

Agenda Item

Subject	Staff Engagement Survey 2023	Status	For Publication
Report to	Authority	Date	7 December 2023
Report of	Assistant Director - Resources		
Equality Impact Assessment	Not Required	Attached	n/a
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1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the results of the 2023 Staff Engagement Survey for Members' information and consideration.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to:
- a. **Note and comment on the results of the staff survey and the actions outlined in relation to the areas for further improvement.**

3 Link to Corporate Objectives

- 3.1 This report links to the delivery of the following corporate objectives:

Valuing and Engaging Our Employees

to ensure that all our employees are able to develop a career with SYPA and are actively engaged in improving our services.

Listening to Our Stakeholders

to ensure that stakeholders' views are heard within our decision making processes.

Effective and Transparent Governance

to uphold effective governance showing prudence and propriety at all times.

- 3.2 Our staff are an important stakeholder group and are crucial to our success as an organisation. By considering the results of the survey at this time, in advance of the update to the corporate strategy due in February 2024, members can ensure that appropriate actions are being taken in response to the results.
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4 Implications for the Strategic Risk Register

4.1 The actions outlined in this report seek to address the 'People' risks in the strategic risk register.

5 Background and Options

5.1 The Authority aims to undertake staff engagement surveys on a regular basis in order to assess progress and direction of travel. The last such survey was undertaken in November - December 2020 and the intention was to carry out a further survey in late 2022 / early 2023. However, due to the knock-on effects on management capacity from the role of Assistant Director – Pensions becoming vacant at around that time, this was deferred by several months. The 2023 Staff Survey was therefore carried out during September 2023 with the results reported to SMT, HR and the Trades Union representative in October.

5.2 The previous survey in 2020 was undertaken with an external consultant – Reed – who designed the survey in such a way as to make it repeatable in future years to enable direct comparison of results and assess improvements or any decline in particular aspects of engagement. For the 2023 survey, we again commissioned Reed to administer the survey on this basis and collate and analyse the results.

5.3 A summary of the survey results is attached at Appendix A.

5.4 The survey response rate was high at 83% - just slightly above the 82% response rate achieved in 2020.

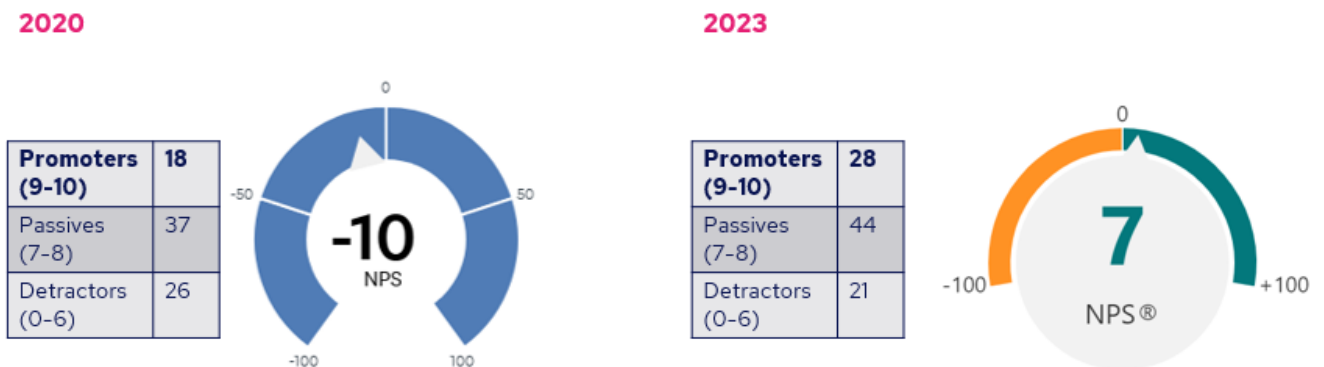
5.5 The survey provides a measure of employee satisfaction by asking a single question which leads to what is called the 'Net Promoter Score'. The question asks employees: *On a scale of 0 – 10, how likely are you to recommend working here to a friend or colleague?*

The responses are then grouped as follows:

- Employees giving scores of 9 – 10 are categorised as Promoters.
- Employees giving scores of 7 – 8 are categorised as Passives.
- Employees giving scores of 0 – 6 are categorised as Detractors.

An overall score is then calculated as the percentage of employees who are Promoters minus the percentage of employees who are Detractors.

5.6 The results for 2023 show a marked improvement in our Net Promoter Score since 2020 as shown below:

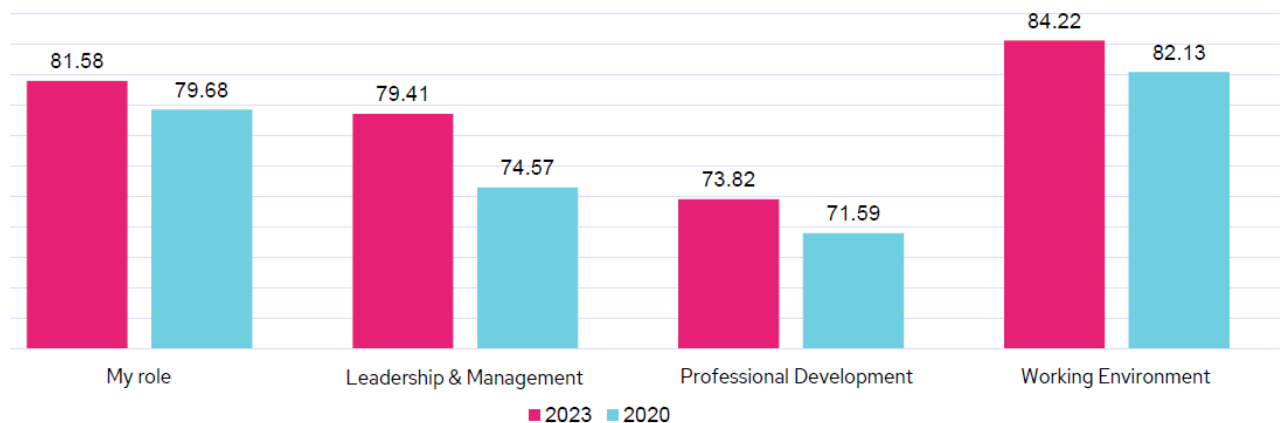


5.7 The net promoter score has increased by a total of 17; from a score of minus 10 in 2020, reflecting that more employees were detractors than promoters, to a score of plus 7 this time – with more employees now promoters than detractors.

- 5.8 This a pleasing result, demonstrating that actions taken since the last survey in 2020 have helped to improve the overall level of employee satisfaction.
- 5.9 The results of the rest of the survey also reflect marked improvements in all four measures of engagement assessed when compared to 2020.
- 5.10 The measures of engagement are:

Engagement Measure	Includes questions about:
My Role	Having access to resources and information needed to do the job well, being trusted to make decisions, and employees knowing what is expected of them in their role.
Leadership and Management	Receiving regular feedback on performance, that the employee feels their opinions count, being aware of the organisation's values and goals and the employee's role in achieving these.
Professional Development	Availability of training, support from manager in improving skills, feeling stimulated by the role and understanding the next steps for the employee's career here.
Working Environment	Being treated fairly by manager, working within a collaborative and supportive team, having a good work-life balance and availability of good wellbeing initiatives. An additional question was also included in 2023 for the first time to focus on diversity and inclusion by asking the extent to which employees feel comfortable expressing their authentic selves at work.

- 5.11 The results across the four measures in 2023 when compared to the results in 2020 are shown below, illustrating the improved scores in all measures in 2023:



Each section scored 0-100

- 5.12 The Working Environment remains the highest of the four measures overall, as it was in 2020, with My Role remaining the second highest scoring measure.
- 5.13 The most significant improvement since 2020 is in the measure of Leadership and Management which has increased by 4.8 points to 79.4. This indicates that the actions taken since 2020 in this area have been effective. This includes increased focus on supporting and developing the skills of our people managers and ensuring they hold regular one-to-ones as well as annual appraisals to provide feedback on performance.

Actions taken in this area over recent years also include an emphasis on engaging with the workforce more actively and improving communication around corporate goals and the organisational values and behaviours – for example, with the introduction of staff away days and a bi-annual ‘SMT Question Time’ event where all employees can ask questions of SMT directly on any topic.

5.14 Other positive highlights:

- a. Being treated fairly by my manager is the highest scoring question as it was in 2020.
- b. Regularly receiving feedback is the most improved question, up 10% on 2020.
- c. Significant improvement on 2020 in wellbeing, supportive team, and feeling that opinions count.
- d. There is excellent engagement at entry level grades (A-C), whose responses showed they feel trusted to make decisions and are treated fairly by managers.
- e. In relation to tenure, the highest level of engagement was among those who’ve been with the Authority for just 1 to 2 years – providing an opportunity to develop this group into future leaders.

5.15 The specific areas that did not score as highly as others and where some of the qualitative comments reflected a level of dissatisfaction are as follows. (Note that the individual question scores referred to below are out of a maximum score of 5).

5.16 Having Access to Resources and Information – this question scored 3.9 in 2023 which is 2% lower than in 2020. The comments made show that the main issue here seems to be in relation to a lack of clarity, user-friendliness and consistency in the availability of guides and information resources for pensions administration processing work. This is an issue that has already been identified and should be addressed by changes being planned in the re-organisation of teams in the Pensions Administration department, by having a team focussed on technical training and support.

5.17 Within the measure for Professional Development, the question ‘I feel stimulated by my role’ scored 3.48, a fall of 1% from 2020; and the question ‘I clearly understand the next steps in my career here’ scored 3.33, which has increased by 3% since 2020 but remains the lowest scoring question overall. Again, this is not unexpected as we have previously identified a need for greater attention to these areas, particularly in relation to career pathways. As above, this is another area where plans are already in place that should help to address the concerns here. These include:

- a. Greater resource for supporting learning and development activity and opportunities across the organisation with the establishment and appointment of a new Business Support Officer for L&D, in post since October;
- b. Two planned programmes to be held in the first half of 2024 – a group coaching programme for female staff to support confidence building and career progression, and a management skills development programme for new and aspiring managers. This latter programme will target senior practitioner level role holders which should help to address the finding from the survey that this group was particularly low scoring on professional development;
- c. Work to be undertaken on reviewing and revising career grade development schemes across the organisation with the aim of improving and enhancing these to ensure a clear progression plan that is based on a set of central principles consistent across departments and teams, with tailored and bespoke arrangements for progression and assessment appropriate to each of the various career-graded roles specific to each service area.
- d. The planned changes in the Pensions Administration department, as approved by the Staffing Committee meeting on 31 October, will introduce a small number of opportunities to apply for new management level roles.

- 5.18 The new question added for 2023 within the Working Environment section of ‘I feel comfortable expressing my authentic self at work’ scored 3.82, making it the lowest scoring question in this section although this is still a fairly good score in absolute terms. It is possible this may have been interpreted in different ways by different individuals given it was a new question for this year. However, the theme of equality, diversity and inclusion is an area that we have identified as requiring further attention in the forthcoming year and plans will be developed to achieve improvement in this area, and develop an updated and fully revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy forming part of the corporate strategy framework refresh due in 2025.

Conclusion

- 5.19 The survey results show a very clear improvement across all four measures of engagement compared to 2020, demonstrating that significant progress has been made and that the actions taken since then have been effective.
- 5.20 Employees have provided some useful feedback through the survey around the areas requiring further improvement – and as detailed above, these are known issues with plans already in place aiming to address these. The qualitative results (i.e., the detailed comments provided by respondents) will help to inform how these plans are taken forward.
- 5.21 The Authority now has an opportunity to use the learning from the survey outcomes to maintain and build on the progress made since 2020 with the aim of ensuring a further increase on the high bar that has now been set the next time we run the survey in two years’ time.

6 Implications

- 6.1 The proposals outlined in this report have the following implications:

Financial	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The budget included the funds required for carrying out the survey. The funding for the actions outlined in the report as aiming to address some of the findings are or will be resourced appropriately from the relevant budget or corporate reserves and separately approved.
Human Resources	As outlined in the body of the report in terms of actions planned to address areas for further improvement to support the aims of achieving a continuing increase in the level of employee satisfaction and engagement between now and the next survey to be undertaken in two years’ time.
ICT	None
Legal	None
Procurement	None

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
None	-