



# Local Government Today: People, Capacity and Organisational Resilience

Thursday 23 April 2026 | PPMA Annual Conference

# Setting the Scene

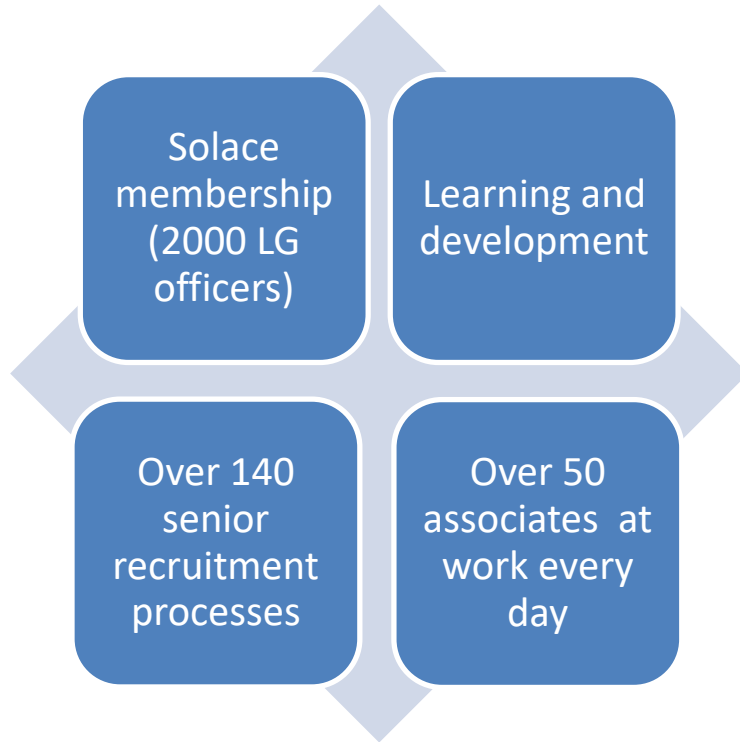


Local Government is a 'people-intensive system under sustained pressure



Financial and structural challenges are ultimately workforce and organisational challenges

# Evidence Base



# The workforce reality in Local Government

Ongoing demand growth vs shrinking organisational capacity

Workforce shortages, skills gaps and recruitment challenges

Retention, engagement and morale in prolonged uncertainty

Increasing reliance on interim, temporary and specialist capacity

The human cost of “doing more with less”

## And a future context...

Economy unable to meet demand for public services

Political instability and breakdown of traditional norms

Increasing expectation of assurance from within system

Decreasing levels of trust from outside system

Uncertain path of technology

Realignment of contract between employer and employee

# Reform, re-organisation and the people impact

## What reform (LGR, devolution, restructuring) means for:

Staff confidence and psychological safety  
Leadership uncertainty, bandwidth and resilience  
Organisational identity and culture  
Industrial relations

## The people risks of poorly managed change:

Talent loss during transitions  
Change fatigue and disengagement  
Loss of institutional knowledge

**HR and OD must be “early shapers” not downstream implementers**

# Financial pressure and the HR & OD consequences

## **Budget constraints driving difficult workforce decisions**

### **Tension between:**

Short term savings v long term capability

Vacancy management v service resilience

Reduced investment in learning, development and OD – and the risks

## **The growing importance of:**

Workforce planning

Skills prioritisation

New delivery and job design models

**Financial decisions are culture shaping decisions**

# What good looks like: strengthening leadership capability

Ambiguity

Complexity

Resilience

System  
leadership

Political  
astuteness

Governance and  
assurance

# Using Organisation Development to:



Support large scale change and integration  
Rebuild trust  
Enable cross-organisation/system collaboration



Succession and talent pipelines  
Inclusive leadership  
Smarter approaches to attraction and retention

# HR & OD as critical systems leaders



Reform will succeed or fail on people capacity



What can you do to future proof your organisation?



How can you prepare your workforce for the future?

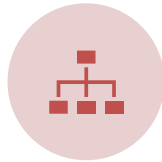
# To continue the conversation:



**1. POLICY AND  
ADVOCACY**



**2. LEARNING**



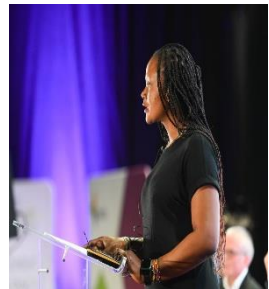
**3. SECTOR  
SUPPORT**

[www.solace.org.uk](http://www.solace.org.uk)

[graeme.mcdonald@solace.org.uk](mailto:graeme.mcdonald@solace.org.uk)

# 2025-6 performance highs

- 84% of UK local authorities are covered by Solace membership (circa 1,900 members)
- Successful Solace Summit
- 97% satisfaction rating across all events (target 95%) with 1,628 delegates attending
- 112 meetings with government and strong engagement on high profile issues e.g. cohesion, housing, and the Outcomes Framework
- High profile media coverage - Solace President featured on BBC Radio 4 Today programme to discuss asylum issues
- Three successful Business Partner roundtables have been held
- £230,000 sponsorship income to date, above target and exceeding 2024-25 outturn (£188,000)



# 2025-6 performance highs



- Good progress to support equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes - two fifths (38%) of AMPLify delegates secured promotion following completion of course
- 97% of participants are satisfied with leadership and development courses and programmes with 56% of the market covered by learning services
- 62% of individuals successfully promoted at least once following completion of our learning and development courses
- 1377 learners supported through our development programmes (excluding apprenticeships)
- 18 apprenticeship programmes running, with 248 individuals supported
- 94 executive roles have been recruited to date
- 3 national awards for recruitment and leadership