

Whilst the majority of Essex County Council's (ECC) workforce is made up of women, this was not reflected in the gender diversity at senior levels in the organization. Following an external D&I audit, an action identified to pioneer equality, diversity and inclusion was to deliver the inaugural Women in Leadership Development program.

## The Challenge



ECC partnered with us to identify women with leadership potential from their current workforce for their first Women in Leadership Development program. The program aims to create a pathway to enable more women to reach senior levels in the organization.

It was integral to implement a rigorous and objective process, thus ensuring the process created equal opportunities for identifying female leaders whilst mitigating bias (e.g., similar-to-me bias).

ECC and Saville have worked in partnership to create a process that takes into account the importance of intersectionality and candidate experience.

The process needed to have a positive impact on all participants by providing them with meaningful information and a chance for personal development, whether they were selected for the program or not.



## The Solution

Our solution combined the validity of market-leading assessments with additional evidence-based exercises, designed to minimize human bias through a thorough and objective selection process.

We first validated ECC's new 'Leadership Success Profile' with Saville Assessment's highly-valid 'Leadership Impact' model. This created clarity around what good leadership looks like within ECC to objectively measure these competencies.

We then worked in three objective and validation-centric stages to select the participants:

### 1 Candidate Attraction

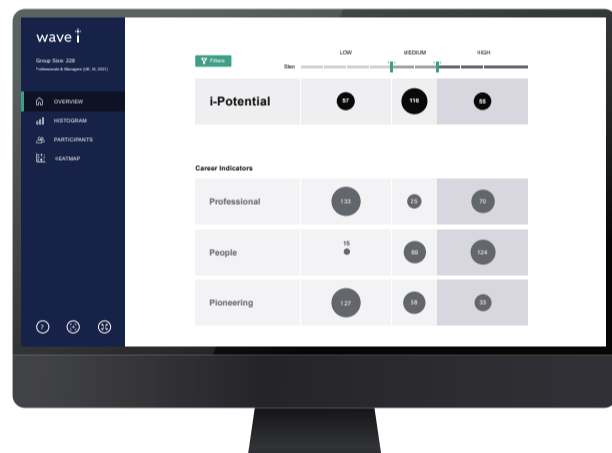
Encouraging a diverse applicant pool by engaging with employee networks and service representatives in focus groups and 1-to-1 meetings.



### 2 Behavioral Assessment & Wave-i

All applicants were invited to take our Wave 'Professional Styles' questionnaire.

Applicants' questionnaire completions were used to generate our new 'Wave-i' dashboard which accurately reveals overall leadership potential, and the types of leadership roles individuals will thrive in. As part of its development, Wave-i was tested for fairness; the model demonstrates no differences in gender, age and ethnicity, which was crucial for ECC's objectives.



Based on this dashboard, ECC was able to make fair and objective decisions to determine the 32 women taken forward to the Development Center stage.

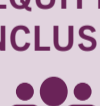
### 3 Development Centers

Great leaders are a blend of inherent behaviors, past experience and future thinking that complement organizational culture and goals. Our validation-focused approach, therefore, had candidates complete a competency-based interview and future-focused presentation. The participants were seen by assessor pairs, made up of one Saville consultant and one trained ECC assessor, which increased fairness in the process. This provided a holistic view of potential leaders and their behaviors, in line with ECC's 'Leadership Success Profile'.

A merit list of overall scores then allowed ECC to objectively assess performance and fairly select in the program's first cohort.

## Benefits to the Organization

#### DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



ECC, in partnership with Saville Assessment, have successfully launched their first Women in Leadership program with a cohort of 20 highly-engaged high-potential women and representation across different age groups, ethnicities and business areas.

#### QUALITY



By implementing a valid and objective assessment process, ECC was able to select participants for their Women in Leadership Program who best aligned with their Leadership Success Profile.

#### ENGAGEMENT



Those who were not progressed to the Development Centers were offered their Professional Styles Coaching Report and an optional workshop. This equipped these women with tailored, targeted and straightforward advice to create personal agency and self-coach.

All Development Center participants received a personalized leadership-focused report, a workshop, the option to attend a 1-1 development session and the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on their Development Center performance. These elements were designed to encourage all participants to reflect on their own current goals, strengths and potential challenges to aid them on their leadership development journey.

#### EFFICIENCY



Using Wave-i analytics, ECC was able to gain insight into the Leadership Potential of 89 candidates and, in less than two weeks, identify 32 women to take part in the highly-structured Development Centers. Saville created objective scoring forms to allow for quick decision-making in the Development Centers, which enabled ECC to select their final 20 participants into their Leadership program in just days after running the last Development Center.

#### COST



It was important for ECC to deliver the program in a cost-effective way, fitting into their budget.

“ From the beginning, we established a true partnership. Saville Assessment fully understood our needs and were able to advise us on how to make it happen. They took the time to understand our needs, our starting point, helped us refine our outcomes and provided invaluable advice throughout the process.

We aimed to test new concepts and try out new ways of identifying talent, and couldn't have asked for better partners in our journey. It was very important for us that all of the women that took part in this process felt supported during throughout the experience and Saville really helped us to achieve that.

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- Maria Farres (Director, OD & Talent Management), Essex County Council