

Employee Relations Manager

Vacancy Information Pack

Term: Permanent

Location: Oxford, Hybrid

Salary: £72,716 - £76,206 per annum

Closing date: 22 February 2026

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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:

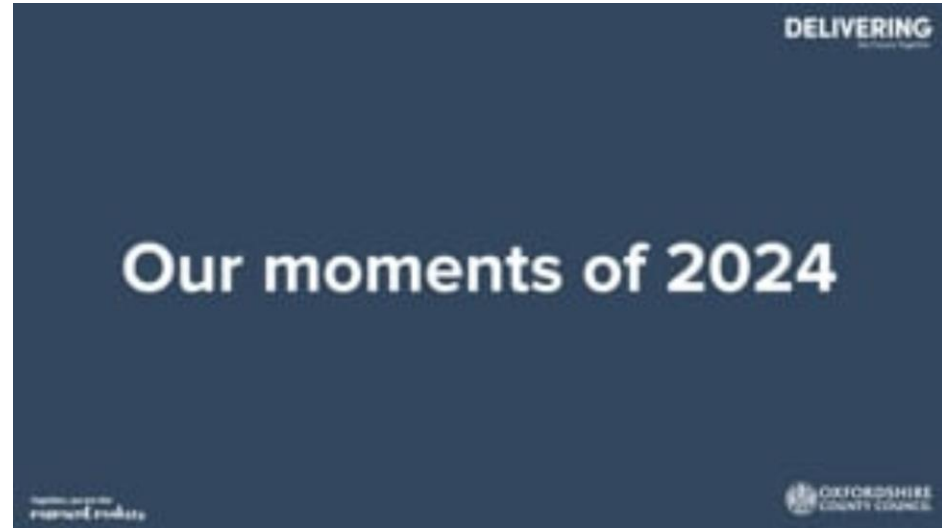
- ✓ an **employer of choice** – where everyone recommends working here;
- ✓ a **partner of choice** – nurturing purposeful relationships with partners who feel well supported by us; and
- ✓ a **place shaper of choice** – where we act as a convener across public, private and community groups to shape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

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!*

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

Policymaking and coordination

Mayors may also come together across larger geographical areas to collaborate on inter-regional issues, like energy and water

Principal authorities come together to form **Strategic Authorities** (outside of London)

Tiers of government

National Government
Delivery and coordination of national level services, such as defense and macroeconomic policy, and services where national consistency is crucial, such as health

Strategic Authorities
Coordination of levers relating to local growth and issues crossing council boundaries, such as infrastructure planning, transport, and spatial planning, while convening partners for public service reform

Combined Authorities

Combined County Authorities

Greater London Authority

Principal Authorities
Delivery of local public services, place shaping and local public service reform

Unitary Councils

County Councils
District Councils

Representation

Mayoral and Enhanced SAs are represented through the **Council of Nations and Regions** and the **Mayoral Council**

Local authorities are represented through the **Leaders Council**



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

This is a high-impact, wide-ranging role with real scope to influence, improve and shape the future direction of employee relations at OCC. Well suited to a confident and ambitious ER professional, it offers the opportunity to lead at scale, challenge established ways of working and embed best-practice approaches that make a tangible difference for our people, services and communities.

In this role, you'll champion a contemporary, values-led approach to employee relations and organisational change, coaching and supporting colleagues across the organisation, building constructive and trusted relationships with our recognised Trade Unions, and driving continuous improvement that strengthens both our culture and the services we deliver to residents. You'll lead on all industrial and employee relations matters across the Council, from developing HR policies to negotiating and consulting with Trade Unions, including Schools and the Fire Service. The role involves providing high-level advice on complex employment issues and working closely with our Strategic People Partners to deliver effective and efficient organisational transformation across Council services.

Acting as a strategic HR and organisational development expert, you'll partner with leaders to implement future-focused people strategies that improve services and deliver excellence for the residents of Oxfordshire. You'll also play a key role in driving Delivering the Future Together (DTFT), OCC's ambitious transformation programme, role-modelling our values as an organisational leader and championing our commitment to daring to do it differently as we continue to improve outcomes for our people, partners and communities. You'll lead large-scale employee relations initiatives, developing impactful strategies that promote excellent employment relations and support the effective management of grievances, conduct, capability and absence.

Could this be you?

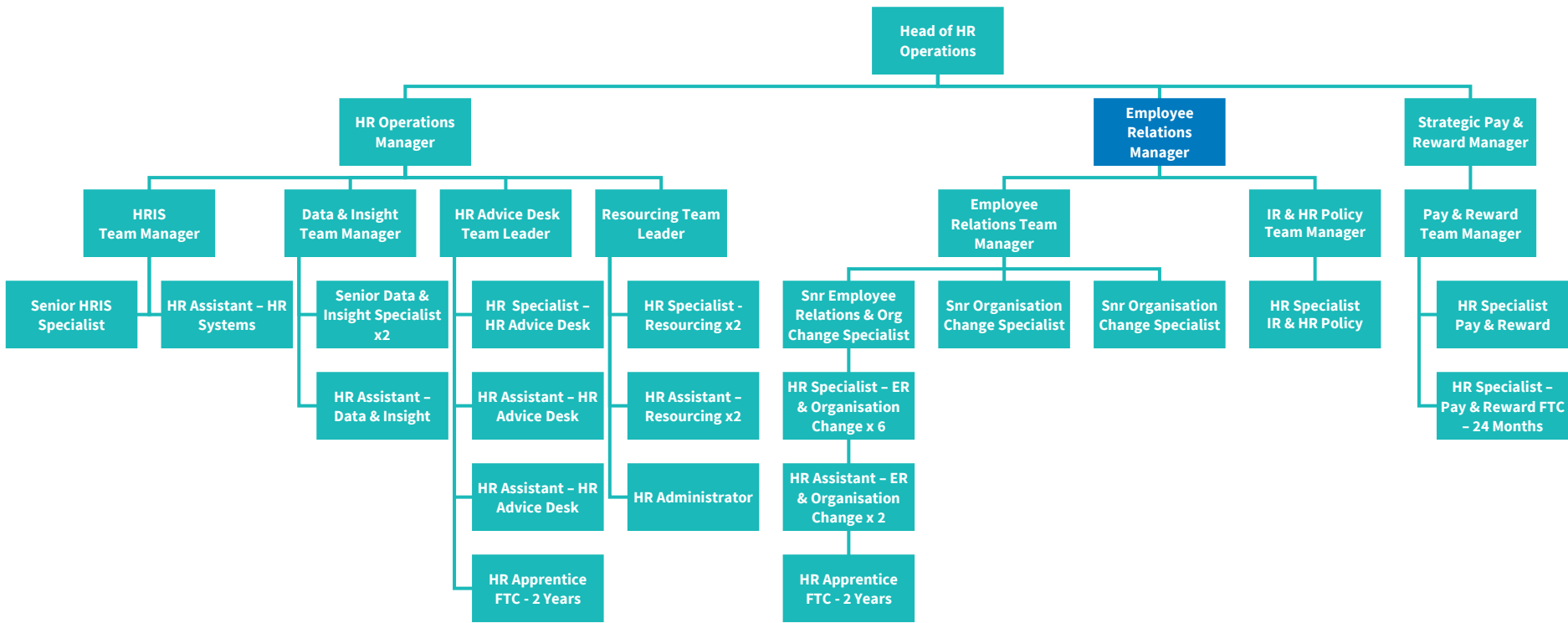
What You'll Bring

- A strong understanding of relevant employment legislation, regulation and best practice, alongside awareness of national and local government policy, developments and emerging trends.
- Experience of working in a complex, diverse organisation, supporting leaders and teams through ongoing change and transformation, and positively influencing improvement.
- Proven ability to lead, motivate and develop others through direct and matrix management, creating an environment where people perform at their best and grow in confidence. This role includes leadership of a team of up to 15 colleagues.
- Experience of turning service plans and business strategies into clear, practical workplans and roadmaps that people can confidently work to.
- Experience of working constructively with Trade Unions in a political or public-sector environment.
- Confidence to communicate clearly and professionally, with the ability to challenge constructively, negotiate effectively and influence a wide range of stakeholders and senior leaders.
- Excellent, up-to-date knowledge of UK employment law, with experience of working in the public sector or a similarly regulated environment desirable.

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

Team Structure Chart

HR Operations



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.

- **Generous 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
- **Enhanced family friendly policies**



Ready to Apply?



- 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 22 February 2026, with shortlisting expected to commence from 23 February 2026.
- **Interview Stage 1:** First-stage interviews will be held online via Microsoft Teams on 02 March 2026.
- **Interview Stage 2:** Candidates progressing from first stage will be invited to a colleague engagement panel (date to be confirmed) and a final interview during the week commencing 16 March 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.

Recruitment Process

 jobs.oxfordshire.gov.uk/your-journey

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 selection 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.



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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