

# Wellbeing Strategy

2020 – 2025

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Organisation development  
& people and service  
transformation



Essex County Council

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# Foreword

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## Our Wellbeing Strategy

Welcome to Essex County Council's (ECC) workforce Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025. At ECC the wellbeing of our employees couldn't be more important to us. It's far more than just a moral obligation. The wellbeing of our people is intrinsic to our Organisational Strategy and People Plan. After all, a healthy, content and resilient workforce is a productive one – and when you serve the people of Essex in the wide variety of life-enhancing ways that we do - this is absolutely essential.

Our organisation strategy highlights our need to change the way we work as an organisation, an element of this being developing the capability, performance and engagement of our



**Gavin Jones**  
Chief Executive

people. Improving the wellbeing of our people is therefore a key element of achieving our strategic aim of 'transforming the council to do more for less'. Alongside this within our People Plan, which is a critical building block of our organisation strategy, we have a strategic theme of 'creating the right conditions'. The focus of this theme being the desire for employees to feel a personal commitment to our organisational objectives and behaviours, but equally important to also enjoy a sense of personal satisfaction and wellbeing. Therefore, it is clear that improving the wellbeing of our people will support ECC to achieve more and reach our ambition of being the best local authority in the country.



**Pam Parkes**  
Director of  
Organisation  
Development &  
People and Service  
Transformation

Therefore, our prevention focussed Wellbeing Strategy supports our vision of ensuring that wellbeing is embedded in everything we do and championed at all levels and across all functions, so that positive wellbeing becomes part of our culture. This encompasses the physical, mental, social and financial wellbeing of our people and recognises that our choice of wellbeing initiatives, standards, individual engagement and behaviours and leadership and management approach all impact our people's overall wellbeing at work. We also recognise that wellbeing does not start and end in the workplace and so we want to empower our workforce to make informed choices and engage in positive wellbeing behaviours so

that they are able to thrive at ECC and beyond.

ECC has a large workforce with people from different backgrounds, experience, identities and needs. Therefore, our wellbeing strategy and subsequent action plans aim to reflect this diversity and to provide a steer on the issues and challenges which should be addressed in order to embrace and value this diversity and support the development of effective wellbeing interventions and outcomes.

In developing our Wellbeing Strategy, we have engaged with employees right across the organisation. We recognise that working in collaboration with all areas of the council with

a common focus on promoting a culture of wellbeing is key to the success of this strategy. Our strategy also draws on sector best practice, academic research, guidance and recommendations from CIPD, Public Health England, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Acas and the Health and Safety Executive to name a few.

During 2020 we have had to face many new and unprecedented challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic and so although already firmly on our radar the wellbeing of our people has never been more important. We have had to take a deeper and more focused look at how we might work differently

and how we can strengthen what we do to meet the future needs of our communities. Although a challenging time it is important to recognise that this can create many opportunities for us here at ECC. As we continue to adjust and explore new ways of working a priority for ECC is ensuring that workforce wellbeing plays a key role in any recovery work including a lasting legacy.

We are confident that our comprehensive approach will deliver measurable improvements to the wellbeing of our people over the next five years and contribute to our success as a local authority.



# Why have a Wellbeing Strategy?

“Creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation”

(Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2016)

A well thought out, structured and comprehensive wellbeing strategy benefits an organisation. It helps to:

- ✓ attract new people to the organisation
- ✓ engage, motivate and retain employees
- ✓ create a healthier, more inclusive culture
- ✓ lower sickness absence
- ✓ improve performance and development
- ✓ improve productivity and success

- In 2018/19 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 44% of all work-related ill health cases and 54% of all working days lost due to ill health. Stress, depression or anxiety is more prevalent in public service industries.
- 1 in 10 employees in the UK report having a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition.
- Only 37% of organisations make efforts to promote financial wellbeing to a large or moderate extent.
- The average level of employee absence in 2019 was 5.9 days per employee per year, or 2.6% of working time lost (a reduction). Yet rates remain higher in the public sector.
- More than four-fifths of employers have observed ‘presenteeism’ in their organisation over the past 12 months.
- 35.1% of employees say that they sleep less than seven hours per night, and approximately 42% have problems with the quality of their sleep.
- 1 in 3 employees with a long-term health condition have not discussed it with their employer.

# Wellbeing at Essex County Council

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Improving the wellbeing of our people will support ECC to achieve more and reach our ambition of being the best local authority in the country.

## This ambition is articulated in our:

- **2017 – 2021 Organisation strategy** which highlights our need to change the way we work as an organisation. An element of this being developing the capability, performance and engagement of our people. Improving the wellbeing of our people should therefore be a key element of achieving our strategic aim of ‘transforming the council to do more for less’.
- **People Plan 2018 – 2021** which is a critical building block of our organisation strategy. It identifies the strategic theme of ‘creating the right conditions’. The focus of this theme being the desire for employees to feel a personal commitment to our organisational objectives and behaviours. Equally important to also enjoy a sense of personal satisfaction and wellbeing.

# Why does wellbeing matter to Essex County Council?

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A key focus in the development of this strategy and now part of our approach is 'collaboration'.

Here we showcase some of the feedback we have had from our people during the development of this strategy which has supported to develop our strategy.

## Wellbeing Surveys

- “I feel the main objectives should be; ECC viewed as an employer that cares about their workforce, in turn making us an attractive employer to potential candidates.”
  - “Things that aren't seen as gimmicks or add-ons, but that really get at the drivers of wellbeing and that can be embedded in service areas. I was pleased to see wellbeing is part of the new performance system.”
  - “Senior management endorsement and sponsorship of any initiatives.”
  - “To ensure that staff wellbeing is given as much importance as the delivery of the organisations goals - as without a fit and well workforce, the organisation will not deliver.”
- Around half of respondents feel they can talk to colleagues / HR / line manager about MH issues (only 40% agree that MH issues are taken seriously).
  - Approximately 50% disagree that their physical working environment contributes to their sense of wellbeing.
  - Only just over 10% feel that ECC runs activities and clubs to support wellbeing.
  - From the results of our Financial Wellbeing survey we can estimate that between 10-15% of all respondents are living below the Essex Minimum Income Standard. When taking family composition into account, this figure may be higher.

## Remote Working Survey

The Digital Remote Working Survey showed mainly positive levels of wellbeing due to working from home during lockdown. Respondents were positive about the 'flexibility' (3%) that remote working allowed. It also revealed longer term limitations around 'social interaction' (61%), 'managing interruptions and distractions' (21%), 'work-life balance' (19%) and 'managing wellbeing' (18%).

## Your Voice Survey 2020

**58%** feel satisfied with frameworks and practices in place to help manage their wellbeing

**55%** believe the council is good at promoting wellbeing



# Our Strategy

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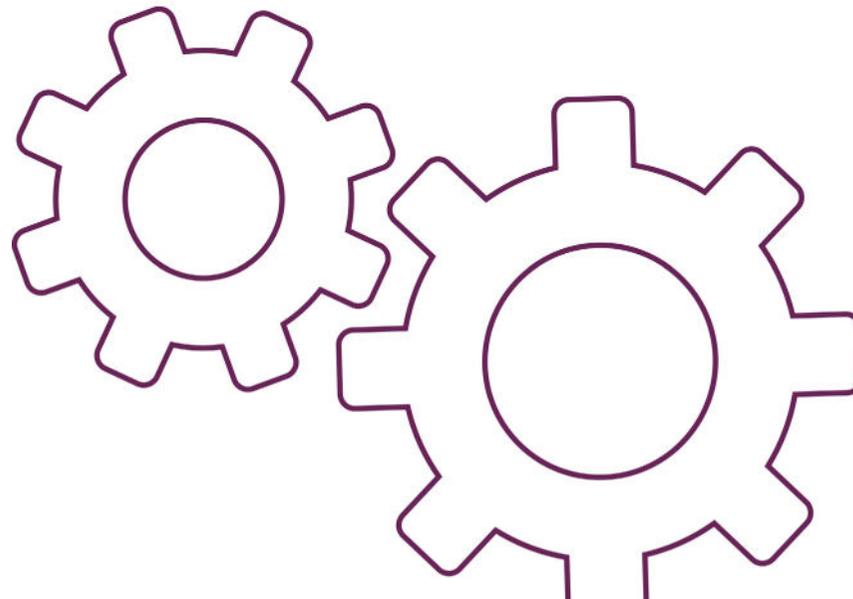
Our workplace wellbeing strategy sets out our vision and aims for employee wellbeing, our key areas of focus including our approach and how Essex County Council will seek to measure success.

Here at Essex County Council we define wellbeing as:

**“A sense of organisation, team and individual health, contentment and resilience. In which employees are supported to make informed choices and engage in positive wellbeing behaviours in order to thrive at ECC and beyond.”**

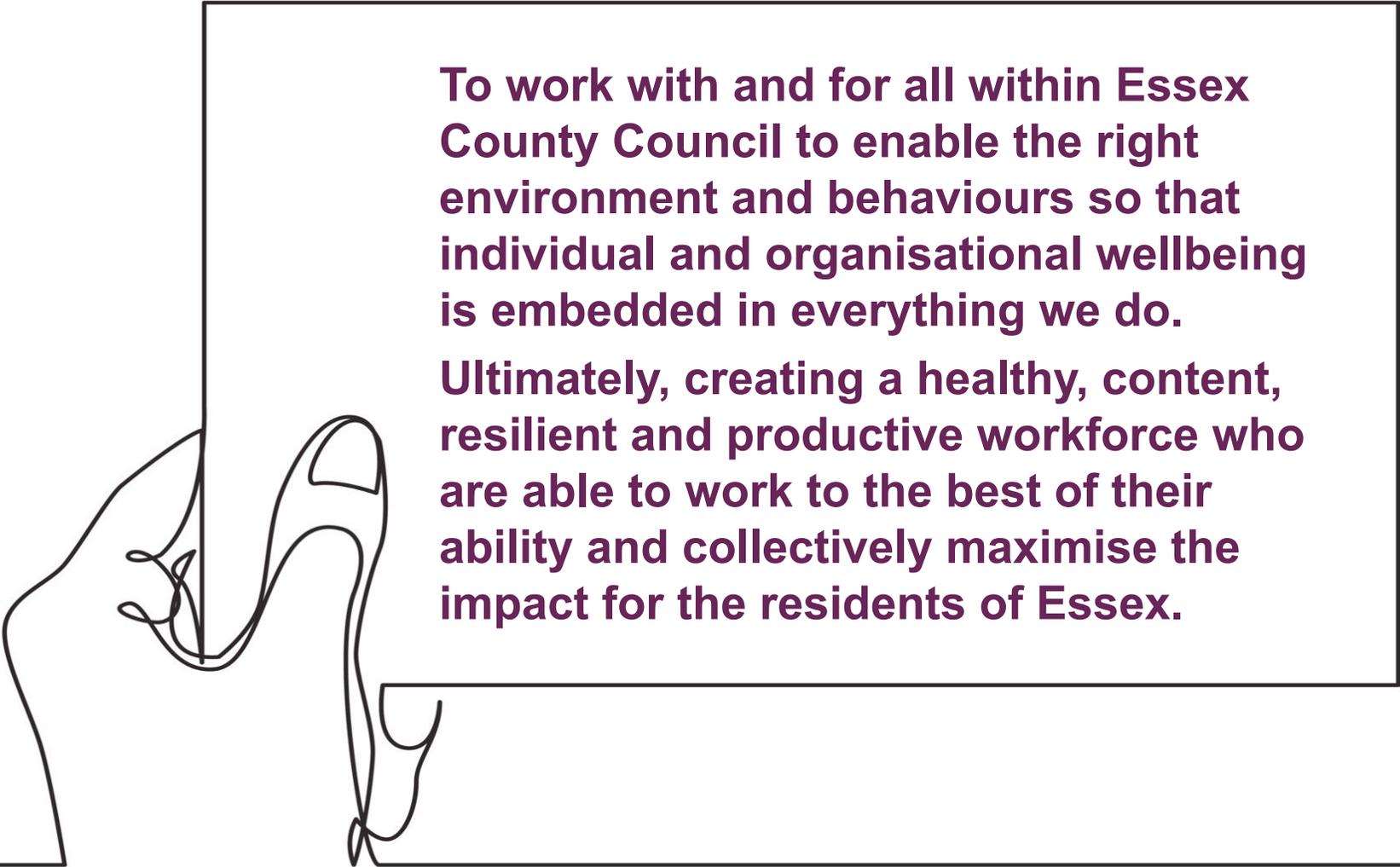
**“To gain real benefit wellbeing must be integrated throughout the organisation, embedded in its culture, its leadership and its people management”**

(CIPD, 2019)



# Our Wellbeing Vision

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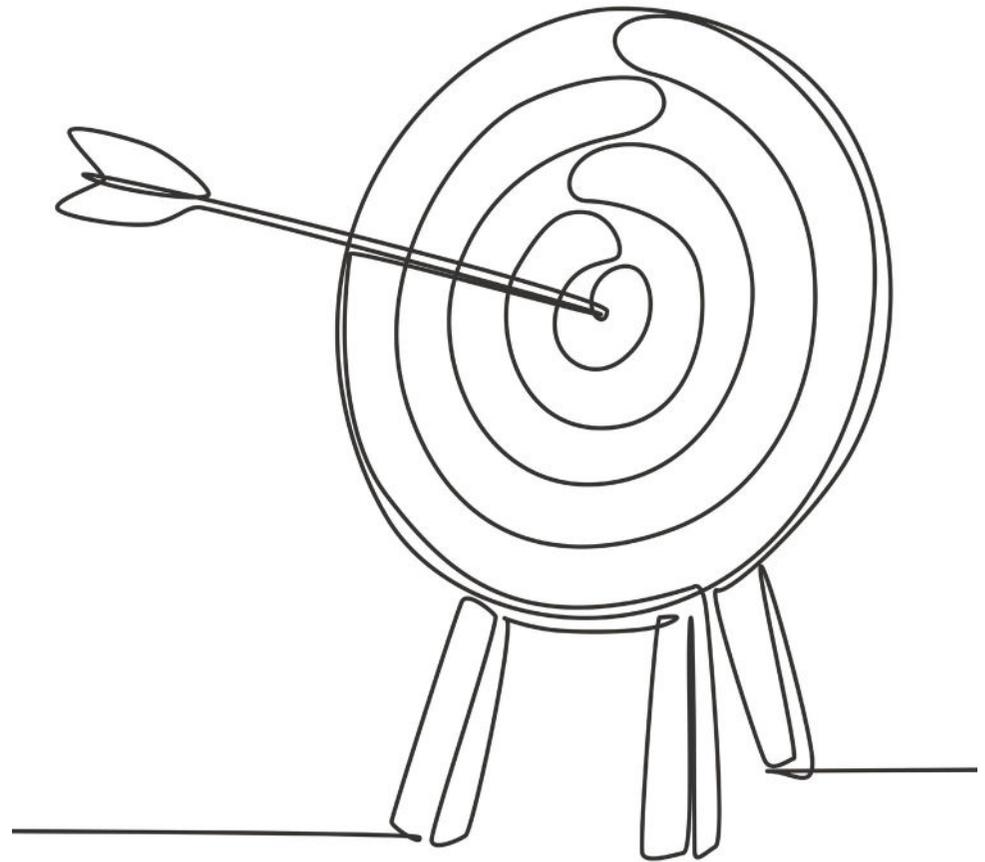
**To work with and for all within Essex County Council to enable the right environment and behaviours so that individual and organisational wellbeing is embedded in everything we do.**

**Ultimately, creating a healthy, content, resilient and productive workforce who are able to work to the best of their ability and collectively maximise the impact for the residents of Essex.**

# Our Wellbeing Aims

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- Create a safe and healthy work environment which fosters a culture of positive wellbeing, whereby the wellbeing of our people is seen as integral to everything we do.
- Improve general wellbeing for our diverse workforce and ensure that wellbeing is seen as everyone's responsibility across ECC.
- Embed wellbeing as a central part of our strategic priorities for our leaders and councillors across all functions within ECC and ensure that all are aware of our statutory obligations.
- To be identified as an employer of choice who cares about wellbeing and recognises the role wellbeing can play in the bigger picture including improving productivity and ways of working.
- Provide impactful wellbeing support based on the needs of our people, using a collaborative approach.



# Our Wellbeing Pillars

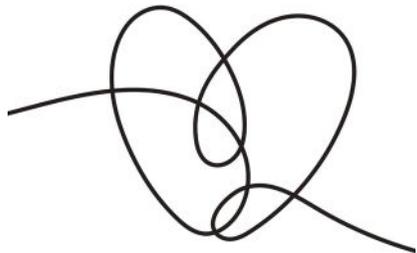
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Our Wellbeing Strategy 2020 -2025 will focus on four key pillars of integrated wellbeing.



## Mental Wellbeing

- Create a culture of open discussion around stress and mental health.
- Supporting individuals to better manage their psychological wellbeing and develop personal resilience.
- Provide better access to support, advice and signposting.

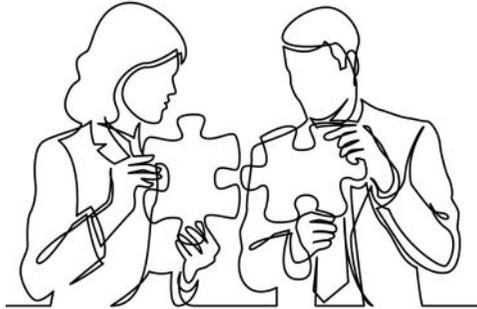


## Physical Wellbeing

- Support people to take care of themselves and make positive steps around health in areas such as sleep, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, and drinking enough water.
- Create an environment where people feel empowered and are educated about their physical wellbeing.
- Establish programmes for specific clinical conditions/areas of need.
- Improve our working environment and ways of working.

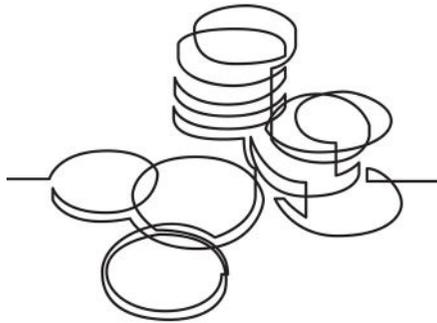
# Our Wellbeing Pillars

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## Social Wellbeing

- Improve the relationships we have with each other across the organisation.
- Build healthy, collaborative, nurturing and supportive relationships, which includes good leadership, to foster a genuine community within ECC.
- Encourage civic and community engagement to improve a sense of belonging and create strong links within the wider community of Essex.



## Financial Wellbeing

- Support individuals to become more aware of their finances.
- Reduce financial stress by helping people to better manage their finances and become more financially secure. This will include areas such as managing debt, budgeting, saving, pensions, investments and living within our means.
- Promote employment practices that avoid low pay, insecure contracts, unfair pay gaps and ensure job security while meeting organisational requirements.
- Ensure reward and benefits' policies allow opportunities to support employees at all stages of their lives.

# Our Approach

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The purpose of our strategic approach is to ensure that wellbeing is seen as essential to **‘creating the right conditions’** for our people.

Wellbeing therefore needs to sit across all areas within ECC. With a focus on creating a wellbeing culture which is championed at all levels, prevention focussed and improves our standards and practices. With the purpose of having a positive impact on the diverse individual needs of all.



# Our Approach: Our Culture

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We will:

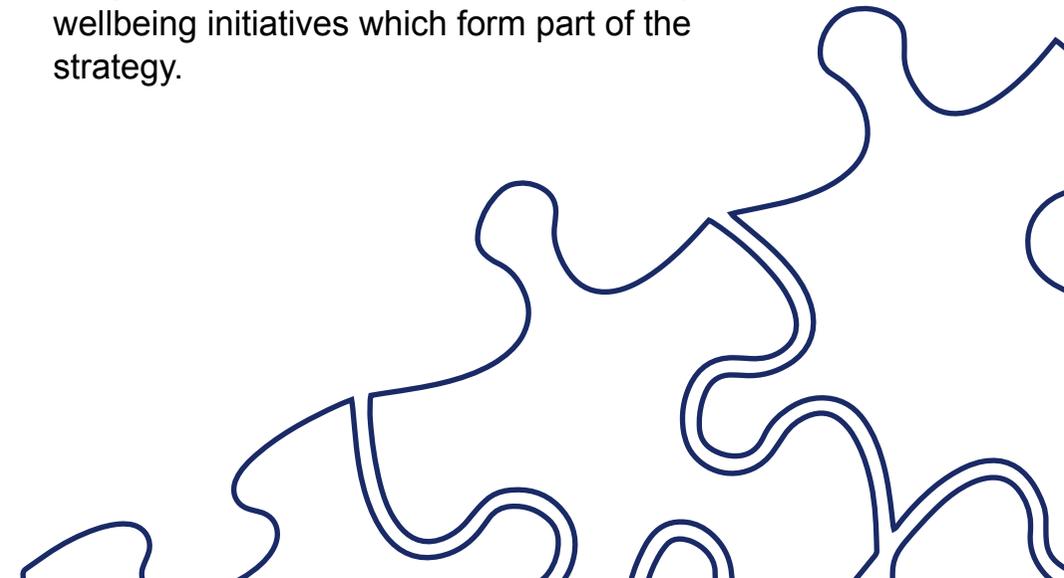
- gain a better understanding of the existing culture as it relates to workplace wellbeing
- influence culture so that wellbeing becomes one of ECC's core values and is integrated within our procedures, policies and working practices
- increase visibility and awareness of wellbeing, making it exciting and accessible by improving signposting to internal and external resources
- have a clear and planned communications strategy in keeping with the My Wellbeing 'brand'
- create a shared understanding whilst allowing for variation, fresh thinking and creativity. So, a coherent people wellbeing plan with the ability to tailor within directorates/functions.

# Our Approach: Prevention

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We will:

- focus on helping people to make better choices, change behaviours and better manage their overall wellbeing
- make wellbeing business as usual and not just for times of change, crisis or adversity
- increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and any wellbeing initiatives which form part of the strategy.



# Our Approach: Our Standards

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We will:

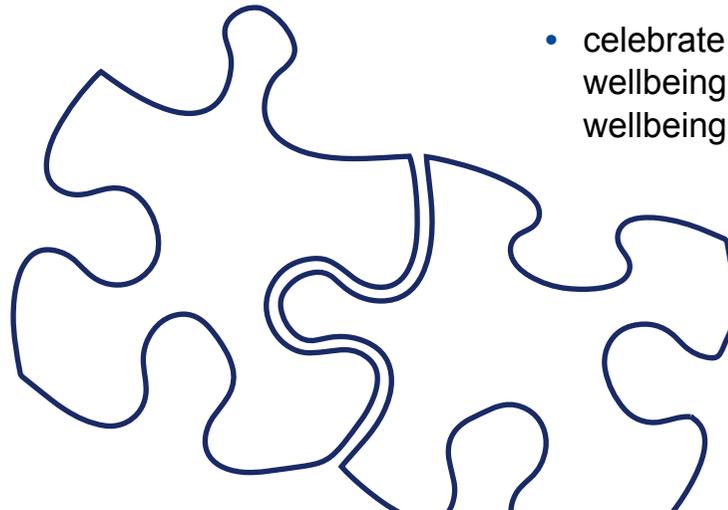
- ensure alignment and fit with wider organisation and HR procedures, policies and standards
- align the wellbeing strategy key objectives with other ECC strategies and strategic aims. Including the Organisation Strategy 2017-2021, Organisation Strategy 2021 – 2024 (in development) and People Plan 2018-2021
- make sure all relevant stakeholders are aware of their statutory obligations.

# Our Approach: My Wellbeing

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We will:

- take personal responsibility for our own wellbeing and acknowledge the benefits of initiatives provided by ECC and how these can be used to support individual needs
- map out what wellbeing means across the employee journey to understand the key moments which matter to people, and the impact these can have on their wellbeing which will provide insight into the initiatives which should be put in place
- celebrate the diversity of our people, champion wellbeing inclusion and work to ensure that wellbeing is seen as a priority for all.



# Our Approach: Leadership & Management

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We will:

- create effective managers and strong working relationships in alignment with the People Plan and learning and development processes
- improve leader visibility and ensure they are engaged and ‘walk the talk’ around wellbeing
- ensure our people understand their roles, expectations, future focus and create feelings of commitment and personal satisfaction
- improve leadership training so that leaders understand the links between wellbeing and other core areas such as health and safety and performance and development.

# Our Approach: Collaboration & Impact

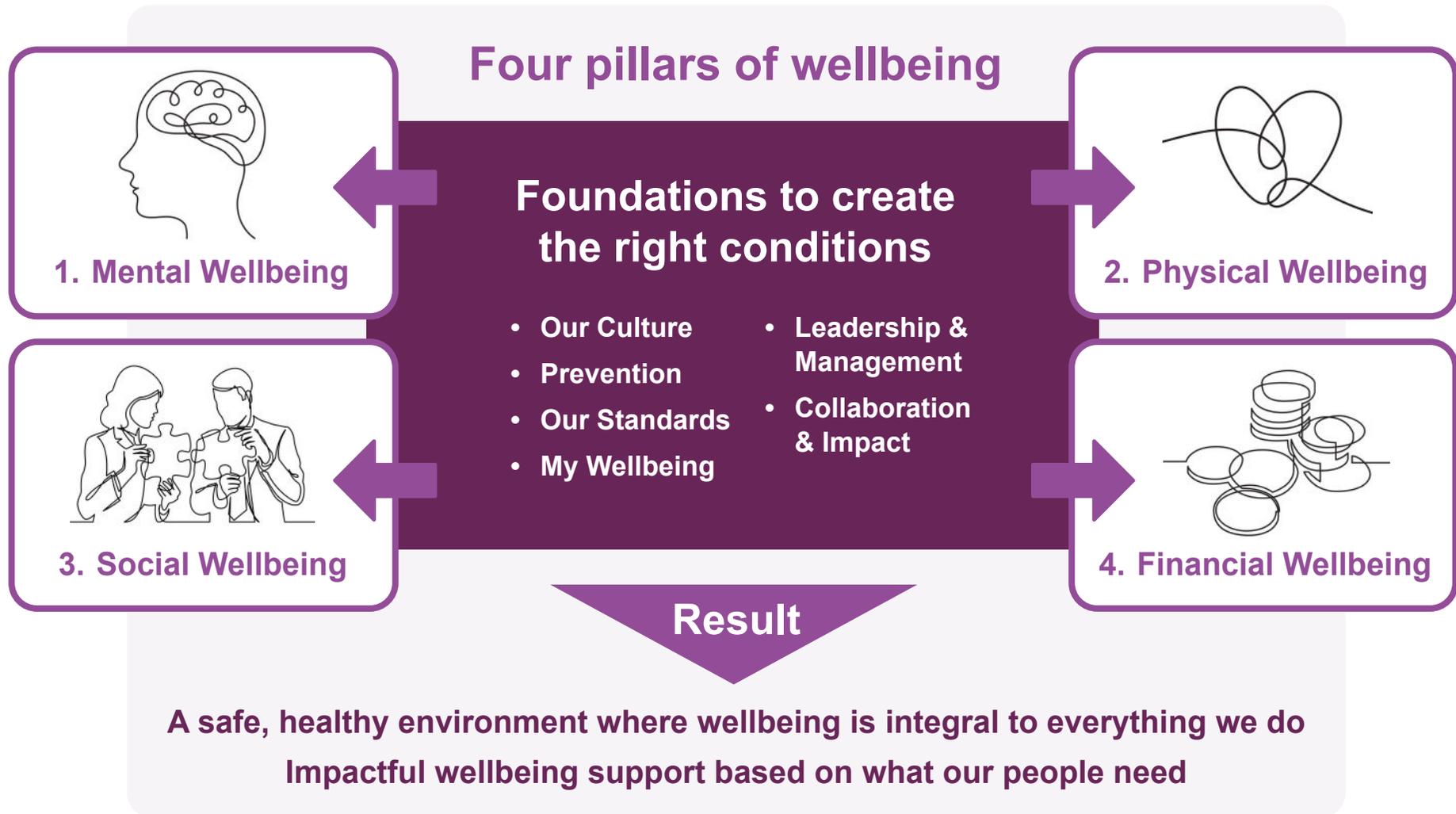
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We will:

- ensure initiatives are based people’s needs and robust research evidence
- establish feedback and sharing of best practice to foster collaboration
- improve data collection protocols to learn more about our people and track trends to measure success and areas for improvement
- track and measure action plans, including regular reviews.



# Our Integrated Model of Wellbeing



# Making It Happen

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A long-term action plan containing detail of the specific actions we will take over each phase to progress the delivery of our aims and approach will be developed.

This strategic plan will be underpinned by business and service plans through which our functions plan their activity.

An annual report will be produced at the end of each year to review progress, impact and alignment with wider organisation strategic aims.

Ultimately every individual in the organisation should feel a connection to our Wellbeing Strategy's aims, approach and our wellbeing vision.

## Every Strategy Needs a Strategy



# Measuring Success

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Success can be measured in many different ways. Our approach to measuring the success of our Wellbeing Strategy will be a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection, review and improvement.

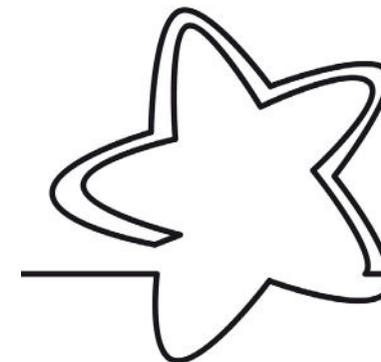
We will use a range of hard and soft metrics to measure the impact of our actions and ensure that wellbeing is central to the success of our workforce and Essex County Council as a whole.

## Hard Outcomes

- Wellbeing Index
- Uptake of Wellbeing Related Activities
- Reduced Sickness Absence
- Monitoring Employee Engagement
- Recruitment and Retention Rates
- Regular Surveys and Ongoing Feedback
- Self- Reported Wellbeing Scores and Mood Tests
- Development of Wellbeing Impact Assessments
- Conducting Deep Dives and Improve Employee Data
- Monitoring and Robustly Evaluating Initiatives
- Annual Evaluation Report and Updated Action Plans.

## Soft Outcomes

- Improved Productivity, Performance & Satisfaction
- Improved Relationships
- Improved Change Management Processes
- Customer Satisfaction / Reaching Organisational Aims
- Enhanced Reputation as a Service Provider in the Community.



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