



Colchester  
Borough Council

MJ Awards 2020

**Rising Star**

**Introducing Cezara Cosma**

# Our People and Why Cezara

***Our organisation values our people, that's what it's all about – they are the product***

In recent years we have focused much more on recruiting and developing remarkable people with the right attitude and behaviours – we don't just default to experience.

Through flexing the apprenticeship levy, being more open to recruitment choices and by maintaining Organisational Development spend we are investing our energy and resources in the workforce of the future and this is delivering amazing results. Cezara exemplifies this shift and I hope this story shows the impact she has made to the team, the business and our community.

I felt compelled to write this because I am proudly convinced that we are witnessing someone who is simply remarkable and inspiring. That someone is Cezara Cosma.

After joining us 3 years ago, Cezara stands out and has literally not stopped amazing us since! Truly a rising star and a future leader.

**Jason Granger – Group Manager, Customer**



# Looking back

## **The Foundation**

At 13 Cezara visited the UK on a school trip and that visit created a love for the country that stayed with her. She had a scrap book and started to dream.

At the age of 19 Cezara took a brave step, not to study at Uni in her native country, but to come to England to take up a Law degree at Essex University, in another language! She left her family and friends to push the boundaries of what she might achieve. Cezara sailed through her studies and graduated in 2017.

*(I think she also did very well in gin drinking and dancing as well – she loved being a student! )*

With the prospect of a student loan needing to be paid back and to gain some experience Cezara applied for a temporary role at CBC within the Housing Benefit team.

## **The realisation**

Very soon we realised we had secured a unique character, who was very able, full of enthusiasm and wanted, really wanted to thrive at work. Also Cezara realised that working for a town she had made her own, serving people in her community and being faced with complex challenges was something worth doing, something she wanted to do and something she was going to commit to – (Also all of this was far more interesting than Law) this is the story of the next three years !

# Calling it the day job just doesn't cut it

## 2018

Was a big year for Cezara. Securing a permanent managerial role within our Benefit processing team. A very quick and steep progression in recognition of the active role she took on within the team from day one. Cezara joined the team as it was going through a significant transformation. Cezara was able to help deliver digitalisation, raise customer care standards and significantly contribute to the performance culture under the mantra *distribute eligible benefit quickly*.

## How?

It started with her own belief and abilities, dedication, focus and will to improve. Then this moved into an ability to coach and mentor those around her. Cezara developed a new team, into an organised, trained and focused unit supporting each other to pay eligible benefit to those in our community that need it the most.

## 2019

Cezara not only delivered massively in her day job, she reached out for more, she has enrolled on a three year degree apprenticeship in Management and Leadership, and then became an accredited Career Ready mentor to business students at our local college. Cezara has found much success in this role and has embarked on coaching a second cohort for 2020.

So far Cezara has helped deliver a step change in her team, embraced her own personal development and is giving back to young adults in our community – this isn't just a day job.



# Creating and Owning a Key Project - EU Settlement

Cezara made her management colleagues aware of a serious shortfall in the regional provision for support to EU nationals securing their rights of settlement. The nearest digital assistance service being Canterbury some 100 miles from Colchester.

Cezara understood some people in our community would struggle with the '*digital by default*' process. Cezara was brave enough to raise this, knocking on the door of our Chief Operating officer, she suggested:

- Our Library and Community Hub became a digital access point
- She worked with our Unitary Authority, our elected Members and front facing staff to provide the service
- Commissioned a communications package, trained staff, created processes and delivered a functioning service within 3 weeks!

This wasn't in Cezara's day job, not even her service, she went the extra mile, collaborated across teams and made something happen. This is what Cezara does, not only did she find a gap, she filled that gap with energy, collaboration and real solutions.



# Working across the business - **No boundary**

With reputation building through delivery, Cezara was asked (poached) to join a focused corporate team sponsored by Cabinet and our Chief Operating Officer to help develop the council wide strategic priorities into real and tangible business streams. A massively influential piece of work.

Cezara is tasked with working with service managers to scope and work up business cases that have been identified to support the new strategic priorities.

This is exposing Cezara to the wider organisation, she is understanding how priorities are formed at a political level and then converted into coherent strategies and then operational realities. Also the wider organisation is seeing what Cezara is about: the drive, care and commitment.

Cezara is helping shape a community for the next 4 years - what an opportunity !



# The Potential – Our Star

Cezara has achieved so much in three years – temp to officer to manager. Cezara doesn't reflect on herself – she talks about making life better for residents because we pay eligible benefit quickly, she is proud of putting in place support for those navigating issues of residency and for helping a team drive forward the ambitions of an entire council – when I asked her to describe her narrative she smiled, and she said to me 'I am lucky, I have found my purpose'.



CBC embraces all that is great about the developing individuals and investing in future supply of well trained, work ready and organisationally competent colleagues. Cezara has embraced this support fully – she has taken everything we have offered, and her achievements are nothing short of remarkable.

As Cezara moves through her studies, expands her knowledge of our business and builds valuable partnerships she will be given opportunities to propel other service areas forward and her influence and impact will grow. This is because of what she is: *'Happy, bright, capable, determined but above all she cares'*

As my career matures, I understand more clearly it's all about the people – surround the business with Cezaras and make them the best they can be -Jason