



**East Midlands Shared Services Joint Committee  
24 June 2024**

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Subject:</b>   | East Midlands Shared Service Annual Report 2023/24.  |   |
| <b>Corporate Directors</b>  | Simone Hines – Assistant Director of Finance, Strategic Property and Commissioning, Leicestershire County Council (LCC)<br><br>Shabana Kausar – Director of Finance, Nottingham City Council (NCC) |   |
| <b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Report author and contact details:</b>   | Lucy Littlefair – Head of East Midlands Shared Services<br>01163056333    lucy.littlefair@emss.org.uk  |   |
| <b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>  | Jill Turner, Business Support Manager, Elaine Simpson, Finance Service Centre Manager.   |   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No  | <b>Subject to call-in</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| <b>Total value of the decision:</b> None  |  |   |
| <b>Section 151 Officer expenditure approval</b>   |  |   |
| Has any NCC spend been approved by the Section 151 Officer? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/a   |  |   |
| Spend Control Board approval reference number: N/A  |  |   |
| <b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s):</b> N/A   |  |   |
| <b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b><br>This report provides the Joint Committee with a summary of the performance of East Midlands Shared Service (EMSS) during 2023/24. |  |   |
| <b>Exempt information:</b><br>None  |  |   |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>   |  |   |
| 1. To note the performance of EMSS during 2023/24   |  |   |
| 2. To request that the EMSS Sponsors and Head of EMSS meet to discuss and develop an updated 4 year vision and strategic plan for EMSS by 1 September 2024.   |  |   |

## **1 Reasons for recommendations**

- 1.1 To report on the performance of EMSS for 2023/24 including Quarter 4 (Q4).
- 1.2 To provide the Joint Committee with an update on the progress of the projects within the Business Plan for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 1.3 To ensure that the Joint Committee can form a clear and accurate view of the performance of the service, reporting any highlights or concerns back into their own organisation.

## **2 Other options considered in making recommendations.**

- 2.1 None, as EMSS is required by the Partnership agreement to provide performance updates to Joint Committee.

## **3 Performance Summary**


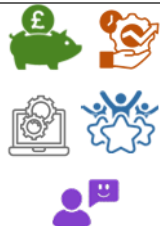







- 3.1 2023/24 has been a positive and high performing year for EMSS. Amongst the highlights has been the successful insourcing of debt back into the Finance Service Centre, demonstrating its ability to provide high quality recovery services to the partners, hopefully a blueprint for future expansion in that area. For the Employee Service Centre, it has been a tale of two halves, with the first half of the financial year focussed on transitioning external customers to alternative payroll providers and managing as sensitively as possible the impact upon the workforce; and the second half of the year dedicated to rebuilding the service and the team, which has been a very positive experience. The Business Development Team continues to deliver high quality project support to the service, without them many of the projects would not have been delivered; as well as ensuring that the core financial, HR and Payroll system is well managed for the partners.
- 3.2 The year has ended with all service areas in excellent shape to continue to deliver high quality transactional services to the partnership and meet the challenges of operating in a difficult financial context.

## **4 EMSS Service / Business Plan 2023/24**

- 4.1 During 2023/24 EMSS have led and managed a significant number of priorities and projects. They have been varied in their focus, size and complexity; but overall have enabled savings and delivered efficiencies in the operational performance of the services.
- 4.2 Table 1 details the projects that have been completed during 2023/24, with the content of the report providing more detailed updates where relevant.

Benefits Key

|                           |   |               |   |                     |   |
|---------------------------|---|---------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Stat / Policy Requirement |  | Cost Savings  |  | Process Improvement |  |
| Customer Experience       |  | Staff Welfare |  | Automation          |  |

| Priorities   | Benefits  | Description   | Status   |
|--|---|---|----------|
| Organisational - Developing EMSS Staff                         |    | Ensure all staff get an APR and the support they need personally and professionally.  | Complete |
| Organisational - New Customer Strategy                         |    | To implement the strategy to improve the standards of customer service and release agent time to resolve urgent queries.          | Complete |
| Organisational - New internal and external communication plans |    | To improve communications and engagement. Plans in place which detail how EMSS will communicate internally and with its customers | Complete |
| Technology - Gen 1 to Gen 2 infrastructure                     |  | This moved the non-SAAS elements of the Oracle system onto new hardware to ensure that the partnership was compliant.             | Complete |
| FSC - Kefron - Phase 2   |  | Further improved the functionality and performance of the Kefron invoice processing system.                                       | Complete |
| Replacement bank account verification system                   |  | Review the current system that checks inputted supplier bank details are correct  | Complete |
| FSC – LCC Oxygen implementation                                |  | Supported the LCC implementation of a new system to seek discounts for early payment of invoices.                                 | Complete |
| FSC – Office move  |  | Following a request from NCC, the team moved from the first to the ground floor.  | Complete |
| FSC - Activity Based Costing                                   |  | To record the FTE resource used on all FSC activities.  | Complete |






| Priorities                                   | Benefits   | Description  | Status   |
|--|--|--|----------|
| ESC - HCM and Payroll Transformation. Year 1 |   | To stabilise the Employee Service Centre (ESC).  | Complete |
| ESC - Cessation of Schools/Academy business  |   | Withdraw from the education sector payroll service market.   | Complete |
| ESC – Implementation of Assure system        |   | One year contract to trial utilising an analytics tool to support the payroll service in identifying any errors. | Complete |
| ESC – NCC Changes to Pay Tables              |   | The ESC implemented a new pay structure for NCC from Sept 23.  | Complete |
| ESC- Oracle Recruiting Cloud                 |  | Implemented the Oracle recruitment module.   | Complete |

Table 1

## 5 Technology

5.1 It has been a busy year in terms of technology. With significant improvements being made in Oracle as well as new systems coming on stream.

### Oracle

5.2 The first big change in Oracle was the launch of the Oracle Recruiting Cloud (ORC) in April 2023. In order to use the module a number of compromises were required, mainly to accommodate staff without work email addresses. At that time both partners committed to providing work emails, however this has proven more complex than anticipated.

5.3 Significant work has also been undertaken in working with Mastek to improve the delivery of the Managed Service contract. Service levels are now generally within contract requirements and the service plan continues to drive improvements.

5.4 The partners purchased Oracle Guided Learning in May 2023 as part of the Oracle contract renewal. EMSS picked up its implementation to ensure that it was available for use by partners, however the uptake was not uniform. This allowed an additional review before committing further expenditure on the system. Both partners again agreed that the service on offer was excellent and with new training and guidance

required as a result of Redwood, OGL offered the easiest and most effective way to deliver this.

- 5.5 Another new feature resulting from the contract renewals was the introduction of Fusion Analytics Warehouse (FAW) for both finance and HCM. This is a reporting system that allows for far greater analysis of data as well as the ability to combine information in Oracle with other data sets. As this was a late addition into the bill of materials there was no budget for implementation, so EMSS was able to use its in-house expertise to configure, firstly the finance system in Q2 and the HCM system in Q4. There were some issues getting the EMSS account activated, and this has resulted in a £50K refund from Oracle.
- 5.6 Joint Committee will recall the very disappointing outcome from the Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) health check. This was undertaken to ensure that the configuration of the core infrastructure of the Oracle system conformed to best practice and did not present any potential weaknesses. Overall, 61 deficiencies were identified, some of which were serious. Work began immediately to remedy the worse issues. However, the best way of resolving the majority of the issues was to move from Oracle's Gen 1 infrastructure onto Gen 2. This would also improve general system running and should, over time, reduce the costs of universal credits. The move to Gen 2 was completed in November and all the identified weaknesses have been addressed in line with Oracle's recommendations. These included activating the automatic alert system, so if anyone tries to change the fundamental configuration, EMSS are alerted. A new OCI health check has been commissioned to ensure that the changes have been made and the system conforms with Oracle guidance.

### **ESC activities**

- 5.7 In addition the ESC began work on implemented the seeded absence solution. This is fundamental to the stabilisation work and will lead to the move to seeded pensions for teachers.
- 5.8 The ESC has also introduced the Assure system. This is product by Egress for the checking of payrolls. Primarily it was procured to support the vast quantity of quality checks needed to implement the sickness solution as part of parallel payroll runs. However, its significant functionality is supporting the day to day operation as well.

### **FSC Activities**

- 5.9 The much greater stability of the finance system has allowed the FSC more opportunity to look for improvements to systems and processes. The first area delivered was to identify and implement an alternative bank account checking system. The system in use from Experian did not return an acceptable level of positive matches, this resulted in manual work to contact suppliers directly to confirm bank details and in turn creates additional work to satisfy suppliers that the request is legitimate. A system provided as a module on the existing BACS system was identified and procured. Bank verification processes are much improved.
- 5.10 The FSC have also been working with partners and Oracle to identify improvements that can be made by better use of functionality already available. This has included

an in-depth review of AR functionality to address some of the issues both EMSS and partners have identified. Further work on the PIVI carried out by Oracle is needed to deliver better value from the investment already made by partners.

5.11 The FSC has also delivered phase 2 of the Kefron implementation. Joint Committee will recall that Kefron provides the invoice processing system which takes invoices and inputs them into Oracle or rejects them back to the sender. Phase 1 delivered the original implementation however there remained the potential to move from a daily feed of invoices to one that operates in real-time. This was a complex more but one that delivers improved visibility of invoices as well as supporting other initiatives such as LCC's move to Oxygen, which looks to negotiate discounts for early payment of invoices and also implement this year.

### Ongoing projects

5.12 Work is nearly complete on the move to the seeded sickness absence solution and this should be finished early in Q1 24/25.

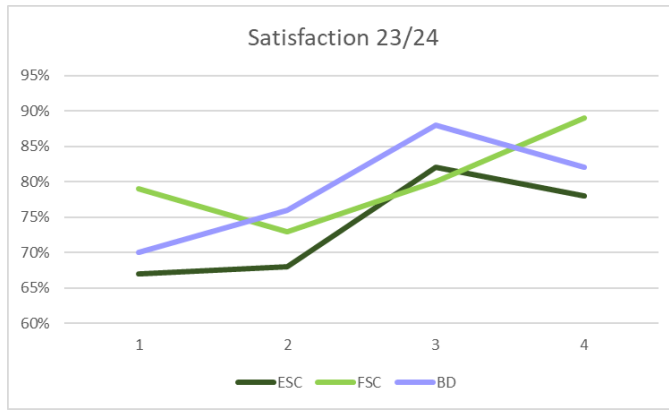
5.13 Now the partners have confirmed they wish to keep OGL, the work to complete the roll-out will continue. Again, this should be complete in early Q1 with BAU support moving from Oracle University to the EMSS Sys Admin Team.

5.14 Work is also progressing to finalise the plans for Redwood. This is the new look and feel for the Oracle system, and also includes new functionality. As with the analytics EMSS are looking into deliver as much using in-house resources, however these will still need to be some reliance on Mastek, especially in configuring new options. Unfortunately, the work on the 24b quarterly update has delayed their input.

## 6 Customer

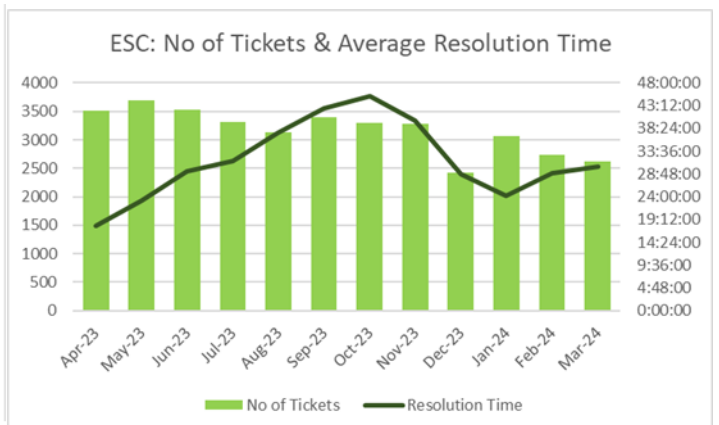
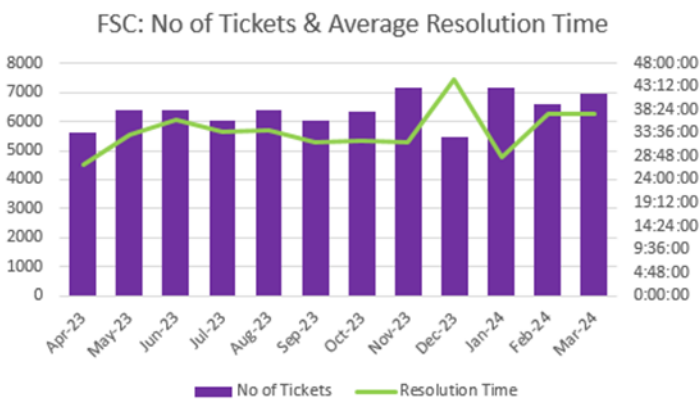
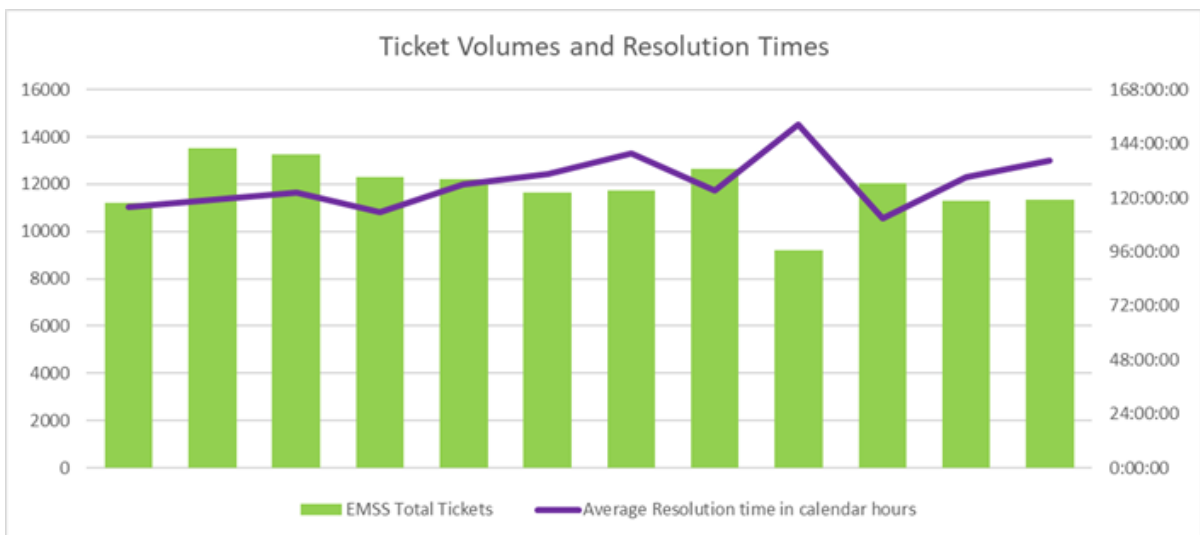


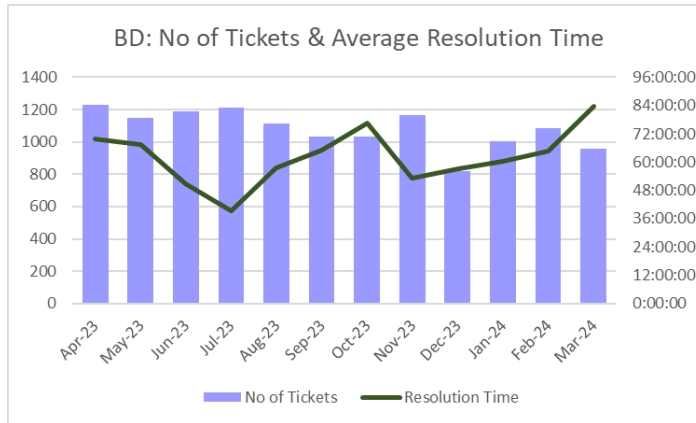
6.1 Performance through the year has been consistent with the move towards greater stability and improved outcomes. The overall trend for satisfaction is generally on an upwards trajectory. The graph below shows a snapshot of performance over the last four quarters.



It shows a strong upwards trend. The FSC has seen improvement since Q2 but the slight downturn in the ESC and Business Development has meant that overall satisfaction remains at 83%, just below the target of 85%.

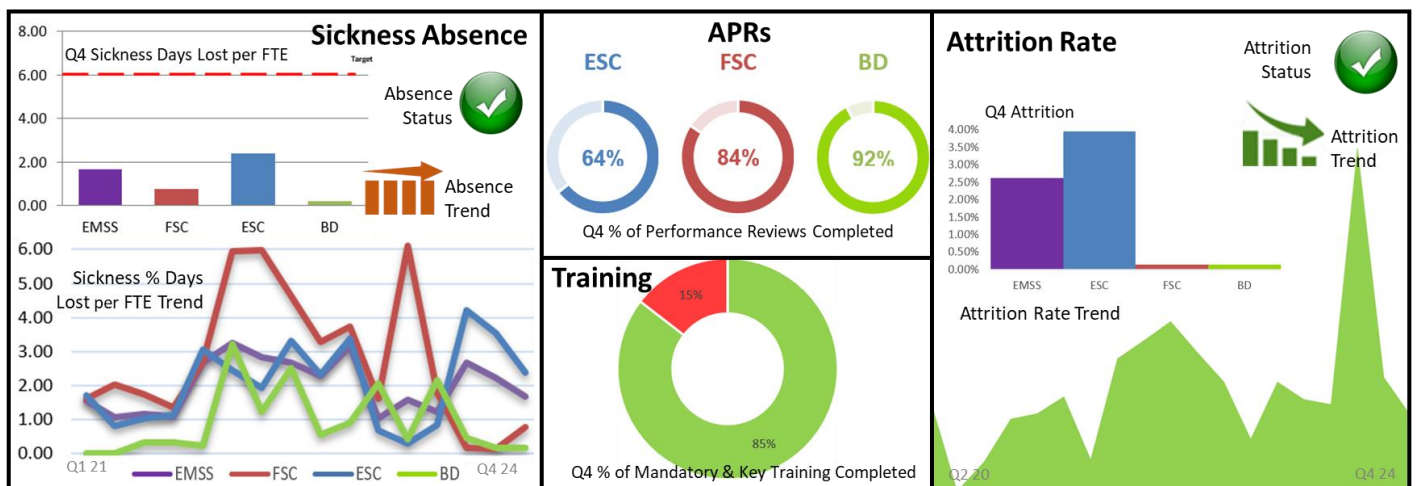
6.2 This trend towards a more stable set of results is also replicated in ticket volumes and resolution times. The graphs below show the performance for this year overall and then broken down by service.





6.3 The Customer Boards have been a major driver of focus and improvement. In order to continue to increase satisfaction, part of their remit is now to investigate common query types to understand what help our customers need and find easier and quicker ways to meet their needs. In addition, a new monitoring regime has been developed to support all those answering customer queries to provide a high quality response.

## 7 People



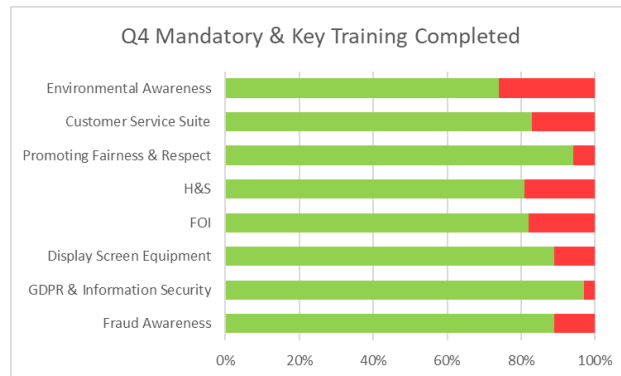
7.1 Overall sickness has fallen slightly to 2.22 days lost per FTE. The FSC saw a slight increase of 0.64 days. The rate in the ECS has fallen from 3.54 days to 2.39, hopefully this is a further signal that the service is consolidating after the major changes and reductions earlier in the year. It should be noted that the data available to ESC managers on absence rates, is different to that produced corporately. However, from Q1 in 24/25 work will be completed to reconcile both sets of figures to produce a more accurate outturn.

7.2 Annual performance reviews (APRs) have been a priority this year and this is reflected in the improved results. The rate for the ESC has reduced slightly but this is a reflection that these have fallen due again.

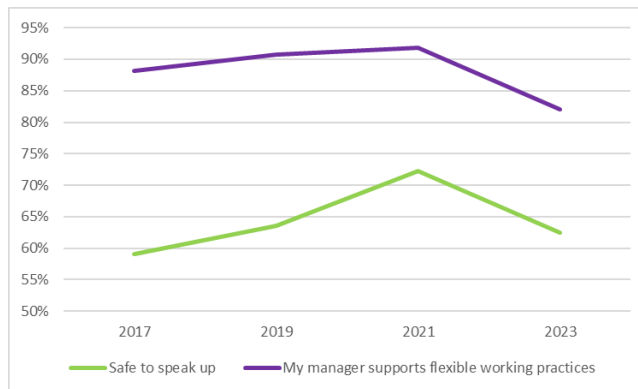
7.3 The completion of mandatory training modules has improved significantly with 85% of all required training complete (up from 78% in Q3). This is the result of a focused



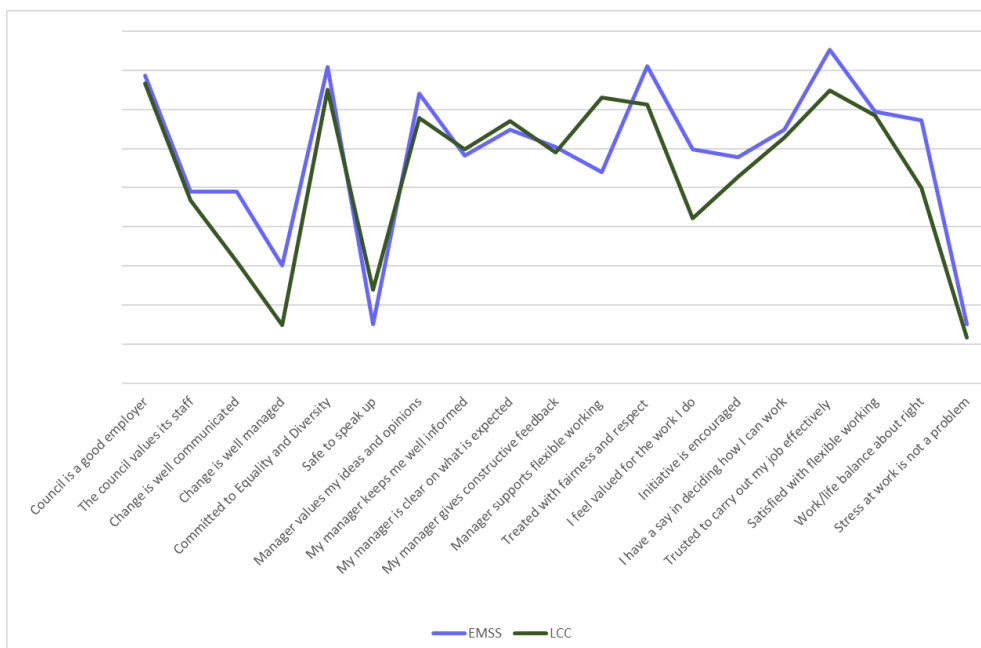
effort across all teams but did also include some long over-due record cleansing to remove contingent workers and leavers from the system.



7.4 The 2023 LCC Staff Survey brought up some unexpected results on ‘my manager supports flexible working practices’ and ‘I feel safe to speak up’. The scores were much lower than in previous years. The graph below shows the change from 2017 to 2023 on these two questions.



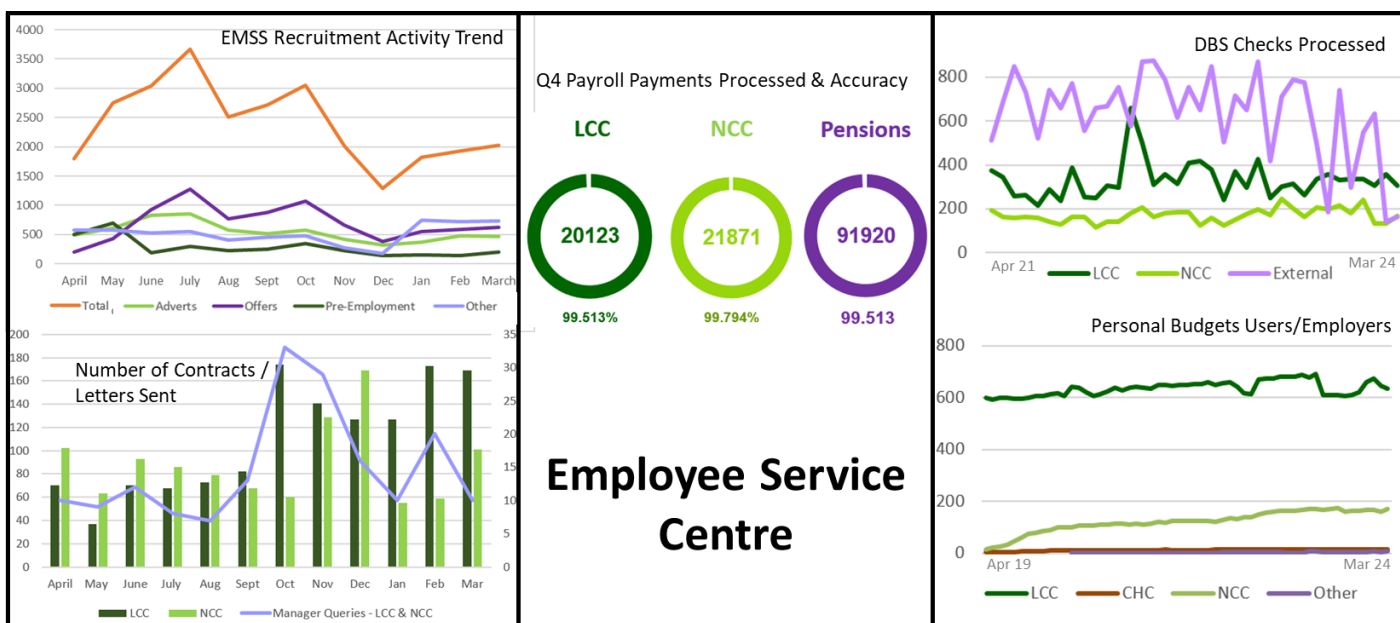
7.5 They were the only questions where EMSS staff were less happy than their LCC colleagues, as is shown below.



7.6 On the question support for flexible working, the ESC Management Team reviewed their approach and policy and implemented some changes to bring their practice in line with teams elsewhere. It is anticipated that this will have resolved this issue.

7.7 On the question of feeling safe to speak up, Appendix A provides Joint Committee with an update on the additional work undertaken to understand in more detail the root cause of the concerns and the proposed action plan to address them.

## 8 Service Performance – Employee Service Centre (ESC)



8.1 The ESC ended 2023/24 is in its most positive position since 2020, able to deliver a robust and consistent payroll service.

8.2 The Transformation Plan set out the priorities and activities across four phases:

- |           |                      |                             |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Stage 1 | Foundation           | April 2023 – September 2023 |
| • Stage 2 | Deliver the Basics   | October 2023 – March 2024   |
| • Stage 3 | Develop the Service  | April 2024 – September 2024 |
| • Stage 4 | Optimise the Service | October 2024 – April 2025   |

8.3 In summary, significant progress has been made on many aspects of the plan:

- Reduced the complexity of the operation by pulling out of the education market.
- Successfully managed the budget this financial year, delivering an underspend.
- Team Leader training on leadership / effective management
- Clarity on ESC delivery model – what services we provide and process ownership
- Monthly account meetings
- Closer working relationship with HR colleagues
- Overpayments project

- Rebranding the support portal
- Monthly Customer Boards
- Change Boards
- Payroll apprenticeship programme supports the ESC commercially.
- Development Team has delivered a huge programme of work in last 12 months

- 8.4 The ESC Transformation Plan has delivered significant benefits for the service, with the decision to withdraw from the education market being the most impactful. In early 2023, the service faced extensive and complex work to address the underlying system issues; and was struggling to deliver a high quality service to its customers.
- 8.5 255 schools and academies were given notice in February 2023 and smoothly transitioned to alternative providers by the end of August 2023. It was a huge project, involving the migration of data, liaison with new providers, supporting maintained schools through regular communications, discussions with finance colleagues and managing queries.
- 8.6 The decision to cease trading with schools and academies, triggered a restructure of the ESC and resulted in 3 staff finding alternative employment externally, 6 being redeployed or taking up opportunities within LCC, 16 taking voluntary redundancy and 3 being made compulsory redundant. All the staff leaving were offered a wide range of support including Employability Skills workshops on building CV's, how to apply for jobs, interview techniques and welfare checks. A special event was very well attended by staff on the 31 August 2023, to thank colleagues for all their hard work and service and gave everyone an opportunity to say goodbye.
- 8.7 Q2 was a challenging period for the ESC, as the education sector payroll customers transitioned to external customers over the summer months and 28 staff exited the organisation. The workload was high during the holiday period. Payroll records had to be closed on Oracle and information provided to schools to enable their new providers to set up new records in time for their first pay day. However, the transition was a success due to the dedication of all staff within the ESC. The professionalism of managers and staff during that time was remarkable.
- 8.8 September 2023 was positioned internally as the start of the 'new' ESC. Many of the team leaders and staff had moved teams, so the management team held a number of briefings sessions to reinforce the vision for the service and the part staff had to play in delivering that vision.
- 8.9 Q3 saw the ESC show some considerable signs of stabilisation in its processes and procedures. The operational benefits of reducing the complexity and volume of the payroll service had started to show. For example, November was the first month that the service returned to pre-implementation (2020) timescales for closing the payroll, meaning staff received their payslips earlier.
- 8.10 Unfortunately, pressure has remained for some managers and staff, as the service being provided to LCC maintained schools by one of the external payroll providers – Dataplan/IRIS, has been poor. Resulting in additional and unnecessary work in relation to Teachers' Pensions and the statutory returns, alongside fielding queries from schools.

- 8.11 Despite this, the operation is functioning well and improving on a monthly basis. In 2023/24 the ESC processed 191,889 payments for NCC, LCC and external customers. The team also processed 363,836 payments to pensioners of the Leicestershire Pension Service through the Altair system.
- 8.12 The accuracy rates of the payroll are based upon the number of errors identified by employees, managers or EMSS after payday. The performance for 2023/24 is 857 errors out of a total of 191,889 payments (a rate of 0.45%). The source of these errors can originate both with the manager and the ESC. The improvement in the payroll accuracy can be seen in the decrease of manual BACS payments made compared to last year. There has been a decrease of 32.75% or 431 payments.
- 8.13 The ESC is now monitoring overpayments closely each month to ensure that debts are pursued immediately either by issuing an invoice or negotiating agreements for recovery via payroll. Work is ongoing with partners to try and reduce some of the common errors/issues which create overpayments. The number of overpayments across both partners had reduced significantly, since October 2023 from 19 at a cost of £36,172 to 3, costing £1,642.
- 8.14 In 2023/24, HR Admin colleagues produced, 3,807 contracts and letters for LCC and 3,023 for NCC. Work is ongoing to ensure that this team has visibility of all transactions that are completed through Manager Self Service (MSS), with error rates monitored. Work has been done with each partner organisation to identify the correct way for these transactions to come into the ESC to help give clarity to managers and the supporting HR teams.
- 8.15 The total number of DBS checks completed in 2023/24 was 16,093, which is 1,611 (9%) lower than last year (largely due to a decrease in NCC usage). The ESC has recently onboarded Blaby District Council as a new customer. The ESC is also working closely with DBS authority to ensure that checks are achieving a high level of compliance.
- 8.16 The new recruitment system - Oracle Recruiting Cloud (ORC) went live in April 2023. During the transition from the old to the new system, support mechanisms were put in place, including a live chat facility to ensure that managers could access help as they needed it.
- 8.17 However, it was not until Q3 that the ESC saw the new ORC processes established, as demonstrated by a decrease in the number of requisition templates rejected for missing information and a considerable decrease in the number of managers contacting the service desk for advice. For example, the number of queries regarding ORC in Q2 was 382, decreasing to 45 contacts in Q3. There was also significant improvement in the service that the recruitment team delivered, achieving the agreed SLA of 24-hour turnaround on adverts and offers by the end of Q3.
- 8.18 On average, the recruitment team processed 417 adverts in Q3 and 2142 adverts during 2023/24, a decrease of 14% on the previous year due to increased control on

recruitment in both Councils. The number of new appointments processed was 2311, a decrease of 36% from last year.

8.19 A key priority for the service this year has been improved engagement with HR colleagues in the partner Councils. In September 2023, new monthly separate LCC/NCC account meetings were started, discussing any operational issues, overpayments, and future development plans of each partner. These have been well received and the feedback from the partners on the 'new' ESC has been excellent:

LCC - 'I want to say thank you to all the ESC team for all their hard work. We have noticed the impact that being able to deliver the service solely to partners has had. By having the time to really get underneath some longstanding issues and time to regularly communicate, we've been able to resolve so many things as well as rebuild a closer working relationship. There is still work to be done but I think we are all learning from each other, we won't always get it right first time, that applies to us in People Services as well as the ESC but the willingness to learn and improve our processes is making a difference.'

NCC - 'Since the ESC reorganisation in September there has been a demonstrable improvement in services from across the whole of the ESC. Tickets are responded to promptly. Payroll is managed, including picking up errors and issues frequently before they even impact on colleagues. Support for managers undergoing recruitment activity is responsive and clear, they certainly appreciate having a named contact. Everyone in the ESC should be so proud of their hard work and effort in providing quality services to the partners, NCC certainly appreciates it- Thank you to everyone.'

8.20 The Developments Team in the ESC continue to focus on rectifying the legacy issues from the implementation of the payroll system and missing standard functionality. The key project during 2023/24 has been the preparation and work to 'back out' the customised absence scheme that the partnership had to put in place during the implementation of Oracle in 2020-22.

8.21 The project is due to complete in June 2024 and will swap the customised functionality for the latest version from Oracle. It is a significant project as it covers all aspects of absence, e.g., maternity, sickness, jury service and will alter the basis upon which many payroll calculations are made.

8.22 Alongside the absence project, the ESC development team are also updating some of the LGPS functionality, again to back out customisations that were previously required as Oracle did not have the necessary capability. Once the absence and LGPS projects are complete, the team will turn their attention to implementing the seeded Teachers' Pensions Scheme and a new statutory return.

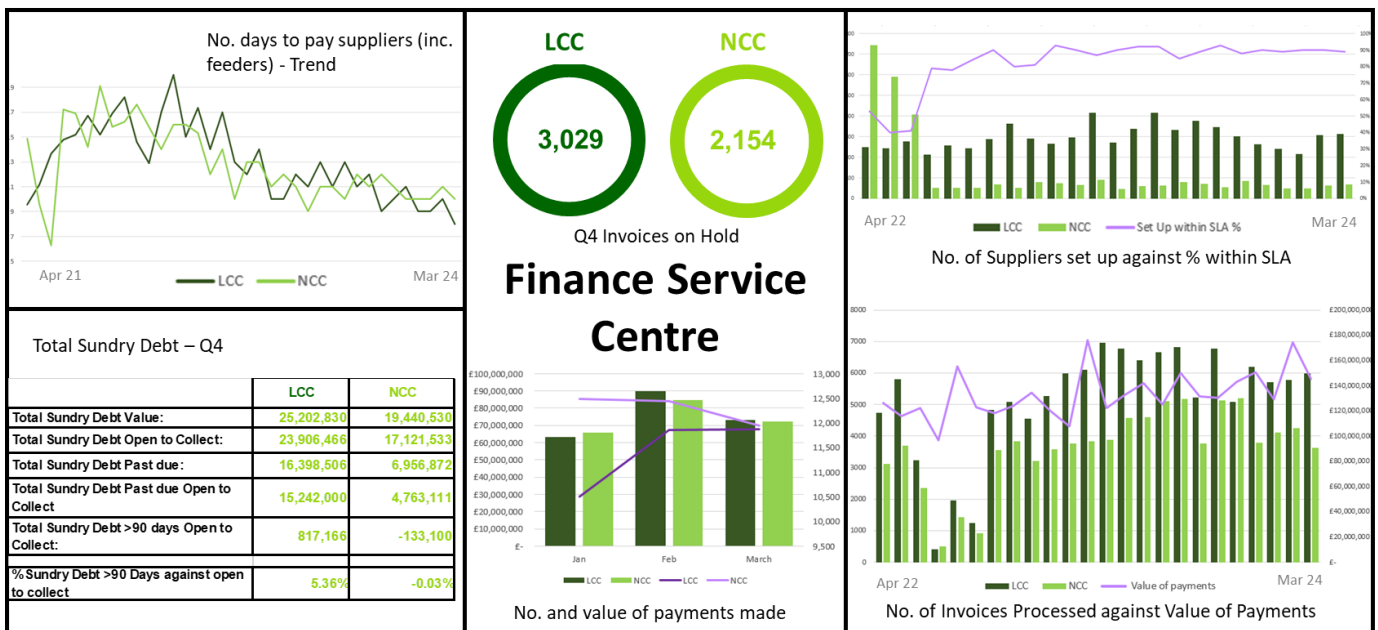
8.23 In addition, during 2023/24, the Development Team delivered the following:

- NCC Grade Restructure
- Compiled and implemented the ESC Developments Team Workplan, which is a vital part of the overarching ESC Transformation Plan

- Maintained School Pay Award and supported the process of off-boarding the schools / academy business
- Implemented the Pay Award for LCC and NCC
- Launched the Level 5 apprenticeship course alongside the Level 3 programme continuing to go from strength-to-strength

8.24 The focus for 2024/25 is the recruitment to the vacant ESC Manager role, which the Head of EMSS has been covering since September. They will be responsible for delivering phases 3 and 4 of the Transformation Plan.

## 9 Service Performance - Finance Service Centre (FSC)



9.1 The FSC has continued to perform well with sustained improvement for supplier set-ups, completing 1,019 new supplier accounts in Q4 with a downward trajectory for the time taken to pay suppliers. In Q4 the FSC also made over 71,000 supplier payments totalling £449 million. Invoices on hold remain stable at 3,029 for LCC and 2,154 for NCC. It should be noted that these volumes include invoices that require coding or approval by the service area. The average days to pay trade suppliers stands at 18.6 days for LCC and 18.5 days for NCC (excluding feeders). AP year on year volumes and values are stable.

9.2 The FSC has also supported the rollout of LCC's No PO No Pay (NPNP) policy by overseeing a new configuration that allows suppliers exempt from a PO to be processed, and items requiring a PO to be rejected if a PO number is not provided on the invoice. There is an expectation that NCC will roll their NPNP policy out soon when the same support will be extended. The early data for the NPNP process for LCC looks to be a success. Multiple and repeated communications were issued to suppliers and internal staff to make sure they were aware of the change, which has helped reduce issues and complaints and improved compliance. The FSC was heavily involved in creating and circulating these communications.

- 9.3 The FSC supported Leicestershire with the Oxygen Supplier Early Settlement project, ensuring that the relevant system configuration changes were made in Oracle and Kefron and these were fully testing and signed off.
- 9.4 Phase 2 of the Kefron Supplier invoice validation is now live, this sees further improvement to the scanning and processing of supplier invoices via an application programme interface (API) feed. Invoices are captured and fed into Oracle via a live data feed rather than a daily file upload, creating real-time processing. This has worked particularly well in line with LCC's Oxygen Finance early settlement project, as supplier invoices are in the system for processing within 15 minutes of being submitted (providing the invoice is valid).
- 9.5 The collections project has seen all sundry debt collection activities transferred to the new in-house collections team in the FSC. This project started in January 2023 with public sector debt, followed by the business and commercial sector in July 2023 and the individual and consumer sector in April 2024. The project covers approximately £38 million of debt across both LCC & NCC. Some of the key benefits are detailed below:
- The in-house Collectors have full ownership of their ledgers and actively work on all accounts within their portfolio. Thornton Hope, the external provider, only covered the top 80%.
  - In-house Collectors are proactively chasing payment dates on upcoming due invoices. Not waiting for debt to age before customer contact is made. The impact of this is shown in the tables below.
  - Collectors are developing good relationships with customers and partner service areas (PSA)
  - Proactively contacting the PSA regarding disputed invoices to ensure a speedy resolution is reached where possible.
  - Collectors are also supporting the AR team by looking at unapplied receipts and suspense accounts to ensure these are allocated to the correct accounts keeping the value of unallocated amounts as low as possible.
  - Collectors ascertain if refunds are due and prepare the necessary work which is then completed by AR colleagues.
  - The Collections Strategy has been rewritten to reflect the more inclusive service offered by the FSC, this includes keeping the debt for longer before referring it back to the council for a decision, ensuring that activity is exhausted before it is handed back.
  - While invoice disputes are not within the FSC's remit for resolution, full visibility and regular lists of items that require resolution or escalation are provided via monthly email bursts which are sent to partner service teams. This is to encourage these disputes to be resolved as soon as possible.
  - Similarly, monthly email bursts are sent to service areas for all no longer referred debt. This is where debt falls out of EMSS scope and requires a decision as to how the partners wish to proceed. Now all debt is managed in-house this has been renamed 'collection strategy exhausted' which is a clearer

description of the issue and prompts service areas to provide the advice needed by EMSS.

- In-depth KPI reports provide a full overview of performance and focus. Regular meetings are held with partners to discuss the performance and any areas of concern that require escalation to Heads of Service.

9.6 Following the completion of the In-House Debt project, the reduction in past due open-to-collect debt from April 23 to March 24 can be seen in the tables below showing over a £5.5 million reduction in past due debt over the last 12 months.

| <b>LCC Open to collect - past due debt</b> |               |                  |               |                  |                     |
|--|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Sector</b>                              | <b>Apr-23</b> |                  | <b>Mar-24</b> |                  | <b>Movement</b>     |
| Business                                   | £             | 2,010,087        | £             | 1,603,922        | -£ 406,165          |
| Education                                  | £             | 1,815,766        | £             | 640,085          | -£ 1,175,681        |
| NHS  | £             | 12,095           | -£            | 18,655           | -£ 30,750           |
| Pub Sect                                   | £             | 1,294,274        | £             | 175,193          | -£ 1,119,081        |
| Individuals                                | £             | 229,011          | £             | 941,455          | £ 712,444           |
| <b>Totals</b>                              | £             | <b>5,361,233</b> | £             | <b>3,342,000</b> | <b>-£ 2,019,233</b> |

| <b>NCC Open to collect - past due debt</b> |               |                  |               |                  |                     |
|--|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Sector</b>                              | <b>Apr-23</b> |                  | <b>Mar-24</b> |                  | <b>Movement</b>     |
| Business                                   | £             | 1,211,207        | £             | 890,790          | -£ 320,417          |
| Education                                  | £             | 1,678,440        | £             | 402,046          | -£ 1,276,394        |
| NHS  | £             | 1,664,477        | -£            | 426,280          | -£ 2,090,757        |
| Pub Sect                                   | £             | 497,997          | £             | 673,227          | £ 175,230           |
| Individuals                                | £             | 59,264           | £             | 123,328          | £ 64,064            |
| Other                                      | £             | 40,630           | £             | -                | -£ 40,630           |
| <b>Totals</b>                              | £             | <b>5,111,385</b> | £             | <b>1,663,111</b> | <b>-£ 3,488,904</b> |

## 10 Procurement Update

10.1 There has been significant procurement activity led by EMSS both on its own behalf and leading for partners. Below is a summary of the key achievements:

- Oracle/Softcat contract renewal for 5 years – delivering a reduction in forecast costs and new functionality.
- Managed Service provider – Mastek for 3 years. Delivering a reduction in forecast costs.
- Freshworks contract renewal for 2 years. Maintaining the competitive discount from the initial contract.
- Kefron contract agreed – delivering improved functionality and value.





















10.2 Looking forward there will be a procurement exercise to identify a replacement bank account verification system as well as an exercise to review the market for a suitable BACS system. Currently there are only four providers who have the required functionality that are approved by BACS, so advice has been sought from Procurement colleagues on how best to process.













## 11 EMSS Service / Business Plan Priorities 2024/25











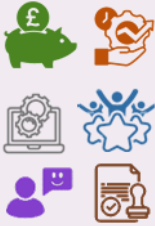

11.1 The following table details the priorities for EMSS in 2024/25.

### Benefits Key

|                           |   |               |   |                     |   |
|---------------------------|---|---------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Stat / Policy Requirement |  | Cost Savings  |  | Process Improvement |  |
| Customer Experience       |  | Staff Welfare |  | Automation          |  |

| Project / Priority   | Target End Date   | Benefits   | Description  | Status  | June 24 Update   |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Organisational - Performance Reporting</b>                | Sept 24<br>Work will be ongoing to deliver further improvements | <br><br>  | Improve reporting capability and measures. Automate and improve use.                         |    | Following a demonstration of FAW, work is underway to use the new systems to produce reports and data.   |
| <b>Technology - Oracle EBS archive</b>                       | March 25  | <br>   | To transfer the data in EBS to an archive state  |  | Work is underway to assess the post March 25 options   |
| <b>Technology - Oracle Analytics implementation</b>          | June 24   | <br><br>  | New functionality negotiated during the contract renewal. Finance available 2023 and HR 2024 |  | The Finance system is fully implemented and final tests on line-manager security are being undertaken by partners on the HR system                     |
| <b>Technology – Oracle Guided Learning</b>                   | July 24   | <br><br><br> | A new system that will greatly improve the user experience of using Oracle                   |  | Both partners have agreed to retain OGL, so work is now underway to renew the contract and complete the implementation                                 |
| <b>Technology - Oracle Cloud Infrastructure Health check</b> | July 24   |   | A health check highlighted a number of significant inadequacies with the set-up.             |  | Work is underway with Oracle to investigate some anomalous account issues which would flag on the new health check before formally starting the review |

| Project / Priority  | Target End Date | Benefits  | Description   | Status  | June 24 Update   |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| Technology – Oracle Redwood Implementation                  | Feb 25          |    | Oracle have developed a new interface /front end for their system which is being rolled out module by module  |    | Planning continues however the 24b quarterly patch has slowed the input from Mastek  |
| Review of the Oracle Support Service                        | Sept 24         |    | A review of the service to ensure it is meeting customer needs  |    | Work began with a workshop for the staff to capture all the services currently delivered. A survey for partners will follow  |
| Procurement of customer support system                      | Feb 25          |    | The Freshdesk contract will end in Feb 25, so a new procurement exercise has been started   |    | Work has begun on understanding requirements and looking at how the market has moved.  |
| FSC – Best Value Review                                     | Mar 24          |  | A full review of FSC services, performance and efficiency. To enable partners to assess the value for money delivered and opportunities for improvements            |  | The review has been shared with the Sponsors / partner colleagues for internal scrutiny and comment. Work to incorporate their comments and complete the review is underway. |
| FSC – Duplicate payment identification system replacement   | Dec 24          |  | The current system requires upgrading   |  | Currently investigating whether to purchase a system or development in-house.  |
| FSC – Oracle Post Implementation Value Investigation (PIVI) | Oct 24          |  | A service from Oracle to review the system and processes post go-live to ensure best use is being made. Will also report on functionality not being fully exploited |  | Oracle have produced a summary of the main AR issues to assist an in-depth root cause analysis   |

| Project / Priority                           | Target End Date | Benefits  | Description   | Status  | June 24 Update   |
|--|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| FSC - Dialler system and SMS software        | Nov 24          |    | A new system to automate the contacting of customers about their debts either by text or by phoning |    | Investigations have begun around the current telephony systems and their capabilities before looking to a new system                           |
| FSC – LCC ASC Debt                           | Jan 25          |    | To move the service to the FSC improving processes and recovery rates                               |    | This project is in its initial stages, working exclusively within the existing dept before any planned transfer                                |
| FSC - Supplier Portal roll out               | Ongoing         |    | A self-service module for suppliers to manage invoices and payments                                 |    | Work continues to move suppliers onto the portal. Have agreed a final round of invitations before use becomes mandatory                        |
| FSC - AR Customer Portal Bill Management     | Sept 24         |  | Self-serve portal to get copy invoices and view account   |  | Work has restarted on this project and defects appear to have been rectified. Working with IG to ensure safe dispatch of invoices              |
| Paperless Direct Debits                      | Sept 24         |  | Project to move customers to paperless direct debits to reduce printing, postage and resource       |  | Developing a business case to move customers to online direct debits   |
| ESC - HCM and Payroll Transformation. Year 2 | Mar 25          |  | Review, define, and re-establish the operating model for the Employee Service Centre (ESC).         |  | Work is progressing including utilising the partner meetings to agree Oracle Change Requests. Transformation Plan will be updated for 2024/25. |








| Project / Priority   | Target End Date | Benefits  | Description  | Status  | June 24 Update  |
|--|-----------------|---|--|---|---|
| ESC – Implementation of ‘seeded’ absence, LGPS fixes and seeded Teachers’ Pension Scheme | Sept 24         |    | Required to move from custom to seeded absence scheme within payroll system by August 24.  |    | Implementation of seeded absence due to complete in June 24. Decision pending on whether to continue with current plan re Teachers’ pension Scheme and MCR. |
| ESC – resolve ‘reducing balances’ element issues   | Nov 24          |   | Issues still outstanding from ‘go-live’ on certain payroll elements, i.e those where the balance reduces each month over a set period of time. |    | Work due to commence on the remaining elements which don’t reduce properly after the completion of the work above in June 24                                |
| ESC – Office move  | Sept / Oct 24   |   | Plans have been agreed to move the ESC and BD staff into the main Pen Lloyd building   |  | An outline office plan has been agreed and work will begin on detailed lay outs. Staff have been made away that the move will happen this year.             |

Table 2

11.2 Work is outstanding to discuss and update the vision for the shared service in the short to medium term, to ensure its plans are aligned with the strategic priorities of each of the partner councils. It is requested that the Sponsors provide the direction required by September 2024, to ensure any requirements are included in the budget setting process, updated Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategic Plan for the next four years.

**12 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**

12.1 In compiling this report discussions have taken place with the Head of EMSS - Lucy Littlefair, EMSS Sponsors - Shabana Kausar and Simone Hines, and Susan Baum Finance Business Partner for EMSS.

**13 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)**

13.1 None

13.2 There are no Crime and Disorder Act implications considered to arise directly from this report.

14 **Social value considerations**

14.1 None

15 **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

15.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

An EIA is not required because the report does not involve changes to staffing or services.

16 **List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)**

16.1 None

17 **Published documents referred to in this report**

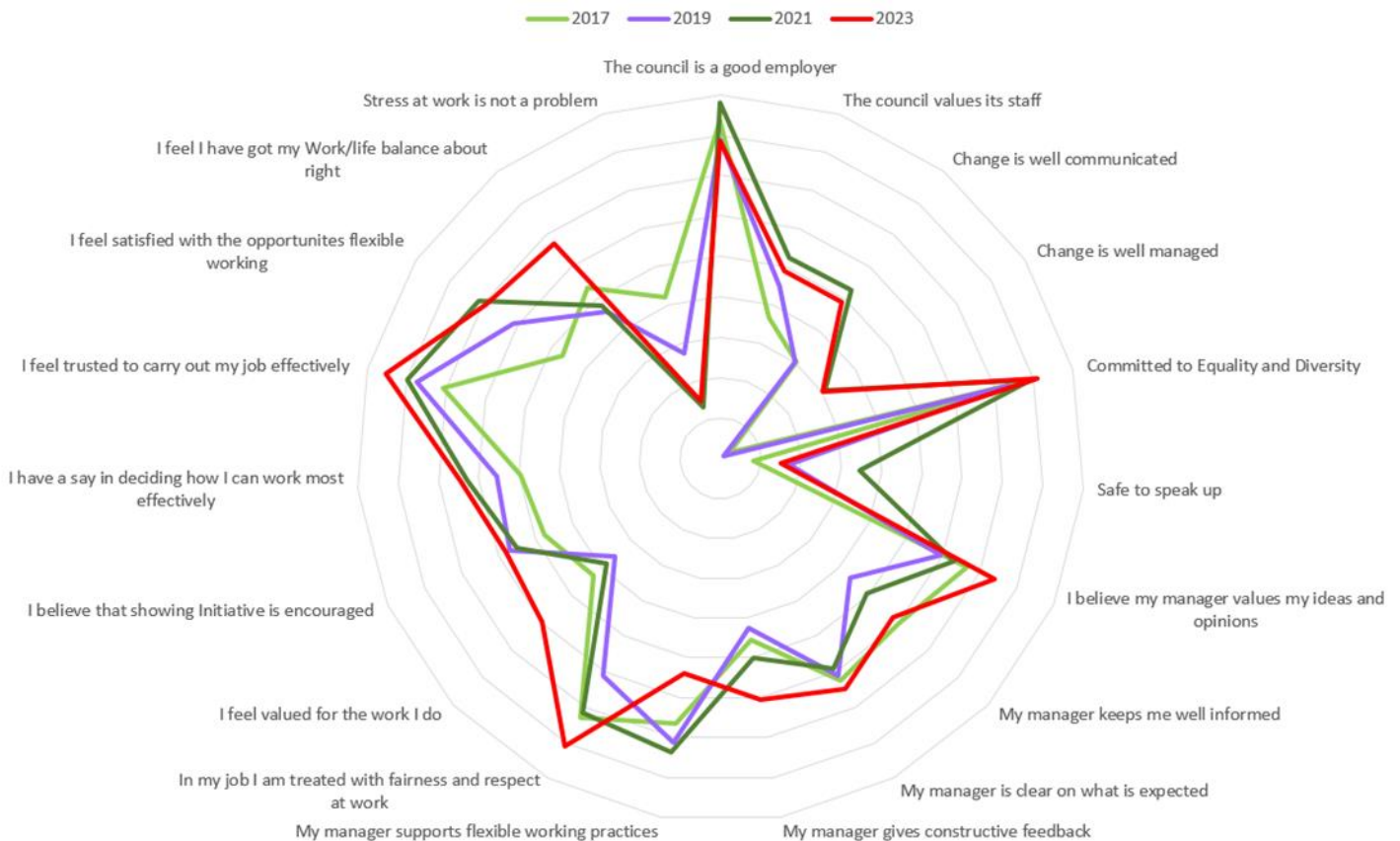
17.1 None

## Appendix A

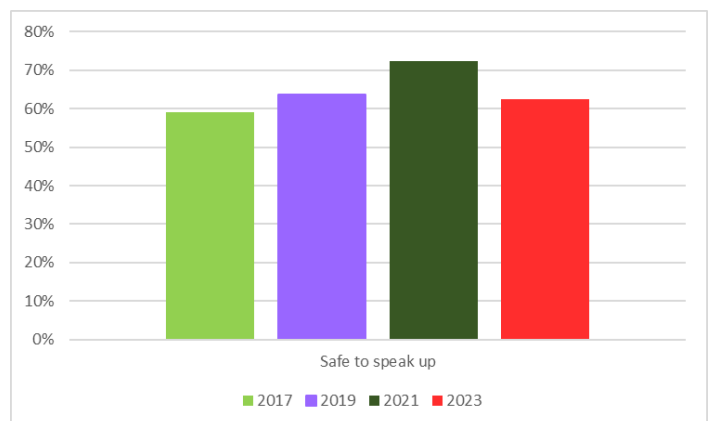
# Staff Survey Action Plan

## Background

LCC reran its Staff Survey in 2023. Due to the difficult business decisions taken in the ESC and the effect on staff, there was an assumption that overall satisfaction results would decline. However, as the chart below demonstrates, most staff responded positively.



However there were two exceptions. Staff felt that their managers did not support flexible working and they did not feel as safe to speak up. This plan looks at the latter question and seeks to understand why staff feel as they do and what actions will be taken to improve their confidence. The graph to the right shows the change over time in feeling safe to speak up.



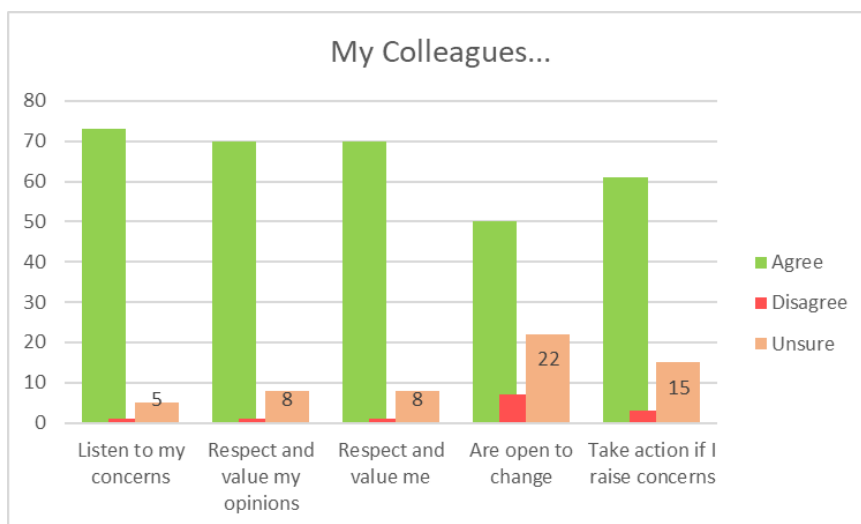
## New survey and results

A new survey was undertaken to understand in what circumstances staff do not feel safe, this included who they were talking to and on which subjects. Staff were asked to say to what extent they agreed about a number of statements as they related to their colleagues, line manager and senior managers, these were:

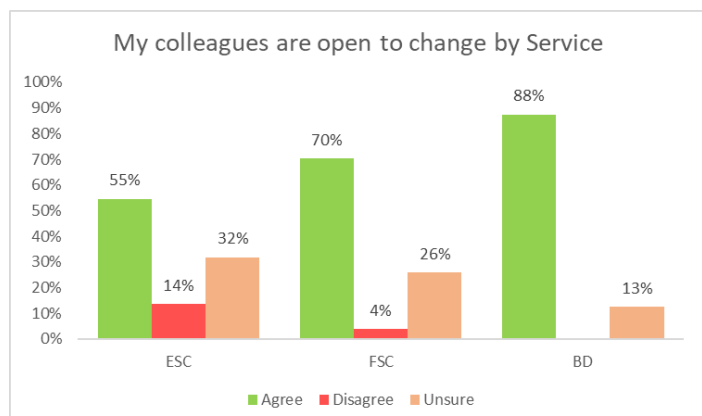
My colleagues / line manager / senior managers:

- Listen to my concerns
- Respect and value my opinions
- Respect and value me
- Are open to change
- Take action if I raise concerns
- Is confidential with concerns (only for manager questions)

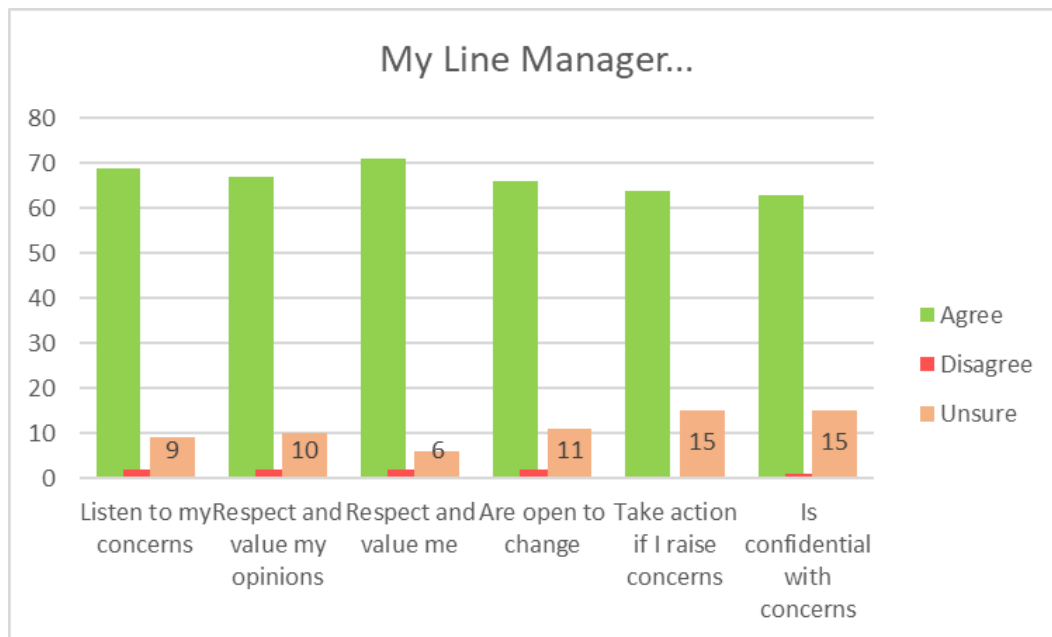
The graph below shows the response to questions about colleagues. As can be seen generally speaking the vast majority of staff feel valued and supported by colleagues and are able to speak freely.



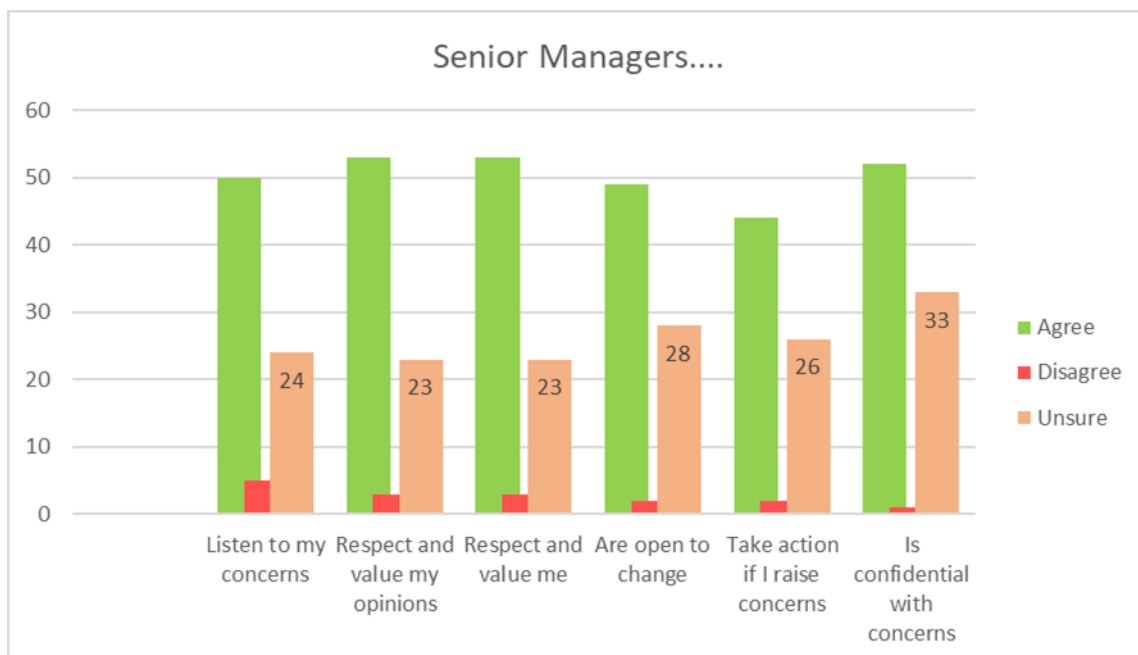
The only slight negative point is the proportion of staff who feel their colleagues are not open to change. Breaking these figures down the graph below shows that these concerns are primarily within the ESC, possibly as a result of the large-scale changes that service has seen over the last year.



Looking at the responses for line managers, again these are positive with little cause for concern.

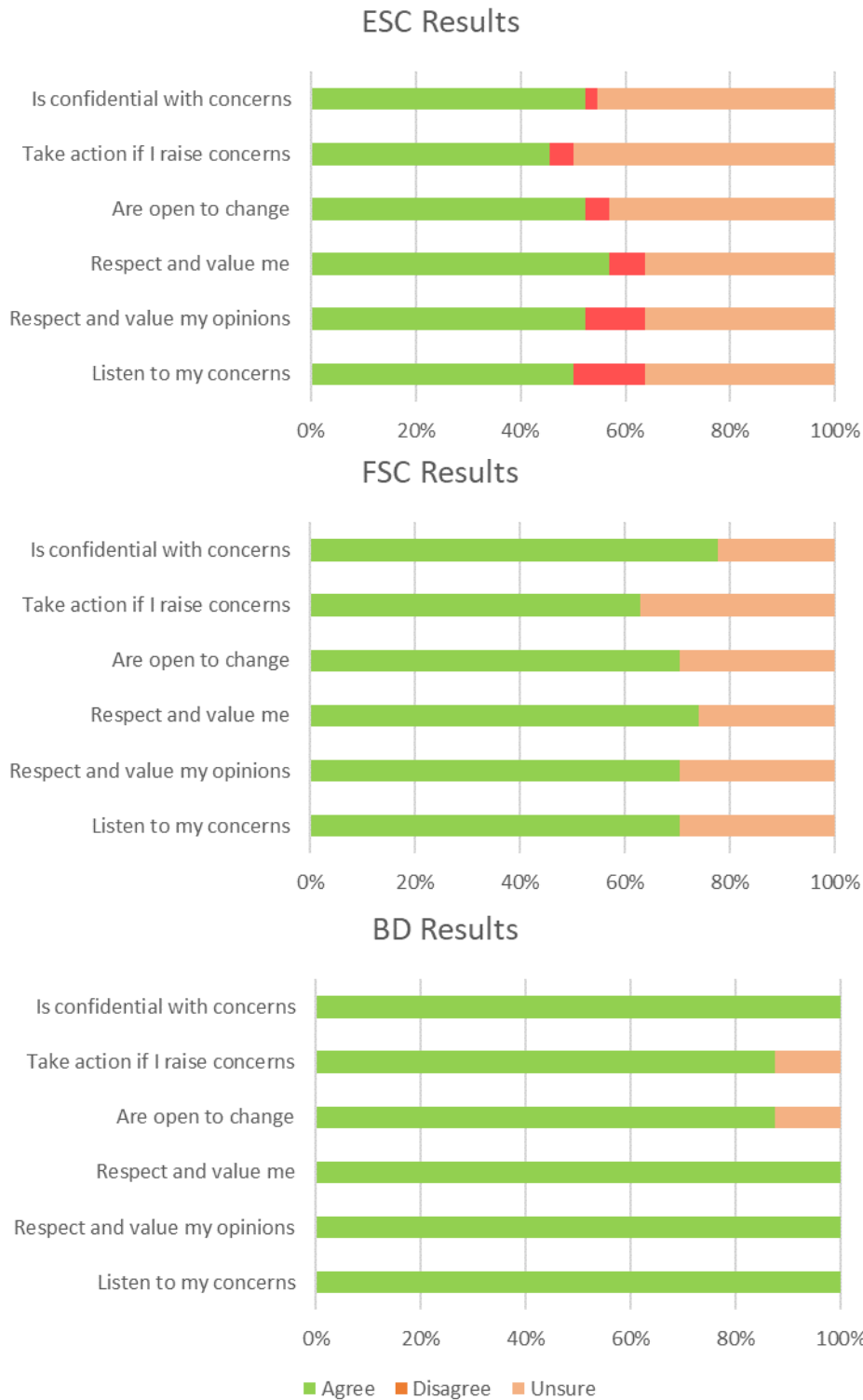


However the results for senior managers are less positive. Only 63% of staff were sure that senior managers listened to them (compared with 87% for line managers). 42% of staff weren't confident that senior managers shared their concerns in a way that protected their confidentiality (again compared to 19% for line managers). Many staff are unsure that senior managers respect them or their opinions and in fact 4% of staff actively believe they do not. The graph below shows the results.





In order to breakdown the senior manager scores they have been broken down by service in the graphs below.



Again colleagues from the ESC are much less likely to feel positively about their senior managers. However as can be seen there are also issues with confidence

within FSC colleagues as well. Subject to further investigation the cause of the lack of confidence in senior managers in the ESC and FSC is thought to be:

- As a result of more limited time in the office and therefore reduced time spent with senior managers, especially for FSC colleagues.
- The continued impact of the major restructuring of the ESC during 2023. Since then significant effort has been put into working with staff to ensure that they have the tools and support necessary to feel confident in their new teams and roles. It is planned to rerun this survey for ESC colleagues before the summer break to see if this activity has improved confidence.
- News and communications not being perceived as not coming from managers but from the EMSS Comms Lead.

## **Action Plan**

### **Action 1 Improve familiarity with Senior Managers**

Ensure that staff do interact with more senior colleagues when in the office. This will mean ensuring that managers attend the office on specific team days. Managers can make themselves available to answer questions but more importantly to make sure they are familiar with all staff, especially those who have joined since March 2020.

### **Action 2 Increase the number of Listening Sessions**

These sessions are run by the Head of EMSS and senior managers and allow a small group of staff to talk about whatever they wish. They ensure that the agenda is set by staff and not by managers and provide useful feedback and ideas for improvement. Currently we try to run a session each month but these will be increased to ensure that every member of staff has an opportunity to attend a meeting each year.

### **Action 3 Have a named sponsor for new initiatives**

Usually new ideas and initiatives are announced in the EMSS staff newsletter. This goes out every month and is a useful tool for sharing important information. Where we would like more response from staff these items will be presented by a named senior manager and feedback sent specifically to them. This should again build familiarity with managers as well as increasing debate and sharing ideas.

### **Action 4 Rerun survey**

As stated above there has been a major assumption that the general less-favourable results in the ESC are a consequence of the major restructuring to that team. Since then a lot of work has been put into supporting all ESC colleagues and ensuring they have the tools they need for their jobs. The survey will be rerun in the summer to ensure that this support is improving the working lives of staff.