



martin reddington associates

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a group of people holding hands in a circle, suggesting a team or community. The image is slightly blurred, with a focus on the hands and the faces of the people in the foreground.

# The Employment Deal

**Worcestershire Regulatory  
Services  
2017  
Feedback Report**



Examining the expectations and beliefs of the workforce about their employment relationship

## About this report

This feedback report is based on your employees' responses to The Employment Deal Diagnostic (TEDD®) survey they took part in during the period 06 to 30 November 2017. The results are set out based on the TEDD® model as described on pages 6 and 7.

This survey shines a light on workforce performance by measuring the 'deal' between Worcestershire Regulatory Services and their employees. Think of it as both parties making *contributions* in a number of ways that reflect the quality of the relationship between employer and employee.

The following results show employees' perception of various elements that play a part in the employment deal. These cover:

- the balance of the employment deal for the organisation as a whole and for Worcestershire Regulatory Services
- the quality of the conversations that are taking place for the organisation as a whole and between managers and individuals
- you will also see words used by staff in Worcestershire Regulatory Services to describe the organisation

The results illustrate the *performance recipes* that underpin workforce performance and provide opportunities for *conversations for change* to make improvements.

# Executive Summary

This page provides an overview of some key metrics drawn from the report.

**Key:** **Sustain:** Good score/outcome to be celebrated (75 +)

**Monitor:** Moderate score/outcome – capable of improvement (51 – 74)

**Improve:** Relatively poor score/outcome – a clear signal to take steps to improve (50 or less)

## OVERALL MEASURES

**Response Rate:** 37 employees responded to the survey, representing 52% of those invited to respond

- **Balance of the Deal** – perceived fairness and value of the employment deal (-16)
- **Overall Satisfaction** with the employment deal (59)
- **Conversational Practice** – quality of conversations to find solutions to workplace challenges and get things done (72)
- **Workplace Tensions** – competing challenges in the workplace, such as *more-with-less* (66)
- **Job Pressure** – perceived excessive pressure in the workplace (72)
- **Organisation Personality** – strongest disposition is **Directive** (47)

## KEY DRIVERS

These are identified as the elements of the employment deal that are most important to employees. Three major themes emerged for WRS:

### Theme 1: Psychological contract (PC)

This highlighted the importance of trust in the line manager, flexible working practices and having access to adequate tools and resources.

### Theme 2: Job Pressure

This highlighted the importance of recognising the pressures that staff face in the knowledge that if levels rise unchecked, it will lead to a fall in employee contribution and associated issues such as rising sickness absence.

### Theme 3: Workplace Tensions

Linked to theme 2, this highlights the challenge between expectations and the reality of what can actually be delivered with the available resources. At present, staff are responding positively to it, but it should not be allowed to rise unchecked.

## KEY THEMES

Increasingly organisations rely on good will and high levels of motivation and performance from staff, in terms of ‘going the extra mile’ and ‘engagement’ with organisational objectives and values.

In this context, trust, reciprocity and the overall quality of social exchange relationships are becoming increasingly important features of the employment deal.

The evidence set out in this report provides an opportunity for Worcestershire Regulatory Services to undertake *conversations for change* in relation to how it can improve the perceived balance of the deal and quality of conversational practice across the organisation, in the knowledge that this will support sustainable employee contributions. Three key themes emerged from the evidence.

### Theme 1: Psychological contract

The psychological contract is a defining feature of the relationship between an employee and employer. It constitutes a set of obligations and promises between the two parties. Three facets of the psychological contract were found to have the biggest impact on employee contribution at WRS:

#### ❖ Role autonomy

This captures the extent to which employees feel they have power to shape their working practices in order to achieve their performance targets. Free text comments provide evidence of this through references to “*flexible working*” and the sense of ‘*freedom to plan one's own work schedule*’

#### ❖ Obligations and Promises

The quality of the employment relationship is shaped by the reliable delivery of obligations and promises by the employer. For example, the expectation that as an employee you will have access to equipment, tools and IT systems essential to one's job role. An emergent theme in the narrative analysis as well as being a key driver of employee performance is the perception of inadequate tools/equipment amongst employees. The comment below demonstrates how insufficient resources is undermining performance objectives.

*Increasing demands from partner councils and insufficient resources available to properly meet these*

#### ❖ Trust in line manager

Line managers are central agents in providing trust-worthy leadership. Trust promotes openness and enables employees to feel secure and confident to share ideas for creative problem solving. There is a great difference in attitude and sentiment between those employees working with trusting and supportive managers and those who are not. This can be seen in the positive comments for example, *'I have a very good working relationship with my manager' and 'very approachable to discuss operational tasks'*. Those with more problematic line managers draw attention to the disconnect and lack of trust in the relationship for example:

*Managers disinterest in the feelings of their staff*

*Would be nice to see my line manager but oh ... never in or working from home....*

#### **Theme 2: Job Pressure**

Job pressure can make a positive contribution towards performance levels. It can help to maintain motivation and inspire employees to be innovative in the face of challenges. At the moment job pressure is in the upper end of the moderate range (72) - nonetheless, if job pressure continues to grow, it can begin to manifest itself in a number of negative ways. Eventually performance levels will deteriorate. This is already evident in some of the data, for example, *'pressure of an ever-increasing workload and the daily feelings of being unable to cope'*. A recognition of the intense pressure staff experience is highly recommended.

#### **Theme 3: Workplace Tensions**

Working under the climate of austerity means employees are being required more and more to negotiate a number of tensions including shortages of resources, staff cuts, increased volume of work, but at the same time having to deliver similar or improved levels of service to the pre-austerity era. In this survey, the *more-with-less tension* expressed via comments regarding the disparity between customer demands, expectations and the reality of what can be delivered with the available resources is toward the higher end of the moderate range. This tension is challenging and if allowed to rise unchecked could lead to harmful effects on wellbeing and performance. Examples include:

*The biggest tensions are often linked to the debate on whether the service has sufficient resources or whether we need to change our approach to the day job*

*Demand exceeding (reduced) capacity*

## TEDD® - The Balance of the Deal'©

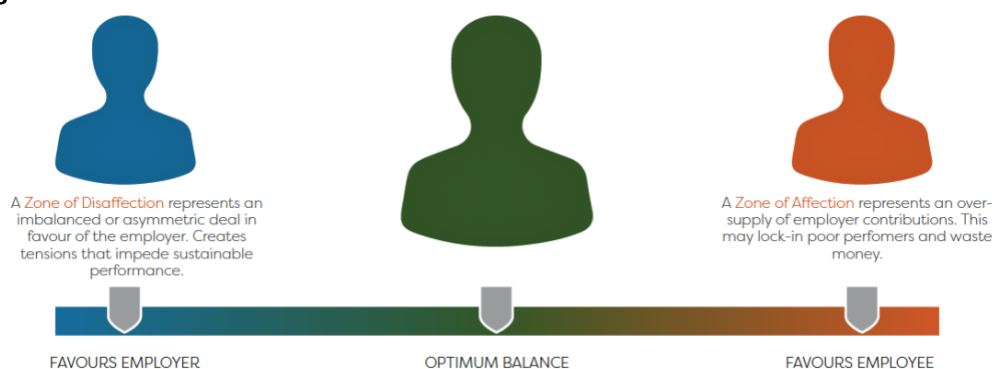
**TEDD®** (The Employment Deal Diagnostic) is about understanding engagement as a process and not as a fixed state. New research stresses that engagement is encouraged and experienced through the employment relationship. A high-quality employment deal is one where there is a balanced, reciprocal exchange of contributions. Our representation of the employment deal is shown in figure 1. The features associated with both employer and employee contributions are used to assess the value and fairness of the deal in the eyes of the workforce. The definitions of the various elements can be found in the Glossary of Terms at the end of the report.

**Figure 1 – The Employment Deal**



The extent to which an employment deal is perceived to be balanced or imbalanced has significant ramifications for sustainability – see figure 2.

**Figure 2 – The Balance of the Deal**



We find this balance is often weighted in favour of the employer, which shows as a negative 'score' in our analysis. The index scores associated with the elements of the Balance of the Deal for Worcestershire Regulatory Services are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Balance of the Deal compared by Service Area	Psychological Contract	Perceived Organisational Support	Employer Contribution	Job engagement	Capability	Organisational Engagement	Employee Contribution	Balance of the Deal	Satisfaction	Number of Responses
All Bromsgrove & Redditch & WRS	55	54	54	82	77	71	77	-23	59	465
Worcestershire Regulatory Services	58	59	59	78	76	70	75	-16	59	37

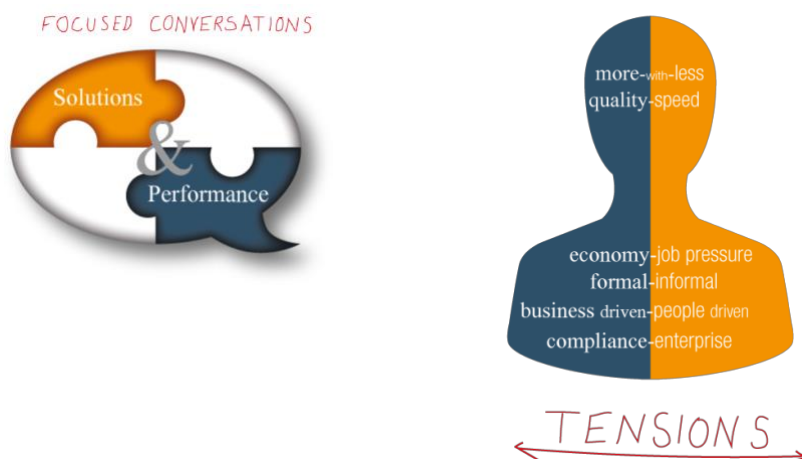
**Key:** **Sustain:** Good score/outcome to be celebrated (75 +) **Monitor:** Moderate score/outcome – capable of improvement (51 – 74) **Improve:** Relatively poor score/outcome – a clear signal to take steps to improve (50 or less)

The balance of the deal results for WRS reveal less asymmetry or imbalance when compared with the overall Bromsgrove & Redditch scores. A balance of -16 is encouraging and suggests the employment relationship is not in a distressed state, but rather a good platform to build on. In particular, the perception of the employer contribution at WRS is significantly better than for Bromsgrove & Redditch as a whole.

## Bringing ‘the deal’ to life (Conversational Practice)

The TEDD® model views the organisation as a ‘conversational arena’, recognising the importance of day-to-day conversations between managers and their teams in managing performance. Such conversations can be viewed as ‘pathways to performance’. Our representation of conversational practice is shown in figure 3.

**Fig 3: Conversational Practices** (adapted from Francis and Reddington, 2010; Reddington and Francis 2012, Francis, Ramdhony, Reddington and Staines, 2013)





Our approach illuminates the importance of *solutions and performance focused conversations* – see Glossary of Terms for more information at the end of this report. The index scores associated with conversational practice, workplace tensions and job pressure for Worcestershire Regulatory Services are shown in Table 2:

<b>Table 2. Conversational Practice compared by Service Area</b>	<b>Conversational Practice</b>	<b>Conversational Practice (Solutions)</b>	<b>Conversational Practice (Performance)</b>	<b>Job Pressure</b>	<b>Workplace Tensions</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
<b>All Bromsgrove, Redditch &amp; WRS</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>465</b>
<b>Worcestershire Regulatory Services</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>37</b>

NB: The scores for job pressure and workplace tensions are reverse logic – i.e. the higher the score the higher the pressure and tensions people are reporting/experiencing.

**Key:** **Sustain:** Good score/outcome to be celebrated (75 +) **Monitor:** Moderate score/outcome – capable of improvement (51 – 74) **Improve:** Relatively poor score/outcome – a clear signal to take steps to improve (50 or less)

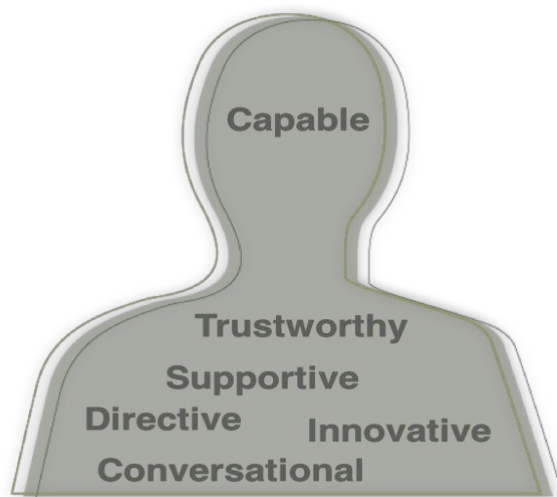
Conversational practice scores for WRS are at the high end of the moderate range. This suggests that WRS staff are engaging in good, high quality solutions and performance focused conversations. More focus on line manager relationship can help to enhance these scores in the future. It should also be noted that both reported job pressure and workplace tensions are higher in WRS than Bromsgrove and Redditch as a whole. A cautionary note about this is contained in other areas of this report.

## Personality of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

TEDD® uses a number of lenses to uncover the myriad of factors shaping workplace social dynamics. One method is to invite employees to imagine the organisation as a human being by asking the question ‘*if your organisation came to life as a person what word would you use to describe it?*’ Personality questions are extremely valuable because they give insight into the perception of corporate personality. Employer branding has implications for retaining and attracting employees as well as sustaining engagement levels. It denotes whether the internal view held by employees corresponds with the external proposition offered by the employers.

The personality profile of the organisation is depicted by a range of ‘human dispositions’ - see table 3 below. The numbers represent the mean score for each disposition.





**Table 3: Scores for Personality of the Whole Organisation (as perceived through the eyes of staff at Worcestershire Regulatory Services)**

Conversational (Respectful, Good listener)	Innovative (Inspiring, exciting)	Capable (Competent, Resilient)	Trustworthy (Honest, Reliable)	Supportive (Compassionate, Appreciative)	Directive (Authoritarian Controlling)
66	60	68	66	67	47

Note: Directive is reverse logic, so a lower score is preferred

**Key:** **Sustain:** Good score/outcome to be celebrated (75 +) **Monitor:** Moderate score/outcome – capable of improvement (51 – 74) **Improve:** Relatively poor score/outcome – a clear signal to take steps to improve (50 or less)

The low *Directive* score allows the other human dispositions to flourish. The personality profile overall is at the upper end of the moderate range and is in keeping with the other results for Balance of the Deal and Conversational Practice.

## Personality of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Each respondent to the survey was asked the question: *If Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils and Worcestershire Regulatory Services came to life as a person, what word would you use to describe it?* The responses from WRS employees are shown below in table 4:

Table 4. Free text comments		
Positive	Negative	Neutral
Ambitious Hard working Honest	Complicated Controlling Domino Hamstrung Stressful Unfair	

## Key Driver Analysis

A statistical technique known as Key Driver Analysis (KDA) has been used to help focus on those features of the employment deal that have the greatest impact on how employees contribute at work – see table below. The outcomes of the KDA should be used to guide the action planning process, as taking effective action in the identified areas will contribute positively toward enhanced employee contribution. This information should be used in conjunction with the other forms of analysis set out in this document.

- S** **Sustain:** Good score/outcome to be celebrated and sustained.
- M** **Monitor:** Moderate score/outcome – capable of improvement.
- I** **Improve:** Relatively poor score/outcome – a clear signal to take steps to improve.

**Table 5. Key Driver Analysis – top 6 items having most impact on Employee Contribution across Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils and Worcestershire Regulatory Services**

1. I feel able to strongly influence my performance objectives	63
2. I am provided with the tools needed to do my job	65
3. I trust my line manager to act in my best interests	69
4. I constantly experience excessive pressure in my job	67
5. Compliance with internal procedures often makes it difficult to do things better	61
6. I am often required to do more with less resources	73

Note: Key drivers 4,5 & 6 are reverse logic, so lower scores are preferred

## Narrative Analysis – Bringing key Drivers to Life

The TEDD survey included some free-text questions. All free text responses were analysed using natural language processing techniques and assigned to the Key Drivers – these examples show how the key drivers reveal themselves in the employee feedback. In table 6, each key driver is matched with free text responses (both positive and negative sentiment) to show how the drivers reveal themselves in practice. This provides useful insights into what really makes the difference to engagement and performance.

<b>Table 6: Free text comments matched with key drivers</b>
<b>KEY DRIVER 1: I feel able to strongly influence my performance objectives (63)</b>
<p><i>Freedom to plan one's own work schedule</i></p> <p><i>Flexible working</i></p> <p><i>The flexibility of work/working hours.</i></p> <p><i>WRS is a flexible employer and understands the need for work life balance. However, this isn't always as achievable due to work load</i></p>
<b>Key Driver 2: I am provided with the tools needed to do my job (65)</b>
<i>Increasing demands from partner councils and insufficient resources available to properly meet these</i>
<b>Key Driver 3: I trust my line manager to act in my best interests (69)</b>
<p><i>I have a very good working relationship with my manager</i></p> <p><i>Very approachable to discuss operational tasks</i></p> <p><i>Managers disinterest in the feelings of their staff</i></p> <p><i>Would be nice to see my line manager but oh ... never in or working from home....</i></p>
<b>Key Driver 4: I constantly experience excessive pressure in my job (67)</b>
<i>Pressure of an ever-increasing workload and the daily feelings of being unable to cope</i>
<b>Key Driver 5: Compliance with internal procedures often makes it difficult to do things better (61)</b>
<i>The biggest tensions are often linked to the debate on whether the service has sufficient resources or whether we need to change our approach to the day job</i>

<b>Key driver 6: I am often required to do more with less resources (73)</b>
<i>Demand exceeding (reduced) capacity</i>
<i>Fewer staff to do more work</i>
<i>Lack of resources - people and time</i>

**Key drivers Commentary**

The scores for the items driving employee contribution (Key Drivers) are mostly in the moderate zone. This is a positive outcome given the burdens and stresses of austerity on employees. The key driver “*I am often required to do more with less resources*” has score of 73. This is at the higher end of the moderate scale and the free text commentary provides greater insight into the increasing difficulties employees are faced with on a day to day basis. If this tension continues to rise it will lead to a fall in employee contribution and associated issues such as rising sickness absence.

One way of managing workplace tensions is by focusing on improving performance focused conversations with line managers. Our research reveals significant correlations between conversational practice, line management style, capability and tensions. Tensions and pressures shape and are shaped by conversational practice. The higher the quality of conversational practice, the more capable a person perceives themselves to be and consequently the lower tension levels experienced. Performance focused conversations are powerful in that they can act as buffers to offset the negative effects of higher workloads, increased pressure, insecurity and turbulence within the organisation. The buffering role of line managers is accomplished through a supportive management style that allows people to speak openly about factors affecting performance, and which offers praise and recognition for their efforts in a challenging environment.

## Glossary of Terms

**Employer Contributions** represent the ‘offerings’ from the employer and take various forms such as pay and benefits, stimulating work, career progression, job security, affording genuine concern for employees’ wellbeing, articulating a clear vision for the future of the organisation and providing support of various kinds in the workplace. Our model organises these contributions into two main categories – *Psychological Contract* and *Perceived Organisational Support*

**Psychological Contract** is a defining feature of the relationship between an employee and employer. It constitutes a set of obligations and promises between the two parties. TEDD examines an employee’s global impression of whether or not employer ‘promises’ are kept, how fair they are perceived to be, and trust in whether they are likely to be delivered in the future (Guest, 2014).

**Perceived Organisational Support** is an expression of the quality of delivery of a range of elements such as feeling supported, recognised, and valued for contributions. It also covers the cultivation of an environment in which employees feel empowered to speak up and voice their opinions about their work and wider organisational aims.

**Employee Contributions** describe what employees feel they are bringing to the employment deal. These include:

**Job Engagement** which is defined as the individual’s physical and mental commitment to their job.

**Capability** measures an individual’s confidence and competence to undertake their role.

**Organisational Engagement** covers a combination of organisational citizenship behaviours such as speaking positively about the organisation to friends and family, recommending the organisation as a place to work, engaging in helping behaviours and constructive challenge.

***Solutions-focused conversations*** - conversations that are about ideas. These *generate the potential* to reach working arrangements that strengthen resilience, employee wellbeing and performance. Through surfacing of multiple perspectives, shared meanings and understandings are generated about how to get something done (actionable knowledge).

***Performance Focused Conversations*** – conversations about *realising the potential* of solutions, focused conversations through the achievement of fair and transparent performance targets such as the delivery of services to customers at the right quality and cost.

**Tensions and Job pressure** - conversations are interwoven in nature and laced with workplace tensions - for example the competing challenges of doing ‘more-with-less’, time pressures affecting quality of service delivery. Another significant factor shaping conversational practices is *job pressure* - a measure of constant, perceived excessive workload.