Employee Relations Manager

Vacancy Information Pack

Term: Permanent
Location: Oxford, Hybrid
Salary: £75,116 – £78,721 per annum
Closing date: 9 December 2026

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OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Hear from Chief Executive, Martin Reeves



Thank you for your interest in joining our team at Oxfordshire County Council. You're potentially just a few steps away from the best career decision you'll ever make. With exciting changes in the local government environment coming soon, it's the perfect moment to join us.

What makes us special? Whatever you do, you'll be able to look around and say, "I made a difference". Because we're all bringing lasting change to people's lives in Oxfordshire. Every day, you'll be challenged in a new way, supported by your team, in an organisation that is free-thinking, flexible, and helps people achieve their ambitions. Working for us, you can create a unique career for yourself – while raising the bar for the future of the UK public sector, together.

Our focus for the past year has been shaping our organisation to be successful and sustainable for the future. We're on a journey to Deliver the Future Together and become:

- ✓ an **employer** of choice – where everyone recommends working here;
- ✓ a **partner of choice** – nurturing purposeful relationships with partners who feel well supported by us; and
- ✓ a **place shaper of choice** – where we act as a convener across public, private and community groups to shape and lead an ambitious and more equal future for our place and our residents.

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Hear from Chief Executive, Martin Reeves

In 2024, we spent time redesigning our leadership structure to make sure we have the right roles in the right areas. Our next phase is to review the size and shape of all our services, addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities locally and nationally, including devolution. That's where you come in.

We're seeking experienced, compassionate, inspiring leaders who can drive strategy and change in complex environments. We're looking for people who will live our values: always learning, be kind and care; daring to do it differently; equality and integrity in all we do; and taking responsibility. We prioritise ethical, inclusive leadership and the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues, while putting our residents at the heart of everything we do.

I'm proud of how much our organisation has achieved since I joined in March 2023 and I'm even more excited about what's to come! Take a look at some of our best moments of 2024.



Video Link: https://shorturl.at/2sUjo

Feeling inspired? Join us and help us shape our 2025 moments and beyond!

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About Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is home to approximately 800,000+ residents. It is one of the most rural counties in England and includes parts of three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Cotswolds to the Northwest, the North Wessex Downs to the south, and the Chilterns to the Southeast. Alongside picturesque villages and hamlets, the county has a range of vibrant market towns, such as Abingdon, Henley, Witney and Woodstock, together with the large town of Banbury and the historic city of Oxford.



Oxfordshire boasts a wealth of cultural and heritage sites, from the Ashmolean Museum to Blenheim Palace, while as a centre of excellence for learning and research, it has earned global recognition. Alongside the world-renowned University of Oxford, and one of the best new universities in the country Oxford Brookes University, the county has a range of internationally regarded research and development institutions, including the Synchrotron light source, Diamond.



We're the local authority for Oxfordshire, committed to delivering top quality services and value for money on behalf of the county's residents. These services range from museums and libraries to the disposal of waste, from the maintenance of our roads to the provision of adult and children's social care services. We employ almost 5,500 people to deliver those services.

About Oxfordshire County Council

Here are some of the things you might not know about us…

We received a Best Companies 1 Star accreditation in 2024 with a focus on Wellbeing, Fair Deal, and My Manager

We were ranked the 9th Best Big Company to Work for in the UK in 2024 by Best Companies

We were ranked the 6th Best Not-for-Profit Body to Work for in the UK 2024 by Best Companies

About Oxfordshire County Council

Our strategic plan 2023 - 2025 sets out our vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

Oxfordshire is a county full of ideas, innovation, inspiration and an ambition to deliver. It is a great place to live, work, learn and raise a family. The county has many strengths: it is home to world-class academic and research institutions; we have one of the strongest economies in the UK, with over 400,000 jobs and 30,000 businesses; and our vibrant rural and urban communities are supported by an active voluntary and community sector.

These make Oxfordshire a very special place.

We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our nine cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.

Our 9 Headline Projects

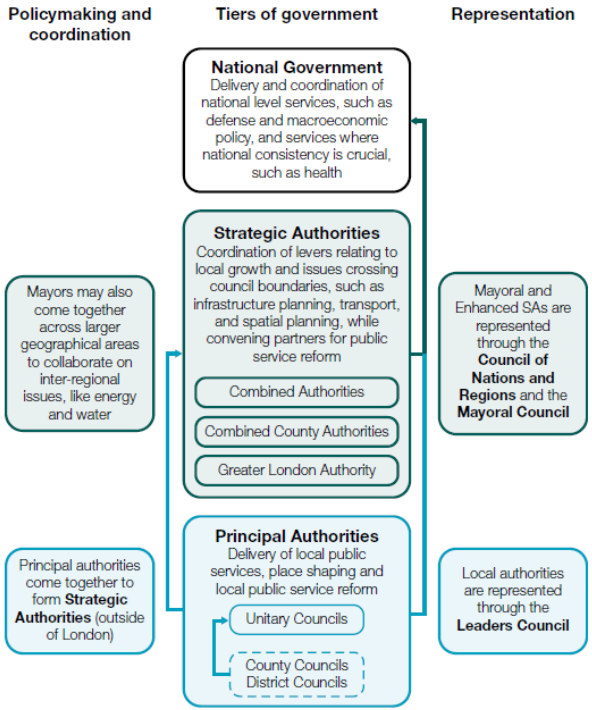
1) Create better spaces for residents and visitors in our town centres.
2) Work with transport partners towards a countywide integrated rail and bus offer.
3) Create two dedicated highways response teams to tackle issues in priority areas
4) Roll out a network of family hubs.
5) Through initiatives like Connect to Work, help people overcome barriers to employment
6) Support young people leaving care into employment.
7) Increase the number of children who reach a good level of development at age five.
8) Deliver more specialist school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
9) Support an expanded and coordinated programme of youth provision

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

On 16 December 2024, the Government published a white paper on a national programme of devolution and reform to local government. The Government wants successor councils to emerge from the current two-tier system and join a Strategic Authority. In February, all councils in Oxfordshire received the statutory invitation to submit proposals for local government reform. For more information: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/node/10068

This role will be pivotal in ensuring the Council can meet the challenges for modernisation through LGR and ensuring that our services meet the needs of all Oxford residents.

The Government's vision for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of governing local areas in England



Local Government Reorganisation Timeline

- **Now & ongoing:** public engagement on proposals to shape and finalise
- **Early '26:** Government Consultation
- **Before Summer recess '26:** Decision on proposals announced
- **After Summer recess '26:** Secondary legislation presented to Parliament
- **6 May '27:** Elections to the new shadow authorities
- **1 April '28:** New authorities go live

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Welcome from the Director of HR & Cultural Change



Thank you so much for your interest in the **Employee Relations (ER) Manager** role here at OCC.

We're genuinely excited about the journey our HR and Cultural Change team is on, as we transform the way we work and bring our People and Culture Strategy to life. Our recent service redesign has helped us create a new operating model - one that brings clarity to our roles, gives us the capacity to deliver, and strengthens our 'one team' spirit.

Our focus is simple: **ATTRACT, THRIVE, GROW, LEAD**. Together, we're building a workplace where everyone can flourish and where we make a real difference for people across Oxfordshire. We're passionate about creating high-performing, innovative, and agile teams that truly reflect the communities we serve.

As our new ER Manager, you will be central to fostering positive employee relations and shaping best-practice approaches that support our organisation through change. If you are ready to bring a fresh perspective, influence at pace and make a meaningful impact, we would love to hear from you.

Cherie Cuthbertson
Director of HR & Cultural Change

HR & Cultural Change Team: Vision & Priorities

Our Vision

We develop and maintain a high performing, innovative, highly engaged and agile teams, employing the best people, and reflecting the communities we serve. We nurture an environment that supports diversity, equality and inclusion, and allows all our employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents.

Our People and Culture Strategy Priorities

ATTRACT: Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people	• It is essential that we are able to attract, recruit and retain our talented people to deliver excellent services for the residents of Oxfordshire
THRIVE: Enabling our people to thrive and perform	• Creating a positive and inclusive work environment built on fairness, trust and transparency will allow our People to thrive and perform.
GROW: Enabling our people to grow and evolve for the future	• Providing growth opportunities both on and off the job to build our knowledge, skills and behaviours will help us all deliver the future together
LEAD: Enabling our people to lead and transform for the future	• Empowering our leaders to embrace the skills and behaviours needed to achieve high performance and effective outcomes

What You'll Do

You'll lead a contemporary, values-led approach to employee relations, taking a holistic view of how relationships, leadership, culture and ways of working shape employee experience. Working collaboratively across the organisation, you'll challenge assumptions, encourage fresh thinking and help colleagues build constructive, trusted working relationships.

Your focus will be the wider ER picture across Council services, including Schools and the Fire Service. Working with our Strategic People Partners, leaders and recognised Trade Unions, you'll bring together insights from employee relations issues to understand underlying themes, identify opportunities for earlier support and influence sustainable improvements. You'll help leaders consider the people impact of organisational change, looking beyond the resolution of individual cases to what we can learn and do differently.

You'll partner with leaders to shape people-focused approaches to organisational change and contribute to OCC's ambitious transformation programme, Delivering the Future Together . You'll challenge established ways of working with curiosity and constructive challenge, role-modelling our values and *daring to do it differently*. Your emphasis will be on turning learning into practical improvements that strengthen employee relations and support better outcomes for our people, services and communities.
Leading and developing the ER team will be central to your role. Through coaching, reflection and shared learning, you'll create a supportive environment where colleagues can ask questions, challenge approaches and try new ways of working. You'll encourage the team to use their professional judgement, grow their capability and confidence, and take ownership of improvements, while keeping a clear connection between their work and wider organisational priorities.

Could this be you?

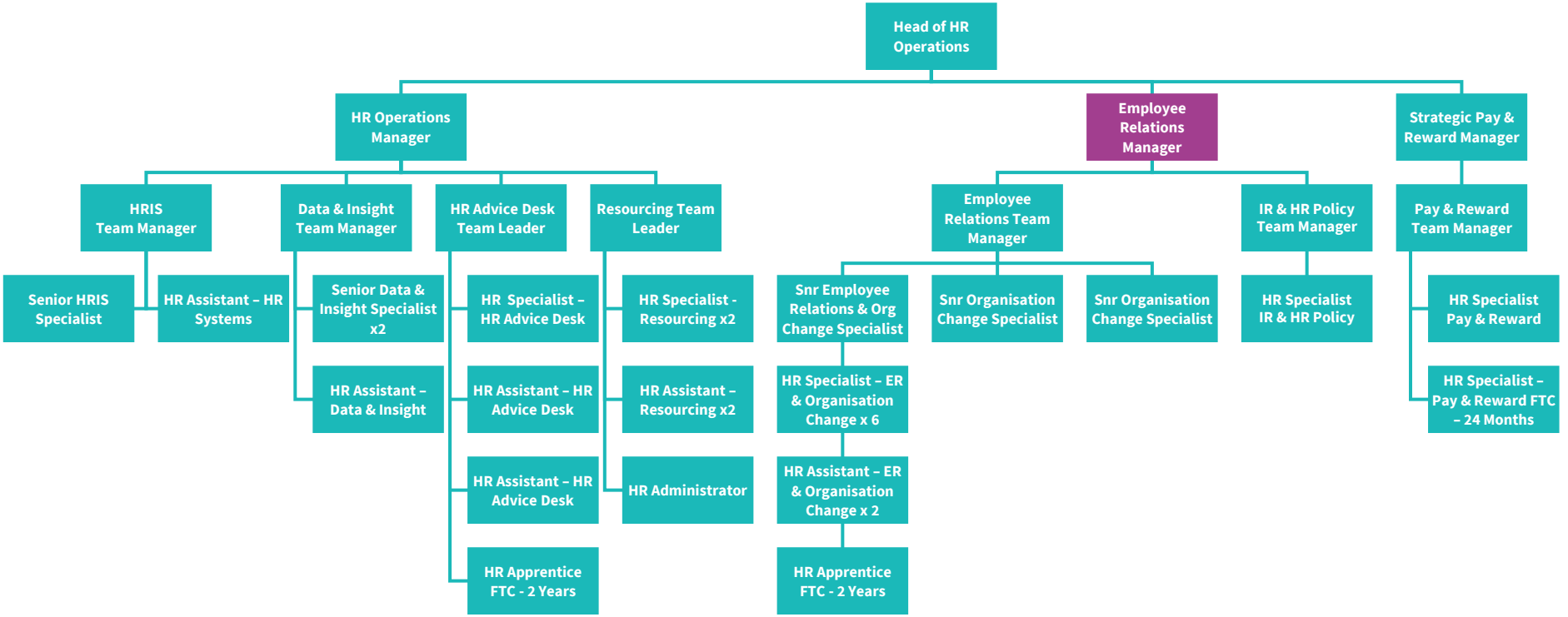
What You'll Bring

- A holistic understanding of employee relations and how employee experience, workplace relationships, culture and leadership connect, with the ability to translate that understanding into practical improvements.
- Experience of supporting leaders and teams through change in a complex, diverse organisation, considering the wider organisational context, to recognise wider themes, address underlying causes and influence sustainable improvement.
- Proven ability to lead, coach and develop others through direct and matrix management, creating a supportive environment for shared learning, constructive challenge and growing confidence. This role includes leadership of a team of up to 15 colleagues.
- Experience of turning service plans and business strategies into clear, practical priorities, helping colleagues understand the wider purpose of their work and take ownership of improvements.
- Experience of building constructive, trusted relationships with Trade Unions in a political or public sector environment, listening to different perspectives and working collaboratively to strengthen employee relations.
- The confidence to question established ways of working, communicate clearly and influence leaders and stakeholders constructively, while encouraging others to contribute ideas and develop their own professional judgement.
- Excellent, up-to-date knowledge of UK employment law and relevant regulation, applied with sound judgement and a wider organisational perspective. Experience in the public sector or a similarly regulated environment is desirable.

Before applying, we recommend reviewing the full job description, which provides further detail on the role requirements.

Team Structure Chart

HR Operations



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What You Can Look Forward To

At OCC, you'll be part of a team that's not only passionate about *what* we do, but also *how* we do it.

This is a permanent role with hybrid working - typically one to two days a week in our central Oxford office, with flexibility to suit your role and lifestyle, balanced with business needs. The post holder must also be able to travel across the county and work from other locations when required.



- **General annual leave package –** 30 days plus bank holidays, and an option to 'buy' additional holiday
- **Local Government Pension Scheme** – with employer contributions up to 19.9%
- **Discounts** – local and national offers for shopping and travel
- **Great learning and development opportunities** to support your continued growth
- **Technology that supports hybrid and agile working,** with unlimited access to Microsoft Copilot for smarter productivity
- **Employee Assistance Programme** – including health and wellbeing support
- **Enhance family friendly policies**

2026–2028

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Our people and culture strategy

Together, we are the moment makers – delivering the future for Oxfordshire

Together, we are the moment makers

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Creating an environment where *everyone* can thrive and perform

Our collective strength at Oxfordshire County Council comes from how we live our values through the dedication, commitment, and resilience we show each day in our work. Together, we all play a part in delivering service excellence for the residents of Oxfordshire, whilst building and enhancing our culture – every manager, team, leader and colleague contributes.

We offer diverse services and we have colleagues from a wide range of professions and vocations. These include over 300 social workers, 280 firefighters, more than 200 support workers, as well as registrars, solicitors, planners, tree surgeons, librarians, archaeologists and many more. It's a fascinating place to work.

The Our People and Culture Strategy is about creating an environment where everyone can thrive and perform. It is our ambition to continue to be an 'employer of choice' in Oxfordshire – by working together, we can make our council a welcoming and inspiring place for all, where diverse strengths and perspectives are celebrated and everyone can succeed.

Our 'Including Everyone' framework for 2025–29 sets out our vision for achieving an inclusive workplace, inclusive service delivery and inclusive communities – demonstrating our commitment to reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion in all that we do.

The year ahead brings big changes for all of us – from preparing for local government reorganisation and devolution, to navigating some real financial pressures. But change also brings opportunity.

Together, we have a chance to reimagine how we serve Oxfordshire, transform our services, and to create a more connected, supportive and ambitious culture across our communities. To deliver this, we need to stay flexible, resilient and responsive so we can shape the change that lies ahead.

Our ideas, feedback and experiences have shaped this strategy. Through open conversations and collaboration with colleagues from all service areas, our inclusion networks and unions, enabling us to focus on what matters most to us all.

This strategy will help us make a difference for Oxfordshire and its residents. Are you ready for the challenges ahead? Find out more in the following pages.

Highlights of what we've achieved together 2024–2026

Lead

- We've increased our focus on developing leadership capability across the organisation. During 2025, more than 100 hours were invested in development activities, including monthly leadership sessions and bi-annual awaydays.
- The reciprocal mentoring scheme has also continued to grow, now with 60 co-mentoring pairs, all sharing their lived experience, helping us strengthen inclusive leadership behaviours.

Thrive

- The Oxfordshire Connects event brought together more than 700 colleagues, with 89 per cent of feedback saying it was useful and helped them feel more connected and supported.
- We have undertaken a cultural review and introduced a new, shortened pulse survey to gauge how everyone is feeling about working at Oxfordshire County Council – listening to your voices and shaping our engagement approach.

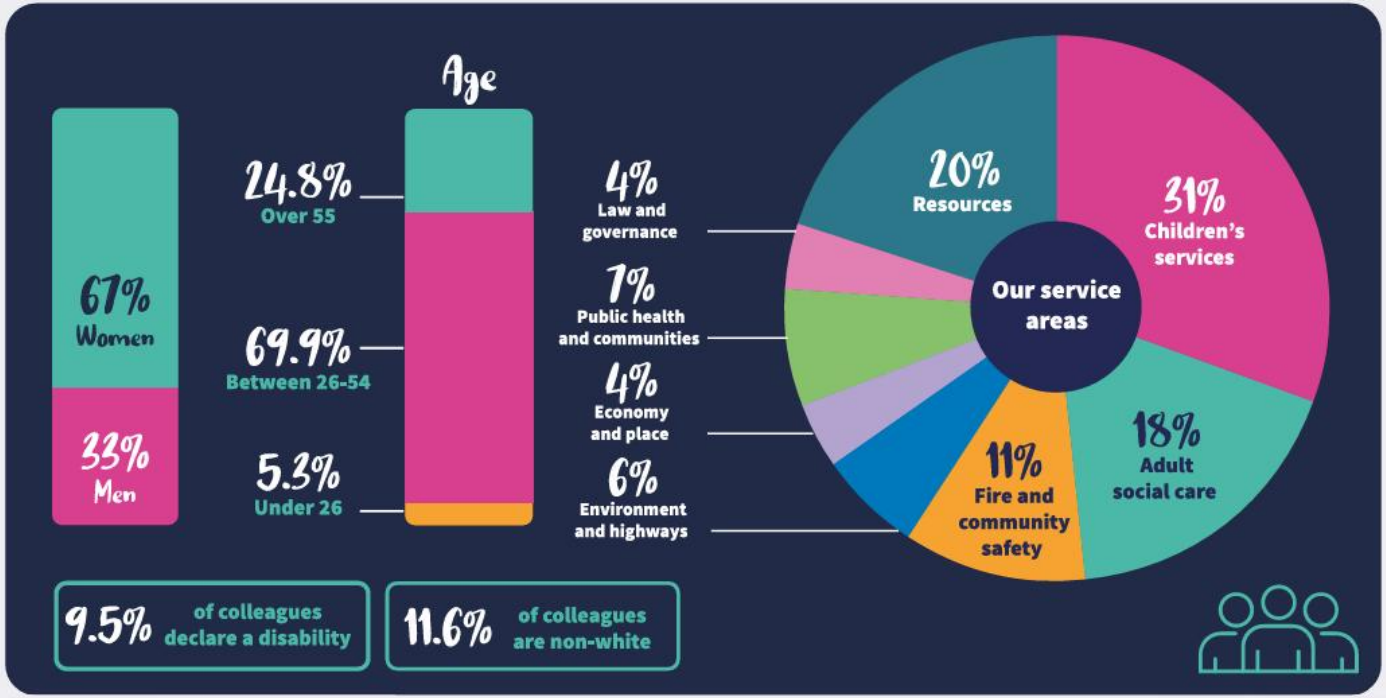
Grow

- Apprenticeships are an important way for us to recruit and develop future talent. More than 340 colleagues are currently on apprenticeship programmes.
- Facilities management are recruiting significant numbers of apprentices and developing clear talent pipelines, while legal services and both adult's and children's services continue to grow strong apprenticeship cohorts – including many social work apprentices.
- Apprentices are bringing fresh skills, progressing into permanent roles, and helping to fill hard-to-recruit posts.

Attract

- Children's social care legal team has been strengthened by working closely with the talent team to attract candidates into hard-to-recruit roles.
- The team successfully recruited five new full-time colleagues – including newly qualified solicitors – which means there is less reliance on agency support and resulted in a significant reduction in agency spend over the year.
- This has improved stability, strengthened continuity for children and families and enhanced the overall quality of support delivered across the service.

Over 5,000 colleagues delivering diverse services in Oxfordshire



Our people: Culture

- Our shared values shape our culture, guiding how we work together and support each other.
- Our Delivering the Future Together Champions work closely with teams to bring these values to life on a daily basis.
- We work closely with recognised unions – including UNISON, the Fire Brigades Union and others representing education and specialist staff – to ensure every voice is heard and everyone feels supported.
- Our 'Including Everyone' framework sets our vision and commitment to lead the way in creating a fair and inclusive Oxfordshire, by building an inclusive workplace culture, delivering inclusive services and tackling inequalities in the communities we serve.
- Colleagues describe Oxfordshire County Council as a kind, supportive and purpose-driven place to work, with strong relationships, inclusive leadership, teams who look out for each other, and the flexibility that helps people do their best work.
- At the same time, colleagues say the experience isn't always consistent and that clearer priorities, simpler processes, more joined-up communication and well-managed change would help everyone feel more confident, informed and supported across all teams.



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Our vision and priorities

Our vision for people and culture in Oxfordshire County Council

A fair, inclusive, and forward-thinking workplace where everyone can thrive, collaborate and deliver outstanding services for our communities. We lead with integrity, compassion and agility, celebrating diversity and putting inclusion at the heart of everything we do. Together, we are ready for the future.



- Leading by example at every level, living our values every day.



- Creating a supportive, inclusive environment where everyone can do their best.



- Help everyone build the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for the future.



- Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented, diverse people.

Where we focus next – together

Lead

- Strengthen our shared vision and culture and further embed our values into everyday practice.
- Invest in leadership development to help us succeed in a period of rapid change.
- Identify and develop future leaders, from a more diverse pool of candidates, and build succession pipelines.

Thrive

- Make people data, policies, and systems clear and easy to access for all.
- Run engagement activities that put equality, diversity, and inclusion at the centre, and keep everyone informed and involved as we change.
- Promote healthy working practices and provide proactive support so colleagues can thrive at work.

Grow

- Improve the learning and development offer and make this more accessible for everyone.
- Invest in our managers, helping them to understand their responsibilities through targeted learning and equipping them to lead teams through change.
- Open up career pathways and prioritise opportunities for care leavers.

Attract

- Develop workforce plans to fill key roles and secure future talent.
- Strengthen our brand and identity to make the organisation a welcoming, rewarding place for all.
- Improve recruitment and talent management to build diverse pipelines.

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How will we know we're successful?

Diverse and inclusive workforce

- Colleagues reflect Oxfordshire's communities at all levels, including senior roles, and we continue to diversify our workforce.

Fair and competitive pay

- Colleagues know our pay is fair, and pay gaps are low and clearly reported.

Positive onboarding and induction

- New colleagues join quickly and smoothly, with a positive onboarding and induction experience.

Engagement and culture

- Colleagues are engaged and supported, with a strong sense of belonging and trust. Regular pulse surveys help us listen and respond, measuring how we lead through change.

Retention and turnover

- We retain talented people, maintain healthy turnover, and celebrate those leaving as well as those progressing.

People thrive and feel well

- Colleagues are healthy, supported, and able to perform at their best. Sickness absence is reduced, and employee relations cases are resolved promptly, helping boost productivity and morale.

Career growth and social mobility

- Colleagues have clear opportunities for progression, the apprenticeship levy is fully utilised, and we support social mobility–for example, by providing 30 care leaver work placements.

Operating efficiently and sustainably

- We make best use of our workforce by converting more temporary roles to permanent, ensuring efficient use of resources and achieving financial sustainability.

Delivering LGR together

- We successfully deliver local government reorganisation, working collaboratively and staying focused on public service for Oxfordshire's residents.

Ready to Apply?



Recruitment Process
jobs.oxfordshire.gov.uk/your-journey

- Please create an account in our recruitment system and upload your CV along with a personal statement outlining how your skills and experience meet the role requirements (up to 1,000 words). PDF or Word format is preferred.
- Applications close on 9 December 2026, with shortlisting expected to commence from 10 December 2026.
- **Interview Stage 1:** First-stage interviews will be held online via Microsoft Teams on 15 December 2026.
- **Interview Stage 2:** Candidates progressing from first stage will be invited to a a final interview on either 17 or 18 December 2026, which will include a short presentation.
- Further details will be provided to you should you be selected for interview.
- Please note that we will try to meet the dates set out in the advert. There may be occasions when these dates will change. Feedback will only be provided if you attend an interview or assessment.

Our Commitments

Our commitment to: Equality Diversity and Inclusion
At Oxfordshire County Council we are proud of our diverse workforce. Everyone is accepted for who they are, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, marital status, faith or belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or on maternity or family leave. We have a number of staff network groups which provide peer support, education and safe spaces for all.

Our commitment to: Guaranteed Interview Schemes
As a Disability Confident employer, we guarantee an interview for disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the job. We also guarantee interviews to care leavers who have completed further education and who meet the essential criteria for the job. For those leaving care without any further education, we guarantee an interview for our apprenticeships. We are also committed to helping and supporting those transitioning from HM Armed Forces to civilian life and guarantee an interview for those demonstrating the essential criteria for the role, within three years of leaving the service.

Our commitment to: Safeguarding
Oxfordshire County Council are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults. We expect all employees, workers and volunteers to share this commitment. We will ensure that all our recruitment and selectin practices reflect these commitments.

Our commitment to: Flexible Working
We are open to discussions about flexible working, which can include flexi-time, full time and part time working, job sharing, nine-day fortnights and annualised hours, depending on the requirements of the role and the service.

disability confident EMPLOYER

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Contact Information

If you would like a confidential discussion about the role, please contact OCC Talent at talent@oxfordshire.gov.uk. A member of the team will be happy to connect you with the appropriate colleague

If you experience any accessibility issues with attachments included in this advert, please contact OCC Talent at talent@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you encounter any technical issues with the application system, please contact the OCC Careers team at careers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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