



Standing out to

outstanding

leaders

The importance of an EVP

The Local Government Leadership Landscape Survey 2024

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Standing out to outstanding leaders

Introduction

Local authorities need outstanding leaders more than ever before, and Councils are seeking better, more innovative ways to attract and retain the best talent. Surveys from the MJ and other trade journals have highlighted that one of the main concerns for chief executives of local authorities over the last two years has been workforce resilience and skills shortages.

At Tile Hill we are passionate about the positive impact that a holistic approach to talent attraction, development and retention can bring to individual organisations, but also the sector as a whole to help tackle these stated concerns. Against this background, in March 2024 Tile Hill conducted a survey of HR professionals within the sector to explore their views on the talent landscape, and the impact of employee value propositions within their own organisation when attracting, retaining and developing existing and future talent. In addition, the findings and insights from this survey were triangulated with the views of Chief Executives and Directors at the MJ Future Forum 2024 where Tile Hill presented its workshop: “Standing out to Outstanding Leaders: The Importance of an EVP”.

These findings shine a light on the need for a more defined employment brand for the local government sector, but also the need to develop stronger EVPs for individual councils that reflect their values, leadership brand, purpose and how working for them will elevate an individuals career. In doing so, helping strengthen talent pools and enhancing succession plans.

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The findings

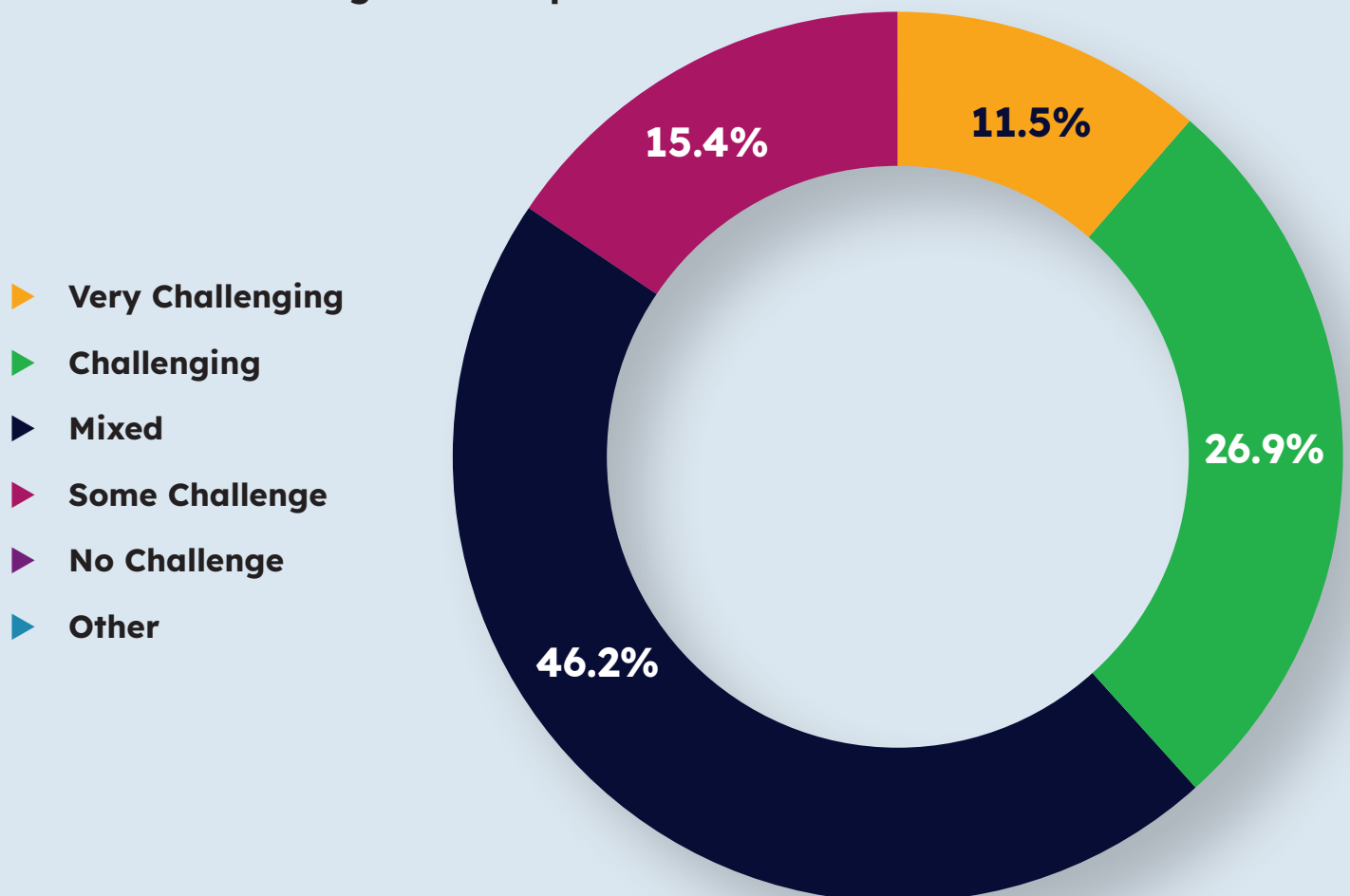
The Talent Landscape

From our survey, it found **38%** of councils are finding recruiting leadership talent Challenging or Very Challenging, with children's services and planning being areas of real difficulty.

This challenge is further highlighted by a review by PwC and CCN in their Future of Local Government Report which stated that as well as the Local Government workforce reducing by 32% in the last decade:

- Only **4.6%** of the local government workforce is under the age of 25
- **26%** of those surveyed anticipate working in local government for up to 4 years.
- With economic inactivity due to the aging population predicted to rise by **2.4m** by 2030, these findings highlight a talent sustainability issue for the sector in the medium and long term.

What level of challenge does the Council face when recruiting leadership talent?



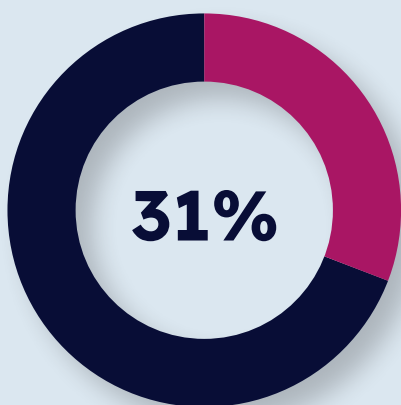
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The challenges

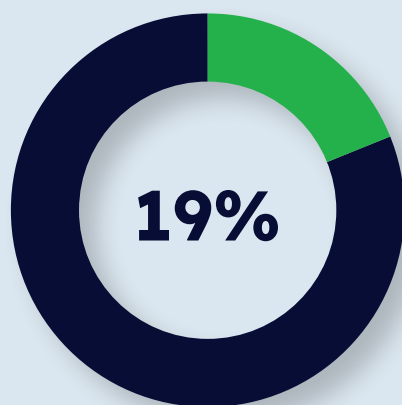
These challenges are set against a backdrop where employees are continuing their search for a better work-life balance.

A recent survey published by HiBob looking into the mental wellness and motivations of employees, found that **70% of UK workers will be looking for new roles in 2024**, with the driving force behind this a desire for a more balanced work-life equilibrium, cited by 17 percent of respondents. The findings also found that **50% of staff were open to consider a new role if upskilling and career development opportunities were offered**.

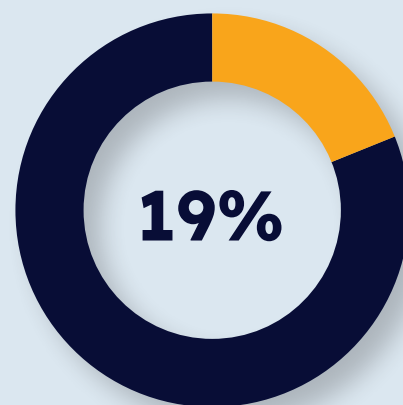
What are the main challenges Council's find when hiring at Head of Service level or above?



Poor quality applicants /skills shortage



Lack of Diversity



Employee Salary Expectations are too high

31% from the HR leadership survey stated they have struggled with the quality or number of applications. This perception rose to 65% when speaking to a broader group of senior leaders in Local Government at the MJ Future Forum. A recent poll at the MJ Forum also found that 21% found it challenging finding technical experts that had the ability to become professional leaders.

The reasons for this vary, but a consistent theme has centred on salary expectations of candidates outstripping what councils can offer. At a time when senior officer pay has reduced in real terms, highlighted by the Association of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (ALACE) now seeking a matched pay settlement for senior leaders within local government, we know that financial advancement is a motivator for many.

However, council budgets have limited flexibility to increase pay to support attraction and retention. And we are certainly not suggesting this is the only solution. Instead, it focuses the mind on the factors you can control that will make a positive difference in attracting and retaining talent, namely the purpose and potential for positively contributing to communities alongside a varied career that can offer advancement and growth.

Standing out to outstanding leaders

Why Work in Local Government?

We know a career in local government can be hugely rewarding. Despite the pressures and challenges, there are not many careers that can offer such breadth, the ability to make such a positive difference in society and offer the opportunity to work across the country and experience so many things. Despite this, the NHS and wider public sector appear to have a more effective branding proposition when attracting potential staff.

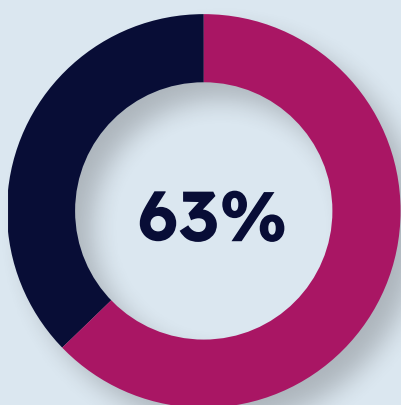
Whilst at the MJ Future Forum, Tile Hill conducted a poll to identify why people love working in Local Government, with 63% stating their ability to make a difference. The findings highlight the importance of the 'why', but despite the obvious social impact an individual can make by working for a local authority this is not being effectively communicated to those outside of the sector. Our findings suggest that councils are not investing enough to showcase their great work and how their purpose links to the values of their organisation, thus not doing justice to their employment appeal.

What this highlights is the importance of an Employee Value Proposition to help tackle these challenges, and celebrate why someone should work for an organisation. With limited headroom for increased salaries, councils need to use their EVP to better communicate their 'why', how working for them will enhance someone's career, providing fulfilment and intellectual challenge. Doing so will help organisations stand out in a competitive employment market, where often the candidate holds many of the cards and are in demand.

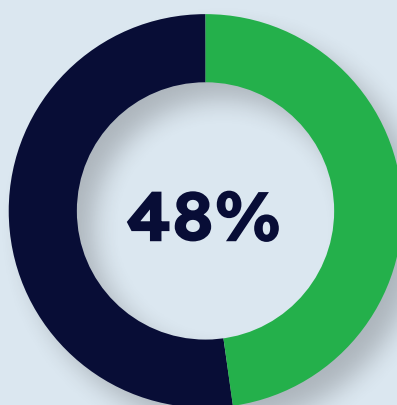
“People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it. We are drawn to leaders and organisations that are good at communicating what they believe”

Simon Sinek

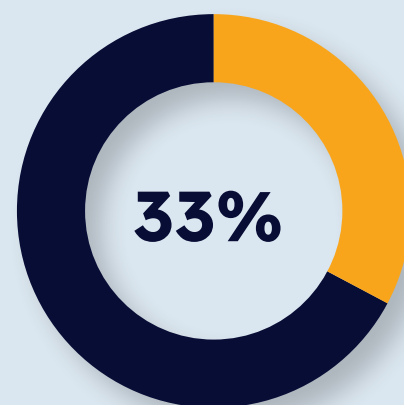
Why do you love working in LG?



The ability to make a difference



The varied nature of the work



The intellectual challenge

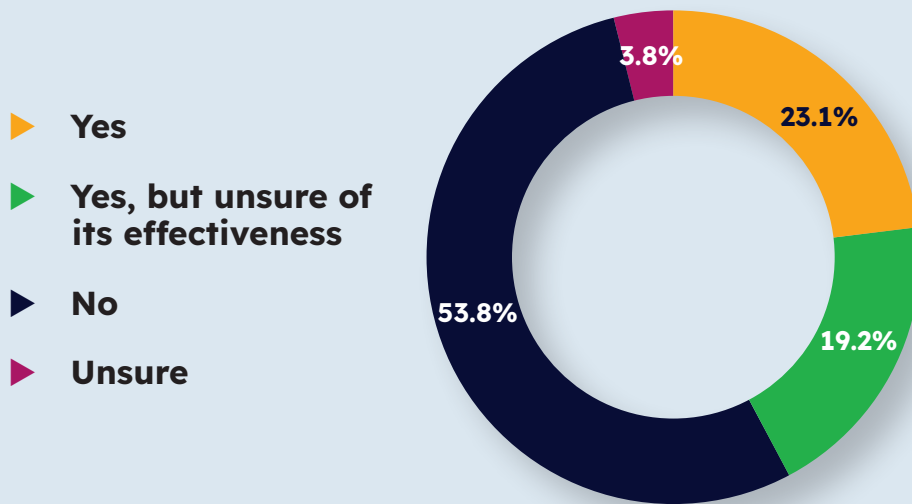
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An EVP Defined

‘The **‘employee value proposition’** describes what an organisation stands for, requires and offers as an employer. The psychological contract between employers and workers addresses and sets the expectations, beliefs and obligations of the employment relationship.

A set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture.’ **Source CIPD**

Survey outcomes: Does your council have an EVP?



MJ Future Forum Workshop Poll Findings

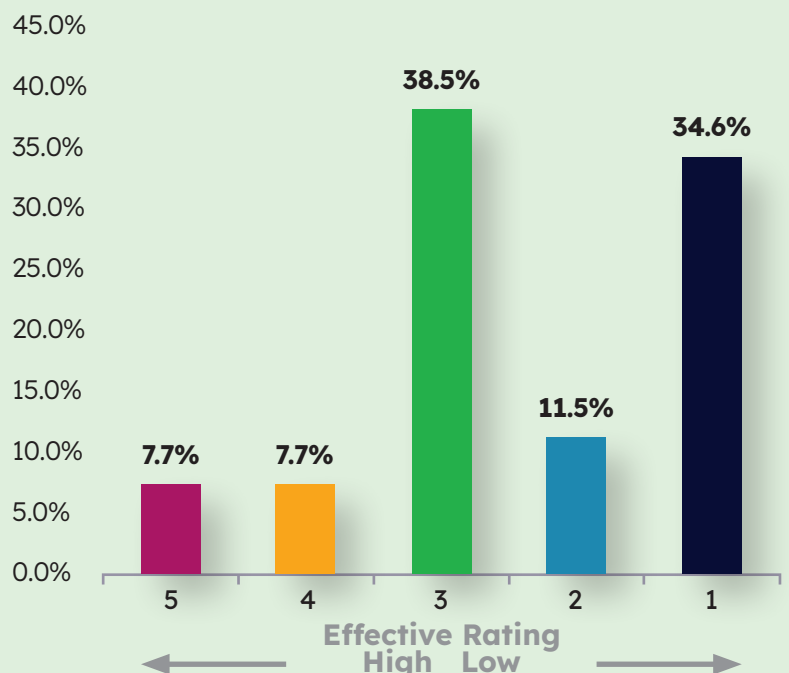
- The findings from the survey were echoed at the MJ Future Forum workshop, where a poll conducted by Tile Hill found that 71% stated that they could not define their organisation’s EVP.
- 71% continued to add that they did not have a defined leadership brand for their authority.
- 31% felt that they were not able to describe accurately what an EVP is.

How effective is your EVP?

From our survey, the average rating was only 2.42

Of those that scored a 4 or 5, the reasons behind the scores included:

- “Council Stability”
- “We have put a lot of thought, energy and effort in this and the CX is completely onboard and driving it.”
- “Pride in being a great and sustainable organisation with values based in people, planet and place.”
- “Strong engagement / staff development focus”



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How effective is your EVP?

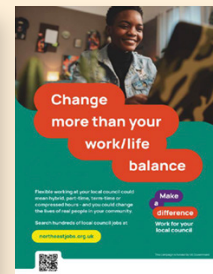
Of those that scored 3 or below, highlighting a low effective rating for their EVP, the below aspects were identified as areas to strengthen:

- “Consistency of messaging across recruitment campaigns”
- “A clearer definition of where the Council sees itself in the short and longer term.”
- “Talent management, staff empowerment and delegation, secondments”
- “Better branding, including authentic case studies and inclusive working”
- “Link EVP to our values and behaviours and EDI strategy”
- “Need to design and embed an EVP”.
- “Career planning & agility”
- “Stronger/tighter definition, which needs to be hardwired into the employment lifecycle and recruitment literature”.
- “Link EVP to place marketing to strengthen our collective brand”.

Case Study

You have less than 30 seconds to stand out to someone

How can your recruitment advertising amplify your EVP to capture the imagination and heart of prospective candidate?



The LGA have received funding from DLUHC to create a single narrative for the sector to dispel some of the myths that exist around careers in local government. The challenge with this historically has been that with over 300 authorities and 800 roles, it isn't easy to create a single brand, and actually it doesn't make sense to have a homogenous brand for all roles, in all councils, across all regions of the sector.

The LGA have recently piloted a campaign in the North East to produce a single EVP for the region alongside residents and councils.

This has run since January 2024, with the campaign centred around 4 key pillars (above).

In each of these pillars, they speak to the individual. These are all linked with **'Make a Difference. Work for your local council'**. Importantly, research showed that using the phrase "local council" had more positive connotations than "local government", with a perceived connection to government in the latter. Full results are to be published shortly as to its success, but all North Eastern council websites have seen increased traffic, whilst media links have seen a huge

increase in engagement which are all positive signs.

What is clear is that the importance of a "brand" that attracts people to the sector and to a local authority cannot be understated. When looking at more senior roles, standing out in a competitive market requires each organisation to be very clear on their own EVP, and why someone should chose to work for one authority over a neighbouring authority. Especially when looking at talent that already exists in the sector, and definitely when considering those roles that are currently defined as 'hard to fill'.

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Investment in Future Talent & Leadership Development

Leadership Development: Budget change for 2024/25

15% of Councils are seeing their budget decrease for Leadership Development.

46% of Councils will see their budget stay the same.

31% of Councils are set to see their leadership development budget increase.

8% unsure.

Interim Leadership Budget Changes

At the same time, **38%** of Councils are predicting that interim leadership spend is set to increase in the next year due to skill shortages, restructures, transformation programmes and instability in the sector.

With **31%** stating that their interim budget is likely to stay the same, whilst **27%** said it was likely to decrease, due in part to budget pressures and the policy to appoint permanent hires.

With a reducing workforce how can you retain and develop the best leadership talent?

The findings from the most recent report from the Social Market Foundation and the Chartered Management Institute, "The Local heroes? Assessing leadership and management in local government", found that although 40% considered quality leadership as the most important factor influencing organisational success, 38% of managers in Local Authorities found that recruitment and retention was the most common obstacle. Moving away from a reactive/placement practice to a more proactive approach of developing and attracting the right talent pool through investment, identifying skills gaps and succession planning has the ability to provide a more sustainable and strategic approach.

Succession planning and the investment in talent development is a dynamic process of aligning employee aspirations and talents with the constantly evolving needs of the organisation and providing employees with the resources and support they need to grow into new roles. Identifying and implementing strategies to support this talent growth is key to reducing the skills gap, and when an EVP is linked with a powerful L&D programme, this can really help boost retention and support in the development of succession plans.

However, this long-term strategic strategy requires consistent investment. The findings from the HR leadership survey found that the majority of councils at **77%** had allocated up to **30% of their L&D budget for leadership development in 2023/24**, with 27% of the sample seeing the allocation under 10%.

But is this set to change as we enter 2024/25?

L&D Budget Changes & Impact

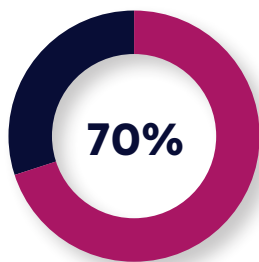
Despite the challenges faced in recruiting to roles at a Head of Service level and above, partly driven by poor quality applications, a lack of diversity, only **30%** of respondents are considering increasing the investment they are making in leadership development programmes.

We know there is a nervousness from senior leaders about the pipeline of future talent in the sector, and the findings of this report also point to the challenge of attracting people at Head of Service level and above. At the same time, we also know that people are more likely to change roles if they can see an opportunity for career development and an employer that will invest in their growth. Both things that councils can offer.

However, despite this, two thirds of councils are not taking a proactive approach to addressing this through increased investment in leadership development.

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What are the top priorities for 2024/25?

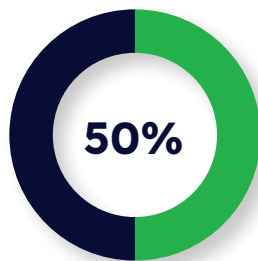


Building Stronger Internal Succession Plans

70% of respondents said the priority in the next year was building stronger internal succession plans, followed by Councils looking to strengthen and sustain diversity across their leadership team.

One consideration to support these priorities is the creation of a leadership brand that links into your development pathways. Prior to the pandemic, over half of employees who left their roles, did so as a result of poor leadership, (Personnel Today, 2020), therefore having a leadership statement that links the leadership values of your organisation to your EVP will improve succession planning, attraction and retention, as well as boosting inclusion across a senior leadership team.

Evidence from our survey and wider research highlights the importance of having a defined leadership culture that links purpose and values when shaping an EVP to help attract, retain and develop talent.



Development of Career Pathways in next 12-24 months

Although only 31% of councils had a Career Pathway programme currently in place, **half** of the sample were looking to implement a scheme in the next 12-24 months! A similar finding was shared for the development of a skills based approach to drive greater agile working in a Council.

Conclusion

65% of respondents told us that the communication of their EVP was poor, if there was an EVP in place at all. With the stated benefit of having an EVP when considering the attraction of future talent, nurturing talent within your organisation and strengthening succession plans, the next step is how you build engagement and awareness. Getting buy in across different stakeholders is vital. No one can argue with the need to have access to the best talent, who are well developed in their skills and inspired, when it comes to delivering complex services and programmes of change at a time of heightened challenge across the local government sector. An EVP is critical to achieving this, and is not solely the work of HR teams within councils. In support of this, **78%** of the sample from the MJ Future Forum agreed that a combined leadership effort was required to develop, shape and own an EVP

An EVP is not just how you attract people to your organisation, it is how you excite and inspire them to be the best version of themselves, and how you support them through formal and informal training to grow. In isolation, a good attraction campaign that isn't supported by a defined leadership programme will only work for a short period. And conversely, a leadership development programme that is not properly articulated to internal and external talent will also have limited success. Connecting them together, linking to your values and to your purpose will make a positive difference to your own organisation and the sector as a whole.

Standing out to outstanding leaders

**We're here
to make
a difference.
Providing
leadership
that delivers.
Every time.**

People are central to all we do. Tile Hill provides Executive Search and Interim Management to a range of organisations across the public and not for profit sectors. Each and every person we recruit delivers essential work that goes on to improve lives, enhance communities and deliver a better society. We're incredibly motivated by the role we're able to play in making your place a better place.

So, we've built our interim management and executive search service around exemplary candidate experience because like you, we want everyone to gain from what we do. When working with us, you can expect to deal with truly capable people who can propel your organisation towards its goals. Our people love their jobs and work with energy and positivity, acting as effective ambassadors for our clients.

Founded in 2017, Tile Hill is a business that lives up to the values and ethos of the sectors we operate in. Every day, we witness the important role that our clients play in building communities, safeguarding the vulnerable, driving economic prosperity and improving lives. We are highly motivated by the role we play in ensuring that the public sector and their partners can hire people with great skills, quickly, when they're needed. Building on our passion to see greater representation in leadership - we're committed to delivering inclusive recruitment experiences. Our aim is to strengthen the efforts of every organisation we work with to improve Equality, Diversity & Inclusion across the board.

Our view is that great recruitment happens when great relationships exist, and we aim to provide the personal, high-quality service that our customers want. If you'd like to find out more about **Tile Hill**, then please **get in touch** or **visit our website** where you can see our **live roles** and access our latest **insight pieces**.

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