

Workforce Planning Strategy 2026 - 2029

December 2025

A shared service provided by
Bracknell Forest Council,
West Berkshire Council and
Wokingham Borough Council



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1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and summary

The PPP employs almost 100 permanent officers across a variety of professional and technical support roles as well as a number of casual and/or agency staff. It delivers on a number of services outside of the two Inter Authority Agreements that form the core of the PPP.

The changing demands and fluctuating priorities faced by services require considered, careful and measured ways of managing the important resource of its workforce.

The Public Protection Partnership (**PPP**) consists of three local government regulatory roles:

1. Trading Standards,
2. Environmental Health, and
3. Licensing.

These roles are professionally based, broad in remit and ultimately open to legal challenge if not carried out correctly.

There are also a significant number of roles which are in place to support the professional officers for example ensuring the customer interface is maintained and quality of data and information provided.

The PPP Workforce Aim

To have a workforce which is qualified, experienced, competent and adaptable with the ability to meet the needs of the community and the Councils.

We recognise the benefit of workforce planning as a method of keeping disruption to a minimum and aim for a dynamic and skilled workforce able to use core skills to minimise issues presented by workforce changes and exterior pressures.

The complexities of the service and the way in which it is delivered mean that the certainty and ability of detailed future planning of the workforce is harder than in some industries, however we will plan generically and aim to build in flexibility wherever possible.

This strategy (and associated documents) draws upon published material from a range of organisations¹ and should provide a solid platform for future decisions about investing in recruitment, skills and abilities which best place the service to deliver against its aims.

¹ Health Education England (2016/17), NHS Education for Scotland (2016/17), Institute for Employment Studies (2008)

1.2 Current workforce profile

1.2.1 Age

The service has split of age ranges with some apprentice/school leaver roles through to a number of staff at or near retirement age. Notably, of the currently filled posts, around 13% are already on flexible retirement arrangements, reached retirement age or are able to take retirement within the next 3 years.

1.2.2 Working patterns and contract type

As of September 2025, the majority of employees are on permanent full-time contracts, and there are minimal numbers of casual and/or agency employed at any given time. The total number of posts within the PPP is 97. The occupied number of posts (at the time of writing) is 84, with an FTE across the service equating to 76.45.

Agency staff are employed on a case-by-case basis, and the service only engage agency staff where there is a strong business case (and available budget) to do so. Approval is required at Executive Director level, and it is more likely that grant funding is the rationale for using Agency rather than revenue budget. The service carries out assessment of these positions for compliance with IR35 requirements.

1.2.3 Gender

The proportion of the workforce identifying as Male is 36.5% and 63.5% Female. This differs slightly to that in 2023 (30% male and 70% female). In 2020, the split was 25% and 75% respectively. Therefore an overall increase in the proportion of male staff compared to female staff.

1.2.4 Staff location

The service is split across 3 locations with all new staff being appointed to the central Theale office. (see Appendix A). Theale now dominates in terms of a staff base for all new appointments.

Since the changes in the Wokingham partnership in 2022, all previously Wokingham based staff have relocated to alternative offices across Theale and Bracknell Forest mostly. A small number of trading standard officers are still able to operate out of Wokingham Shute End for practical purposes.

1.2.5 Absence

The size of the PPP means that it is likely that from time to time there will be staff experiencing extended periods of absence from work. although not immune to staff absenteeism, the levels experienced within the last year is below the organisational average. (see Appendix A).

1.2.6 Professional Roles

The recognised professional roles are:

- Lawyers
- Trading Standards Officers

- Accredited Financial Investigators
- Environmental Health Officers
- Licensing Officers

There are officers who are accredited as qualified officers, each requiring between 20-30 hours of Continuing Professional Development per annum.

1.3 Current Workforce within Service Delivery Model

The PPP is a model for delivering regulatory services at local authority level. Most councils across the country operate at either city/borough, unitary or county level which means the services are on a far smaller scale or split amongst different providers. By combining them at this level we are able to deliver a 'best value' service which will provide our stakeholders a cheaper, better quality and more comprehensive package.

Partners have recognised the value of the service. At the time of writing, the service arrangements are to be extended up until 2029 following a peer review that established the service was delivering high quality services and had a capability beyond that of any individual partner. It is also worth noting that Central Government devolution plans are in place, resulting in a major re-organisation of Councils across the UK. It is inevitable that this will impact on the PPP once decisions have been made across the partner Council's and beyond. It's more important than ever that the services' workforce is able to pivot and have in place the resilience to ensure it can maintain a level of delivery across all the competencies come what may.

We aim to avoid potential drawbacks of this service model by ensuring our workforce remain competent within their own professional fields at the same time as broadening their abilities to deliver in other areas. They can then provide resilience in the other fields as well as having a useful awareness of the range of activities performed by those services.

The PPP has a range of different provider roles which will affect its workforce planning;

- **Direct service provider** – directly delivering the Regulatory Services functions within the 3 council areas. The workforce will be affected by budget cuts, political changes of priority etc.
- **External service provider** – arrangements with other services and councils to deliver on their behalf e.g. proceeds of crime investigations – Reading BC and Oxfordshire County Council
- **Technical Specialist Contractors** – we currently have a number of specialist contracts services such as Animal Health Inspections, out of hours stray dog collection and management of air quality monitoring units.

PPP recognises the benefit of building in workforce resilience to interior changes and exterior pressures and addresses this in a number of ways including:

- Preserving budget to pay for temporary staff when necessary. E.g. during times of legislative change, emergency issues (e.g. Foot and Mouth outbreak) or lengthy national investigations.
- Having budget to pay staff overtime where necessary to ensure delivery of Service commitments, e.g. attendance at large events such as music festivals, or inspections of food operators.
- Upskilling staff and maintaining a number of generalist staff who can undertake a broad spectrum of tasks.
- Consistent re-evaluation of workflow and resources through our tasking and management resourcing meetings to address workloads and pressures upon the service.

1.4 Current workforce challenges

The main challenges that are currently faced by the service workforce include:

- Financial uncertainties
- Political uncertainties
- Workforce profile and approaches
- Attracting new (professional) members of staff
- Developing professional officer roles
- Maintaining a fair and equitable system of pay

1.5 Strategy for dealing with the workforce challenges

Financial uncertainties - The service is continually evolving, with uncertainty on which teams, professions or officers will be undertaking particular tasks now and in the future and therefore the level of resource required in those areas.

The PPP will work to maintain records of staff and their training to understand the resourcing available at any one point. The use of Strategic Tasking to guide resourcing of teams and priority work areas will give clarity in decision making for all. There is also a need to recognise certain activities may require a specialist officer and that it is acceptable to “buy in” the skill for the short term.

Political uncertainties – There remains uncertainty concerning legislative and economic uncertainties and changes. Local political uncertainties can affect the shaping of the service and include financial constraints

Through the Strategic and Tactical tasking processes the service will ensure that horizon scanning and local/national issues are considered within priority setting. Changes in legislation will be reviewed and staffing impacts and training needs assessed. The service commissions technical specialists for short term projects or investigations but it will always be reviewed against the benefits of supporting internal staff to develop new skills. Linking into internal management and strategy groups will ensure our work is aligned with the Council Plans for each authority.

Workforce Profile – The recruitment of new staff within enforcement roles has attracted more experienced officers, with a number of field officers having possibly already retired from another service (e.g. Police). The workforce is therefore at risk whereby officers decide move towards reducing hours to balance work and retirement choices and/or leaving within a short space of time from recruitment. Staff may also leave if there are more opportunities for career development away from the service

The PPP will develop clear career development paths to ensure new staff into the service are certain of the opportunities to develop and learn from those more experienced staff. The use of mentoring and coaching from those staff who may be near retirement is essential to minimising the risk and improving resilience should those officers move on. We will develop an apprentice scheme with the aim of bringing younger staff into the workforce and “growing our own” in hard to recruit to posts.

Attracting new (Professional) members of Staff – Whilst bringing in valuable knowledge & experience, having an aging and/or stagnated workforce can have negative affect. For example, officers may no longer reflect general society and can be stuck in dated working methodology and ideals

The PPP will ensure we have a workforce who are able to deliver the needs of our communities regardless of the age of the workforce. As a service we need to recognise this issue and ensure we have good information sharing, training and an understanding of our customer needs to manage this. We can gain support from the internal services in each authority to ensure our services are designed for interacting with all sectors of our population using technology to our advantage in delivering this. We also need to support change in a fast moving and ever changing environment.

Developing professional officer Roles – Current recruitment has identified that attracting new staff to the service in the professional fields of Environmental Health and Trading Standards has proved difficult. Factors such as the competitiveness of salaries, location (size of area) and current market availability of qualified professionals. This is something recognised by West Berkshire Council and not unique to the PPP

The PPP will work with the Joint Management Board members and the support services (HR) within the authorities to review the current arrangements and ensure that the uniqueness of the service is recognised. The culture of “growing your own” is already in place with a number of staff having been supported through gaining qualifications within the PPP and a number of apprentice roles in place. As a service we possess a clear career progression path so staff can see the potential opportunities for development. See also succession planning.

Maintaining a fair and equitable system of pay – There remains a need to understand better roles and responsibilities and legacy issues around pay (related to TUPE arrangements)

The PPP needs clear identification of roles and responsibility with clarity and consistency needed on Job Descriptions across the service. The service has a number of job profiles within the service over those that are recognised as professional roles. In order to ensure equity and pay in job delivery, the management should review each role and a review of the job profile to ensure officers and managers are clear on expectations and requirements of their roles. Further, that the pay grade for each role is in line with current evaluation criteria.

1.6 The role of professional bodies

The professions within PPP all have their own professional bodies as listed below.

Professions	Organisations
Environmental Health	The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) https://www.cieh.org/
Case Management	The Law Society https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/ The BAR Council The Chartered Institute of Legal Executive Solicitors Regulation Authority
Licensing	The Institute of Licensing (IoL) https://www.instituteoflicensing.org/
Financial Investigators	The National Crime Agency (Proceeds of Crime Centre)
Trading Standards	The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) (and local Southern Branch) https://www.tradingstandards.uk/ The National Trading Standards (NTS) https://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/ Trading Standards South East (TSSE) https://www.tsse.org.uk/

The role of these bodies vary but generally they champion, lobby, assist, organise and promote the work of the professions and oversee competence requirements and regulate.

In order for PPP to operate to its potential, the support and training offered by these (and other) organisations is maximised to ensure our workforce remains competent and that the service remains relevant. To this end, most staff receive regular updates from the bodies and should act upon any 'action points' accordingly. The IoL and TSSE are particularly active in promoting training courses and legal updates covering the full range of tasks undertaken by the service.

By using the support of the bodies we ensure,

- Our professional and 'generalist' workforce maintain their competency
- Operate within regulatory frameworks
- Lead officers continue to keep their high level of expected expertise
- We benefit from the 'horizon scanning' from other organisations across the country which can enable us to restructure or revise ourselves early.

1.7 Apprenticeships and Professional Development

The PPP (through West Berkshire Council - the "Employer") are signed up to the recruitment through the National Apprenticeship Scheme.

PPP have made use of these funds to help with the training of new field officers by using one of the approved courses. Previously, the service employed 4 Regulatory Compliance Officer Level 4 apprenticeship roles. 2 have gone onto further study within PPP. The service has also invested in six L6 TSO apprentices and one L6 EHO.

The training is not stand alone but undertaken whilst performing basic normal work tasks within the service under the control of more experienced officers. The duration varies between 2-4 years depending on previous qualification, or in the case of 2 DHSC funded posts, the time spent learning v's on the job training.

It is anticipated that level 4 training will assist in creating new officers to the professions by giving them foundation level skill and knowledge allowing them to develop further within the regulatory field. These officers can then remain as Regulatory Services staff with the intention of assisting with lower-level work across the 3 services or they can use it as a step in progression towards training as a fully qualified officers within one of the professions and undertaking higher level work. i.e. progression to L6.

The Scheme only pays for the training of the officer, so the service must pay for the officer's salary. If the training and support offered by the scheme proves beneficial and valuable it is hoped that salaries may be found to pay for these posts (possibly from those older officers who retire).

The recognised advantages of the apprenticeship scheme include the ability to grow our own officers to the needs of the service as well as the encouragement for experienced officers to act as mentor's and develop in this area too. The service has also invested in mentoring with existing staff in place supporting learners.

In addition, the service has funded 4 MSc Environmental Health Officer roles since 2023. Two have completed their academic elements and graduated in 2025, and two others enrolled on the two year programme in 2025

2. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Staff groupings

Staffing within the service can be defined at a number of levels and may relate to technical knowledge and competency, specific skill sets (e.g. finance, lawyers) or management responsibilities:

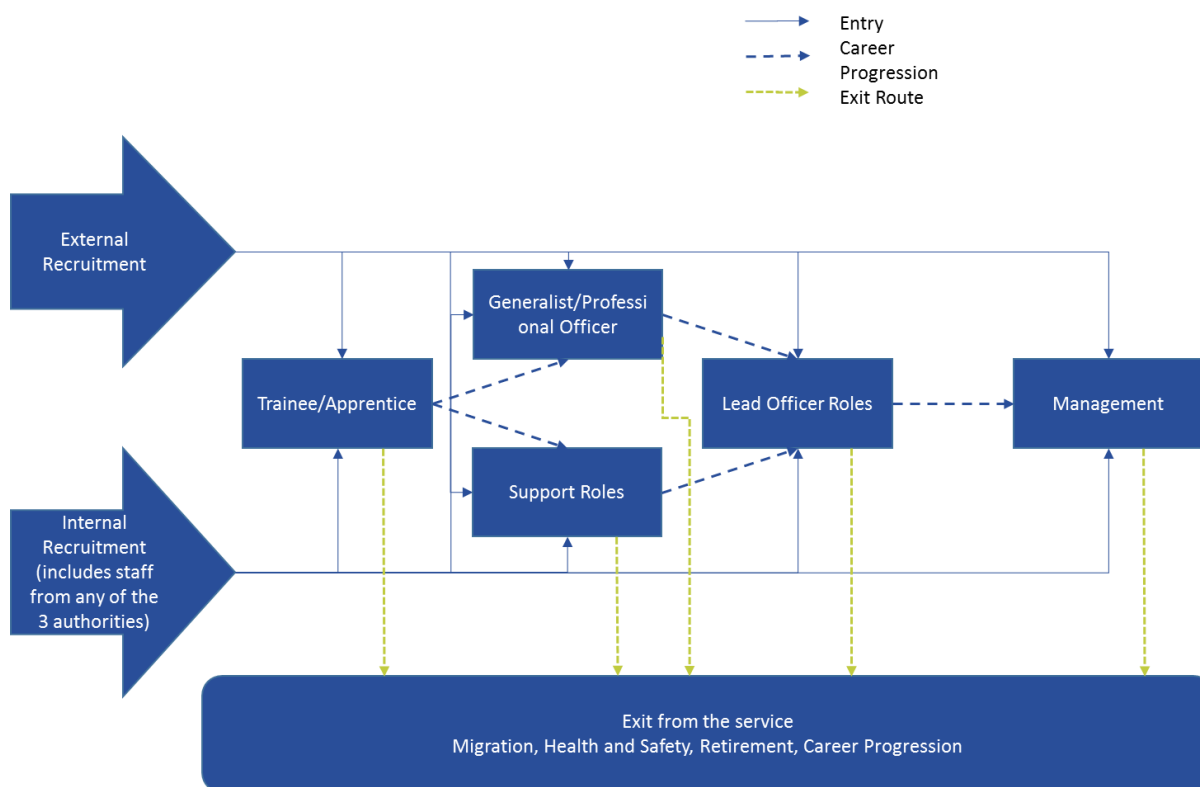
- ***‘Trainees/Apprentices’***
E.g. Trainee Regulatory Services Officer, L6 TSO/EHO.
- ***‘Operational Support’***
E.g. Applications, Customer Care, Legal and Finance officers.
- ***‘Generalists’***
E.g. Trading Standards, Fair Trading Officers, Environmental Control or Licensing Technical Officers who undertake a broad spectrum of tasks
- ***‘Professional’***
E.g. Trading Standards, Environmental Health or Licensing Officers with more qualifications.
- ***‘Subject Matter Experts’***
E.g. Lead Officers for Contaminated Land, Food legislation, Financial Investigators, lawyers
- ***‘Cross Cutting’***
E.g. Intelligence officers, disclosure officers
- ***‘Managers’***
E.g. Principal, Strategic etc.

These roles (including Entry and Exit points) are outlined in more detail in Appendix A.

3. THE WORKFORCE SYSTEM²

The diagram below shows the stages and general route through the workforce system within PPP.

Wastage can occur between each stage through promotion to other posts, resignation, retirement or other reason.



4. SKILLS RESILIENCE & SUCCESSION PLANNING

We recognise within the Training and Development Plan that there are key areas to focus on within the service (see appendix A). Whilst Professional Competence and Personal Development are important to overall service delivery, we have to recognise that improving our communication with the customer, quality statement writing and other core skills are key as the other areas will fall down if the basics are not right.

4.1 Core Skills

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Investigation techniques
- Interviewing under caution
- Handling complaints
- Managing expectations

² Workforce planning guide – Institute for Employment Studies (2008)

- Understanding the PPP operating model

4.2 Management and Leadership Skills

- Managing change
- Performance management
- Project management
- Budget control
- Analysing intelligence products

4.3 Technical Skills

- Conducting financial investigation
- Conducting profession/sector specific enforcement
- Handling communications data

4.4 Service Development Skills

This is set out in the Learning and Development plan. This is a live document as it needs to reflect the management of external and internal factors which are constantly evolving.

4.5 Succession Planning

The service has experienced long standing vacancy at both senior (field) Officer level, and at Principal Officer and Strategic Manager level. The reason for this is speculative but pay disparity compared to other council's (included within PPP following TUPE arrangements) and the increased level of responsibility, commensurate to little pay increase is likely to be a factor.

A more probable influential factor preventing higher responsibility roles being filled is the lack of professional officers generally able to move on within PPP and the restriction qualifications place on officers who would wish to move up the ladder but lack the professional (EHO/TSO) qualification to do so.

As set out earlier, field operational staff comprise of a mixture of EHO/TSO and enforcement & technical officers. Except for Principal Officer, Strategic Manager and Head of Service roles (all of whom are professionally qualified), the combination of field staff comprised of the following;

- 8 Qualified Trading Standards Officers
- 11 Qualified Environmental Health Officers
- 4 Accredited Financial Investigators
- 3 Qualified Lawyers
- 69 other technical/enforcement posts – 52 excluding support roles such as legal, customer services and financial support.

Although the specific data isn't available, this profile has shifted over time with the deletion of posts and conversion from higher graded officers to lower - more specifically enforcement focussed resource.

Consequently, the service recognises the need to develop professional TSO and EHO staff as well as future managers.

The PPP, through its recruitment and JD evaluation process will ensure it maintains a healthy balance of EHO's/TSO's and non-professional/technical officers as too much loss or gain either way will bring about pressures within the service. Moreover, to ensure succession planning to higher line management levels, the service requires a pool of EHO/TSO's who wish to progress. In doing so, it has invested highly in training from within those skills and professional qualifications. Especially taking advantage of the apprenticeship levy available (see 1.7).

However, the service also recognises from its recent staff survey that not all EHO/TSO staff wish to progress further than their existing role, or in areas not within their own specialism. See JPPC paper's March 2025 [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Joint Public Protection Committee on Monday 24 March 2025, 7.00 pm](#)

The service will continue with the 'grow your own' approach to deal with the lack of qualified skilled managers in the medium to long term. It has already supported additional ILM (Management) qualifications. Since 2023, it has seen 2 officers complete their ILM, placing them in a more confident position as a line managers and ready to potentially progress.

It is also recognised that management need to revisit person specifications to ensure that they do not act as a barrier to those with the relevant skills to perform the managerial roles. Currently there is a significant focus on the need for EH or TS professional qualifications for management roles and without such qualifications.

The management will, through its review of activities carried out within PPP identify single points of failure (SPOF). Where SPOF are identified, develop a training plan and ensure adequate resources are in place to manage this issue. This will be added to the competency framework and reported back to JMB in due course.

Finally, to provide a stepping stone towards management, officers will be actively encouraged to act as mentors. Doing so will provide learning and developmental opportunities, as well as additional job satisfaction.

Finally, the service will be informed further by repeating its staff survey of December 2024. This is supported by the staff feedback forum (a forum created as recommended following the peer review) and will include an opportunity to explore staff's views on psychological safety in the service.

5 UNDERSTANDING SERVICE CAPACITY

5.1 Managers

The Management Team comprises of one Service Lead, three Strategic Managers and eight Principal Officers. There are other managers within the system who are senior officers, with other roles within their team purpose to perform. The 2025 Peer Review recognised that whilst a substantial plan was in place for entry level and professional development, there was a weakness in that the service had a number of

SPOF at management level as well as a lack of succession planning for key management roles – especially that of Service Lead. This will be a priority in the coming period and progress will be subject to ongoing reporting to the Committee.

5.2 Professional

Whilst the service retains a number of professional officers there has been an ongoing issue with recruitment in professional posts. There has also been a shift to part time working, which has reduced capacity. All managers listed above are also Professional Officers who are no longer involved in day-to-day support.

5.3 Support

Support staff can be considered as all non-operational staff. This includes customer delivery, governance, case management and Intel functions. There are also support officers within the licensing team who process and advice on licensing applications.

5.4 Subject Matter Experts

Historically these have been the more technical specialist roles. However, the services has seen many generalists becoming ‘specialists’ due to competency requirements, which in turn reduces resilience (competency and capacity) in general activity and risks even less resilience in those specialist areas when those posts become vacant.

As a service we have not appointed to many of these roles for some time. The most recent being to an Enforcement Officer (Animal Health) which is a specific role and which like many others in the systems, requires specialist knowledge of a discrete area of work. This is often an area where we have lacked resilience and requires careful workforce planning.

5.6 Generalist

This role encompasses a majority of operational enforcement roles, ranging from discreet responsibilities, such as fly-tipping enforcement to general enforcement in all matters linked to licensing enforcement, trading standards and environmental health.

5.7 Cross cutting

These roles have developed as a theme to promote cross cutting issues across PPP. There are a number of roles in their existing format which naturally cross cut the service such as Victim Support Officer. There are also more niche roles which are currently a “bolt on” to existing day to day operational work such as Safeguarding Lead and Training Lead. Cross cutting roles would also include community public health officer functions, assured care and support schemes, responsible retailers, smoking cessation and alcohol reduction with partners (CAP) and modern slavery work.

Appendix A - Workforce Profiles, Locations, Workstyle and Absenteeism.

Entry Point for Roles

Operational Support

The entry point for most PPP operational support staff is external recruitment. These staff may already be experienced in this type of work or as the service continues to encourage apprenticeships, we hope to train apprentices who can then become permanent staff.

Such is the expansion of the service, that this has created a need for Technical Leads within this group of staff.

Regulatory Service Officer

The introduction of RSO's is a positive addition to the service in its future planning freeing up qualified staff to undertake more complex work. Level 4 trained staff will have a level of knowledge (and experience) which would enable them to 'hit the ground running' in most aspects of regulatory controls throughout the service. Knowledge and skills will develop through mentorships, senior officer support and shared learning will continue grow as subsequent cohort join.

The service will continually review the need for level 4 qualifications as it continues supporting L6 professional qualifications over the next 2-4 years.,

The service will maintain that;

1. Professional officers will be as comprehensively and broadly qualified as possible – to give the flexibility to rotate between teams & deliver different aspects of service depending on service need.
2. RSO's will be provided with a career pathway that will enable them to remain in their current role or to become qualified officers in one of the professions.
3. Training and opportunities to develop will be fairly offered and balanced with service needs and sustainable.

Professional Generalist

The operating model for PPP demands high quality professionals capable of acting in a multi-disciplinary way. There are distinct skills required of staff that operate in this capacity and normal entry to this grouping would be as a trainee, if not recruited directly (externally).

Currently the group is made up of staff with professional qualifications or demonstrate expertise in problem solving and communication. The level of independence and delegated authority allowed is directly proportionate to qualification, skills and experience.

Most staff will be affiliated or registered with a professional body and be able to demonstrate a track record of CPD (Continual Professional Development).

Technical Specialist

Working alongside the *Professional Generalist*, the nature and complexity of PPP workloads require some staff to enhance their knowledge in specific areas.

These areas will be determined by the current strategic priorities and entry to this grouping is likely to be internal development.

Currently the group is made up of staff with professional affiliations who have significant experience in a particular function. There will be demonstrable CPD in these areas of specialism throughout the group.

Managers

The current management structure demonstrates a mix of backgrounds. Requirements at this level tend to be around recognised professional and managerial qualifications and experience of managing staff. Future entry will be focussed on internal development of senior professional staff.

Exit Point for Roles

Operational Support

In recent years some staff that have left this group to become trainees and move into the Professional Generalist or Technical Specialist group. There has been some natural wastage but no identifiable trends.

Professional Generalist and Technical Specialist

These two groups suffer from natural wastage in the main and within the next 10 years or so, a significant proportion will reach retirement age. Succession planning is key and we seek to address this by ensuring the service will incorporate the tools available in order to ensure a respectful resignation process. [HR Knowledge transfer form - Appendix D.pdf](#)

Managers

The creation of PPP and subsequent reorganisations have resulted in changes at management level. Recent examples indicate that people leave for promotions, relocation of family and changes in work patterns as a result of shared services.

Table 1: PPP Officer Workstyles

October 2025	Headcount	Office	Home	Community	Mobile Community
total:	84	2	38	43	1

Table 2: PPP Officer Work location

October 2025	Existing Headcount	Market Street	Theale Gateway	Wokingham Borough Council	Bracknell Forest Council
Total:	84	33	37	4	10

Table 3: PPP absenteeism Oct 2024 – Oct 2025

October 2024 - 2025	Headcount	Days Lost	Hours Lost
*Total:	84	463.5	3294.96

*5.8 days lost/person. HR reports directorate (People) as 8.5 days lost/person. 15 July 2025 PC report.pdf