



REPORT ON A SURVEY OF NEW STAFF
WHO JOINED SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL
BETWEEN 2015 AND 2020

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1. Introduction

416 staff who commenced employment with South Dublin County Council since 2015 were invited to complete an online survey on their induction experience in May and June of this year. Of those, the 139 outdoor staff were also given the option to complete the survey in hard copy and were provided with hard copies of the survey and stamped addressed envelopes which were posted to their homes.

165 staff in total replied to the survey - a response rate 39%. 115 indoor staff out of the 277 invited replied i.e. 42%. 50 outdoor workers of a total of 139 replied to the survey i.e. 36%. 16 hard copies of the survey were returned i.e. 68% of outdoor workers who replied to the survey did so online.

This report details the replies given to each question to identify any patterns particularly from the perspective of work location i.e. indoor and outdoor workers and by grade, and to identify improvements in the induction process for the organisation. This is important for an organisation that transitioned from zero recruitment of new staff between 2008 and 2015 to a very full and intensive recruitment programme with 416 new staff, over one third of our total staff complement, joining in the last five years. Issues such as learning and development, managing performance, and staff communications are also identified in the report as they are relevant to the induction experience. While it is evident the organisation has been very welcoming to new staff who largely reflect a very positive experience, the implementation of the actions identified in this report and the consideration of the issues raised, particularly by all managers across the organisation, will help to improve the induction experience and the integration of new staff into the organisation and potentially positively impact on key organisational dynamics such as staff engagement, diversity and retention.

2. Executive Summary

Overall, the survey provided very positive insights into the experiences of new staff; 92% of staff reported their overall experience to date as being either positive or very positive and 80% reported their induction met their expectations. Only 7% of staff replied that they felt they are not given the opportunity to provide feedback or that their ideas are not listened to at least sometimes.

Notably, one of the most frequently recurring answers given to the question regarding the “most positive experience” (Q8) for new staff was in relation to their experiences with other staff and

management. The words “welcoming” and “friendly” were used frequently and several respondents refer to a generosity of time and support offered by their peers and colleagues.

The most frequently recurring “disappointments” (Q9) highlighted by staff were in relation to the recruitment process and communications. In a number of cases the two are related in that some staff report disappointment with communications around the recruitment process it would appear in some cases that staff who may be new to the sector are not fully informed with certain elements of the recruitment process i.e. requesting feedback after interviews or the shortlisting process and this is evidently an issue which affects their overall experience. Issues availing of learning and development opportunities particularly among outdoor workers are also evident. These themes are echoed in replies to other questions such as question 10 “what would you immediately change”.

Another common theme highlighted in question 10 is communication. There is an evident eagerness among staff to know more about the work of other sections and areas of the council and to improve communication and collaboration between depots, between depots and County Hall, between departments and across the grading structure.

While a significant majority of staff (80%) indicated that their induction met with their expectations, a significant number of staff (33) were not satisfied and raise relevant issues in relation to the induction of new starters in the Council. Outdoor workers were generally more satisfied with their induction with 90% reporting satisfaction with the process. For indoor staff 76% were satisfied with induction. For Grade 7s however this rate is only 37 % (5 out of 8 respondents). A “more detailed” or “tailored” induction was cited by several of the respondents at Grade 7 level. The most frequent issue raised generally with induction was in relation to the timing of receiving induction.

Very positive responses are also evident in terms of what surprised staff since starting. Most of the staff report being surprised in a way that is reasonably described as positive. Surprise at how positive their experiences with staff and management were referred to often and there is a notable recurrence of how surprised new staff are with the range of services provided and the work rate and professionalism of existing staff.

While there are some recurring areas highlighted in the survey that new staff are not fully satisfied with - the overall indication is of a generally satisfied group of staff who indicate feeling welcomed and listened to in the organisation and who, in a significant number of cases, refer to the positive impact their colleagues and managers have had on them and who are broadly impressed with the range and quality of the work the council carries out.

Executive Summary of Follow-up actions:

More detail on these actions is available in section 4 of the report.

The Induction Programme:

1. A comprehensive blended induction programme of both online and in person content led by HR working with local managers will be developed.
2. We will work to ensure all staff can avail of the induction programme within their first fortnight of taking up employment.

Learning and Development Opportunities

3. We will arrange management training on the effective use of PMDS to manage performance and support staff development for all managers.
4. We will improve our communications with all managers and staff on the preparation and delivery of the annual training plan.
5. We will work to raise staff awareness on the identification of training needs through the PMDS system and the Health and Safety Training Needs Analysis.

Dignity At Work Awareness

6. We will arrange training for managers in how to respond to bullying allegations.
7. Management development courses will include communication skills and the suite of all HR policies.
8. The Human Rights and Equality Framework working group will engage with new staff members

Employee Engagement and Communications

9. Investment in accessible staff communication resources will be rolled out alongside the Depot Improvement Plan.
10. The 2021 Communications Plan will highlight the work of staff across the organisation
11. A smart phone app will be developed in 2021 that will facilitate better staff engagement and participation, including an 'In My Opinion' staff suggestion tool.
12. We will better communicate our recruitment and selection policy and procedures to all applicants.
13. We will issue the Digital Staff newsletter to all staff via the SMS service. Content will include features from new staff to reflect on and share their experiences to the organisation.

3. Survey Findings

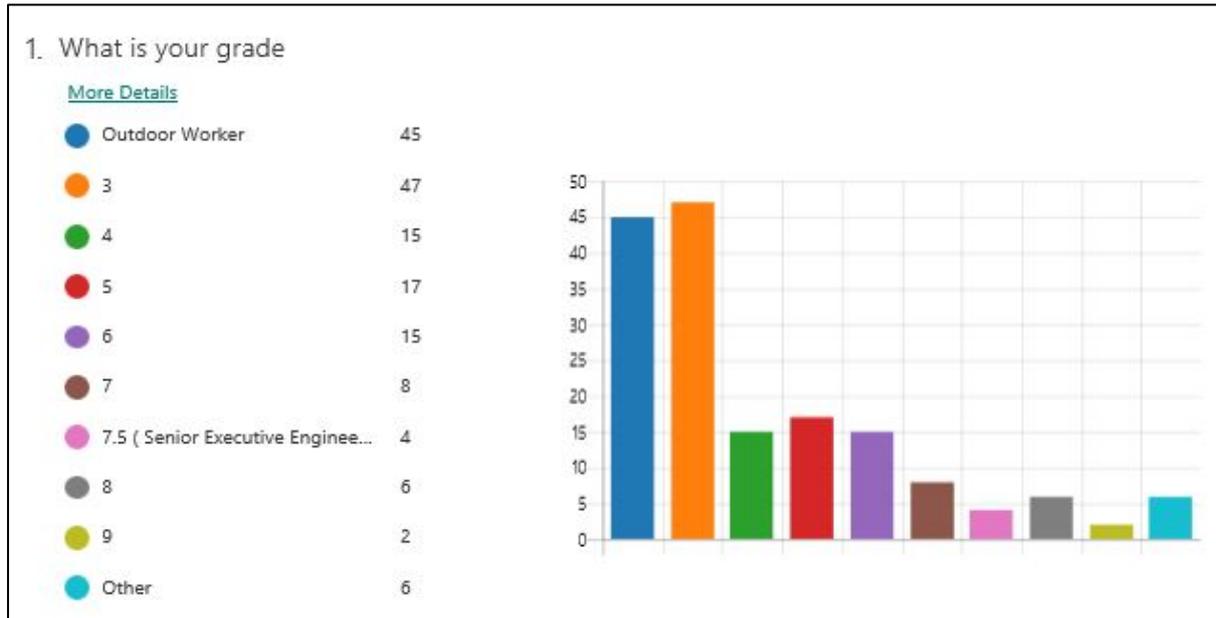
This section presents the answers given to the 18 questions that were included in the staff survey. Outside of the first four questions which are contextual in nature (grade, role, location and year joined), the following 5 questions were responded to by all respondents:

- Q5 Was your introduction / induction to the organisation in keeping with what you expected? (165 replies = 100%)
- Q7 How would you rate your overall experience with South Dublin County Council? (165 replies = 100%)
- Q13 Does the work you are doing match your expectations? (165 replies = 100% however only 34 (21%) replied to the ancillary question Please give a reason for your answer)
- Q15 Do you feel you are given the opportunity to provide feedback and that your ideas are listened to? (165 replies = 100% however only 42 (25%) responded to the ancillary question 'Please give a reason for your answer')
- Q17 Are you happy with the learning and development opportunities provided in the organisation? (165 replies = 100% and 130 people (79%) gave reasons for their answer)

The questions with the least responses given, starting from the lowest first, are listed below:

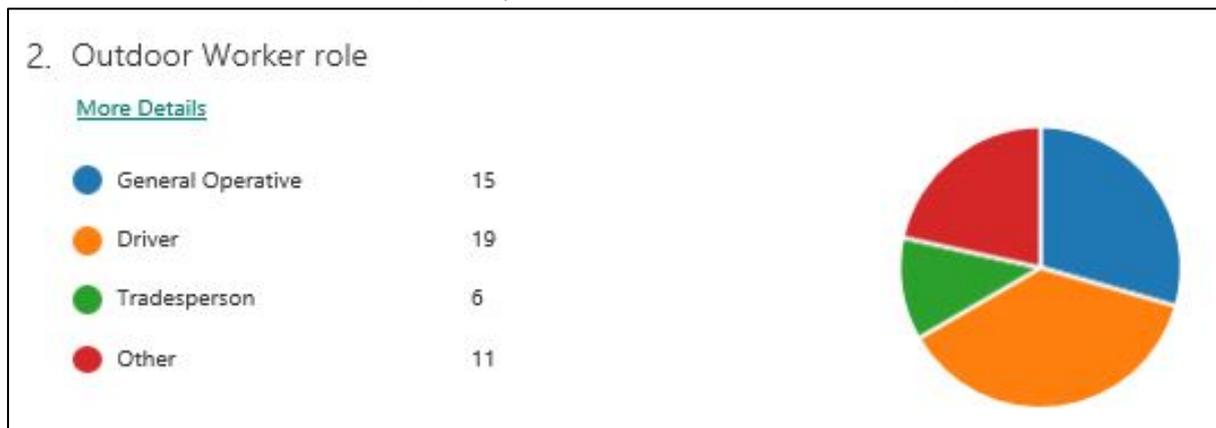
- Q12 What else would you change about the organisation? (105 replies = 64%)
- Q10 What would you immediately change? (135 replies = 82%)
- Q6 Would you change with the introduction / induction process? (137 replies = 83%)
- Q11 Regardless of whether your overall experience has been positive or negative - What has surprised you most about the organisation (positive or negative or both)? (139 replies = 84%)
- Q9 What has been your biggest disappointment? (145 replies = 88%)
- Q8 What has been your most positive experience? (154 replies = 93%)

Q1. What is your Grade? (165 responses = 100%)



Outdoor Workers: 27%
Grade 3: 29%
Grade 4: 9%
Grade 5: 10%
Grade 6: 9%
Grade 7: 5%
Grade 7.5: 2%
Grade 8: 4%
Grade 9: 1%
Other: 4%

Q2. Outdoor Workers Roles (51 responses = 100% of outdoor workers)

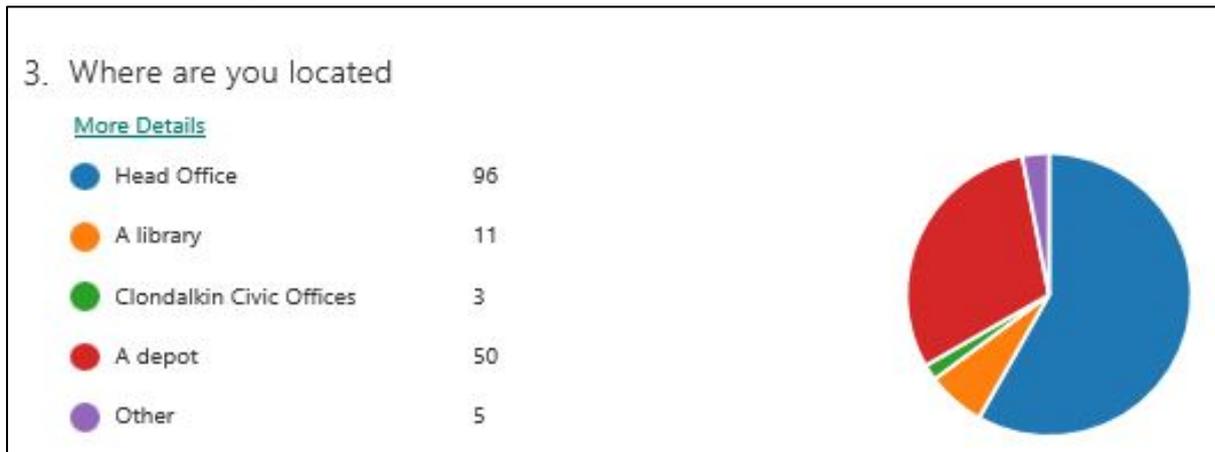


Breakdown by %:

- Driver: 37%
- General Operative: 29%
- Tradesperson: 12%
- Other: 22%

*1 staff member mistakenly input outdoor worker therefore total of outdoor worker respondents is 50.

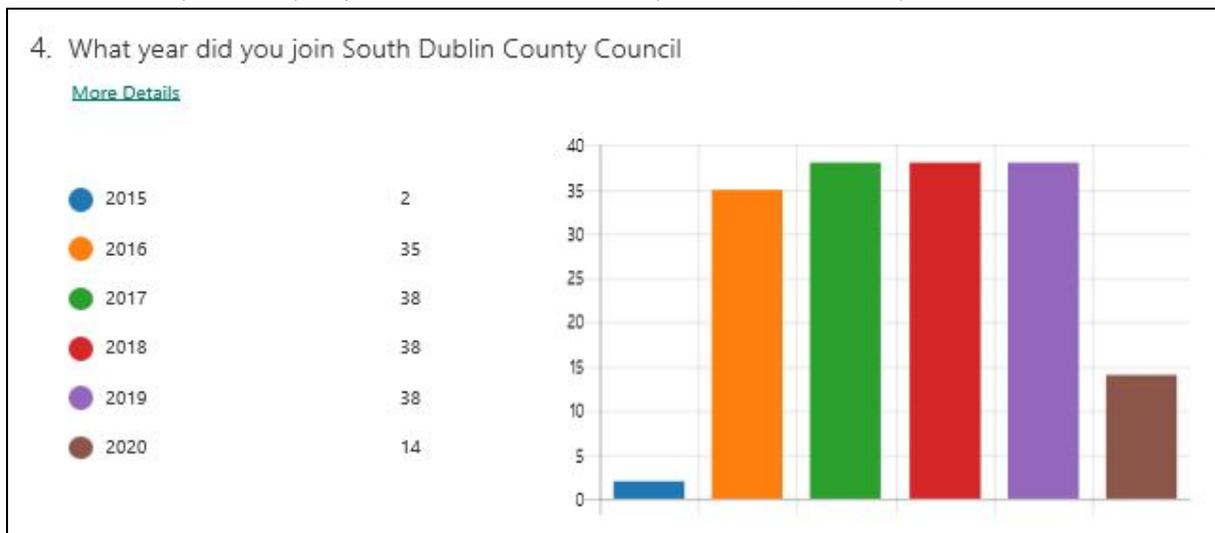
Q3. Where are you located? (165 responses = 100%)



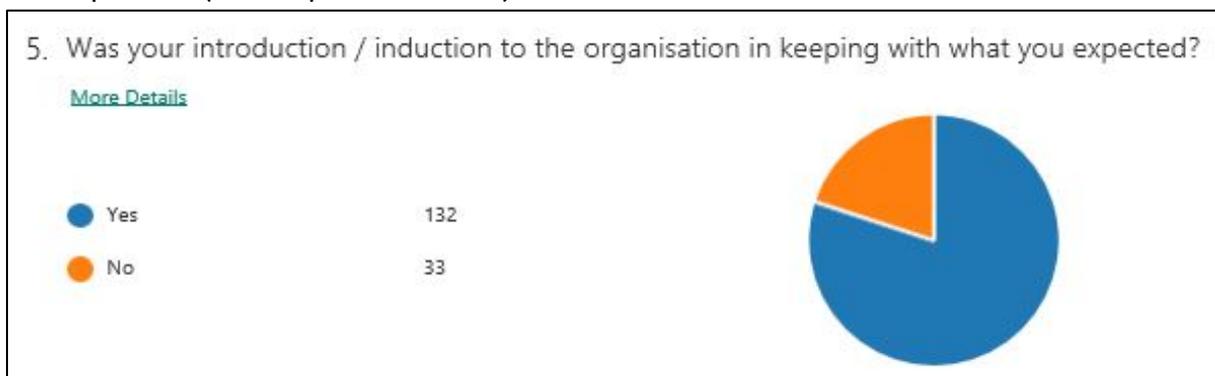
Breakdown %:

- Head Office: 58%; Depot: 30%; Library: 7%; Other: 3%; Clondalkin Civic Offices: 2%

Q4. What year did you join South Dublin County Council? (165 responses = 100%)



Q5. Was your introduction / induction to the organisation in keeping with what you expected? (165 responses = 100%)



Breakdown %: Yes: 80% No: 20%

Further breakdown for those who responded “No” by location (Indoor or Outdoor)

- 28 responses - indoor staff located in Head Office - 85%
- 1 response - outdoor staff member located in Head Office - 3%
- 4 responses - outdoor staff members located in a depot - 12%

Grade Breakdown for those who responded “No” (Was your introduction / induction to the organisation in keeping with what you expected?)

- 15% of Grade 3 respondents
- 33% of Grade 4 respondents
- 29% of Grade 5 respondents
- 33% of Grade 6 respondents
- 63% of Grade 7 respondents
- 17% of Grade 8 respondents
- 11% of outdoor worker respondents

There is no significant correlation between the year of joining to those who responded that their induction was not in keeping with what they expected. Five out of the eight staff who responded at Grade 7 level (Administrative Officer and analogous) were not satisfied with their induction with two indicating a preference for a more detailed and tailored induction for their role.

Q6. What would you change with the introduction / induction process?

137 staff replied to this question and 28 staff did not.

Sample of recurring themes in replies

139 replies – 26 no reply

- Would change nothing / Happy (x44)
- Shorter lead-in time to receive induction (x17)
- More information about your role and/or have induction tailored to your role / department (x4)
- Map/more detailed tour of the building (x4)
- Buddy/Mentor Programme (x3)

Sample of comments

“Make it more relevant to the role you were assigned when started employment, a lot of the induction did not apply to my role”

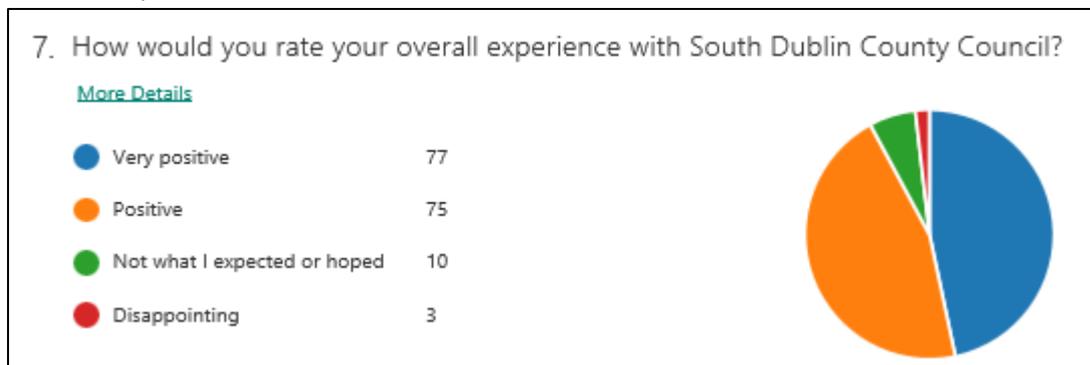
“I'd have a designated settling in buddy for each department/section. On the first day the buddy would collect you from HR, bring you on a tour of the building, meet your colleagues, bring you for tea break and lunch, show you how all the systems work and so on”

“Tea coffee should be provided at tea break and people encouraged to mix together, I found people went back to their offices or sat with their own groups and did not really take the opportunity to get to know others on the training. A smaller group might make this easier.”

*This and other opportunities to network with other inductees has been included in the course for the last 2 years

"I would like to see a more detailed induction done by HR. It would be nice to have online training videos from departments that work cross sectional"

Q7. How would you rate your overall experience with South Dublin County Council? (165 responses = 100%)



Breakdown %:

- Very Positive: 47%
- Positive: 45%
- Not what I expected or hoped: 6%
- Disappointing: 2%

Breakdown by Grade – Very Positive & Positive (Overall experience with South Dublin County Council):

- 94% of Grade 3 respondents
- 80% of Grade 4 respondents
- 88% of Grade 5 respondents
- 100% of Grade 6 respondents
- 100% of Grade 7 respondents
- 100% of Grade 7.5 respondents
- 100% of Grade 8 respondents
- 100% of Grade 9 respondents
- 91% of outdoor worker respondents
- 83% of "other grade" respondents

Breakdown by Grade – Not what I expected or hoped (Overall experience with South Dublin County Council):

- 4% of Grade 3 respondents
- 13% of Grade 4 respondents
- 12% of Grade 5 respondents
- 9% of outdoor worker respondents

Breakdown by Grade – Disappointing (Overall experience with South Dublin County Council):

- 2% of Grade 3 respondents
- 7% of Grade 4 respondents
- 17% of "other grade" respondents

Further breakdown of Disappointing / Not what I expected or hoped respondents

There are some patterns evident in relation to the 13 staff who replied that their experience is not what they expected or hoped / disappointing.

- 12 of the 13 i.e. 92% staff also answered “no” or “partially” to question 13 “does the work you are doing match your expectations”. This is significantly above the 22% who replied “no” or “partially” in the overall sample.
- 7 of the 13 (54%) also replied “no” to question 5 “Was your introduction / induction to the organisation in keeping with what you expected?” in comparison to 20% overall who replied “No” in the overall sample.
- 5 of the 13 reported their most positive experience to date being experiences with other staff.
- 3 make reference to “bullying”

Q 8. What has been your most positive experience? (154 replies = 93%)

Replies indicate the significant relationship between respondents’ experience with other staff and their peers and how positive they view their experience in the organisation.

Sample of frequently recurring themes in replies

- 37 staff refer to other staff/colleagues as being the most positive experience in various similar contexts.
- 9 mention the word “welcoming”
- 9 refer to the training opportunities available.
- 6 refer to the rewarding nature of working with the public

Sample of quotes

“The work that I get to do is very rewarding and I can go home in the evening feeling good about the work that I do. Also, the people working in SDCC were so welcoming when I started and have continued to be throughout my whole time working here.”

“Meeting visitors of the park and how they express how the park is kept so neat and clean & that the walkways are so enjoyable to walk. The staff are so helpful.”

“Overall I've thoroughly enjoyed working here. It's probably the first time I've been happy in a job, which in turn has influenced my life away from work positively too.”

“Staff were very welcoming, Senior Management are great at keeping staff up to date and aware of what goes on in SDCC and the CEO is constantly updating staff and introducing initiatives for staff wellbeing.”

“Better work life balance”

“Sense of doing something that benefits society “

Q. 9 What has been your biggest disappointment? (145 replies = 88%)

Sample of frequently recurring replies:

- Nothing / No disappointment /no answer (x 53)
- Issues with career progression, success at interviews, internal recruitment generally (x17)
- Lack of Communication (x13) (12 indoor and 1 outdoor worker)

- Pay / Pay scales (x3)
- Training (x4)
- Access to IT systems in depots (x3)

Sample of quotes

“I feel my qualifications are under-valued with preferences given to longer serving members with inadequate qualifications”

“The lack of knowledge in what goes on / is looked after by different departments. There is no interdepartmental communication.”

“Not ensuring all staff have laptops to work from home”

“The facilities on offer and outdated design and layout of departments”

“There have been no big disappointments, but the depot internet, office space and lack of some office supplies can sometimes be a bit frustrating.”

“Lack of access to the Intranet in the depot.”

Q. 10 What would you immediately change? (135 replies = 82%)

Sample of frequently recurring themes in replies

- Nothing (x17)
- Communication (x9)
- Work Hours / Remote Working (x7)
- Recruitment process generally i.e. eligibility to go for competitions/ feedback for unsuccessful candidates (x5)
- Toilets / Toilet Facilities (x3)
- More training opportunities (x3)
- Improve office layouts (x3)

Sample of quotes

“The lack of communication from head office to depot employees. Depots need the Intranet to feel like they are part of the system, the future.”

I would inform indoor staff of the work being done by outdoor staff and visa-versa so that we all work together.

“More training opportunities provided to staff in order for them to be able to continually meet the requirements of the job.”

“Recruitment, certain posts can have several vacancies for months before jobs are even advertised. Once a panel has been exhausted or expired and a vacancy occurs at that grade a new competition should start automatically.”

“Require each role and department to have a written list of processes and job roles. There is very little clarity on what each role is, the correct way to carry out a task and who is responsible for what”

“I found it challenging to navigate the building (although I understand so do existing staff) but it would be great if there was a map or if the phone book included floor and building details in sectional information.”

"Having worked in two depots and currently county hall I feel there is a disconnect between both and it's something that could be easily rectified."

"Reintroduction of IMO or similar programme for voicing concerns and suggestions"

"Choice in placement in section on promotion so individual goals and skills can be acknowledged."

"I would try to improve communication / flow of information between senior level and the ordinary staff."

Q11. Regardless of whether your overall experience has been positive or negative - What has surprised you most about the organisation (positive or negative or both) (139 replies = 84%)

Sample of responses

"I think what has surprised me most is how much the County Council actually does for the local community. I knew a certain amount about SDCC before starting the job, however, I have become so much more aware about the great work carried out by SDCC and it has made me think a lot more positively about local Government in general."

"The major positive for me was how welcoming staff are. This definitely made it easier to find feet and settle in. This is not necessarily surprising but not all organisations have such an open and inclusive culture."

"The organisation has very good management and a very good reputation."

"I was surprised how welcomed I felt from the very first day I started to work in SDCC. I am almost a year and a half working in SDCC after being with Dublin City Council for 19 years previous, I feel like I have always been in SDCC."

"I was so impressed by Danny McLoughlin's generously giving of his time to help IPA students."

"Some long-term staff members are so set in their ways they are resisting and resenting any new work practices."

"The amount of work that benefits the community that is not seen, promoted or known about. The talented staff that aren't known about."

"I was surprised at how much we do and are involved in and I am very proud of the positive work carried out by the council. There are some depts really far behind on assessments and seem to be overwhelmed and there doesn't seem to be anyone looking for solutions to this problem in certain depts."

Q12. What else would you change about the organisation? (105 replies = 64%)

Sample of recurring replies with relevant comments made by respondents (note small number of replies to this question with 60 staff skipping the question and 27 reporting they would change nothing more

- Change nothing /no reply 87 respondents = 53%

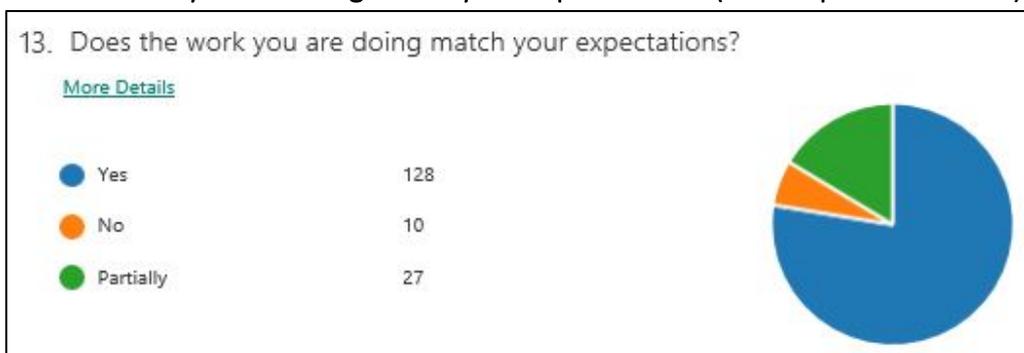
- Communication 6 respondents = 4%

"More communication with staff on the ground."

"Better communication about what's happening within the organisation."

- Change PMDS 5 respondents = 3%
“There is no reward for exceeding expectations.”
“PMDS could be made more relevant.”
“PMDS. It is seen as an unwelcome chore, too focused on the negative with punishment for failing to achieve standards and promotes doing just good enough.”
- Change Canteen / Café Areas 3 respondents = 2%
“The facilities on offer such as the canteen and shower facilities and toilets are outdated and need to be modernised.”
- Change the Customer Care / Reception Area 3 respondents = 2%
“Customer service staff should be better protected. Not enough privacy for members of public. Front reception desk also very vulnerable.”.
- Environmentally Friendly Issues 5 respondents = 3%
Digitisation of paper- based systems and convert fleet to EVs.

Q13. Does the work you are doing match your expectations? (165 responses = 100%)



Breakdown %:

- Yes: 78%
- No: 6%
- Partially: 16%

Breakdown by Grade – Yes (Does the work you are doing match your expectations?):

- 75% of Grade 3 respondents
- 67% of Grade 4 respondents
- 70% of Grade 5 respondents)
- 87% of Grade 6 respondents
- 75% of Grade 7 respondents
- 75% of Grade 7.5 respondents
- 67% of Grade 8 respondents
- 100% of Grade 9 respondents
- 84% of outdoor worker respondents
- 84% of “other grade” respondents

Breakdown by Grade – No (Does the work you are doing match your expectations?):

- 4% of Grade 3 respondents
- 13% of Grade 4 respondents
- 6% of Grade 5 respondents
- 9% of outdoor worker respondents
- 10% of “other grade” respondents

Breakdown by Grade – Partially (Does the work you are doing match your expectations?):

- 21% of Grade 3 respondents
- 20% of Grade 4 respondents
- 24% of Grade 5 respondents
- 13% of Grade 6 respondents
- 25% of Grade 7 respondents
- 25% of Grade 7.5 respondents
- 33% of Grade 8 respondents
- 7% of outdoor worker respondents
- 6% of “other grade” respondents

Q14. Please give a reason for your answer (34 replies == 21%)

Below is a sample of comments received from the 22% of respondents answering “No” or “Partially” to the question “Does the work you are doing match your expectations?” No one who answered “yes” provided further information. Please note small size of remaining sample.

“My current role doesn't fully reflect what was advertised for this job position. My duties and responsibilities are not exactly as the job role description.

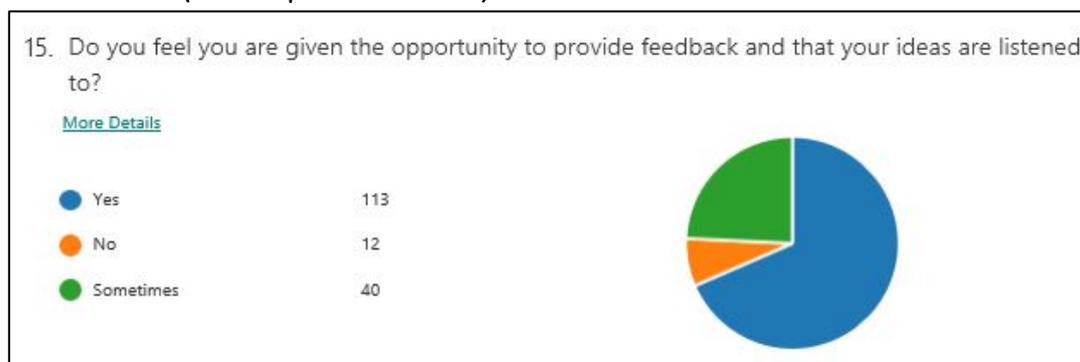
“I would have expected as a Grade 5 to have more flexibility in managing the team & introducing new initiatives & improvements”

“Had more responsibility in previous roles. If I could see a better way of doing things, moving staff around, system improvements etc it was very easy to do this and I had the authority to do same. “

“Yes - in that I offer a lot of admin support but no in that I've more responsibility than most other 3's I've spoken with. There doesn't seem to be a standard of work for a 3 but there sure is a standard rate of pay. The work I'm doing lines up with what I've previously done for much more money in the private sector”

“I have been picking papers for the first 10 months and cutting grass recently. With the right training I could be more useful. Chainsaw course, Mini Digger, C. Licence etc.”

Q15. Do you feel you are given the opportunity to provide feedback and that your ideas are listened to? (165 responses = 100%)



Breakdown %:

- Yes: 68%
- No: 7%
- Sometimes: 24%

Further breakdown for those who responded “No” by location (Indoor or Outdoor)

- 7 responses - indoor staff
- 5 responses - outdoor staff

Grade Breakdown for those who responded “No” (Do you feel you are given the opportunity to provide feedback and that your ideas are listened to?)

Note this is a small sample of 12 respondents

- 4% of Grade 3 respondents
- 7% of Grade 4 respondents
- 18% of Grade 5 respondents
- 7% of Grade 6 respondents
- 11% of outdoor worker respondents

Further breakdown for those who responded “Sometimes” by location (Indoor or Outdoor)

- 27 responses - indoor staff
- 13 responses - outdoor staff

Grade Breakdown for those who responded “Sometimes” (Do you feel you are given the opportunity to provide feedback and that your ideas are listened to?)

- 26% of Grade 3 respondents
- 27% of Grade 4 respondents
- 29% of Grade 5 respondents
- 13% of Grade 6 respondents
- 38% of Grade 7 respondents
- 25% of Grade 7.5 respondents
- 29% of outdoor worker respondents

Q16. Please give a reason for your answer (If answering “No” or “Sometimes”) (42 replies = 25%)

Sample of comments from respondents below:

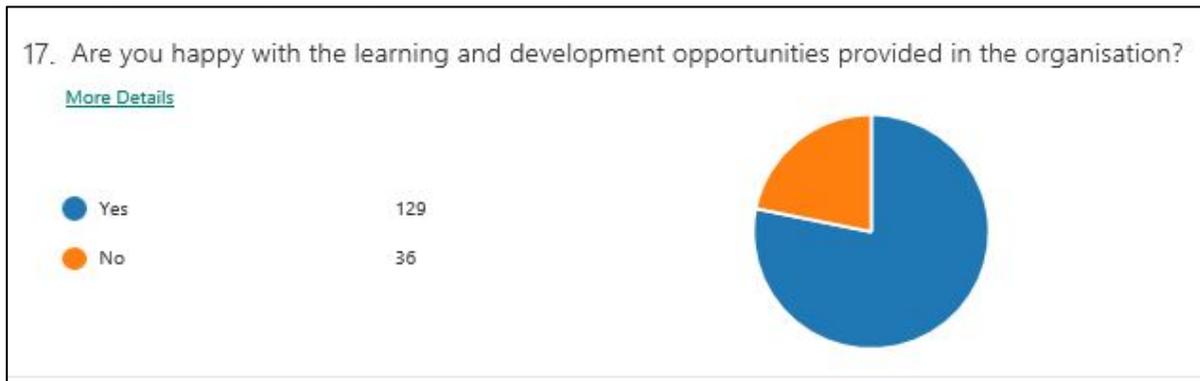
“Within my department there is no opportunity to provide feedback. Emails are not responded to and staff meetings are not held.”

“My manager is too stressed to even approach”

“Reluctance of management to introduce changes that would deliver process improvements, efficiencies & accountability & transparency within my section.”

“Management of the department sometimes shrug off issues raised by staff. Lack of direction and assistance at times. Mental health of the staff is not considered or taken into account at times also.”

Q17. Are you happy with the learning and development opportunities provided in the organisation? (165 responses = 100%)



Breakdown %:

- Yes: 78%
- No: 22%

Breakdown by Grade – Yes

- 81% of Grade 3 respondents
- 73% of Grade 4 respondents
- 88% of Grade 5 respondents
- 87% of Grade 6 respondents
- 75% of Grade 7 respondents
- 100% of Grade 7.5 respondents
- 67% of Grade 8 respondents
- 100% of Grade 9 respondents
- 73% of outdoor worker respondents
- 100% of “other grade” respondents

Breakdown by Grade – No (Are you happy with the learning and development opportunities provided in the organisation?)

- 19% of Grade 3 respondents
- 27% of Grade 4 respondents
- 12% of Grade 5 respondents
- 13% of Grade 6 respondents
- 25% of Grade 7 respondents
- 33% of Grade 8 respondents
- 33% of outdoor worker respondents

Q18. Please give a reason for your answer (130 replies = 79%)

Sample of recurring themes with comments from respondents who are not happy with the learning and development opportunities provided in the organisation

- Training not offered (7 respondents)

"Have not been offered any courses I've shown an interest on through PMDS. Not a great variety of courses available there."

"I have requested a training course each year but have received none"

"Non-existent. Same courses being offered all the time. "

"They are poor, not much on-going courses. No support for 3rd level courses."

"There are certain training courses that I would like the opportunity to complete. However, they do not seem to be organised too often and therefore I have not had the opportunity thus far."

- *Want more training to be made available (4 respondents)*

Sample of quotes from staff who are replied that they are happy with the learning and development opportunities.

"I have already attended courses and there is a great variety. I love the Staff Wellbeing Platform it is a great tool"

"The access to the IPA courses is invaluable to learn more about the council, I'm also happy with the amount of day courses you can sign up for to help and improve your day to day skills"

"I've been offered the course I have selected on my PDP every year plus the option of others"

"The learning and development opportunities provided in the organisation appear to be good and are communicated well"

4. Analysis and Follow-up Actions

Overall, the experiences of staff are quite positive and most staff report that they are 'substantially satisfied' with their induction, learning and development opportunities, are satisfied that they are given the opportunity to provide feedback and are listened to. It is worth considering further improvements to further develop satisfaction ratings among new starters and ideally impact on staff retention and engagement.

The range of differences in the replies among staff suggest a small number of staff having experiences that are inconsistent with the general experience of new staff in the organisation. However, it is not possible to fully address some of the issues staff raise i.e. pay scales, and disappointment following recruitment. Pay scales are agreed as part of national pay agreements and procedures regarding the implementation of pay scales are determined by government circular, all of which means any local negotiations on pay scales are outside the remit of individual local authorities.

The Council's [Recruitment & Selection Procedure](#) is an LGMA template policy that is used across the local government sector and complies with the Code of Practice of the Commission for Public Service

Appointments to ensure that our recruitment process is in line with the principles set out in this Code of Practice.

Feedback was given from one respondent that staff meetings are not held, and this is unsatisfactory as the holding of regular Team meetings is identified in the Council's [Internal Communications policy](#) as one of the most effective communication channels for the organisation. This finding has been reiterated in the communications surveys carried out since 2015. The communications policy gives direction on the format of the meetings by providing a template Standing Agenda for Team Meetings to ensure important items are regularly discussed.

There are significant similarities among staff in terms of their overall positive experiences. There is an indication from staff that their experiences and interaction with other staff positively influences their overall experience in the organisation. The ability to network, socialise and interact with staff is considered a likely factor in staff's overall experience of the organisation being positive place to work.

The findings of the survey point to four key areas that should be developed to provide a better induction process for new employees joining the organisation. These are 1] the induction programme itself, 2] Learning and Development opportunities within the organisation, 3] Dignity at Work awareness, and 4] Employee engagement and communications. Each is explored in more detail and follow-up actions are identified in each case.

[The Induction Programme](#)

While 80% of staff reported that their induction met their expectations, there remains scope for improving the experience. The key issue of timing was raised with staff in some cases reporting having never attended induction or there being too long a lead-in time from them joining SDCC. This can be significantly improved by the development of an engaging online and interactive induction programme that will enable all new employees to access upon taking up their employment and can return to it whenever needed. This will be a blended programme so will include personal interaction with other new starters, colleagues within their department, and HR personnel to help them to make personal connections that are vital to anyone's integration within an organisation. The content of the induction programme will be reviewed to address feedback from some staff regarding the duration of the programme and the relevance to each post, particularly at different grades.

Time will be taken on a person's first day in the job to meet in person to welcome them to the organisation in person by both HR and their new manager. This will explain the induction process, our communications systems such as the intranet, phone link etc, and all important organisational policies and procedures that need to be brought to their attention. Further improvements in the induction

process will be looked at through the work on the People Strategy but the key finding from this survey is to commit to the delivery of the induction programme within the first fortnight of a person's start within the organisation, with ongoing supports available for full on-boarding of new staff over the initial three months of their employment commencing via a combination of HR and local management supports.

Follow-up Actions:

We will review the induction process and develop a comprehensive blended programme of both online and in person content led by HR working with local managers.

We will work to ensure all staff can avail of the induction programme within their first fortnight of taking up employment.

Learning and Development Opportunities

Almost 80% of staff were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available to them and these opportunities are mentioned frequently in the survey in responses across a number of questions. Although there are some high percentage rates of "not happy" responses per grade, in some cases this should be taken in the context of a relatively small sample size i.e. at SEO level. In terms of outdoor workers however 32% returned that they were not happy with learning and development opportunities available to them this compares to an average not happy rate of 18% for indoor workers.

Replies from outdoor staff indicate ambition and attempts by outdoor staff to avail of more training and report they are not offered, not approved for, or not supported to undertake additional training. In some cases it may be reasonable to consider this in the context of anecdotal evidence and some evidence within the survey that there are often cases where outdoor staff are keen to do additional Health and Safety training but there may not be a specific departmental need or demand for that particular area of skill development or there may be oversubscription or over demand to undertake training in particular machinery or vehicles i.e. Driver CPC, Chainsaw training etc. In this context it is possible that dissatisfaction in this area by outdoor workers may be partially addressed by improved communication and expectation management with outdoor workers regarding Health and Safety training that is specific to the post. The identification of the Health and Safety training needs of outdoor staff is completed by a comprehensive annual Training Needs Assessment process which is carried out each year by local management and HR. A comprehensive list of the full range of the Safety Training provision is provided to the local management teams who assess and confirm what the exact training requirements for that service and workplan are by post and section for the coming year. The

preparation of the Training Needs Analysis is separate from and additional to the agreement of training needs through the PMDS process.

This issue of Learning and Development for outdoor staff will be picked up again in the preparation of the People Strategy, which will include a Learning and Development Strategy for the long term skills and capacity development within our staff cohort that will inform the preparation of the annual Training Plan.

Follow-up actions:

We will arrange management training for all managers and all new managers on appointment to include a focus on how to effectively use the PMDS process to manage performance and support staff development.

We will improve our communications with all managers and staff on the preparation and delivery of the annual training plan and engage with staff members on an individual basis if their training requests are not being provided in any given year to explain the reasons and their options.

We will work to raise staff awareness on the process of how training needs are identified and agreed jointly between staff member and manager through the PMDS system and the preparation of the Training Needs Analysis for health and safety specific training.

Dignity At Work Awareness

A small but sufficiently concerning number of staff (4) refer to having some experience with bullying since starting in the organisation. For this reason we have identified the need to carry out training on the Dignity at Work policy for line managers that will develop a better understanding among all staff of what are bullying behaviours and how to address them effectively where they do arise. We will also continue to promote the ongoing availability of the Employee Assistance Programme and the services of the Staff Welfare Officer to support staff encountering abuses of this policy.

Follow-up actions:

In the 2021 Training Plan and regularly thereafter, we will include training for managers in how to respond to bullying allegations in accordance with the Dignity at Work Policy.

Training on communication skills and the suite of all HR policies for managers will be delivered as an integral part of our management development courses and included in the 2021 Training Plan.

The Working Group set up under the Human Rights and Equality Framework as set out in the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 will include engagement with new staff members through a mechanism to be agreed by the working group.

Employee Engagement and Communications

Communications is raised frequently in the survey. Many are positive comments and notably 68% of staff say they feel they are given the opportunity to provide feedback and that their ideas are listened to, and 24% of respondents indicate they feel this at least sometimes.

Outdoor staff raised issues with access to the intranet, IT equipment and email addresses as potential areas for improvement for communications. There are positive indications in the online completion rate of this survey by outdoor workers (68%) that there is a level of digital engagement among outdoor staff. It is worth considering the development of a mobile app to bridge the communication gap between outdoor and indoor staff. The app could enable better communication of important information as well as facilitating two-way interaction and uses in induction and training.

There is notable feedback from staff highlighting communication issues and a sense of separation between depot-based staff and staff based in county hall. The recent expansion of the SMS communication system has greatly improved this experience with the use of “hidden” web pages on the SDCC website that are only accessible by staff. The development of the communications infrastructure will continue by the planned investment and provision of screens and computers in depots.

Follow-up actions:

Investment in accessible staff communication resources has commenced in the depots, including access to the intranet and the use of screens for digital communications, and this will continue to be rolled out alongside the implementation of the Depot Improvement Plan.

A programme of content creation in our Communications Plan that highlights the work of staff across the organisation will develop in 2021 to increase staff awareness in the work carried out across the indoor / outdoor based staff and across the variety of services delivered.

A smart phone app will be developed in 2021 that will facilitate better staff engagement and participation. This will include an ‘In My Opinion’ staff suggestion tool.

We will better communicate our recruitment and selection policy and procedures to all applicants to provide greater assurance on how we achieve the core recruitment principles of Probity, Merit, Best

Practice, Consistency and Fairness, and Transparency, in accordance with the Commission for Public Service Appointments Code of Practice.

The Digital Staff newsletter will be issued to all staff via the SMS service where previously it was by email only, hence reaching all staff. New staff will be contacted following their induction and onboarding process and invited to write an article for the digital newsletter to reflect on and share their experiences to the organisation, thus encouraging all staff to better understand the challenges of being a new member of staff in the organisation. This will be particularly helpful now as we recommence recruitment and take on new employees with the Covid restrictions in place. We will also target outdoor staff to contribute articles to highlight the valuable work they do.

5. Conclusion

The actions identified in section 4 are being progressed for implementation by HR and by working with management in all sections. This will be a significant piece of work that has started in 2020 and will be delivered in 2021. They cross critical areas of the organisation including recruitment, learning and development, performance management, communications and the organisation’s policies and procedures as well as the induction programme itself. Hence it is relevant to reference that 2021 will also see a People Strategy developed in the organisation. This will largely mirror the objectives in the People Strategy that was launched in 2019 for the local government sector which sets out three core pillars and six objectives, which are presented in the table below. Its preparation will be an opportunity to engage further across the organisation with both management and staff and the findings of this survey will also inform its development.

People Strategy Framework for South Dublin County Council:

