

West Midlands Employers Annual Report

for 2024-25

A Message from the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Within the West Midlands, each Council has a distinct identity, reflecting the unique needs of the communities they serve. We understand and value these differences, knowing they are bound together by a shared commitment to strengthen local government across the region. This interconnected strength is at the heart of our work, and the achievements captured in this Annual Report are a testament to that collective effort.

Over the past year, we've made significant strides. Our WMJobs Fair drew over 2,000 visitors, creating tangible pathways into public service. The "Exploring Careers in Local Councils" resource pack is inspiring the next generation of talent, while our innovative "From Fear to Fearless" AI programme has equipped colleagues from 15 councils to turn uncertainty into opportunity.

These are not just programmes – they reflect a fundamental shift in how we address shared challenges. The Children's Services Memorandum of Understanding, which achieved a 71% reduction in agency use, means greater stability for vulnerable families. The £11 million in projected savings through WMTemps is being redirected to frontline services, and over 1,100 hours of shared coaching has strengthened leadership capacity across the region.

This year also marks a significant milestone as we conclude our 2020 to 2025 Strategic Plan and launch our new strategy, "Progress Through Partnership." This forward-looking plan will guide us as we continue to support councils in delivering better outcomes for their communities. It builds on the strong foundations we have laid, reinforcing our role as a truly Regional Shareholder Organisation.

Beyond our regional borders, our work is recognised nationally. While we actively contribute to the network of nine Regional Employers, WME's leadership in addressing critical workforce challenges has set a benchmark for others to follow.

As you explore this report, I hope you feel not just pride in what we've accomplished together, but also a renewed sense of possibility for what lies ahead. The challenges we face are significant, but our collective strength has proven time and again that we can turn obstacles into opportunities.

Thank you for your trust, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to the West Midlands. Together, we are building a future where local government thrives and communities flourish.

Rebecca Davis Chief Executive, WME

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STRATEGIC PLAN

Progress Through Partnership

We are pleased to share our Strategic Plan for 2025–2030, setting out our vision and direction for the next five years. Developed in close collaboration with our Shareholder Councils and key partners, the plan outlines how we will continue to support public sector organisations across the region – helping to meet today's challenges while preparing for the future.

Our purpose is clear: to support councils and public sector employers to attract, develop, and retain a highly skilled, motivated workforce. Our vision is that every citizen in the West Midlands has access to modern, high-quality public services that work together to help them, and our region thrive.

At the heart of the plan are five strategic priorities:

1. Delivering Trusted Services

We will continue to provide highquality, independent services across the employee lifecycle, supporting organisations with their workforce and leadership needs.

2. Leading Collaboration

By connecting councils, partners, and national bodies, we will strengthen collaboration to deliver shared solutions and respond to regional opportunities.



3. Representing the Region

We will act as a strong voice for the West Midlands – promoting best practice, influencing policy, and supporting effective industrial relations.



4. Improving Career Desirability

We will champion local government as a great place to work, highlighting career opportunities and supporting inclusive recruitment and progression.



5. Inspiring Workforce Innovation

Through forward-thinking projects, we will lead and support innovation in workforce planning, technology, and service delivery.

The plan also reaffirms our commitment to social value, sustainability, and reinvestment. As a not-for-profit, member-owned organisation, we are proud to deliver services that make a difference – and to do so in a way that supports the region's wider ambitions.

We are excited about what lies ahead, and we are ready to build on the strong foundations already in place.

Read the full Strategic Plan here: wmemployers.org.uk/about-us/ our-strategic-plan





OUR JOURNEY: 5 Years of Strategic Impact (2020–2025)



Strategic Plan 2020-2025 To advocate, build and champion people centred organisations for a resilient and diverse public sector workforce that benefits everyone in the West Midlands

Building Resilience, Innovation, and Value for Shareholders

° 2020

Responding to Crisis Start of Covid-19 pandemic

- Created 2 Covid resource hubs
- > Weekly HR advisory webinars launched
- 6,800+ jobs advertised on WMJobs
- > 58,000+ applicants supported
- £100k Workforce Priority Fund launched



°<mark>2021</mark>

Adapting to Hybrid: Widespread shift to remote and hybrid working



- Launched hybrid working support workshops
- > WMTemps launched 7 councils onboarded
- Inclusion: 12 in Breaking Through, 11 in Allyship pilot
- > 7.3M sessions on WMJobs
- £900k consultancy revenue delivered

<u>ໍ 2022</u>

Reset and Rebuild: Recovery and restructuring across the sector

- National Data Hub launched (WME-funded)
- First LGA National OD Network managed
- 60+ members joined WME OD forum
- Coaching & mentoring expanded – 1,000+ hours delivered
- Continued investment in pay and grading support



MMEmployers

°<mark>2023</mark>

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Growth Through Collaboration: Skills shortages, recruitment challenges



- £4m+ turnover (5th year of growth)
- > 454 organisations supported
- > Strategic Resourcing Board established
- Tribepad ATS implemented in 14 councils – £805k savings
- > WMTemps saved councils £7m+

°**2024**

Strategic Evolution: Sector reform, budget pressures, planning for future

- > Building Strategic Plan 2025–2030
- Career & Apprenticeship Campaign launched
- First WMTribe network formed for shared learning
- WMTemps highly commended at PPMA Awards
- Focus on innovation, inclusion, and resilience



Value

Value Delivered to Shareholders



- > £7m+ in shared service savings
- Strategic data access & workforce planning tools
- Regional collaboration for big impact
- > National voice for West Midlands councils
- > Trusted partner through crisis and beyond

RESOURCING

Building Tomorrow's Local Government Workforce

Young people across the region often remain unaware of the wide variety of rewarding careers available in local government. Our research highlighted an opportunity to better connect talented students with the diverse roles councils offer.

We found that despite best efforts, there were knowledge gaps to address:

- Teachers lacked visibility of sector pathways.
- Council-school engagement varied regionally.
- Students recognised only the most visible council roles. This presents an opportunity to strengthen talent pipelines while helping young people discover fulfilling careers in their communities.

To address this challenge, we developed a comprehensive resource pack to raise awareness of local government careers among students. We created a solution that integrates with existing school programs while remaining flexible for various teaching needs. We leveraged external marketing expertise to ensure the materials would resonate with our target audience. The resources align with Gatsby Benchmarks 2, 4, and 5, making them valuable for careers education. They're designed for use by either school staff or council representatives conducting outreach.

"Exploring Careers in Local Councils: An Essential Guide"

Launched in March 2025, the comprehensive guide is available free of charge to our shareholder councils and education settings across the region. The flexible suite of teaching resources seeks to provide a foundation level of understanding, introducing young people to the diverse opportunities available in local government. The pack includes:

- Three comprehensive lessons with presentation slides, teacher notes, lesson plans and student handouts
- Interactive activities that bring local government careers to life.
- A regional competition challenging students to transform council job profiles into youth-focused content.
- Video resources featuring case studies from people in our region and career advice from Shoshanna Davies, The Fairy Job Mother.
- Clear guidance on finding, applying and undertaking interviews for roles in local government.



The materials were designed for Key Stage 3 students (ages 11–14) but can be adapted for other age groups.

The downloadable resource pack helps local councils bridge the gap between young people and careers in local government. By providing ready-made materials, we've saved councils time and resources while ensuring consistent, high-quality information reaches students across the West Midlands.

With 893,000 18-year-olds expected by 2030 (a 25% rise from 2020), these resources help councils engage with this growing talent pool. They support social value aims and raise awareness of the sector among future employees - helping young people explore career paths they may not have otherwise considered.

The regional competition aims to spark creativity and engagement, encouraging students to reinterpret council roles through posters, videos, and other media. It not only raises awareness but also challenges public sector career stereotypes.

Embedding these resources into your workforce planning will help build stronger talent pipelines, close skills gaps, and secure your future workforce.



WMJOBS



WMJobs Fair: Transforming Public Sector Recruitment Through Face-to-Face Connections

Recruitment challenges persist in our sector, with the LGA noting 90% of councils struggle amid rising service demands. Job seekers often misunderstand the diverse roles available in local government, while councils face budget and time limitations for recruitment marketing. We created this opportunity for West Midlands councils to collectively showcase our varied job opportunities, dispel misconceptions, and connect with local talent.

We launched the first WMJobs Regional Public Sector Job Fair to address recruitment challenges by connecting job seekers directly with employers. This event made local government careers more accessible while complementing our digital channels, the national 'Make a difference, work for your local council campaign,' and local initiatives.

Held on January 23rd at Birmingham Library, the fair featured 14 organisations who exhibited at no cost. Councillor Gwilym Butler, Chair of West Midlands Employers' Management Board, supported the event. "It was great to see so many people attend the event; it was very organised and great to collaborate with colleagues from other LAs and WME staff. The event gave out a very positive message."

Participant from Sandwell Council



Your dedicated

WMJobs.

Our team managed all aspects of the fair and implemented a comprehensive engagement strategy with DWP, WMCA Skills Team, educational institutions, and social media campaigns. We provided exhibitors with promotional materials to boost local awareness.

The inaugural event was highly successful, drawing over 2,000 visitors who could learn about available roles, ask questions, and receive application guidance in an engaging atmosphere. One attendee, Hassan, captured the event's value: "I was very happy and very glad to find somewhere I can talk with people, ask questions and find some solutions."

Feedback was exceptional, with exhibitor satisfaction rates of 4.9 out of 5. The likelihood of organisations attending future events scored 9.8 out of 10, demonstrating the tremendous value found in this direct engagement approach.

For councils facing skills shortages, the event proved that direct engagement is a game-changer. It revealed a significant audience interested in public sector roles who simply needed that extra touchpoint to take the next step in their career journey.

We're already planning future events! This marks a significant moment of change for public sector recruitment in our region, harnessing the clear enthusiasm for careers with purpose, stability and impact.

Congratulations you and the team for putting together the Jobs Fair today, we were overwhelmed with the amount of people we saw and were glad we were there to be a part of it. Well done and thanks for having us there!

Participant from Stratford-on-Avon District Council

"Massive footfall and candidates genuinely interested in roles. A really great event!"

Participant from Staffordshire County Council







I think the more people that we can get together in a venue like this, the better.

Workforce Priorities

LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Squiggly Careers – Embracing the Squiggly: A Fresh Approach to Career Development

In today's fast-moving world of work, career paths rarely follow a straight line. The concept of a "Squiggly" career - coined by the innovative team at Amazing If - recognises that people now navigate a series of twists, turns, and unexpected opportunities throughout their working lives. Rather than viewing this as a challenge, Squiggly careers embrace flexibility, personal growth, and experimentation, encouraging individuals to shape their professional journeys according to evolving interests and aspirations.

At West Midlands Employers, we believe in supporting curiosity and adaptability. Through the West Midlands Workforce priority fund, we partnered with Amazing If to pilot the Squiggly career concept at Staffordshire County Council and Coventry City Council. We aimed to help employees identify strengths, develop transferable skills, and discover new progression possibilities - regardless of how non-linear their paths might be.

During the pilot, participants engaged in interactive workshops, accessible toolkits, and collaborative sessions designed to encourage reflection and self-discovery. They identified their motivating values, desired skills, and fulfilling experiences. By focusing on strengths and interests rather than titles and rigid progression, employees thought more creatively about their futures, improving current performance while recognising broader opportunities.

The results speak for themselves: participants consistently reported greater confidence in driving their own development and renewed excitement for the future. The trial's success has led us to make these resources originally tested in Staffordshire and Coventry - available to all West Midlands councils.

We're keen to help local authorities equip their workforces with the mindset and skills to thrive in fast-changing environments. A detailed <u>case study</u> of the pilot is now available, sharing best practices, lessons learned, and practical implementation tips.

Recognising that careers should be fluid unlocks possibilities for individuals and organisations alike. When people feel supported to explore their strengths and passions, they become more engaged, resilient, and collaborative - a win for all. We urge councils and partners to embrace the Squiggly approach, making full use of these resources to help employees flourish in an evolving workplace.

> Ready to see for yourself how a Squiggly Career can empower your workforce?

Contact WME and we'll ensure you have access to all the resources and if you need any help or guidance, just get in touch

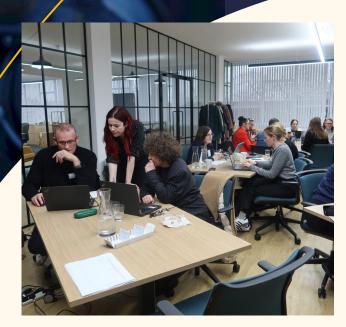
A From Fear to Fearless: People-powered transformation in Local Government

In the rapidly evolving world of generative AI, transformation is ultimately about people - not just platforms, systems, or tools. At WME, we believe HR and OD professionals are the architects of this change. They shape culture, build capability, and understand that the true power of technology lies in how people apply it.

Local government is under increasing pressure to deliver services that are not only efficient but also responsive to the changing needs of communities. We believe that generative AI is part of the solution - but only as part of a wider, people-led transformation journey. That's why we introduced **AI: From Fear to Fearless** - a programme designed to equip colleagues with the vision, ambition, and practical skills to lead this change with confidence.

Mind blown. Just stepped out of a game-changing 'Prompt like a pro' workshop. This session was specifically designed for non-technical professionals who want to embrace AI in meaningful ways. As someone working in a local authority I was amazed to discover how AI can enhance our public service delivery without replacing the human touch. The workshop addressed those common anxieties we all share while providing hands on experience with various AI tools. What really clicked for me was seeing how these tools could help us create more inclusive and accessible services for our communities and workforce."

Participant from Dudley MBC







Breaking Down Barriers, Building Confidence

- WME partnered with leading AI trainer and influencer Heather Murray to co-create the AI: From Fear to Fearless programme - at a time when demand for her accessible, non-technical AI training is growing globally.
- Having experienced the programme first-hand and aligned it to our #BuildAWindmill approach, we secured support from the Workforce Priority Fund to roll it out across the region.
- The tailored learning offer was designed specifically for HR and OD professionals, empowering them to view generative AI as a strategic enabler of human potential, capacity, and innovation.

Programme Highlights

- 15 local authorities participated in the initiative, exploring how AI can drive human-centred improvements in workforce strategy, service design, and operational efficiency.
- From January to March 2025, 76 colleagues ranging from practitioners to Directors - took part in an inspirational webinar, designed to bust myths and showcase real-world use cases that transformed uncertainty into excitement.
- **57 colleagues** progressed to the **in-person programme**, covering practical, hands-on modules: Prompting like a Pro, Creating and Editing Standout Content, Personal Productivity, Workflows and Automation.

Participants didn't just learn theory - they applied it. Working collaboratively, they co-designed scalable GenAI solutions to tackle real HR and OD challenges, such as:

- Revolutionising Induction and Onboarding
- Rethinking Job Design and Employer Branding
- Workforce Transformation and Strategic Planning
- AI-Driven Learning and Leadership Development
- Embedding Inclusion and Accessibility.

Embedding Ethical, Human-Focused Innovation

Participants explored GenAI's ethical risks, limitations, and governance - viewing safeguards as enablers of responsible innovation. Trust, transparency, and inclusion were key themes.

By focusing on people, skills, and real-world application, we've built a solid foundation for thoughtful GenAI adoption in local government. People professionals are now ready to lead transformation that's both human-centric and future-focused.

Our journey has only just begun - because the real power of AI lies in the creative, strategic minds ready to harness it.

We look forward to supporting you on that journ<mark>ey</mark>



HR Consultancy

During the last 12 months the HR Consultancy Team have provided advice and support across a varied number of employee relation interventions.



93%

Attendance rate at HR Network Meetings

559

Job Evaluations

40.5 days

Job Evaluation / Moderation Training

65

Attendees at Annual Employment Law Seminar

1200

Readers of People Hour – monthly HR Advisory Bulletins

41

Mediations undertaken

34

Investigations undertaken

4 Councils

Support Organisation Wide and Senior Management Restructures

HR Network Meetings

The team have continued to hold fortnightly network meetings for Directors and Heads of HR within our 31 member authorities. 93% attendance rate

Job Evaluation

There has been increased demand for consultancy for our Job Evaluation Services due to their niche expertise.

Additionally, the team have provided expert support to a number of organisations with the redesign of their pay structures.

Job Evaluations

During the last year we have undertaken 559 job evaluations.

Provided technical support to Client Job Evaluation Moderation and Appeals Panels and delivered Job Evaluation/Moderation Training 40.5 days.

As part of our wider job evaluation offer support to ensure robust outcomes, expert advice and identification of any potential equal pay issues is provided to our members through this area.







Investigations

The team continued to provide expert support for investigations across the range of HR and ER case themes. Delivered both by internal and associate consultants, this service has added value to our members at times of significant pressure.

Support Organisation Wide and Senior Management Restructures

With the increasing pressure on financial resources there has been a significant increase in the need for the team to support our members with organisational changes. Working to support all aspects of restructures including advice on organisational design, job content, job evaluation, consultation, and transformation to the new structure including interviewing and redundancy. This area of consultancy has provided members with reliable and independent support for often controversial times of change.

Benchmarking Club

As a member benefit in 2024/25 we introduced a benchmarking club for Borough and District member authorities for the purpose of comparing pay across roles agreed by the HR leads, collating data, and providing an overall analysis and producing comprehensive reports to aid benchmarking and recruitment and retention.

During the year roles across Planning, Legal, Environmental Health & Procurement Services were benchmarked. A total of 19 roles.

CASE STUDY



oyers



Shropshire Senior Management Structure

Shropshire Council needed to restructure its top three management tiers to boost efficiency and better align with strategic goals.

Our HR Consultancy team supported the Chief Executive to design, consult on, and implement a new operating model within a fixed timeframe.

WME provided full project support. We started by developing a strong business case that clearly set out the need for change, helping secure stakeholder buy-in across the organisation. A detailed risk analysis followed, with tailored mitigation strategies for anticipated challenges.

Due to the restructure's impact on staff, we prioritised equality impact assessments to ensure fair treatment for all groups. We also provided ongoing professional advice to the Chief Executive and Elected Members, supporting informed HR decision-making.

During implementation, we created new role profiles aligned to strategic objectives and supported fair, transparent recruitment processes.

The restructure was completed on time, with the new model fully in place. The Council now operates with a more efficient leadership structure, better equipped to meet its goals.

"The support we received from WME was most helpful. Their team provided practical advice and guidance, which was instrumental in navigating a particularly complex restructure within our organisation. Their expertise and thoughtful approach helped us find a way forward, ensuring that we addressed the issue with the utmost care and professionalism."

Chief Executive from Shropshire Council

LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In a year of unprecedented challenges and transformative possibilities, we've partnered with local authorities as collaborators in reshaping the future of work.

For 2024-2025, with training budgets tight and consultancy resources limited, local authorities face a delicate balancing act - addressing immediate needs while building strategic thinking and leadership for the future.

Despite these constraints, we've stayed committed to delivering creative, impactful support. Our approach maximises value with minimal resources, innovates when traditional paths are blocked, and brings creativity and insight to every interaction.

This year, we've pushed boundaries, challenged conventions, and invited you to look beyond the immediate horizon. From the **#buildawindmill movement** to workforce transformation, we've sparked conversations about the workplace of 2040, Generation Alpha, and the impact of generative AI on people strategies. We haven't just observed change - we've actively helped you prepare for it. We took our ideas to **10 local authorities**, explored solutions at **6 regional OD network meetings**, shared insights in <u>4 podcasts</u>, wrote <u>6 blogs</u> (3 in The MJ), and pushed boundaries at the annual coaching conference.

But it wasn't just talk - we turned ideas into action. We boldly placed AI in the people space to help our members understand its impact. We onboarded Heather Murray and designed the **AI From Fear to Fearless programme**, which excited **15 councils and 76 colleagues**. WME also facilitated meaningful AI conversations, particularly in social care, helping colleagues move from 'worry to wow' with confidence.

We challenged traditional career paths with our #buildawindmill thinking, showing that structure and hierarchy don't limit growth. By testing squiggly resources with Staffordshire County Council, we've developed an approach ready for wider deployment.

Check out the case study



Building Future-Ready Leadership: Highlights from Our Development and Coaching Events



returned with 13 teams from local authorities, housing associations, and NHS trusts. City of Wolverhampton Council triumphed as their team claimed the title of Best Leadership Team after a day of leading a fictitious public sector organisation.

The 17th annual <u>Coaching</u> <u>Conference</u>

continued the theme with **'I am not a robot**,' where over **120 public sector professionals** were inspired by speakers envisioning the future of work, exploring the blend of human and AI.





We were involved in several impactful strategic consultancy assignments. Notably, we designed and scaled a **bespoke 'owning and driving leadership performance'** initiative at Coventry City Council (**see case study**) and played a key role in introducing and embedding a fresh approach to <u>Strategic Workplace</u> <u>Planning at Telford & Wrekin Council</u>, along with articulating their EVP.

WME's guidance and expertise has been invaluable in helping us to develop and implement a strategic approach to workforce planning across the Council.

From our initial conversations, through the planning process and throughout the roll out of this first phase of the pilot, WME's innovative and insightful advice and expertise has enabled us to develop a robust and forwardthinking approach to workforce planning, as well as equipping our managers with the skills and capability to deliver this.

Acting as a critical friend, WME has encouraged us to develop our thinking further than we would have been able to on our own.

We feel confident that through WME's input and support, we are better placed to plan for and navigate the complex, evolving landscape in which we work."

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{HR}}\xspace$ OD Service Delivery Manager and $\ensuremath{\mathsf{HR}}\xspace$ Policy and OD Manager

Quietly yet notably our training courses, management development and personal growth services continued throughout the year supporting **more than 1730 participants** gain new insights on programmes like our Stepping into Management, 15 resilience and 18 inclusion related courses, 50 personalised 360 feedback sessions and psychometric reports for 35 people plus so much more in the coaching for managers space. And so much more when you take a look at the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool.

CASE STUDY





Coventry City Council – Owning & Driving Performance

Over the past year, we worked closely with Coventry City Council to transform leadership culture through the "Owning & Driving Performance" initiative. This programme reshaped leadership practices, boosted staff engagement, and improved service delivery

The collaboration began in autumn 2024 with 360-degree feedback for 60 senior leaders, identifying key areas for transformation. WME, in partnership with Elizabeth Lisle of ELA Development, introduced a phased approach using her ODP Programme to embed new ways of working.

The first wave included workshops on performance management, coaching leadership, and positive challenge. Elizabeth guided leaders in fostering open dialogue, holding constructive conversations, and building team trust. Leaders were paired for mutual accountability, supporting each other's growth and applying new techniques in real time.

The second wave expanded the initiative with monthly half-day "challenge" sessions, where leaders tackled organisational issues like equalities, staff empowerment, and discipline. These sessions demonstrated how collaboration and respect can improve communication and resource sharing.

The third wave introduced creativity and psychological safety through a "SWARM" session led by Dr. Mark Batey. This safe space for ideation empowered staff at all levels to contribute ideas, fostering ownership and engagement within the leadership network.

WME conducted follow-up 360-degree feedback with streamlined questionnaires to measure impact, allowing leaders to track their progress and refine their approaches. This evidence-based method enabled Coventry City Council to adapt quickly and consolidate gains.

WME also provided ongoing support, including access to the West Midlands Coaching & Mentoring Pool, executive coaching, and consultancy days, helping the council maintain momentum.

Today, Coventry City Council is built on a stronger foundation of collaboration, accountability, and innovation. The "Owning & Driving Performance" initiative remains a model for meaningful cultural change in local government, with plans to extend the approach to all managers.





The power of partnership – A year of impact through the Public Sector Coaching & Mentoring Pool

In a year of economic uncertainty and tighter budgets, the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool has remained a beacon of resilience, innovation, and impact. Formerly the West Midlands Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool, this year's rebrand reflects our bold growth ambitions amid rising interest.

Now in its 17th year, the Pool continues to show the value of collaboration. With a flat-rate subscription, members gain unlimited access to external and internal coaching and mentoring. This model **saved subscribers over £117,500*** this year on external delivery alone. Including internal activity, total **collective savings exceed £290,000***. With an average ROI of £5,500 per organisation, members are planning ahead - ensuring staff have timely access without delays or the higher cost of pay-as-you-go procurement.

"I was in a difficult place... I was considering whether I should leave the job I am in as I was so unhappy... I can't thank [my coach] enough for the impact the coaching has had on everything - from my home to my work life, everything is different - and all for the better."



This year, over 1,900 hours* of coaching and mentoring were delivered, supporting 449* individuals - a 24% increase on the previous year. Mentoring uptake rose by 33%, with 101* people supported. Behind every stat is a story of renewed confidence, clarity, and transformation:

"I am more confident in my approach to work and have been able to take a more positive view on some of the challenges being faced by our team."

We welcomed our 50th subscribing organisation, adding 10 new members to our community of local authorities, health, fire, police, regulatory services, and universities. Newcomers include Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (BSOL ICS), Gloucester City Council, and Sandwell Children's Trust. BSOL ICS is our largest consortium yet, taking our supported workforce to over 200,000 public sector staff.

With 483 trained coaches and mentors now active, and 35 newly gualified coaches completing their ILM with us this year, our offer continues to strengthen. Our annual conference, attended by 130 delegates, was a vibrant space to learn, connect, and explore AI in the people space - 'I am not a robot'.

Watch the Conference Highlights.



Themes like reciprocal and reverse mentoring, team coaching in complexity, and executive coaching for senior leaders continued to gain momentum this year.

Our strong sense of community remains central. We hosted two Service Advisory Group meetings, bringing together subscriber reps to co-design the future, share learning, and ensure our offer meets evolving organisational needs.

* Represents updated with additional information since first publication.



We're a member of the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool.

To reflect our shared mission - to embed coaching and mentoring at the heart of public service excellence -

we refreshed our visual identity. All subscribers now have access to a full suite of marketing assets to spread the message across their workforce, including CMP logos, seven new videos, 15 posters, and pop-up banners.

CASE STUDY





How Dudley Council Transformed Its Approach to Coaching

Introduction

In just one year, Dudley Council went from one of the lowest to one of the highest users of the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool. Despite financial pressures, they recognised the value of coaching and secured funding to maintain their membership. This case study explores their journey, the impact on staff, and key lessons learned.

Background

Dudley Council joined the Pool in 2022 with limited initial engagement. Budget pressures and rising workforce demands prompted internal champions to highlight coaching's potential to boost resilience, leadership, and performance. Still, the message wasn't reaching those who could benefit most.

> "I have more confidence to embrace new ways of working especially around technology and change management. The project itself has received good feedback"

> > Specialist Project Role

"Coaching has helped me to refine my approach as a manager and helped me see things from my team members' perspectives."

Development Partner

The Turning Point

What led to the shift in engagement? A few key factors:

Integration into the People Strategy

- Coaching was promoted through Leadership Development Programmes and Manager Induction.
- > A Coaching Framework outlined the offer and ensured consistent messaging.

Alignment with Apprenticeships

- > Coaching apprentices were contracted to work in the Pool during and after qualification.
- > They were matched with coachees through the internal pool and given support and supervision.

Senior Leadership Advocacy

- > Senior leaders benefited from coaching and championed it.
- Organisational change highlighted coaching as essential for development.
- > Success stories drove wider staff engagement.

The Talent and Organisational Development Team secured funding to stay in the Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool by making a strong internal case and demonstrating ROI - unlocking further value.initiative remains a model for meaningful cultural change in local government, with plans to extend the approach to all managers.

The Impact

Coaching at Dudley Council led to:

- Increased Confidence & Leadership Coachees felt more assured in decision-making, team management, and influence.
- Improved Change Management & Resilience Staff were better equipped to navigate change and challenges.
- Enhanced Productivity & Strategic Thinking Coaching improved time management, prioritisation, and decision-making.
- Positive Team & Organisational Impact Stronger leadership boosted engagement, creativity, and project outcomes.

"Challenges have arisen, and I feel I achieved better outcomes because of the coaching. It helped me reflect on how to respond professionally without feeling worried."

Assistant Team Manager

By leveraging the pool, the council obtained 3.5 times more external coaching in 2024/25 than would have been possible through direct commercial purchases, resulting in substantial cost efficiencies.

Dudley Council's success highlights:

People First Pays Off

Even during financial strain, investing in staff brings lasting value.

Advocacy Is Key

Internal champions helped secure funding.

Engagement Unlocks Value

Greater use meant better access at lower cost.

Lessons for Other Organisations

Conclusion

Dudley Council shows the power of Coaching & Mentoring. By valuing its impact and making the case for investment, they've boosted workforce skills, wellbeing, and ongoing access to a vital service.

RESOURCING

Over the past 12 months, our resourcing service has continued to deliver exceptional value to our shareholder councils across the West Midlands. Working as your trusted partner, we've strengthened public sector recruitment through tailored solutions that connect talented individuals with meaningful careers. Our collaborative approach has supported organisations to build resilient teams despite challenging market conditions.

Here's how our service has made a difference this year.

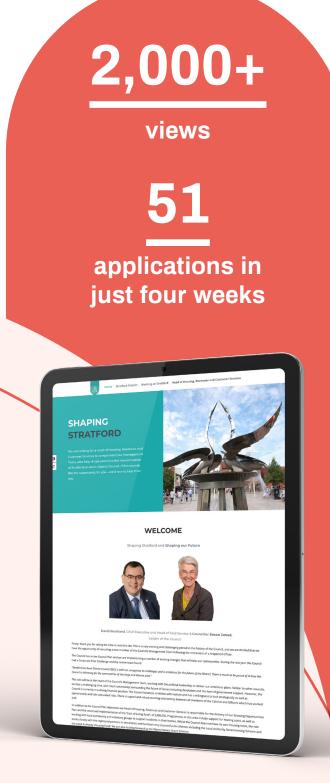
Executive Recruitment Success

West Midlands Employers continues to excel in executive recruitment, partnering with organisations to secure key leadership roles. A highlight was our renewed work with Stratford-on-Avon District Council to recruit their Head of Housing, Revenues and Customer Services.

Our campaign included bold visuals, targeted ads, and a dedicated microsite - attracting 2,000+ views and 51 applications in just four weeks. Using past insight, we designed a bespoke assessment to match Stratford's priorities. The in-person centre allowed candidates to showcase skills and experience the council's culture. Despite market challenges, four strong finalists were presented to the Member Panel, resulting in a successful appointment joining later this year.

> "Having worked with WME before on senior recruitment campaigns, when one of our leadership team decided to retire, they were the obvious partners to support us through the process. From designing a microsite, to executive search to supporting the assessment centre and Member Panel Interview, the WME team demonstrated professionalism and commitment, understanding clearly what it means to work at SDC. As always, the WME felt like an extension of our own team, working with us to be able to make a successful appointment to our leadership team."

Chief Executive Stratford-on-Avon District Council



Resourcing Communities

Thriving

Our work to transform public sector recruitment includes three specialist networks driving expertise, innovation, and collaboration across the West Midlands.

The Resourcing Board

meets quarterly, bringing together senior leaders from 14 strategic councils to shape regional strategies, share solutions, and build peer networks.

The WMJobs Recruiter Network

connects resourcing leads from 35 shared service subscribers, offering performance analytics, early feature access, regional initiatives, and expert-led best practice sharing.

WMTribe

supports **WMTalent** Acquisition Service users, focusing on system innovation, success stories, and ongoing improvements to recruitment technology.



Customer-Focused Support

At the core of our service is a strong commitment to customer support. We assist recruiters and job seekers through three service centres - supporting WMTalent Acquisition subscribers, WMJobs recruiters, and job seekers using the platform.

This year, we enhanced support with personalised data via quarterly reports, optional one-to-one calls, and responsive communication. Our team remains available by phone and email, offering reassurance and practical help.

As we reflect on the year, we're proud to have supported Members in building their future workforce. Blending expertise with personal support, we continue to champion the West Midlands as a great place to live and work.

WMJOBS UPDATE

As we complete year one of our three-year shared service term, WMJobs continues to flourish one of the UK's largest public sector-owned job boards. This is a major achievement, especially as job postings return to pre-pandemic levels amid economic pressure and candidate hesitancy.

We're on track with our roadmap set in summer 2023, with 2024/25 focusing on job seeker engagement, candidate attraction, platform improvements, and better user experiences.

Alongside core goals, WMJobs has led major initiatives like the WMJobs Regional Job Fair and tailored careers resources for schools and colleges - demonstrating our commitment to the wider West Midlands recruitment ecosystem.





Reaching Communities Through Local Job Fairs

This year, we connected with job seekers at 12 job fairs across the region, including Lichfield, Walsall, Telford, Worcester, Stoke, and Birmingham. Partnering with local councils and WMTemps, we engaged a wide range of audiences - career changers, university students, and school pupils exploring future options.

These in-person events were invaluable for promoting public sector roles, offering application advice, and helping candidates set up WMJobs accounts.



Award-Winning Candidate Attraction Campaigns

Our creative marketing has expanded our reach to new audiences while supporting current job seekers. Our 'Summer of Sport' campaign brought back the jobsters, using 2024's major sporting events to promote public sector careers. We also provided subscribers with toolkits to boost their own attraction efforts.

WMJobs proudly acted as the West Midlands hub for the LGA's 'Make a difference – work for your local council' campaign, hosting virtual and in-person events to maximise regional impact. Our targeted 'new year, new career' campaign on news sites generated over 415,000 impressions in January 2025.

Our innovative approach earned national recognition - winning the ONRECs 'Creative Online Marketing Award' and shortlisting at the REC Awards 2024 and PPMAs 2025.



Our LinkedIn integration continued successfully, bringing over 220,000 new users to WMJobs. This valuable talent pipeline will run until at least March 2027, offering ongoing access to candidates beyond the public sector.

In response to regional feedback, we launched the CV Database in early 2024, offering free access to subscribers from April. It now holds over 5,000 active job-seeker profiles.

The popular 'Recruiter Hub' lets subscribers showcase their employer branding and value proposition on WMJobs, with nine organisations already using it and more to follow in 2025/26.





As we move into next year, we're excited to build on these foundations. With your continued collaboration, WMJobs will remain at the forefront of public sector recruitment, providing innovative solutions that connect talented individuals with rewarding careers. Together, we're creating a platform that not only meets today's recruitment challenges but anticipates tomorrow's opportunities.

Over 23.8K

Jobs advertised

Over 6.8M

Job views

Over 2.2M

Active users

Over 30M

Job alert emails sent

Over 28.4M

Page Views

WMJobs Social Media **Expanding Our Digital Reach** Social Media Feel like a champion Leap into (SFFsomething WMJobs.out better Find a career with a 🕑 ET O Find your d difference in the public sector Make your move to the public sector Ambitious goals? WMJobs.co.uk illw WMJobs.co.uk ore your dream car in the public sector WMJobs \bigtriangleup

When setting out our delivery roadmap, we identified the chance to strengthen WMJobs' digital presence. Traditional attraction methods performed well, but social media's potential to reach passive job seekers and younger audiences hadn't been fully tapped. The digital space offered new ways to showcase public sector careers and complement existing strategies.

This year, we launched a comprehensive social media strategy focused on growing followers, extending reach, boosting engagement, and driving click-throughs to WMJobs.

We also supported national campaigns via our channels, including 'Make a difference – work for your local council' and DHSC's 'Make care your career.'

Our weekly 'Job of the Week' feature highlights standout roles, alongside automated Facebook and LinkedIn job postings. Our content goes beyond vacancies to include practical advice, case studies, award updates, and event news. We engage with subscriber content, re-sharing posts aligned with our audience.

Key campaigns like 'Summer of Sport' and the WMJobs Regional Job Fair were backed by targeted paid promotion and external support, as set out in our roadmap. These efforts have delivered strong results, particularly on LinkedIn and Facebook. For out WMJobs' platforms combined, this year we have achieved:

11,410 new followers 157% Increase

3,286,147 combined page & profile reach

109% Increase

6,386,000 combined page & profile impressions

104% Increase

Average post engagement rates

58.1% Increase

WMTALENT ACQUISITION



Overview

We began the last financial year by celebrating 14 organisations that successfully implemented their new Applicant Tracking System through our strategic partnership with Tribepad – WMTalent Acquisition Service. The event reflected on key project goals and outlined priorities for the WMTribe network for the year ahead.

Delivering a tight, ambitious implementation on time and within budget was a major achievement - but the real work began after go-live. Maximising any tech investment takes time, commitment, and a focus on embedding, adopting, and expanding system use.

Over the past year, we've focused on driving adoption, addressing common themes raised via the WMTribe network, and evaluating success. Together and individually, organisations have developed a shared roadmap focused on key topics such as:

>

Great candid

r candidates

^{Jeremy} Bowman

^{Akiko} Yamamoto

Laura Knight

Chris Bussell

>

>

Provide effective redeployment processes

To support effective redeployment, options will be explored and the best practice approach to using Tripod for redeployment management will be implemented. This will bring greater transparency to redeployment activity, improve the redeployee experience through easier access to opportunities and tailored outplacement support, enable quicker processes, and provide a clear audit trail.

Improve candidate experience and quality of applications

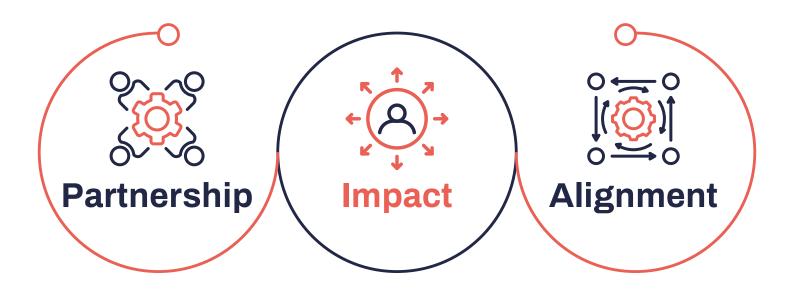
Candidate experience will be enhanced by implementing screening and application questions, increasing application completion rates, and introducing a customer feedback survey. These changes aim to improve the overall application quality, shorten shortlisting time even with increased volumes, and align with regional performance – reducing average time to offer to 34 days compared to 109 previously. Additionally, the application completion rate is expected to rise to 75%, up from 42% in other sectors.

Reduce time to offer

To reduce time to offer, onboarding and contract functionality will be implemented. This will lead to increased automation of contracts, a more modern onboarding experience for candidates, improved compliance, and an overall increase in the speed of hiring.

Welcome to...

A warm welcome to Worcestershire County Council and Oxfordshire County Council, who joined the WMTalent Acquisition Service in July and September 2024.



The new operating model

As part of the new service, we've redesigned our relationship management model and introduced a customer success wraparound. Customers now work directly with Tribepad, while WME collaborates to ensure the best return on your investment. We care deeply about the organisations we support and are committed to ensuring a positive experience. The new model is working well, with encouraging feedback confirming this fresh approach was the right one:

"The partnership between WME, Tribepad and our organisation has been really positive - support has been responsive, clear and solutions-focused."

"Claire has been invaluable - easy to contact, responsive and helpful. We're really pleased with the service and support we receive."

Success plans and annual reviews

We've also introduced a structured approach to understanding each organisation's goals, deliverables, timeframes, and results. This supports goal-setting aligned to your business needs. Each organisation has, or will have, an annual review to track progress and priorities.

3

WMTribe networks took place

11

Top tip sessions

14

System ideas have been accepted and implemented by Tribepad showcasing the collective difference and impact we can make together towards continuous improvement

100%

Uptime on stable and performing platform

CASE STUDY







WMTalent Acquisition -Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils

During the launch of the WMTalent Acquisition Service, it's been inspiring to see how innovation and collaboration can transform public sector recruitment. Each organisation faced different goals and challenges, but through shared purpose and hard work from HR teams across the region, we hit key milestones on time and within budget.

The challenges were clear - offline paperwork, fragmented systems, and inconsistent candidate experiences. But this wasn't just process improvement - it was about reimagining recruitment through shared services and tech. By uniting 16 public sector organisations under one framework, we improved efficiency and set a new benchmark for collaboration and impact.

Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils are a standout example. They embraced the opportunity, treated tech as an enabler, prioritised experience alongside process, and delivered through strong planning and communication. A huge thank you to the team for your commitment to transforming recruitment and for being part of our Tribe.

Among the first to go live, they completed implementation in just 10 weeks delivering a smooth transition to Tribepad's platform, streamlining recruitment, reducing inefficiencies, and improving the candidate journey.

Key achievements include:

- ★ Empowering hiring managers WMTalent Acquisition provided training and tools to simplify tasks and support confident, fair decisions.
- ★ Streamlined candidate experience Centralised applications created a consistent, professional journey, boosting the councils' employer brand.
- ★ Greater visibility and control A single system gave HR full oversight, enabling strategic recruitment management and reducing manual work.

"We're not doing all that manual work now. Tribepad has saved us a huge amount of time. Everything is so much easier than before."

Recruitment Advisor at Malvern Hills & Wychavon District Councils



Explore the full case study to uncover the insights behind this success.



WMTemps was designed to offer a unique regional resourcing solution for local authorities in the West Midlands. Since launch, over 25% of the region's councils have implemented the WMTemps framework to revolutionise their approach to recruiting and managing temporary staff, with a particular focus on:

- Stabilising the permanent workforce.
- Transitioning more temporary positions to permanent status.
- Enhancing access to high-quality temporary workers when required.

Reducing the reliance on multiple suppliers to simplify the temporary recruitment process both for councils and temporary workers themselves.

Opus has collaborated closely with each council to thoroughly evaluate their temporary workforce needs, and to understand the existing temporary recruitment processes across different departments.

Armed with these insights, Opus has worked directly with council teams to co-create sustainable and effective strategies and workforce plans tailored to their specific needs, focusing on reducing their reliance on agency workers ,reducing temporary spend and stabilising the workforce.

WMTemps has demonstrated its capability to deliver effective temporary workforce solutions for district, borough and unitary authorities across the region with a range of profiles and spend.

'Opus and WME's commitment to workforce planning and innovation is refreshing. Their forward-thinking strategies have not only resulted in instant and significant cost savings but have positioned us for sustained success.'

Director of HR, Walsall MBC



Highlights from the past year include:

iii WMTemps 🚺

- > Over 25% of the region's councils have implemented WMTemps.
- These councils are anticipated to generate combined savings of over £11m over four years using the service.
- Significant reductions in off contract spend.
- > 98.9% fill rates on placements.
- > 1 in 4 West Midlands placements have been made permanent.
- One council achieved nearly £840k in savings in the first 12 months since go live.

Other achievements and progress include:

- Working with approximately 30 local partners across the West Midlands to provide career advice, support recruitment opportunities and increase awareness of local government jobs.
- Launching our Future Forward campaign to highlight the different work opportunities in local government and help equip the next generation workforce with the required skills.
 - ★ Actively supporting reduction in temporary agency spend by reviewing tenure and identifying temp to perm opportunities.
 - ★ Support with permanent recruitment for hard to fill roles – conducting full market overviews to help the councils improve their position and leading to successful placements.



CHILDREN'S MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND ADULT'S MEMORANDUM OF COMMITMENT



WEST MIDLANDS ADCS NETWORK

A Commitment to Fair Pay, Ethical Recruitment, and a Stable Workforce in Social Care Across the West Midlands

The Children's Services Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has played a major role in stabilising the regional social work workforce. By reducing agency reliance and promoting fair pay, it has improved retention, casework continuity, and created a more sustainable recruitment model. Collaboration across 14 local authorities/ trusts has cut agency use, saved costs, and strengthened partnerships with managed service providers - enhancing care quality and workforce stability.



Key Achievements:

- 71% Reduction in Agency Use Only 3 of 14 local authorities remain in agreed exemptions, down from historic high reliance.
- Workforce Stability The MoU reduced movement for higher pay, improving consistency for children and families.

Collaborative Efforts

- Building on Success WME continued to coordinate regional updates on the MoU, engaging all 14 Children's Services Directors and workforce network colleagues.
- Stakeholder Engagement One-to-one meetings with local authorities and managed service providers built understanding, trust, and ongoing communication.

Commitment to Quality

 Data-Driven Decisions – WME developed tools and templates to monitor agency use, leading to £4 million in savings over two years and a drop in workers above cap.

Positive Outcomes

- Exemption Reduction Most authorities are no longer exempt. Where exemptions exist, they're time-limited and managed with full Director oversight.
- Breach Management Breaches dropped from 3.5 to under 1 per week, with all fully resolved. Investigations and findings were shared regionally.
- Market Relationships Trust and respect have grown with the supply market, aligning with regional priorities.
- Permanent Conversions All local authorities now have systems to support agency-to-permanent moves.
- Consistent Practices A reference template for agency workers supports quality and aligns with national standards.

Regional Coordination

A dedicated regional officer and strong Director commitment enabled a unified response to workforce consultations. Our timely, collaborative approach has been recognised nationally, with West Midlands practice cited in MoU guidance.

Year 3 Milestone

In January 2025, Directors formally signed off the region's MoU at a dedicated residential, marking a key step in our workforce strategy.

Here is what our MoU sponsors had to say.

"The implementation of our Children's MoU has strengthened regional collaboration and shown the power of working together. Standing 'shoulder to shoulder', we've built resilience, improved management of the social work agency market, and stayed ahead of national guidance. Despite early doubts, two years on, data and clear rules - underpinned by transparency and mutual support - prove that regional unity drives real impact, stability, and sustainability. This not only supports individual councils but shows central government we're taking

proactive control of our region's future." DCS Network Chair & ADCS Workforce Chair, November 2024

In addition to the above, WME continue to support Children's Big thinking event, this year which allowed the region to have an insight and an opportunity to discuss Artificial Intelligence. This discussion generated interest across the region as to how AI can support the workforce and day to day working practices going forward.



What Our WM-ADASS Partners Say:

"We're delighted to have a three-year strategic partnership arrangement in place between West Midlands Employers and West Midlands ADASS. WME is working with us to deliver practical adult social care workforce initiatives and improvements across the sector in the region."

Assistant Director – Improvement at WM-ADASS

Adult Social Care

Supporting Workforce Resilience and Development

West Midlands ADASS has partnered with WME to develop a programme of initiatives around **recruitment**, **retention**, **and resilience**, supporting councils with their adult social care workforce priorities.

Key Achievements:

- > Career Pathways: Developed structured career progression frameworks for adult social care roles.
- Workforce Planning Templates: Designed and implemented region-wide workforce planning tools.
- Workforce Data Sets: Established comprehensive data analytics to support evidencebased decision-making.
- Regional Research (Adults MoC): Conducted extensive research to support the introduction of the Adults Memorandum of Commitment (MoC).

International Recruitment Support:

WME has played a pivotal role in supporting WM-ADASS in designing, developing, and implementing the Department of Health and Social Care's International Recruitment Programme (Phase 1 & 2):

- Provided specialist advice and supported a regional recruitment approach.
- Developed resources, services, and products enabling care providers, local authorities, and international care workers to access critical workforce information.
- Established a regional HUB and specialist HR and Legal support services to assist displaced international care workers.

Adults - Memorandum of Commitment (MoC)

In January 2025, WME met with the 14 Directors of Adult Social Care, providing them with intelligence and data to support the development of an Adults MoC.

Key Benefits of the MoC:

Collaborative Workforce Planning: Working together across all service areas to monitor and manage pay rate pressures for a fair, transparent, and regionally aligned approach.

Shared Commitment: Directors of Adult Social Services, Assistant Directors, and Principal Social Workers are committed to embedding the MoC within their services, with an expected implementation from April 2025.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

WME has been recognised nationally for its commitment to impactful, people-focused services. These achievements reflect the strength of our team and the power of collaboration with councils, suppliers, and strategic partners across the region.

Awards Won



The Sunday Times Top 100 Best Places to Work (2024)

Celebrated for an inclusive, values-driven workplace culture



ONREC Awards (2024) Winner

Creative Online Marketing Award for public sector recruitment marketing across job board



In-House Recruitment Supplier Awards (2024)

Bronze – Outstanding Impact (Individual) – Chloe Herrmann

Highly Commended



PPMA Awards (2024)

Best Partnership/Collaboration (WMTemps with Opus)



PPMA Awards (2025) Candidate Experience

(WMCA with Tribepad)

ONREC Awards 2024

- Creative Offline Marketing Awards
 WMJobs
- Niche Job Board of the Year WMJobs

REC Awards 2024

Recruitment Team of the Year

Finalists

National Online Recruitment Awards 2024

 Best Regional Job Board – WMJobs

In-House Recruitment Supplier Awards 2024

Specialist Job Board – WMJobs

PPMA Awards 2025

- Creative Campaign (with TMP)
- Workforce Transformation (with Opus People Solutions & Telford & Wrekin Councils)
- Partnership (with Pembrokeshire National Park Authority)

These recognitions affirm WME's place as a trusted delivery partner and regional enabler. They highlight how our collaborative work continues to shape the future of workforce development in the West Midlands and beyond.

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

Our current Shareholder Councils





