

# Introducing West Midlands Employers



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**Local government and the wider public sector are delivering vital services at a time of unprecedented challenges, from post-Covid recovery to the cost-of-living crisis.**

For organisations to be at their most effective, they must invest time and resources in their biggest asset: people. In the West Midlands they have a trusted ally to help them do exactly that.

For over 30 years, West Midlands Employers (WME) has acted as an expert advisor, partner and enabler for elected members, senior management and staff at all levels to help the region create a resilient public sector workforce.

From end-to-end recruitment support to enabling practitioners to learn from one another, WME is the West Midlands' expert in human resources (HR) and organisational development (OD).

What sets us apart is we work at the heart of local government, owned by our member local authorities. We're dedicated to serving their needs while challenging organisations to drive improvement and acting as an advocate for the workforce agenda at a regional and national level.



# WME - over three decades of evolution

Advocate

Build

Champion

**WME's mission is to advocate, build and champion a resilient and diverse public sector workforce for an ambitious West Midlands region.**

**These are much more than just words – they go to the heart of our very reason for being.**

**As a not-for-profit, public sector organisation collectively owned by 32 councils across the West Midlands, we are an integral part of the sector.**

Our roots can be traced back to the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, which created 9 Regional Employers' Organisations (REOs) one for each region of England. While some REOs have remained smaller operations, WME has evolved to become a progressive and proactive asset for councils in our region.

As an organisation we have grown significantly in our breadth of service and support and now have a team of 30 staff running an organisation with a turnover in excess of £3m a year generated by a combination of membership fees and income from services provided. With that growth has come greater capacity to offer an ever-widening range of services to fulfil our vision for a stronger sector, by supporting the recruitment and personnel needs of public sector organisations across the region as well being a hub for collaboration and innovation in shared services.

The combination of our in-house team and our network of WME Associates enable us to provide expertise and support to everyone from councils large and small, emergency services, and NHS trusts.



# WME - a flexible ally responsive to changing needs

**WME has built a reputation for being a strong, member-led organisation and solutions-focused partner.**

Those qualities came to the fore during the pandemic as we quickly adapted our offer to help members respond to huge challenges and rising demand.

But responding to workforce challenges is part and parcel of what we do every day, whether it's helping members to find an edge in an increasingly competitive recruitment market, supporting them to retain and develop their talent, or helping them find a solution to a big issue.

As the big business saying goes, you're only as good as the people you employ – and that's why a robust and innovative approach to HR and OD is the backbone of the most successful organisations.

WME is the region's cheerleader for driving excellence and enabling HR and OD practitioners to flourish. Whatever the size of the organisation and scale of the challenge, we are there when you need us with solutions that can be tailored to your needs.

We can play many different roles whether it's becoming an extension of a smaller council's team or providing training sessions to upskill an internal function.



When we consulted on a new strategic plan for WME in 2019 one clear message from member councils was a desire to focus on shared workforce priorities. That's why we set up the Workforce Priority Fund, which ringfences £100,000 every year for us to work with heads of HR and identify activities that address key issues.

It's become a catalyst for drawing in funds from strategic partners and other areas of WME's work funding a variety of priorities from sector-wide recruitment campaigns to inclusion research, development of new support programmes, shared service offers, and more recently focussing support on recruitment and retention.





## WME - your regional strategic partner

**In recent years we have grown in our role as an enabler and convener for developing a resilient, diverse and people-centred West Midlands' public sector workforce, through shared services and collaborative projects.**

In 2022 we launched the West Midlands Workforce Strategy for Local Government, aimed at developing a collective approach to the way in which councils use agency staff to meet their needs. Like many areas of our work, it's about driving greater value from limited resources, ushering in more effective ways of working, and helping local government to stabilise the permanent workforce over the long term.

WME brings organisations and individuals together in a variety of ways to innovate, share knowledge and experience, and ultimately improve the services they deliver. We run a programme of conferences and other events as well as convening regular meetings of HR directors and heads, including a dedicated forum for district councils.

One of the most powerful examples is our leadership of the West Midlands Coaching and Mentoring Pool. It has created a melting pot for cross-sector learning with more than 35 organisations signing up to both use and provide coaches and mentors – enabling the region's wealth of public sector talent to support others while gaining new insights themselves. Our annual Coaching & Mentoring Conference is now in its 16th year!

WME has also evolved to become a key strategic partner. For example, we worked with our councils to find solutions to problems within agency service provision, culminating in the establishment of a single agency framework offering our councils access to consistent service quality, support and uniquely providing support into our regional Workforce Strategy.



We have recently partnered with West Midlands Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) to support an effective Memorandum of Understanding to provide stability for councils accessing agency social work professionals.

WME is also in partnership with West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (WMADASS) on a joint project to review the workforce challenges and needs for the future in Adult Social Care to develop sustainable initiatives to address identified priorities.



"WM ADASS have strengthened our working relationships with WME recognising the ongoing workforce challenges facing the adult social care sector. WME provides key capability and capacity that we have found invaluable as we looked to strengthen our focus on retention and recruitment to the many important roles that assist in keeping our communities safe, cared for, and living independent lives in the region."

**Pete Jackson, Improvement Director,  
WM ADASS**

Through closer working with fellow regional bodies, we can connect related initiatives and we're able to use our wealth of experience and expertise to help local government tackle resourcing challenges in social care.

We are creating sector hubs through our Workforce Priority Fund, such as the Adult Social Care Careers Hub.

It's a valuable resource with a wide range of advice and information for those either thinking about entering adult social care or taking their career in a new direction. We also launched a Local Government Careers Guide to showcase the range of opportunities in our sector.



"The Careers Guide is extremely enlightening to job seekers at events who are surprised at the career options available to those entering local government – and many of those options are in contemporary and cutting-edge careers not at all like the 'stereotypical local government worker' that some often believe to be the case. It's great to see a real 'light bulb moment'."

**David, Walsall Council**

WME increasingly plays a role in spreading best practice across the country. Examples include working with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development to create and deliver the Inspire People Professionals Academy, which is upskilling HR and OD professionals and enabling them to be at the heart of organisational transformation.

WME has also partnered with the LGA to lead the Culture & OD Exchange – a virtual national network for organisational development practitioners throughout local government in England.



# WME – How we are governed

The REO is an active and influential Employers' Organisation for Local Government in the region; advising, supporting, and representing councils in membership in the broad fields of workforce and people management, employment relations and employee /organisational development and transformation. Owned by 32 shareholder councils WME is governed through a Shareholder Membership Group (the Chief Executives from all 32 councils) and an elected member Management Board comprising representatives from the 6 sub-regions and a further representative for District Councils. The WME Management Board has responsibility for the general management and oversight of the business of WME and help set the strategic direction.



## WME - how we can help?

We support our sector in a variety of ways.

Here is a flavour of our support offer to showcase how we can help support your organisation.

### Resourcing

from advertising vacancies via our own platform [www.WMjobs.co.uk](http://www.WMjobs.co.uk) (one of the largest public sector jobs board in the country) to the provision of full applicant tracking system, to managing the WMTemps Agency Framework, to delivering executive recruitment campaigns that both support elected members on interview panels and ensure a first class candidate experience. Our team provide a helping hand through every stage of a recruitment process and in some cases become an extension of a council's resourcing or HR team.

### Coaching and Mentoring

WME has championed the power of coaching and mentoring for many years and helped organisations to embed a coaching culture – whether it's by creating an in-house offer or via access to an external network involving professionals across the region, to realise the true potential of an organisation's greatest asset, its people.

### HR and Consultancy

Our HR experts provide advice, training, and consultancy on a wide range of employment issues while keeping our members up to date on latest policy via a helpline service, regular publications, and employment law events.

### Leadership and OD

We recognise that all organisations have the opportunity to develop the leaders of tomorrow while transforming the way they work. WME provides bespoke support to enable them to do exactly that, from running leadership programmes, to helping them address workplace health and wellbeing, and building a better understanding of diversity and inclusion.

### Membership Services

We offer defined benefits to our subscribing councils including access to free events, publications, and one to one support. A key benefit valued by our councils is the independent facilitation of CEO appraisals, which play a key role in establishing positive working relationships between officers and members.



**Find out more:**

**[wmemployers.org.uk](http://wmemployers.org.uk)**

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