

RESOURCING AND TALENT PLANNING 2021: CASE STUDIES

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 160,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

The CIPD's *Resourcing and talent planning survey*, in partnership with Omni RMS, examines resourcing and talent planning practices and the key challenges organisations are facing. It provides people professionals and their organisations with benchmarking data on important areas such as recruitment costs, workforce planning and retention. The following case studies supplement the main survey report, providing real-life, good-practice examples of how some of the issues raised in the survey have been addressed.

Resourcing and talent planning 2021: case studies

Contents

1 Longhurst Group – Championing disability inclusion and supporting carers	2
2 The Co-operative Group – Building a Co-operative candidate experience	4
3 North Yorkshire Police – Transforming resourcing to future-proof policing.....	7

Acknowledgements

These case studies were conducted and written by Annette Hogarth, research consultant. The CIPD and Omni would like to thank all the case study organisations for taking part in this research. We appreciate that taking time out among other pressing commitments to be interviewed can be challenging and we are grateful to the participants for their willingness and openness in sharing their valuable insights.

Publication information

When citing this document, please use the following citation:

Hogarth, A. (2021) *Resourcing and talent planning 2021: case studies*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

1 Longhurst Group – Championing disability inclusion and supporting carers

Longhurst Group is a leading charitable housing association in the Midlands and East of England. Employing over 1,200 staff, it provides more than 23,000 homes and a wide range of care and support services.

The organisation is committed to making a positive difference to people's lives and recognises its value to customers is driven by having a diverse, engaged and healthy workforce. CEO Julie Doyle is a strong champion of this vision. Her passion for inclusivity is grounded in personal experience of the everyday challenges faced by her disabled grandson and his carers.

The group's organisation-wide strategy – 'Improving Lives 2025' – sets out to support both customers and employees with their health and wellbeing and economic resilience. Building a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion is a core focus. Over the last two years, the organisation has developed comprehensive action plans to really deliver an inclusive workforce and to become an employer of choice for all nine protected characteristics.

A strategic approach

Longhurst Group has developed an inclusion and diversity strategy with a clear programme of work to ensure it is an inclusive organisation. As part of this, its policies are regularly reviewed and updated in line with legislation and best practice. These are then impact-assessed by both an external diversity consultant and its internal diversity working group.

Evidence-based

The company is using regular audits, surveys and consultations to inform its strategies and target action. These include a full review and report of its equality monitoring data to provide better insight into the makeup of the organisation, an equalities pay gap assessment, including disability pay gap, to help identify and take action against any potential barriers to progression, and organisation-wide surveys to better understand workplace needs, equality, diversity and inclusion issues and engagement.

'We're trying to be a lot more evidence-based rather than assume we know what people want.'

Rachel Bennett, Director of People Services

A personal details audit is conducted annually to ensure equalities data is up to date. This year, it used a more targeted and digital approach, which resulted in a record return rate of 80%. It also included additional questions on long-term health conditions following employee consultations.

'Just 8% report they have a disability, but 26% report a health condition, of which some could be classed as a disability. That was an interesting lesson – listening to the language we were using – and we are now able to tailor our service to meet their needs.'

Rachel Bennett, Director of People Services

Attracting diverse candidates

Longhurst Group is working in partnership with Evenbreak Disability Job Board to help attract talented disabled candidates. Job descriptions and adverts include logos around disability confidence to show it is disability-friendly. The organisation plans to further

showcase its credentials through including case studies on its website that show what it is like to work for the Group.

The organisation is now beginning to evaluate its efforts through looking at its data to see how many people with a disability it has attracted and how many have actually gone through the process and been offered a job.

'What we need to do next is identify our colleagues who have disabilities, get them talking to each other and supporting each other – get that open culture – then we can say, "How can we help other people coming in?" We review the recruitment process with all new hires to learn lessons, including what the process is like for people with disabilities, and put the lessons into action plans.'

Rachel Bennett, Director of People Services

Removing barriers to work

Longhurst Group is moving towards more remote working to attract and retain a more diverse workforce, including disabled people who find it easier to work from homes that are already adapted to their needs and people who find it difficult to make the journey to work. Workplace assessments, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments (including hearing loops), phased returns to work, and so on, are also in place. In addition, the group is moving beyond its current flexible working offering to instigate more agile working practices, such as giving employees the flexibility to make doctors' appointments without booking time off work and trusting them to make the time up at the end of the day.

'It's a huge culture shift. We're really pushing the adult conversations and relationships in our strategy and working with managers to move to an outputs-driven approach.'

Rachel Bennett, Director of People Services

Support for carers

As part of its commitment to the national [Harry's Pledge campaign](#), Longhurst Group has joined Employers for Carers (EfC) to better support staff who provide unpaid care for a loved one. It has conducted an audit of employees with carers' responsibilities and created an action plan to support them, including making policies carer-friendly and providing platforms and support for carers to share their stories and needs.

Employment offer

Over the last two years, Longhurst Group has reviewed all of its terms and conditions and completely redesigned its total reward package. This has included introducing an employee assistance programme and increasing its sickness pay entitlements to demonstrate its commitment to health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing

A cross-team working group has introduced a number of health and wellbeing interventions, including a wellbeing hub on the organisation's internal website, which provides a wide range of information and resources. Longhurst Group has signed up to the Mindful Employer Charter in recognition of its commitment to supporting mental health in the workplace.

Learning and development

All employees are provided with a range of courses that focus on health and wellbeing, equality, inclusion and diversity, as well as modules designed to help people perform to their

best. Leaders and managers also have access to a specialist management development programme, which helps to develop the skills and knowledge needed to bring out the best in people. Learning materials and courses cater to different learning styles and needs, and evaluations ensure the service is inclusive.

Building awareness

Ongoing information campaigns and workshops are used to get managers and employees on board with Longhurst Group's vision for equality and inclusion. This has included events with carers of disabled people and case studies to highlight the issues people face. These events have been successful in encouraging employees to come forward in sharing their own stories.

Achievements

- Longhurst Group is currently a Disability Confident Employer and is working with the National Centre for Diversity to achieve the Investors in Diversity and Disability Confident Leader Awards.
- It achieved one-star accreditation on the Best Companies Survey in September 2020, an impressive achievement for an organisation completing the survey for the first time.
- Voluntary turnover (total) figure reduced from 22.45% in 2016 to 15.89% in 2019. In 2020 it fell to 8.59%, although some of this reduction would be expected due to the pandemic.
- Its latest ED&I survey findings show that 92% of employees are confident to explain why good FREDIE (fairness, respect, equalities, diversity, inclusion and engagement) practices contribute to better organisational business performance, and that 84% feel that Longhurst Group encourages employees to consider FREDIE in their daily routines.
- Most recently, it was awarded its conditional Investors in Diversity accreditation by the National Centre for Diversity. The Investors in Diversity Award is recognised as the national equality standard and shows that the organisation puts the FREDIE standards at the heart of everything it does. In addition, it was placed at No. 21 in the Top 100 Most Inclusive Workplaces 2021 on its first submission.

2 The Co-operative Group – Building a Co-operative candidate experience

Since its inception in 1844, the Co-op has held an important role in the communities it serves across the UK, giving profits back to local causes and partnering with like-minded organisations to co-operate for a fairer world.

With rising unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Co-op experienced a 30% increase in job applications last year, despite new vacancies falling by 40%.

'We saw the desperation and despair that some people were feeling about the job market. It could feel quite impersonal the way we managed declines for people who didn't make it to the point in the process where they interact with a human being. We always responded to candidates, but it felt like we could do more at a time when there were people with a real need for support. We wanted

to live up to our values, demonstrate that these things matter to us and also protect our employer brand for when the job market changes and candidates are less abundant.'

Matt Eyre, Candidate Marketing Manager

The Co-op Career Development Hub

The Co-op partnered with OMNI RMS to develop and roll out the Co-op Career Development Hub – an online resource that aims to build employability skills, much like a personal career coach, giving users access to the following features:

- 'Career Pulse' – a self-assessment tool that gauges the user's employability and develops a personalised training plan uniquely catered to their qualifications, experience, and skillset.
- A cover letter and CV building tool that assesses CVs via 50+ assessments providing instant feedback and tips on how to improve users' job applications and develop LinkedIn profiles.
- Interview 360 – video and audio interview simulators with learning videos and follow-up AI feedback and guidance to provide best-in-class examples.
- Over 1,000 e-learning programmes, including expert videos, tutorials, and articles covering key aspects of employability and career development.
- Engagement with psychometric and aptitude tools, including assessments and quizzes on ability, motivation, personality, and resilience (complete with downloadable results) to build readiness for job search.

Engaging users

Efforts are under way to promote the hub to a range of potential beneficiaries:

- Regretted candidates – unsuccessful candidates are sent personalised emails following notification of their unsuccessful application, advising them to register and benefit from the tool. Follow-up personalised emails are also sent out to those who are yet to register – highlighting how the hub can enhance their job search.
- School-leavers – students at Co-op Academy schools and colleges based in disadvantaged areas of the north-west of England are encouraged to use the hub through partnership with career leaders. Webinars have been conducted and user guides created for career advisers, tutors, parents and students to ensure maximum buy-in and it is already being used as part of the careers curriculum in some academies.
- At-risk employees – hub access is distributed to Co-op employees at risk of redundancy to help them find another role internally or externally.
- Vulnerable groups – the Co-op is also collaborating with *The Big Issue* to provide access to the hub for its 1,500 vendors, many of whom have experienced homelessness and been severely impacted by the pandemic. The hub aims to help develop their employability skills and support them into longer-term employment routes.
- Community partners – the Co-op works with the Black Young Professionals (BYP) network to drive its inclusive recruitment initiatives, and it has offered access to the hub to all of BYP's 60,000+ members.

The hub is designed to be accessible for all, including people with basic IT skills or limited means. It was built as a 'mobile first' solution – allowing user access for those without a home laptop or PC. To maintain interest and interaction with the hub, weekly email 'round-ups' are sent to all users informing them of new tools that can aid them in their job search as well as reminder emails to encourage users to complete any outstanding learning programmes.

Ongoing efforts to build awareness and engage users include blogs, speaking at events and developing case studies of how users have benefited from the tools.

'We're starting to look at how we can offer it to people at different points in the job application process – feedback from declined candidates shows they think it's great but that it would have been better if they'd had it before they applied for the job at the Co-op. So we're starting to look at that – whether it's to help people get a job here or somewhere else.'

Matt Eyre, Candidate Marketing Manager

Ongoing reviews and evaluations

Usage of different resources and tools on the hub are automatically tracked and regularly reviewed. This allows the team to review the marketing of different aspects of the hub and promote less popular activities via its weekly email alerts.

Monthly user reports, measures of career confidence and regular user surveys gauge the hub's impact. The team uses these measures and the feedback collected to make ongoing improvements.

Outcomes

Since its inception in January 2021, around 4,000 people have made use of the hub, completing a total of 41,000 activities.

The career confidence scores of users have increased from an average of 62% on registration with the hub to 70% after completing activities.

Feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive. The average user feedback score is 8.4 out of 10.

At least 95% of people report the hub has helped them gain employment.

The hub is also supporting the creation of talent communities that the Co-op can draw from for future roles.

'Following my redundancy during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was suddenly out of work for the first time in 15 years. The online career hub has helped me to refine my interview skills (which were very rusty), bring my CV to life (via the excellent CV assessment tool) and the articles on how to increase my online presence (through building a LinkedIn profile and posting my CV on multiple job sites) helped me to secure my new role as a financial controller.'

John James (regretted candidate invited to use the hub)

3 North Yorkshire Police – Transforming resourcing to future-proof policing

North Yorkshire Police is one of the UK's largest single-county forces. It needs to continuously respond to the ever-changing threats to society – from fraud to cyber and sexual offences to terrorism. The development of a research piece that shaped the design of a future workforce blueprint by 2025 revealed that the traditional approaches to recruitment and assessment, embedded in the organisation and standardised across the force, would not meet future policing needs. A more agile, innovative and forward-thinking approach was required.

Meeting future talent needs

With its future requirements in mind, the organisation knew it needed to strengthen and develop its talent planning. Supported by Cappfinity, it began by looking at existing research and best practice from other organisations and sectors as well as drawing on the national Policing Vision 2025 and the workforce reforms initiated on a national level.

It also questioned the effectiveness and shortcomings of its existing competency-based approach to recruitment and progression. Its ambition was to attract talent based on potential rather than competence, *'because competence is expected as standard'*. It also wanted to develop a more flexible approach around entry and exit into policing to attract, retain and really nurture talent.

'Policing in the future won't be a job for life but will be a connection for life. So if you've reached a certain point in your career and need to go off and do something else because we can't satisfy that need, we won't think about what you've lost but what you've gained.'

Annette Canning, Strategic Lead – People Partnering, EnableNY

Introducing and embedding a strengths-based approach

The team concluded that a [strengths-based approach](#) to recruitment and progression supported by the use of innovative technology would be the best way to meet its needs and help unlock potential.

To deliver the new approach, the Talent and Resourcing Team needed the support of the entire force, so gaining buy-in from the Chief Officer Team from the outset was critical to its success.

'Some people love statistics and evidence, others are only convinced when they see it, so we tried a mixture of things to bring people along and respond to their concerns. We started at the top, with a vacancy for deputy chief constable, and the initial process combined a blend of the old and the new for us to learn from – but immediately the feedback was really positive. As we rolled the process out to other ranks, we immediately got change advocates because people were talking about it and saying, "I can't believe how innovative and different this is."'

Annette Canning, Strategic Lead – People Partnering, EnableNY

The strategy had clear objectives and measures of success:

- Upskill the Talent and Resourcing Team to ensure effective delivery of the programme.
- Create a levelled framework supported by strengths, as identified through success analysis, which involved speaking to key stakeholders as well as making sure anything designed complemented national frameworks. This allows the approach to be tailored for different levels and ranks while enabling a consistent recruitment approach across the entire force.
- Design and implement valid assessment processes around six core strengths to assess for future potential. These incorporated a range of innovative assessment tools, including an online immersive assessment, strengths-based interview, micro exercises and virtual reality. Using this technology has enabled candidates to act naturally and authentically, demonstrating their true potential rather than focus on 'rehearsed' examples of competence.
- Promote a positive candidate experience through managing expectations – workshops held across the force for each rank to inform employees of the changes and to provide support, advice and guidance where required.

'We didn't want our use of virtual reality and other technology to be seen as just going with the latest fad, so we were keen to demonstrate its validity and how it adds value through candidate engagement sessions that allowed people to test the system and become familiar with it.'

Kerry West, Talent and Development Manager, EnableNY

- Full and comprehensive training for all assessors involved in the selection processes to ensure the quality of hire.
- Ongoing evaluation and improvements – at the end of each assessment, feedback is collected from assessors and candidates through debriefs and surveys to continually review, refine and ensure it is fit for purpose. Any themes of gap areas then shape the development programme.

Outcomes

Feedback on the new approach has been outstanding from the outset: 88% of candidates rated the candidate experience as excellent or very good, and 68% of candidates felt the process was fair and consistent (in comparison with 28% in the previous promotion process). This has led to a significant reduction in appeals from unsuccessful candidates.

'We have worked hard to reduce any bias in the new system by focusing on the candidate as an individual and allowing them to demonstrate through the process their potential in the future – rather than, for example, manager recommendations.'

Kerry West, Talent and Development Manager, EnableNY

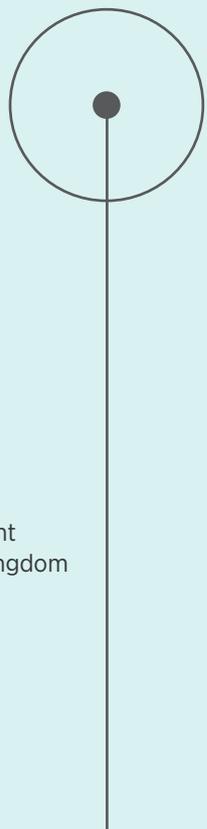
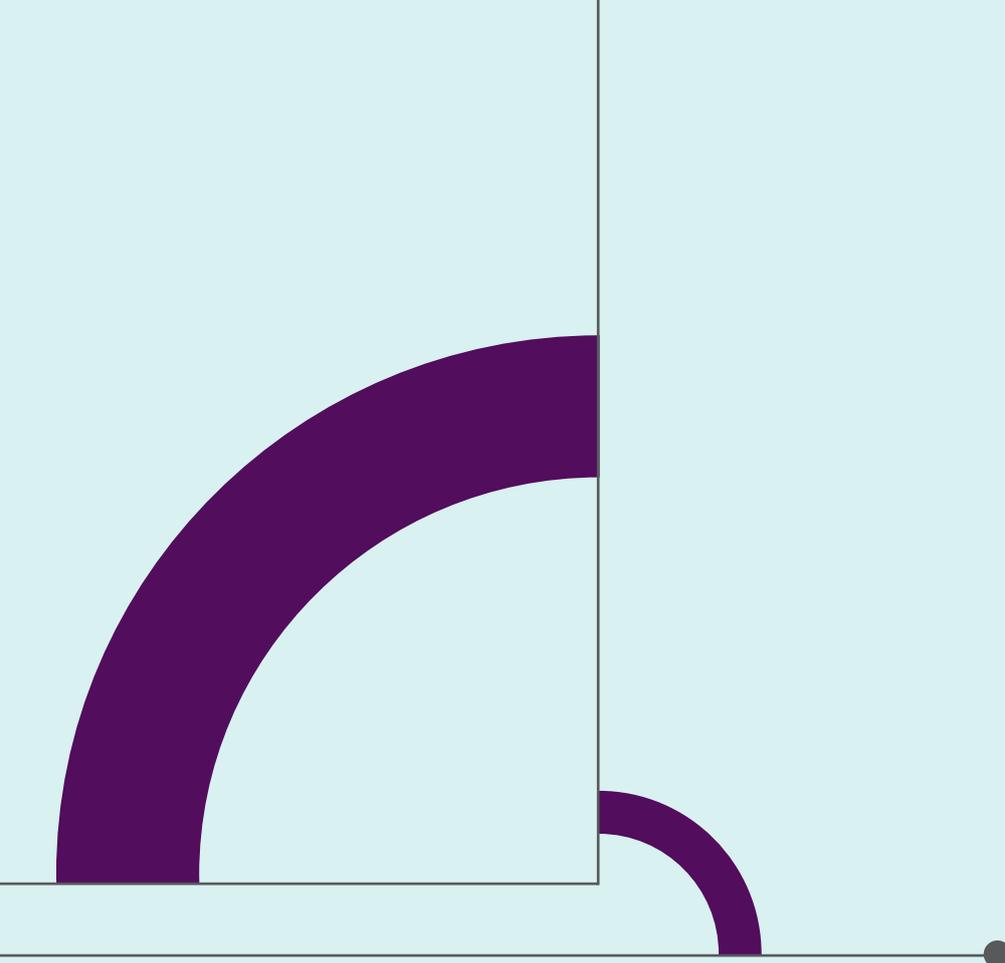
All assessors (100%) rated the strengths-based promotion process as excellent or very good and all felt the process was fair and consistent.

Early indicators show significant improvements in the quality of candidates, speed to competence, work outputs, retention and accelerated progress to the next level of promotion.

Cost per hire has been reduced (by up to half for some job categories that attract a high volume of applicants). Additionally, instead of the recruitment team shortlisting candidates, the new process uses online situational strengths tests, which present potential applicants with a realistic job preview, including the types of situations and scenarios they will face. This process also enables less suitable candidates to deselect themselves if they feel it's not the right career move for them.

The approach has attracted considerable interest from other forces as well as other public sector organisations – all of whom now want to share this best practice.

North Yorkshire Police won Best Resourcing Initiative (supported by Cappfinity) at the People Management Awards 2020 and Leaders of the Future (in partnership with Cappfinity) at the Recruiter Awards 2020, as well as being nominated for many more.



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Issued: September 2021 Reference: 8167 © CIPD 2021