

West Midlands Employers

Annual Report

for 2025-26

A Message from the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



Local Government has faced another year of unprecedented events, with financial pressure, reform, rising demand, workforce challenges. Across the West Midlands, this has only strengthened our ambition to improve, collaborate and invest in leadership, workforce development and recruitment, because we know transformation only deepens when people are prepared and supported.

Over the past year, West Midlands Employers (WME) has continued to evolve as a trusted regional partner. Alongside supporting councils with workforce, leadership and organisational challenges, we have increasingly brought organisations together to tackle shared strategic challenges, recognising that collective action delivers greater impact, achieving more than any one organisation acting alone.

The pages that follow reflect both the breadth of support provided by WME and, more importantly, the impact that collaboration, innovation and partnership working are having for councils, communities and public services across the West Midlands.

We have supported thousands of public sector colleagues across leadership development, organisational change, recruitment, coaching, workforce strategy and HR consultancy. We have helped councils rethink succession planning, strengthen executive teams, modernise recruitment approaches and build more sustainable workforce models. This includes **over 2,150 hours of coaching and mentoring and support for more than 4,200 colleagues**, strengthening culture, capability and team effectiveness.

Innovation remains a key focus. **The Public Sector AI Festival brought together over 600 colleagues** to explore how technology can reduce pressure, improve services and create more capacity for human-centred work.

Our recruitment activity has continued to scale. Through WMJobs, WM Talent Acquisition and wider collaboration, councils have delivered a stronger narrative about public service careers. **Over 17,000 jobs were advertised, generating more than 6.6 million views.**

At the heart of this success is collaboration. Partnerships with WM ADASS, Opus People Solutions, Solace and Tribepad continue to support regional improvement and deliver value for councils.

This year also marks a significant milestone as WME progresses towards becoming an employer in its own right, laying the foundation for future growth.

We remain ambitious for local government, the workforce and the West Midlands. Through Year 1 of our Strategic Plan, we continue to demonstrate the value of regional collaboration.

As Chief Executive, I am proud of what our team, partners and councils have achieved. Much of WME's impact is built on strong relationships behind the scenes.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, we remain committed to supporting councils to navigate change, strengthen their workforce and maximise the benefits of working together.

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RESOURCING CONSULTANCY

Recruitment across the public sector is becoming increasingly complex, with a tighter labour market, higher expectations of leadership, and growing pressure on internal capacity. WME remains a trusted partner to councils across the region, helping them attract and appoint the talent they need.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our offer to reflect these challenges, expanding support for executive leadership and hard-to-fill roles. By working with leading resourcing partners, we combine strong local insight with national reach.

This approach ensures councils benefit from both regional insight and wider market expertise, enabling more effective and flexible recruitment solutions.

Executive recruitment and assessment

During the year, WME launched a refreshed **Executive Recruitment and Assessment service**, delivered in partnership with **Solace in Business**.

The service supports organisations recruiting to senior leadership roles, including Chief Executive, Director and Assistant Director positions. Executive appointments require a careful balance of sector insight, leadership assessment and market reach, which this offer delivers through a structured, collaborative approach.

Working alongside experienced executive search specialists, the service provides:

- › Access to an extensive network of senior local government leaders and professionals
- › Executive search capability to reach candidates both within and beyond local government
- › Tailored recruitment campaigns that reflect the values and priorities of the organisation
- › Professional assessment processes designed to evaluate leadership capability and organisational fit

During the year, the approach has supported several live campaigns across the region, including both internal and external senior recruitment. Early delivery has led to successful senior appointments for local councils, alongside ongoing campaigns for key leadership roles, demonstrating the value of the collaborative model in practice.

Interim management

WME also introduced a strengthened **Interim Management service**, delivered in partnership with **Solace in Business** and **Opus People Solutions**.

Interim leadership plays a critical role in helping organisations navigate change, manage transitions and maintain momentum during periods of pressure or transformation. The service enables organisations to quickly access experienced interim professionals who understand the complexities of public sector leadership.

Through this offer, organisations can benefit from:

- › Access to a strong pool of experienced interim leaders and specialists
- › Rapid deployment of interim capacity to support organisational priorities
- › Flexible arrangements that respond to changing organisational needs
- › Expertise in identifying individuals with the skills and experience required to deliver impact from day one

Looking ahead

WME is continuing to develop our **Resourcing Consultancy** to support organisations in strengthening your recruitment capability.

Our consultancy is designed to support **resourcing and HR professionals, as well as hiring managers**, to navigate the realities of modern public sector recruitment.

We provide support across a range of areas, including:

- › Designing compliant and effective recruitment processes
- › Creating engaging and effective recruitment advertising
- › Translating workforce planning into practical recruitment activity
- › Supporting organisations to develop recruitment capacity and business partnering approaches

Combining practical expertise with a strong understanding of the public sector, we help organisations build the skills, processes and capacity to attract and appoint the people they need.



VIEW
[Interim management brochure](#)



VIEW
[Executive recruitment and assessment brochure](#)



The public sector recruitment landscape continues to face pressure. Application volumes are rising, but volume alone does not indicate quality of match - and for organisations working within tight resourcing capacity, that distinction matters.

WMJobs supports our councils and the wider public sector to navigate this effectively. More than a job board, it combines a recruitment platform with targeted campaigns, shared insight and a strong professional network to help organisations attract the right candidates.

This has been an active year, including regional campaigns, the WMJobs Public Sector Careers Expo, early careers activity and continued investment in the Resourcing Network.



Supporting public sector organisations to attract talent

WMJobs remains the region's dedicated recruitment platform for the public sector, supporting organisations to promote vacancies and connect with candidates interested in public service careers.

Over the past year, **WMJobs delivered three targeted regional attraction campaigns**, designed to raise the visibility of public sector careers and reach audiences beyond those already active on the platform. Using digital marketing, employer storytelling and the shared Employer Value Proposition, these campaigns focused on communicating the purpose and impact of public sector roles.

Alongside this, WMJobs continues to provide practical tools to strengthen recruitment activity.

The rollout of Recruiter Hubs has enabled organisations to showcase their Employer Value Proposition through customisable pages, helping candidates better understand organisational culture and opportunities. Access to the WMJobs CV database, now containing over 9,500 active jobseekers, supports proactive candidate engagement, while free campaign toolkits provide ready-to-use assets to support local recruitment initiatives.

Further detail on campaign activity can be found in the Life Changing Jobs case study.



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800+

roles represented across 22 exhibitors

100%

of attendees able to engage with employers

71%

reporting increased awareness of careers in the sector

Connecting public sector employers with candidates

Direct engagement continues to complement our digital activity. The WMJobs Public Sector Careers Expo brought together employers from across the West Midlands, with 800+ roles represented across 22 exhibitors. The event enabled organisations to engage directly with jobseekers and promote opportunities through in-person conversations.

Feedback highlighted its value, with 100% of attendees able to engage with employers and 71% reporting increased awareness of careers in the sector.

Additional information can be found in the Public Sector Careers Expo case study.

WMJobs also supported a wider programme of regional recruitment events, helping organisations connect with candidates at different stages of their career journey.



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Building professional capability across the region

The Resourcing Network continues to provide a practical and valued space for recruitment and HR professionals across the region.

Through regular sessions and an active Basecamp community, members share insight, discuss common challenges and strengthen their practice.

This year's programme included a National Campaign and Early Careers Pilot briefing, an Advert Writing Masterclass, and a DBS Workshop, providing targeted support to resourcing teams.

In a challenging environment, this collaborative approach remains a key part of the WME and WMJobs offer.

Early careers and pipeline development

WMJobs has continued to support work to raise awareness of public sector careers among young people through outreach and regional collaboration, including the LGA's national early careers campaign.

This activity is explored further in the **Early Careers in Local Government case study.**



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Looking ahead

Recruitment conditions across the public sector remain challenging. WMJobs will continue to support organisations through a platform designed for the sector, targeted campaigns and a strong professional network.

Over the coming year, we will also focus on ensuring the technology underpinning the WMJobs platform continues to evolve, providing a modern, effective service aligned with the changing needs of the public sector.

The focus remains on delivering real value: better matches, broader reach and a stronger pipeline of people who understand what the public sector offers.

Over 10K

Searchable job seeker CVs within our database

17,683

Jobs posted

Over 6.6M

Job views

Over 2.3M

Active users

Over 89K

New job alert signups

Over 464K

Apply clicks (where functionality used)

WMTALENT ACQUISITION

Over the past 12 months, the West Midlands Talent Acquisition (WMTA) service has continued to deliver strong, measurable impact for member councils and public sector organisations across the region and beyond.

Subscription to the service has provided councils and public sector organisations with a powerful combination of technology, collaboration, and shared expertise, creating a modern, efficient, and effective recruitment environment. With access to Tribepad's applicant tracking system, the WMJobs platform, and collaborative networks such as WMTribe and the Recruiters Network, members benefit from a service built on efficiency, inclusivity, and continuous improvement.

Collaboration has been at the heart of the service's progress. The WMTribe network continues to engage actively through Basecamp, where day today questions, tips and shared experiences support faster problem solving, innovation and the spread of good practice.

Our partnership with Tribepad has matured into a strategic, insight driven relationship that continues to deliver significant operational improvements for members. In 2025, West Midlands Employers and Tribepad won **Best Supplier Partnership** at the Talent Labs Awards, recognising our joint commitment to transforming public sector recruitment. This year, the partnership **won the 2026 In-House Recruitment Supplier Award for Customer Experience** and the **PPMA Award for Best Partnership / Collaboration**, highlighting its continued impact.

This alignment has produced substantial operational improvements for members. **Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service achieved a 73% reduction in admin tasks and a 93% reduction in email traffic**, freeing recruiters to focus on value adding activity. **Wolverhampton Homes reported that they have halved their recruitment costs**, alongside improved feedback from hiring managers and candidates.

Other councils have also seen dramatic improvements in recruitment speed and candidate quality. **Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council**

recorded a 75% reduction in time to offer, from 16 weeks down to just 22 days, while filling 100% of roles directly and eliminating agency spend. These improvements demonstrate not only greater efficiency but also enhanced employer branding and candidate engagement across the region. The seamless integration between WMJobs and Tribepad continues to elevate the candidate experience from first click to final offer, ensuring consistency, accessibility, and fairness throughout the recruitment journey.

In summary, the West Midlands Talent Acquisition service continues to evolve, innovate, and deliver tangible value for its members. Together, through shared expertise, strong partnerships, and a commitment to continuous improvement, we are supporting a more efficient, inclusive, and future ready recruitment landscape for the region.

Success plans and annual reviews

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen our structured approach to understanding each organisation's priorities, objectives and timelines. This framework helps us work collaboratively to align key goals with your wider business strategy and to ensure we are delivering meaningful, measurable outcomes.

Every organisation receives an annual review, providing the opportunity to assess progress against your Success Plan, recognise achievements, and identify areas for continued development in the year ahead. These sessions remain a core part of ensuring our service stays proactive, transparent and aligned with your evolving needs.



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for Case Study
Hereford &
Worcester Fire
and Rescue
Service



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Worcestershire
County Council

Headline Highlights (This Year)

1

WMTribe networks delivered, bringing together member organisations virtually, to share learning, best practice and innovation.

8

'Top Tips' sessions held, supporting users with practical advice to get the most from the platform.

25

Drop in sessions, supporting ad hoc queries and enabling ongoing improvements to recruitment processes across the service.



A stable and high performing platform, maintaining **99.99%** uptime throughout the year.



AWARDS & RECOGNITION

The WME WMTalent Acquisition Service with Tribepad was awarded / shortlisted:



Recruiter Awards

Recruitment Industry
Supplier of the Year

★ Highly Commended ★



Talent Labs

Best Supplier
Partnership

★ Won ★



In House Recruitment Awards

Use of
Technology

★ Finalist ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Plus the 4 x PPMAs ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



PPMA Awards

WME WMTalent Acquisition Service
with Tribepad Partnership Award

Best Supplier

★ Won ★



In-House Recruitment Supplier Awards

WMJobs
Specialist Job
Board

★ Silver ★

WMTalent Acquisition
Service with Tribepad
Customer Experience

★ Bronze ★

WM TEMPS

Over the past year, WMTemps has continued to strengthen its impact across the West Midlands Region, delivering both financial and operational improvements. To date, the nine authorities on the framework have achieved combined savings of over £13m on agency spend. In addition, off-contract spend has reduced by over £7m.

Alongside these headline savings, authorities have realised wider added-value. This includes margin savings, increased temp-to-perm conversions, and targeted support for hard-to-fill permanent and executive roles. Social value delivery has provided further community and workforce benefits.

Opus' MSP approach has contributed to reduced agency dependence and greater long-term workforce stability.

One council increased its temp-to-perm conversion rate from 10% in 2024/25 to 24% in 2025/26. Enhanced insight and workforce planning support have enabled councils to make more informed workforce decisions, strengthen talent pipelines, and decrease overall utilisation of temporary workers. This represents over £1.7m in additional strategic value delivered through the MSP. Opus have also worked closely with councils to prepare for the upcoming Employment Rights Act and Umbrella Reforms, ensuring full compliance with evolving regulations and effective supply-chain risk management.

The framework continues to gain momentum across the region. South Staffordshire Council joined in January 2026, while Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council have also committed to join, signing individual contracts to transition to Opus via WMTemps for temporary resource management this summer.

Other achievements and progress include:

- Developed partnerships with 40 regional organisations, including universities, colleges, schools, and job centres, to expand career opportunities for local residents.
- Took part 42 careers-focused events and initiatives across the West Midlands, including job fairs, mock interviews, school and college presentations, community outreach and work-experience activities.
- Collaborated with councils on employability taskforces to promote inclusive recruitment and support under-represented groups.
- Launch of the Future Forward campaign to raise the profile of local government career pathways and help candidates build the essential soft skills needed to succeed in an AI world.

Highlights from the past year include:

- ✓ Combined savings of £13m on agency spend.
- ✓ Off contract spend reduced by £7m.
- ✓ Three councils confirmed to join the framework in 2026, strengthening regional adoption.
- ✓ Temp-to-perm conversion rates increased from 10% in 2024/25 to 24% in 2025/26 at one authority.
- ✓ Over £280,000 contributed to social value activity.



Discover the impact in action:



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to read
Walsall
Council
case study



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to read the
Shropshire
Highways
case study

Strengthening SOCIAL CARE

Through Fair Pay, Ethical Recruitment & Regional Collaboration

Across the West Midlands, a unified regional approach to workforce reform is driving measurable improvements across both Children's and Adults' Social Care. Through shared standards, collective accountability, and sustained collaboration, 14 authorities are working together to build a more stable, ethical, and sustainable workforce.

At the heart of this approach are two aligned programmes:

- › **The Children's Services Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**
- › **The Adults' Services Memorandum of Commitment (MoC)**

Together, they reflect a shared regional ambition to reduce agency reliance, improve workforce stability, and deliver better outcomes for communities.

A Shared Regional Approach: Children's & Adults' Services

While operating at different stages of maturity, both Children's and Adults' Services are demonstrating the impact of coordinated action at scale.

Children's Services are now in year four of partnership - and their first year under statutory regulation - while Adults' Services have completed year one of the MoC. Despite these different phases, both programmes are aligned in their core principles: fair pay, ethical practice, transparency, and strengthened oversight.

This collective approach is:

- › Reducing agency dependency
- › Improving workforce stability and continuity of care
- › Strengthening regional governance and market oversight
- › Enabling more consistent, data-informed decision making.

Children's Services: Embedding a Mature Regional Model

The Children's Services MoU remains central to regional workforce reform. By reducing agency dependency, embedding fair and consistent pay, and strengthening market oversight, the MoU is delivering a more resilient workforce and improved continuity for children and families.

Impact Highlights

- › Sustained reduction in agency social care usage
- › Targeted exemption management, used only where genuinely needed
- › Breach levels reduced to fewer than one per week
- › Increased conversion to permanent roles - strengthening workforce stability
- › Stronger data-driven decision making through regional collaboration
- › Clear economic benefits through active MoU compliance monitoring
- › Strong regional governance is reducing agency spend, strengthening workforce stability and improving transparency.



“The MoC has provided a strong foundation for constructive engagement with our agency workforce, creating a clear pathway to reduce costs while supporting transition into permanent roles. Since April 2025, this approach has enabled us to convert a significant number of high-quality agency staff into substantive posts, strengthening workforce stability and ensuring continuity of care for adults who rely on our services.”

Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director of Adults and Health, Birmingham City Council

Adults' Social Care: Building Momentum and Sustainability

The Adults' MoC builds on the same regional principles, with a clear focus on workforce sustainability and long-term resilience.

In January 2025, WME met with all 14 Directors of Adult Social Care to shape the rollout of the 2025–2026 MoC, aligning leadership around a shared vision for the workforce.

Key Benefits



Collaborative workforce planning to manage pay pressures and improve stability



Strong regional alignment across Directors, Assistant Directors, and Principal Social Workers



A focus on consistency, transparency, fairness, and stability as the programme enters Year 2 (April 2026)



A commitment to recruiting and retaining high-quality permanent staff

The West Midlands Workforce Story: A Region Choosing to Lead

Across Adults' and Children's Services, the region demonstrates what can be achieved through genuine collaboration. By prioritising transparency, shared accountability, and ethical practice, 14 authorities are working together to deliver meaningful, measurable outcomes.

This collective approach - underpinned by strong partnerships, sustained investment, and long-term commitment - is creating a more resilient and sustainable social care workforce, improving outcomes for communities across the West Midlands.

Through this joined-up way of working, the region is:

- Driving greater consistency and quality in practice
- Strengthening oversight and accountability
- Delivering sustainable workforce solutions
- Establishing itself as a nationally recognised model of effective partnership working

Additional Regional Impact: International Recruitment

Alongside the MoU and MoC, the region is extending its collaborative approach to wider workforce challenges.

The partnership between West Midlands Employers (WME) and West Midlands ADASS continues to strengthen workforce planning, recruitment, and retention across the region.

International Recruitment: Regional Leadership in Action

WME has supported the Department of Health and Social Care's International Recruitment Programme (Phases 1 & 2, 2024–2026) by providing:

- Specialist regional recruitment legal and HR advice and helplines
- Targeted webinars to embed knowledge across the region
- Practical resources for local authorities, care providers, and international workers
- A dedicated regional hub offering HR and legal support to displaced workers

LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (L&OD)

This has been a defining year for Leadership & OD. The foundations built over recent years for credible insight, practical support and healthy challenge are now entrenched. . Councils are increasingly relying on the service for insight, momentum and partnership when it matters most.

Demand reflects this shift, with

320+ enquiries across the year, including **70+ consultancy commissions**, **150+ training requests** and **60+ personal development** focussed interventions. **Over 4,200** colleagues were supported through training, alongside **63 360 feedback reviews**, increased use of psychometric assessments, strengthening both individual and organisational capability.

Behind these numbers is a clear pattern in the challenges councils are facing.

At the most senior level, there is demand for **support to executive teams navigating** complexity, reorganisation and pressure. The focus is shifting from developing individuals to strengthening how top teams operate together from clarity of roles, collective accountability and decision-making across boundaries.

Across the workforce, leadership development is being approached less as isolated programmes and more as a connected pipeline, from first-time managers through to senior leaders, linking talent, development and succession. Programmes such as **Stepping into Management** still provide practical, immediate impact, with participants applying learning directly into their roles.

Alongside this individual support has increased, including **executive coaching, mentoring and 360 feedback**. This reflects that organisational change is experienced personally, and people increasingly need space to think, reflect and act with clarity.

A defining feature this year has been our **psychologically informed approach to complex team challenges**. We have helped organisations move beyond process, using high-support and high-challenge interventions to reset expectations, rebuild relationships and restore performance.

Concurrently, we have played a leading role in shaping how councils engage with AI as a workforce and leadership issue. Through workshops, organisational sessions and regional activity, we have built shared understanding and confidence moving from uncertainty to practical application. This has been brought to life through the launch of our regional **Ultimate Copilot Programme**, with 55+ colleagues from HR, IT, Governance and Communications applying AI directly to their roles.

Beyond delivery, the service continues to connect the region and shape thinking. **WMOD Elite** brings OD professionals together to share insight and practice, while our briefing papers, podcasts and Pulse articles are helping councils navigate challenges such as executive team effectiveness and team rebuilding.

We also led a **regional mentoring pilot**, testing targeted approaches including reciprocal mentoring and support for underrepresented groups, resulting in a practical toolkit for councils to implement mentoring at pace and with quality.

Responding to emerging themes, we initiated and convened a **community cohesion roundtable**, creating a safe space for leaders to explore complex, evolving challenges without easy answers supporting collective sense-making across the region.

The **Tri-Sector Challenge** continued to bring future leaders together, with public sector teams from across the region showcasing their potential. Worcester City Council were named 2025 champions.

We will continue to strengthen our offer, helping you place Leadership & OD at the centre of organisational performance, where it is critical, not hidden behind process.



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Study

COACHING AND MENTORING AT SCALE



THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Coaching & Mentoring Pool

Led by West Midlands Employers

Strengthening People, Services and System Leadership

Public Sector Coaching & Mentoring 2025–26

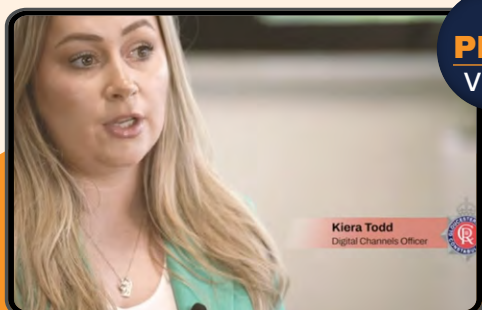
Across the public sector organisations continue to navigate significant financial pressure, organisational change and rising demand. In this environment, the ability to support people to think clearly, lead effectively and sustain performance is no longer optional, it is critical.

Over the past year, the **Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool (CMP)** has continued to demonstrate its value as a trusted, sector-owned solution to that challenge.

This was reinforced through the successful re-contracting of the pool, with **43 organisations continuing their investment and new interest growing**. In the current climate, this level of commitment reflects a clear and collective judgement that coaching and mentoring provide a **cost-effective way to strengthen leadership, capability and resilience**.

Demand for the offer remains strong. Over the year, more than **600 colleagues registered for coaching**, resulting in nearly just over **400 active coaching relationships**. Alongside this, over **250 colleagues have shown interest in mentoring**, creating more than **100 mentoring relationships**. In total, this has delivered **over 2,200 hours of coaching and mentoring support**.

Behind these numbers are thousands of moments where individuals have had space to reflect, reset and move forward, often within complex and demanding roles. Increasingly, this support is being actively sought. Following investment in engagement resources, over **45,000 views** were recorded on the **“Selecting the Right Coach or Mentor”**



The video alone, signalling a shift towards more proactive, **self-directed engagement with development**.

The financial value of the model remains significant. Using a blended market benchmark (an average rate based on career, leadership and executive coaching,) the support delivered this year equates to over £605,000, compared to a collective investment of just Under £150,000. This represents a saving of more than **£455,000**, whilst building internal capability and strengthening a culture of continuous development.

That capability continues to grow. This year, **over 140 new coaches and mentors** were approved, contributing to a network of more than **400 active practitioners**. This model does not just provide coaching and mentoring, it builds it from within, creating a sustainable shared resource across the public sector.

Alongside this, the year has marked a significant step forward in modernising the service. A new digital matching hub has been procured and prepared for launch, with coaches and mentors transitioned onto the platform. Launched at the start of the new financial year, all preparation has taken place this year, ensuring the offer is more accessible, more intuitive, and ready to evolve alongside changing expectations.

At the same time, **demand is expanding beyond the core pool**. Organisations are investing in **executive and independent coaching** to support senior leaders navigating complexity, alongside **team and group coaching** to rebuild trust, alignment and performance in high-pressure environments. This signals a more deliberate use of coaching, not just to support individuals, but to strengthen leadership and teams.

As we look ahead, one thing is clear. Coaching and mentoring are no longer peripheral, but central to how organisations operate under pressure.

At its heart, this work is simple.

Supporting the people who deliver public services to be at their best even in the most challenging conditions.

Read the full case study and explore how coaching could support your organisation



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HR

This year has been another busy and rewarding one for the HR Consultancy Team. We've continued to provide expert support to councils, helping them navigate complex grievance and disciplinary investigations as part of our core offer.



Job evaluation remains a major area of focus, with seven councils purchasing job evaluation bundles - including a fresh and innovative approach developed with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. You can learn more about this partnership in our detailed case study. Alongside this, we've delivered additional capacity and specialist input for ad-hoc job evaluations, completing 34 individual evaluations and 13 consultancy projects supporting restructures and service reviews. Our two-day open training event on NJC (Green Book) and Gauge job evaluation was particularly well attended, and we also continued to deliver bespoke training programmes for job analysts at Birmingham City Council.

Looking ahead, we're already supporting HR to shape the future - starting with our first in-person event for HR professionals affected by Local Government Reorganisation, held at our offices in March.

Our consultancy support continues to reach beyond councils, partnering with Fire and Rescue Services, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and Housing Associations to deliver tailored HR solutions.

We've also brought the HR community together through our regular Heads of HR network events, the annual Employment Law online masterclass, the Schools HR network, and our annual regional pay briefing. These gatherings have provided valuable spaces to share best practice, network, and explore the year's hot topics - especially the introduction of the Employment Rights Act and its ongoing impact across the HR landscape.

A Year of Workforce Impact

72

investigations undertaken

15

mediations

21

bespoke consultancy offers

506

Job evaluations and appeals

89.51%

Attendance at the Heads/Directors of HR Network averaged 89.51% across the financial year.

78

people attended the Employment Law Seminar in 2025



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SHAREHOLDER BENEFITS

Real value for your organisation



As a shareholder in West Midlands Employers (WME), your organisation gains access to a comprehensive suite of services designed to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and support workforce resilience.



Trusted services and cost savings

WME's Best Price Commitment on consultancy services offers a minimum 20% discount on expert support for Organisational Change, Pay and Reward, HR, Leadership, OD, and Resourcing. This means more impact for your investment, whether you're implementing workforce restructuring or tackling pay reviews.

As your Regional Employers' Organisation (REO), WME also represents your interests on the West Midlands Joint Council, ensuring your voice is heard in key negotiations on pay, terms, policy changes, and local government reorganisation.



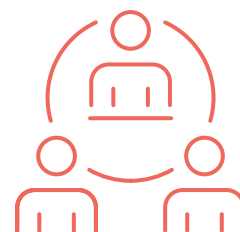
Shared Services and strategic support

WME invests in shared services to reduce your overheads and secure the best market rates.

These include:

- WMJobs Public Sector Jobs Board – reduces recruitment costs.
- Tribepad Applicant Tracking System – streamlines candidate management.
- IDVT & DBS Services – ensures faster, compliant hiring.
- WMTemps Single Agency Framework – cuts temporary staffing costs.
- Job Evaluation Bureau – supports fair and consistent job grading.

The Employment Helpdesk also provides unlimited, expert guidance, reducing your need for costly legal advice.



Leadership and collaboration

WME provides CEO appraisals, leadership inductions, and senior team meetings, ensuring your leaders are equipped to drive change. Professional networks and access to Infinistats HR Data offer strategic insights for workforce planning.

For full details and to discuss West Midland Employers Membership Benefits in more detail, email us at info@wmemployers.org.uk

WORKFORCE PRIORITIES FUND 2025-26

The Workforce Priority fund has been in place since 2020. It resulted from a clear message from our councils for WME to provide a focus on shared workforce priorities with a dedicated fund to invest to drive progress forward. The intent of this is to support work, whether these be pilots, events or initiatives, where individual councils could not achieve the same results individually. £100,000 each year is ring-fenced to tackle workforce priorities, and wherever practical to prioritise issues that offer benefit across all councils.

Here we offer an insight into the work enabled by the Workforce Priority Fund for 2025, the outcomes from these projects and how they will be embedded for the future.

AI Festival – 2026

Funding allocation - £15,000

Held from **26–30 January 2026**, the AI Festival brought councils together through a series of interactive Microsoft Teams sessions to explore and implement AI responsibly. Through practical learning, collaboration and real-world case studies, the Festival accelerated AI adoption, built workforce capability and supported service transformation across local government.

- Created a regional collaboration space for councils to explore AI in a practical, supported environment.
- Accelerated organisational engagement with AI, workforce and service transformation.
- Positioned AI within mainstream leadership and service improvement discussions.
- Shaped WME's future AI support offer to be more practical and demand-led.
- Launched the first public sector Copilot programme, engaging 60 local authority colleagues.
- Built regional momentum, securing investment for **AI Festival Vol.2**.



Future Leaders Pilot

Funding allocation - £9,000

A pilot delivered in partnership with the City of Wolverhampton Council to test and develop a practical approach to succession planning and internal talent development through live implementation. The programme established a live talent pool, enabling participants to demonstrate leadership potential through real organisational challenges while strengthening the council's future leadership pipeline.

- Successfully transitioned the **Our Future Leaders** pilot from concept to live implementation.
- Tested a practical approach to succession planning and talent development with City of Wolverhampton Council.
- Encouraged regional collaboration through shared learning and reflection across councils.
- Reinforced an approach centred on experimentation, learning and adaptation rather than one-size-fits-all models.
- Generated early learning that is informing WME's emerging Shift series on future-ready leadership.

Dissemination of learning includes:

- Published a programme design and early learning case study. [\[click to view\]](#),
- Produced a cross-sector podcast with City of Wolverhampton Council sharing delivery insights and lessons learned. [\[click to view\]](#)
- Planned a second case study (February 2027) exploring longer-term outcomes, organisational impact and sustainability.
- Will host a WMOD Elite showcase session focused on succession planning and talent pipelines.



Regional Mentoring Pilots

Funding allocation - £24,000

A regional pilot delivered in partnership with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to test and refine practical mentoring approaches for workforce development. The programme explored reciprocal mentoring, mentoring for aspiring leaders, and mentoring to support inclusion and career progression across local government.

- Completed evaluation, bringing together learning from all participating councils.
- A detailed evaluation report and practical mentoring toolkit will be shared with shareholder councils in summer 2027.
- The toolkit will provide tested approaches, implementation guidance, resources, communications and rollout materials.
- Learning will inform the future development of the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool.
- Recommendations will strengthen regional mentoring through greater collaboration, shared support and coordinated approaches to talent development and career progression.

Regional Recruitment Dashboard

Funding allocation - £6,000

A regional pilot with participating councils to develop a shared recruitment data dashboard, using applicant tracking system (ATS) data to provide consistent insight into end-to-end recruitment performance across key metrics.

- Developing a regional benchmarking tool to improve workforce planning and evidence-based recruitment decisions.
- Pilot underway with participating councils testing data quality, usability and practical value.
- Providing a shared insight framework that complements local reporting while enabling consistent comparison across councils.
- Planned rollout to all participating authorities by September 2026, following refinement through pilot learning.
- Supporting regional benchmarking, shared learning and improved recruitment performance.
- Long-term ambition to embed a consistent, evidence-based approach to recruitment decision-making across the public sector workforce.

Careers Expo

Funding allocation - £15,000

Brought together employers, support organisations and jobseekers to raise awareness of public sector careers and challenge perceptions of working in local government.

- Combined live vacancies, workshops and face-to-face support to improve jobseeker confidence and readiness.
- Connected jobseekers with more than 800 public sector opportunities.
- Enabled employers to showcase roles, strengthen employer brands and promote a collective regional offer.
- Demonstrated a collaborative approach to large-scale public sector recruitment and engagement.
- Created a foundation for future regional talent attraction events and workforce campaigns.
- Contributed to the long-term ambition of strengthening and diversifying public sector talent pipelines.

Community Cohesion

Funding allocation - £13,500

(carried forward from 2025/26 to support delivery of the Summit and two pre-event webinars in 2026/27)

A regional event designed to strengthen collaboration across councils and partner organisations by sharing practical learning, building workforce confidence and supporting a coordinated approach to community cohesion across the West Midlands.

- Brought together more than 180 delegates, speakers and partners from across the region.
- Two pre-event webinars engaged more than 100 attendees, helping to build awareness, share context and prepare delegates ahead of the Summit.
- Enabled organisations to share good practice, explore common challenges and learn from regional and national expertise.
- Strengthened regional partnerships and created a platform for ongoing collaboration and shared learning.
- Learning from the Summit and webinar programme will inform future workforce support and collaborative activity.



RECRUITMENT DATA DASHBOARD

The Regional Recruitment Data Dashboard will provide councils and public sector organisations with a powerful, data driven view of their end-to-end recruitment performance. Drawing directly from the Tribepad ATS, the dashboard enables users to analyse essential metrics such as time to hire, conversion rates, source of hire, internal versus external recruitment trends, and overall recruitment yield.

With the ability to view each council individually or compare performance across the region, it supports meaningful benchmarking and highlights opportunities for improvement.

By surfacing this insight in one accessible place, the dashboard will help services identify successful approaches, share best practice, to ultimately reduce hiring times, identify the most effective sources of advertisement and streamline onboarding processes.

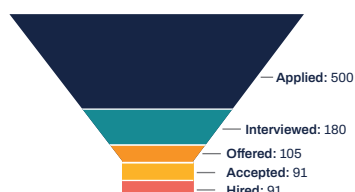
Dashboard

Data Dashboard

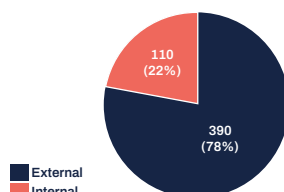


500 Applications
36% Interviewed
58.3% Offered
86.7% Accepted
100% Hired

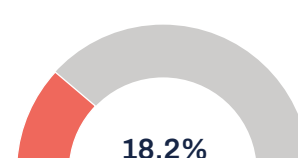
Recruitment Funnel



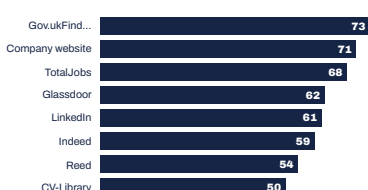
Internal vs External Candidates



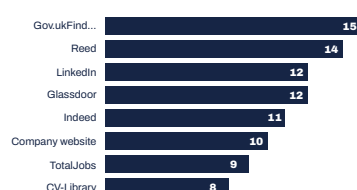
Recruitment Yield



Source of Application



Source of Hire



56.48

Avg Time to Hire

29.80

Avg Time to Offer

26.62

Avg Pre-Employment Period

WMJOBS PUBLIC SECTOR CAREER EXPO



The WMJobs Public Sector Career Expo was a regional initiative led by West Midlands Employers, in collaboration with employers, to support the attraction and engagement of talent into the public sector. Funded through the Workforce Priority Fund, the Expo brought together employers, support organisations, charities and jobseekers to raise awareness of career opportunities, challenge perceptions and strengthen future talent pipelines.



Designed as more than a traditional job fair, the Expo combined live vacancies with practical support, workshops and face to face engagement – helping jobseekers feel confident, informed and ready to explore over 800 opportunities. At the same time, it enabled organisations to promote current roles, showcase their employer brand and highlight the future of public sector careers through a collective regional voice.



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Study



COUNCILS LEADING THE CONVERSATION ON THE FUTURE OF WORK

AI is no longer a future conversation for councils, it's already shaping how work gets done. The question is no longer whether to engage, but how.

In January 2026, we brought councils together for the first Public Sector AI Festival, creating a space to explore AI not just as technology, but as a workforce, leadership and service transformation issue. The scale and response were clear:



1,100+

registrations



600+

participants from across councils and the wider public sector



1,600+

session attendances across the week



Colleagues joined from HR, digital, social care, communications, customer services and beyond reflecting the reality that AI is everyone's business, not just IT's.

What made the week different was its focus on practical application and shared learning. Councils openly shared real examples of how they are already using AI to reduce administrative burden, improve accessibility for staff and residents and create capacity to focus on people, not process.

The festival helped shift organisations from awareness into early action, with leaders and teams beginning to explore how tools like Microsoft Copilot can be used safely, meaningfully and with purpose. Just as importantly, it created space for honest conversations about risk, ethics and adoption, recognising that confidence and capability must grow alongside ambition.

A number of clear messages emerged:

- › AI adoption is not linear. It requires sustained focus, not one-off pilots
- › Organisations must create safe spaces to explore and learn
- › Leadership ownership is critical. This cannot be delegated
- › Technology can inform decisions, but people bring the judgement

The launch of the WM ADASS AI Playbook, grounded in real citizen experiences, reinforced what matters most, using AI to improve outcomes, not just efficiency.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of participants wanting the festival to return.

The festival demonstrated the power of councils learning together, building confidence, sharing practice and shaping a collective response to one of the most significant workforce shifts of our time.

"What an inspiring and uplifting session that made the future feel genuinely exciting."
AIFEST attendee

How are councils turning AI ambition into practical action?

See how the Public Sector AI Festival brought 600+ public sector colleagues together to build confidence, share learning and shape the future of work.



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OUR FUTURE LEADERS

Turning talent management into succession planning



Supported by the

Workforce
PRIORITY FUND

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

The City of Wolverhampton Council set out to rethink what succession planning could look like in practice, not as a programme, but as a live, working model for growing future leaders from within.

Rather than relying on traditional development approaches, the council created a live talent pool, where participants step into real cross-council challenges, with real accountability, visibility and support. Crucially, roles are backfilled, allowing people to fully engage rather than balancing development alongside already stretched day jobs.

This is not talent theatre. It is a genuine investment in building leadership capacity.

What makes the model stand out is its focus on testing potential in practice. Participants are selected and developed not just on experience or confidence, but on their potential. Their ability to adapt, influence, work across boundaries and make sense of complexity reflecting the realities of modern local government leadership.

The programme also goes further than most by:

- Involving the Chief Executive and senior leaders directly in selection, mentoring and review
- Offering coaching support to all applicants, not just those selected
- Building a connected leadership community, not a single cohort
- Embedding future-focused themes such as AI, systems thinking and non-linear careers

Importantly, the council has also focused on what many organisations overlook - what happens next. Early work is already shaping how talent remains visible, supported and ready for progression beyond the programme itself.

Delivered in partnership with West Midlands Employers, the model has moved rapidly from concept to reality, with a live cohort now in place and beginning work on transformation priorities. For councils facing similar challenges, this approach offers a clear provocation:

If we are serious about growing our own, development needs to move beyond programmes and into real, structured opportunities to lead, test and grow in practice.

What does succession planning look like beyond theory?

See how City of Wolverhampton Council is building a live leadership pipeline through real work, accountability and investment in future leaders.

“West Midlands Employers’ challenge, insight and practical support helped City of Wolverhampton Council create a programme that tests leadership potential through real work, accountability and contribution to council priorities.



It is helping future leaders at the council build confidence, capability and experience while delivering meaningful outcomes for the city.”

Tim Johnson Chief Executive of the City of Wolverhampton Council

Read additional information from Tim, via the case study.



CLICK
for Case Study

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



In our Strategic Business Plan, West Midlands Employers committed to strengthening partnership working locally, regionally and nationally — recognising that meaningful collaboration is central to delivering sustainable improvement, innovation and influence across local government. We set out an ambition to work alongside councils and partner organisations not only as a service provider, but as a connector, convenor and enabler of collaboration across the region and beyond.

Over the past year, we have continued to deliver against this ambition through a broad range of strategic partnerships, collaborative programmes and regional initiatives. This has included working directly with councils on-site to support organisational priorities; facilitating regional networks and shared services; strengthening relationships with national bodies and sector partners; contributing to policy development and consultation activity; and creating opportunities for councils to collaborate, learn and influence together.

Our partnership approach has enabled us to:

- **Support regional collaboration and shared learning**
- **Bring national insight and opportunities into the region**
- **Amplify innovation and sector-leading practice**
- **Strengthen leadership, workforce and organisational development activity**
- **Secure and maximise external funding opportunities**
- **Increase the visibility and influence of the West Midlands nationally**

The following section highlights some of the key organisations and partnerships we have worked with throughout the year, alongside examples of the impact, activity and collaborative outcomes achieved together.



- › First year of delivery of the regional Memorandum of Commitment – managing social care agency spend.
- › Continued delivery support on the regional International Recruitment project for social workers
- › Partnership working in response to the Fair Pay Consultation
- › Continued delivery of the Adult's Services Sector Hub via WMJobs for talent attraction
- › Collaboration in AI Festival – dissemination of AI projects & learning



- › Continued delivery of the regional Memorandum of Understanding – managing social care agency spend.
- › Newly hosted Children's Services Sector Hub via WMJobs for social care talent attraction



- › Convenor of 4 network meetings



- › Convenor of 12 network meetings



- › Our partnership working in the establishment of a regional framework – **WMTemps**, for Councils to access contingent workforce has enabled Councils to reduce agency spend, improve quality hires, whilst generating more than £380k in social value contribution to the region
- › Our partnership working has contributed to the delivery of;
 - Interim Management Partnership for senior appointments
 - Hosting LGA Drinks Reception for senior officers or members



- › West Midlands Talent Acquisition service continues to be recognised nationally for its partnership impact and service excellence
 - 2025, winners of **Best Supplier Partnership** at the Talent Labs Awards
 - 2026, **bronze winners of Best Customer Experience** at the In-House Recruitment Supplier Awards
 - 2026, winners of Best Partnership / Collaboration at the PPMA Awards
 - Continued growth onboarding new Councils



- › **Together**, WME and Solace bring complementary networks, relationships and insights. By working collaboratively, both organisations aim to strengthen leadership connectivity across the region, support the development of current and future leaders, and ensure councils receive the greatest possible value from their respective membership offers.
- › Our partnership working has contributed to the delivery of;
 - Executive Recruitment Partnership for senior appointments
 - Interim Management Partnership for senior appointments
 - Establishing a West Midlands Future Leaders Network
 - Chief Executive in person network sessions – guest speakers and thematic insights

OUR CURRENT SHAREHOLDER COUNCILS



South Staffordshire Council



Herefordshire Council



Birmingham City Council



City of Stoke-on-Trent



Wyre Forest District Council



worcestershire county council



Coventry City Council



North Warwickshire Borough Council



Shropshire Council



Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council



Walsall Council



Bromsgrove District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Warwickshire County Council



Designed by

