the goals of the Department as this is also reinforced through the Ambition Plan events.
- The Housing Leadership Group also meets quarterly to discuss and review how the Department is progressing.

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is integral to everything that the Department does as it supports people who are homeless and those who are vulnerable. There is also considerable involvement with clients whose feedback is also highly valued.

**“We really do care about our customers; many of them are so vulnerable so we need to make sure they are ok.”**

**The Learning and Development Strategy**

**“The training you are offered is very good.”**

**“I get lots of encouragement from my manager.”**

**“It’s not a problem to get the training you need, you just have to ask.”**

**“I always feel that I am encouraged to look at what training I need to progress.”**

- A key feature of the department is the focus on staff on-going development as an important part of achieving its mission and targets. There is a strong recognition of the importance of ensuring all staff have the skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively.
- Interviewees were very positive about the encouragement that they received to develop and progress and the various opportunities that people were given to improve and upgrade their skills.
- This was certainly appreciated by staff and was one of the factors in making them feel valued.
- There was also firm agreement that there was definitely a culture of continuous learning across the Department, whether this was in terms of formal training or on-the-job or mentoring support. This was also reinforced by a number of comments from interviewees who talked about the encouragement that they received.
- It was also confirmed that staff continue to identify their development needs either informally, as required, or through the IPAD process. However, as before, any training which is identified has to support both individual objectives and those of the team/the whole Department, so that it contributes to an impact on performance, such as sharps training, as just one of the many examples cited.

**“They are really very supportive of any training you want to do. It really is excellent.”**

- There is also an emphasis on trying to ensure that learning and development also takes account of varying learning styles, so that on-the-job training, for example, is more

appropriate to some learning and to some members of staff. However, training generally also encompasses e-learning, mentoring and more formal courses etc.

- This therefore results in the offer of flexible and innovatory learning, demonstrating the investment and commitment that the Housing Department is making in the development of its staff.
- The emphasis on capacity building is also evident and an important part of the Department's learning and development strategy to ensure it has the workforce and the skills and knowledge for the future. The environment of continuous learning is therefore a key aspect of this strategy and encouraged by managers at all levels.
- Another key feature of this is the sharing of skills and learning across the teams which is facilitated by mentoring and sharing of information at team and whole Department six monthly meetings.

**People Learn and Develop Effectively (evidence to support indicator 8 as part of learning and development.**

**“My induction was so good and I was really made to feel welcome”**

**“The corporate induction was very interesting and I got lots of support when I started.’**

**“I’ve never had such a good induction.”**

**“I had such a good induction and it was really useful to have a tour of the estates.”**

- Certainly, there does not appear to be any lack of encouragement for people to continue their development, as appropriate, with training opportunities available both within the Department and corporately. However, as already described this must support individual and Departmental objectives and targets, so that any training investment does contribute to their achievement.
- This is reinforced during the IPAD process so that the predicted outcome of any learning is established.
- The Department is also very supportive of on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching as an important means of development, particularly for those new to an area of work.

- As indicated by the small example of quotes above, induction, generally, both corporately and into individual areas of work, also continues to be robust, with new starters emphasising the welcome and support they received when they started. This also included any necessary training that was required to start work effectively.
- A further important aspect of the Department's culture is the emphasised placed on ensuring that successes are shared. This happens through team meetings, electronic communication and, where appropriate, through the all-staff meetings.

**“When something has gone really well, we do like to tell everyone either in a team meeting or on an email.”**

**The People Strategy**

**““I feel that they really do care about their staff.”**

**“Flexible working is a life saver.”**

**“I don't know how I would manage if I couldn't sometimes work at home.”**

**“It really is one of the reasons I love working here and why I stay.”**

**“It's one of the best reasons for working here.”**

**“We now have a working club, which is great.”**

- The Department is very committed to the health and wellbeing of its staff and this is reinforced by the fact that Housing is seeking to gain accreditation against the Health and Wellbeing Award.
- Currently, this commitment is particularly demonstrated by support for flexible working policies and homeworking. These are valued by staff and are a key reason for staff staying with the Department and feeling appreciated by the fact that they feel the Department really values and supports them and cares about their wellbeing.
- Most impressive is the emphasis on the safety of staff and the considerable investment in the “People Safe” initiative.

- It is certainly seen as a very important benefit for working in the Housing Department, reinforced by the feeling that managers at all levels are seen as very supportive and encouraging of staff and that they understand that people have lives outside work
- Likewise, the commitment to equality and diversity is seen as a very positive one with people from diverse backgrounds forming part of the staff group, with equality and diversity being inherent in the whole culture of the Council and not least within Housing.
- The emphasis is also on ensuring that all staff have regular IPADS and reviews and that learning opportunities are available to all staff, whatever their role or contract.
- As with other parts of the Council, the culture and values of the Housing Department reflect those of the overall Council and are very much those of equality of opportunity and an emphasis on ensuring every feels part of a team. Interviewees confirmed that whatever their area of responsibility, they felt very included and cited the Ambition Events as a key example of this. This is also supported by the fact that it was very evident that the Department is also very committed to ensuring it has a diverse and talented workforce who are encouraged and supported to progress.
- It was also evident that people do value the feedback that they get, particularly from their managers during the IPAD process and one-to-ones. This is seen as very helpful, particularly as it provides them with a dedicated time to discuss anything with their manager.
- Finally, it is important that recruitment and selection is seen as very fair and based on a firm commitment to equality and diversity, so that people feel it is an open process.

**Leadership and Management, Capability and Effectiveness (indicators 4 and 5)**

**“I think managers are very supportive and you can always go to them.”**

**“It’s my manager that makes me stay here.”**

**“A new appraisal process is about to be rolled out and people are in the process of being trained.”**





**“You certainly get the feeling that they care about people.”**

- The importance of effective leadership and management at all levels of the Department is seen as vital to having well trained, motivated and supported staff.
- As the next section indicates, this also ensures that people feel valued for the work they do and it is clear that they enjoy working in the Department.
- To this end, the Department has ensured that there is an emphasis on developing managers and potential managers to give them the skills and knowledge to be effective leaders. For example, the Housing Future Leaders course which has recently been developed and the Corporate Future Leaders Programme, again to name but a few of the many development opportunities.
- Effective leadership and management are therefore seen as a cornerstone to having well motivated staff who are able to contribute effectively to the goals and targets of the Department.
- Interviewees were positive about the support and encouragement they received from their managers and stressed that they were very approachable and ready to encourage people in their development and progress.
- Managers certainly act as role models of good leadership, particularly from the top and make people feel involved in what the Department is doing and aiming to achieve.
- Managers are very clear about their own people management responsibilities and it was confirmed that everyone continues to have a regular annual IPAD and a mid-year review. There are also monthly one-to-ones and people are being trained on the new appraisal process.
- It was also evident that managers' are aware of the potential of people in their teams and will help and encourage them to progress, as appropriate and provide them with opportunities to support this, such as further training or multi-skilling.

**“I’ve got a brilliant manager and it makes all the difference.”**

**“I can always go to my manager and they are very supportive.”**

Reward and Recognition

**“People are really great here.”**

**“I love my job and I really enjoy working here.”**

**“Everyone is so friendly and it really is a great team.”**

**“Why should I want to work anywhere else?”**

- A notable aspect of the review was the general positivity of staff with regard to working in Housing. As the quotes above indicate, it was evident that, despite any challenges associated with cuts and workloads, people did feel appreciated for the work they did for the Department and felt that it was a rewarding department to work in.
- Positive feedback and praise/thanks from line managers was particularly appreciated, especially when people had “gone the extra mile, “ and it was very clear that supportive and encouraging management made people feel valued, particularly when they were encouraged to undertake on-going development and progress.
- The ability to work flexibly and to “be trusted to work at home,” were also emphasised as two key contributors to feeling valued by management. These were certainly seen as key benefits and the fact that there was a general feeling that the Department did care about the wellbeing of the people that worked in Housing.
- As the next section will also emphasise, people felt valued by the fact that they were encouraged to continue their development and that they were all made to feel part of the whole Department by being invited to take part in such events as those for Housing Ambition.

**“You feel that they want to include us which are really good.”**

**“It’s important to feel part of something and that in itself is rewarding.”**

**Involvement and  
Empowerment**

**“They are very open to suggestions”**

**“The staff survey is a very good idea and so are the Ambition events.”**

**“They are engaging staff more and more.”**

**“They asked us to look at all the different devices for lone working before we all chose one.”**

- What particularly impressed the Assessor was Department’s emphasis on ensuring staff felt involved and consulted, when appropriate. This is certainly a key feature of the culture and something which is clearly valued by people in Housing.
- People are very positive about the six monthly all-staff meetings which are certainly a key aspect of the Department’s commitment to involve and communicate with all staff.
- It was more than evident that staff in Housing do feel that they can make suggestions and are empowered to “get on with the job” (quote) and make any necessary appropriate decisions in the course of their work without having to constantly check with their manager and there is certainly a culture of trust and one which is clearly appreciated by staff.
- A few of the other examples cited included:
  - Inviting people to look at the various lone working protection devices
  - Inviting about 12 staff to act as volunteers to talk to residents about their housing needs assessment.
  - The staff group help to organise the Housing Ambition events which have now moved from quarterly to six monthly as they are now sufficiently embedded in the culture.
  - The Housing Ambition Events are very impressive as a tool, not only to involve staff and gain their feedback, but to ensure effective and on-going communication across the Department.
- In addition, the People Ambition Group is another very effective commitment to staff involvement as this is led by staff.

- As previously discussed, there is a firm emphasis on effective communication and interviewees were very positive about the amount of information they received (sometimes also seen as too much!). This includes Purple Pages, the Housing Ambition Newsletter, the staff newsletter, the Grapevine and a range of other communications, particularly through the intranet.
- The staff survey also provides people with an opportunity to voice their opinions and the results from the last one are discussed as part of the HAP agenda.
- Interviewees readily confirmed that they are able to give feedback on improvements and that there are a range of ways in which they are encouraged to do this, not least of which is the survey and the various Housing Ambition events.

**“I think it’s really great that they are so keen to involve us and get our ideas.”**

**Impact and Continuous  
Improvement (indicators 9 and 10)**

**“We don’t believe in standing still, it’s not in our culture or vision.”**

**“I think this is a very forward thinking department”**

- The investment that Housing is making across the Department is more than evident and one which clearly contributes to its success and the achievement of its goals and targets. Whether this is financial or in terms of staff time, the investment is considerable, particularly given the challenges that all parts of the Council are facing.
- However, as previously stressed, the Department is very cognisant of the importance of this development and is aware that without it, it would not have the well trained staff that it needs for now and the future.
- The benefits of investing in staff is understood in terms of the impact it is having on the goals and targets of Housing and the impact it has on staff retention which is very good.
- This is also clearly recognised by staff and managers who are well aware of the benefits of any training they have undertaken, both to themselves and to their own particular team.
- The Department is also well aware of the importance of continually looking for ways to improve and it was very clear to the Assessor that this was not a department that believed in standing still.
- The various improvements that it has put in place over the past few years are considerable and the Department and its management are certainly to be congratulated on the emphasised placed on continuous improvement.

- A key current development is the Department's commitment to achieve the Health and Wellbeing Award in 2015 and this is very commendable. In addition, there is the continuing success of the Housing Ambition Events and the People Ambition Group, all of which demonstrate the commitment to continually moving forward, to name but a few of the many examples.
- People are very positive about working for the Department and clearly enjoy the work they do despite the fact that sometimes there are heavy workloads and challenges associated with particular work areas.

**“It can be difficult but I still enjoy what I am doing, despite the stresses.”**

**“I love working in housing, it's a really friendly place work.”**

**“I love my job and they are very supportive.”**

**“It really is a good place to work.”**



**Evidence Requirements Framework Matrix**

<b>Core Standard</b>										
	<b>Indicators</b>									
<b>ERs</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1</b>	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X
<b>2</b>	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X
<b>3</b>	n/a	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>4</b>	X	x	X		x				X	
<b>5</b>	X		x						x	
<b>6</b>	X									

<b>Wider Framework</b>										
	<b>Indicators</b>									
<b>ERs</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4</b>	Core	Core	Core	X	Core	No	No	X	Core	No
<b>5</b>	Core	X	Core	X	X	No	X	X	Core	X
<b>6</b>	Core	X	X	X	X	No	X	X	X	X
<b>7</b>	X	X	X	X	X	No	No	X	X	X
<b>8</b>	X	X	X	X	no	No	X	X	X	No
<b>9</b>	X	X	X	X	X	No	X	X	X	X
<b>10</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>11</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>12</b>	X	X	X	X	no	No	X	No	X	X
<b>13</b>	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X
<b>14</b>	X	X	x		X	o	X	X	x	X

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<b>15</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		x
<b>16</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
<b>17</b>	X	X	X		X	X	No	X		
<b>18</b>	X		X		X	No	X	X		
<b>19</b>	X		X		no	X	X	No		
<b>20</b>	X		X		X			X		
<b>21</b>	X		X		X					
<b>22</b>	X		X		X					
<b>23</b>	X		X		X					
<b>24</b>	X		X		X					
<b>25</b>	X		X		no					
<b>26</b>			X							
<b>27</b>			X							
<b>28</b>			X							
<b>29</b>			X							

## Recommendation and next steps

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for Investors in People Specialists by Investors in People – United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills, the Investors in People Specialist is totally satisfied that **Harrow Council Housing Department** continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard at Gold Level.

Investors in People accreditation is granted indefinitely, with a proviso that an interaction is undertaken within 18 months of accreditation and a full assessment takes place no greater than 3 years apart. Assessments can be undertaken at any time and more frequent assessments are recommended to maintain levels of good practice and continuous improvement.

The organisation should discuss the timing of the next assessment with their Investors in People Specialist, using the Improvement Planning Meeting to agree the best strategy for future use of the Investors in People framework.

## Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Both the Investors in People Specialist and Investors in People South would welcome your feedback on this assessment and you will shortly be supplied with a Client Satisfaction Questionnaire from Investors in People to complete. Particular importance is placed on the feedback given by client organisations on Specialists, therefore we would very much appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire.

## Promoting continuous improvement

We support organisations at every stage of the Investors in People journey, helping them to realise the power of their people, optimise their performance and achieve their full potential. We see Investors in People as the People Partner for sustainable people solutions.

Please contact your Account Manager Pauline Mycock on 07834 656829 or email [pauline.mycock@iipsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk](mailto:pauline.mycock@iipsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk) to find out more about Investors in People and how we can help your organisation.

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