

Your Say Matters - Working with Suffolk County Council to improve engagement

“We were very impressed by BMG’s approach to our staff engagement campaign. From project management right through to presenting us with the results, the BMG team were pro-active, supportive and very responsive to our needs.”

Amy Anderson, Communications Officer, Suffolk County Council

Background and context

In 2014, Suffolk County Council (SCC) commissioned BMG Research to conduct an annual Employee Engagement Survey for a period of three years, the first of which running in September/October 2014. In addition, pulse surveys were to be carried out twice a year at four monthly intervals. In the 18 months prior to the first survey (SCC) began to undergo a significant period of change through their transformational change programme in order to help achieve savings of £156 million through their four year plan. Prior to 2014, the last Employee Engagement Survey was carried out in 2010 and as a result of the programme of change and the associated change in culture, the suite of surveys beginning in 2014 required a fresh approach.

Following a successful survey in 2014, it was decided that the full surveys were to become bi-annual, with a pulse survey in-between. To date, two full staff surveys (2014 and 2016) and one pulse survey (2015) have been carried out.

How did BMG and Suffolk County Council work together?

In light of the period of change, SCC were keen to redesign the approach for the 2014 survey so it was fit for purpose for the context of the organisation at that time. To achieve this, the dedicated project team at SCC worked closely alongside the Employee Engagement and Insights team at BMG to reshape the survey. In the lead up to the 2014 survey, SCC regularly engaged with employees which included the introduction of a new values and behaviours framework called ASPIRE. In the design of the survey, particular focus was placed on ensuring measures were built into the questionnaire that could be linked to the various behaviour that underpin each of the ASPIRE values. These measures were then used to develop an index score of how well staff believe the values are embedded into the culture of the organisation. In addition, a series of focus groups were conducted with staff to gauge their views of the organisation, and what factors are most impacting on their workplace experience.



The main objectives of the most recent survey (conducted in September 2016) were as follows:

- To measure current employee perceptions of working for SCC and their level of engagement to the council;
- To measure the adaptability of the workforce;
- To explore how embedded the organisational values are into working practices and behaviours;
- To identify variations in opinion across Directorates and Teams, and by key demographic groups;
- To monitor results against the previous surveys; and
- To benchmark the survey results with similar organisations.

How was the survey delivered?

Over 5,250 employees within SCC were given the opportunity to complete a survey, either via a paper questionnaire or electronically. An electronic survey was made available to over 4,700 employees via an emailed hyperlink sent to work email accounts. The remainder were provided with a paper questionnaire either sent to their home address or distributed internally at the workplace. This included workshops that were held at remote locations where paper surveys were handed out and staff were given the opportunity to complete the survey there and then. This was very effective at improving response rates in these locations.

Approximately 3,000 responses were received, giving a response rate of approaching 60% - matching the response rate achieved in the pulse survey in 2015, and comparing favourably to BMG's local authority average of 54%.

A number of methods were used to improve staff engagement with the survey. A very distinctive and effective brand was developed for the survey ("Your Say Matters") and this was included on a range of materials (posters, leaflets, newsletters and the intranet). This brand has been consistently used after the closure of the first main survey as a means of communicated to staff where changes were made that came directly from what they said



in the staff survey. Making this direct link was crucial for closing the feedback loop and ensuring staff are aware that their views are listened to and actioned. This brand has been used in both of the main surveys and the pulse survey conducted to date.

What was achieved?

Following the completion of the 2014 survey, a series of action planning workshops were run at both a Corporate Management Team and a Directorate level, in order to feed into the development of action plans at both of these levels, and the wider People Strategy.

Within the Children and Young People Directorate it was discovered that they scored particularly poorly in terms of staff having what they needed when working out of the office, and this was clearly a key issue amongst this set of staff as they often work remotely and between locations. Focus groups were run to better understand the nature of the issues staff experience, and to get their thoughts and ideas on how things could be improved.

As a result of this, a programme called 'Free Me' was put in place. In summary the programme included the following set of activities:

- To combat variations in management style, a consistent approach to home working and hot desking was developed, so that all managers were clear on the expectations. Training was delivered alongside this to ensure a smooth transition.
- The technology was improved, so staff had access to emails when working away from the office through Smartphones.
- Improvements were made to the remote access of council files and folders, which also meant that staff could return home to work if this was more convenient than having to return to the office.

A promotional poster for the programme can be seen overleaf, and it can be seen that staff have fed back positively on its impact. In terms of the wider outcomes as measured through the pulse employee engagement survey in 2015, the Children and Young People Directorate saw a 20% point uplift in agreement that staff had access to everything they need when working out of the office, a 15% increase in satisfaction with the working environment, and a 6% point improvement in engagement levels.

STAFF SURVEY 2016

Survey open 1 Sept - 30 Sept



YOUR SAY
MATTERS

Look out for
your survey
email link

For those of you without easy access to email, we will send you a paper copy of the survey to your home address.

You said,
we listened:

SCC is becoming
a mobile workforce:

"We are in the process of getting the support we need to be able to work at other SCC offices, when we are out and about and at home. This means we can work more productively; spending more time with our customers."

Bethan Stott, Clinical Team Manager, CYP



Staff Survey 2016

bmg research
BMG Research in association
with Suffolk County Council

FREE ME

Your answers will be treated anonymously