



The Gateshead Housing Company Human Resources Committee

Wednesday 4 March 2009 at 10am
Board Room 1, The Gateshead Housing Company, Keelman
House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Fifth Avenue, Team Valley
Trading Estate, Gateshead NE11 0XA

Agenda

Item	Business
1.	Apologies for Absence <u>ITEMS FOR DECISION</u>
2.	Minutes (Pages 3-10) The committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2008
3.	Matters Arising <u>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</u>
4.	Changes in Employment Law 2009 (Pages 11-14) Report of Director of Finance
5.	Sickness and HR Update (Pages 15-27) Report of Director of Finance
6.	Learning and Development Update (Pages 27-30) Report of Director of Finance

Contact: Stuart Gibson Tel: (0191) 433 5308 Date: 26 February 2009

Item	Business
7.	Date and Time of Next Meeting The next meeting of the committee will be held on Tuesday 16 June 2009 at 10am in Board Room 2, Keelman House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Fifth Avenue, Team Valley, Gateshead
8.	Exclusion of the Press and Public The Committee may wish to consider excluding the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Category 1 of the company's Access to Information Rules.



HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 December 2008

PRESENT:

Directors

Allan Curry
John Hamilton
Joachim Moussounda Mouanda

Advisers

Bill Fullen	Chief Executive
Elaine Snaith	Assistant Chief Executive
Jon Mallen-Beadle	Director of Finance
Jennifer Aston	HR and Administration Manager
Stuart Gibson	Company Administrator

Apologies

Stan Dawson
Paul Foy
Valerie Hodge

30 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

RESOLVED – That John Hamilton and Allan Curry be appointed as Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee for the ensuing year.

31 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 23 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS WITH TRADE UNIONS

The committee approved the following strategies at its meetings on 17 June and 23 September 2008, subject to consultation with trade unions: -

- Learning and Development Strategy
- Human Resources Strategy
- Workforce Development Plan
- Capability Policy.

Unison and GMB have been consulted on each of the strategies, plans and policies. The trade unions welcomed the Learning and Development Strategy, Human Resources Strategy and Capability Policy. The trade

unions welcomed the Workforce Development Plan and detailed comments were submitted.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the strategies, plans and policies be approved following consultation with the trade unions.
- (ii) That the Chief Executive considers a reward for employees to thank them for their work during the last year and the Chair of the Committee is given delegated authority to approve the reward.

33 MOBILE PHONE AND BLACKBERRY GUIDELINES

The existing guidelines for use of mobile telephones and Blackberry's are relatively brief.

New guidelines were submitted that outline in more detail the roles and responsibilities of the mobile telephone user, the manager and the accounts department.

The guidelines have been developed to protect both the user and the company. The guidelines include Blackberry's which are now more widely used and provide clarity around who should have access to a mobile device.

- RESOLVED – That the new Mobile Phone/Blackberry Guidelines be approved, subject to amendments to the policy regarding the use of handhelds, excessive use and misuse.

34 TRANSSEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND GENDER REASSIGNMENT POLICY

The company is committed to the belief that all individuals have the right to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

A Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Reassignment Policy was submitted that provides straightforward, user friendly advice and information for employees about the service offered.

The policy reaffirms the company's position on equality and applies to all employees and workers, however outlines clearly the expectations of employees when dealing with customers and the community.

The policy will ensure that as required in the Gender Equality Duty 2007, harassment, discrimination in employment and vocational training is eliminated for those people undergoing gender reassignment.

Guidance is provided for managers responsible for an employee who has undergone or is undergoing gender reassignment.

- RESOLVED – That the Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Reassignment Policy, attached as an Appendix to these minutes, be submitted to the Board for approval.

35 SICKNESS AND HR UPDATE

The committee received an update on general HR initiatives and developments for the period April to October 2008.

An analysis of the key HR data to provide the committee with an overview of the company's performance and key priorities was submitted.

An analysis of the sickness absence levels for the period compared with performance last year with that of the top quartile performance for ALMOs as a whole was submitted. The reasons for absence within each department of the company were also submitted.

The total sickness absence for the period equated to 5.96 days (compared to 7.93 days for the same period last year), a 25% reduction in the seven month period.

The company has set a target of 10.25 days absence per employee for the current year (an improvement of last year's performance of 12.4 days), with a planned reduction over the next three years to reduce lost days due to sickness to be in line with the top quartile set by Housemark, which is currently 9.5 days. If absence continues at the levels as the first seven months, the company is likely to achieve 10.2 days.

Short term absence relates to periods of absence less than 15 working days in duration with long term absence greater than 15 days in duration. In the period, short term absence was 2.55 days and long term 3.41 days. This compares with 2.74 days short term absence and 5.19 days long term absence in the same period last year.

Depression and anxiety with the effect of stress is still the biggest cause of absence. In the period, 970 days were lost to stress. This compares to 1,057 days lost in the same period last year and equates to an 8.3% reduction.

The cost of sickness absence to the company for the period was £222,063.

182 employees (59%) have achieved 100% attendance in the period.

The company has held 31 sickness counselling interviews triggered in response to four periods of absence or two periods of 15 days or more in a rolling 12 month period. Two employees have attended an options interview triggered where long term absence has reached four months.

41 employees attended a health and safety stress awareness course, with another 30 employees scheduled to attend a course up to March 2009.

A Stress Awareness day was held on 5 November 2008 to raise awareness of the positive initiatives that employees can take to manage stress. Evaluation from the day indicates that 50% of respondents would like to be involved in developing a programme of physical activities. An

Occupational Health Involvement Group will meet in December 2008 to review policies and plan a programme of activities.

As a result of the day, smoking cessation sessions have begun for a period of eight weeks with eight employees signed up to the programme. Fitness testing appointments have also taken place. All sessions were fully booked and additional dates are being explored for December 2008.

The company continues to promote work life balance policies and supports applications. Details of applications processed in the period were reported.

The committee received an update on disciplinary and grievances during the period.

An Employee Benefit Statement promoting many of the benefits of working for the company has been issued to all employees and Board Members. The benefit statement will be issued to candidates who attend for interview and will also be included in an induction pack.

Employees have been informed of job evaluation grades and were being paid the grade of the post in October 2008. A number of employees are preparing an appeal to the job evaluation grade for submission to Human Resources by 31 December 2008. Unison, GMB and HR have been available to support employees throughout the process.

The annual pay award for 2007/08 is subject to arbitration at ACAS. An interim amount of 2.45% has been awarded pending the outcome of arbitration and has been paid to employees in November.

The committee received a recruitment update for the period. The company attended an Employment and Training event on 19 August 2008. To enhance the customer experience of applying for a job with the company, a Jadu Online Recruitment software package is scheduled to be introduced in December 2008.

The company is working with the Council to introduce an expenses self service software application that will allow employees to input their own car mileage. The company has agreed to pilot the system, which is scheduled for early next year.

The company has successfully secured the services of Durham County Council who are an umbrella body to process CRB checks.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

36 FLEXI SCHEME UPDATE

The committee received an update on the revised flexi scheme which was revised in January 2007 and resulted in enhanced flexi time entitlement.

There is a maximum carry forward entitlement of two full days. Flexi sheets have been developed to ensure compliance with the 48 hour

working time directive with all infringements highlighted. In managing flexi time, managers and employees must comply with the directive and ensure that at least a 30 minutes break is taken when a six hour period is worked. Additionally, only employees who have signed to be excluded from the 48 hour working time directive should ever exceed working a 48 hour week average over a 52 week period.

Employees and line managers sign the flexi sheet at the end of a four week period as an accurate record of time worked, training, sickness and leave taken. The monitoring of credit and debit balances is carried out centrally by the HR and Administration Team.

A four month summary of flexi time exceeded over the approved carry forward credit of 14.48 hours (pro-rata) from 14 July – 31 October 2008 was submitted. The number of employees who have exceeded the approved credit in each service area and the total hours exceeded was also reported.

The following actions have been taken: -

- Ensure compliance with appraisal and 1-2-1 and achievable objectives.
- Assess capacity and priorities.
- Reviewed and updated the flexi sheet to ensure compliance.
- Information to all employees on completion of the form and compliance with the 48 working time directive.
- Monthly information on exceeded time to CMT members.
- Meeting with service managers.
- Managerial meetings to address specific concerns.

This has resulted in the “exceeded time” reducing from a peak of 277 hours in September 2008 to 194 hours in October 2008.

- RESOLVED – (i) That progress being made on reducing the levels of “exceeded time” be noted.
- (iii) That a further report be submitted to consider a proposed strategy to reduce the amount of exceeded time.

37 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The committee received an update on the progress and activity of the Staff Development function.

The Management Development Programme is well underway with the first four modules now complete. Following completion of these modules, managers will be presented with a certificate in Developing Leadership Skills.

The 12 month training prospectus is now finalised and has been issued to employees.

The Council is working with Ivy Learning Services Ltd to provide ICT and personal development training via e-learning. Following a demonstration of the training, the company's Staff Development Officers now have access to the system to set up new users and produce usage reports to ensure all licences are utilised. This training will provide additional learning materials to support the classroom training which is already provided. It will also allow employees to access the relevant courses without the requirement to attend a full one day workshop if this is more suitable to their individual training needs.

The company has accepted an invitation from the Learning and Skills Council to attend a workshop to gain insights into employers' opinions and suggestions in regard to engagement of 14-19 year olds. The information given is part of a large project.

This was the first year of the Partnership Apprentice of the Year Award. Nominations were made by each of the construction partners and the company also provided a nomination. All finalists received an award, with the overall winner being chosen from Local Environmental Services. It is hoped that this will become an annual event.

Michelle Cherrett, Older Persons Housing Manager has won the Chartered Institute of Housing North East Branch award for best postgraduate student for the Housing Management and Policy course at Northumbria University. Keith Nicholson, Estate Officer has won the award for best student at New College Durham.

A Harassment Working Group has been established with members nominated to ensure representation across services. Training is to be arranged from early 2009 and will be delivered by EEF Northern.

Details of training additional to the in-house & PSA training prospectus were reported.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.
- (ii) That a letter from the committee be sent to Michelle Cherrett, Older Persons Housing Manager and Keith Nicholson, Estate Officer congratulating them on their Chartered Institute of Housing North East Branch awards.

38 UPDATE ON NVQ'S FOR CONTACT CENTRE OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER CARE

The Staff Development function has secured additional funding for a number of training courses during the last 12 months. The funding provides additional training for employees to supplement the existing programmes and initiatives already provided by the existing Learning and Development budget. Several innovations have been used to increase the knowledge of employees in key subject areas with the ultimate aim of increasing performance and business benefit.

The North East Contact Centre Academy, part of City of Sunderland College support improvements in performance of both organisations and individuals operating in a customer contact environment. The Academy provides a range of NVQ's including Contact Centre Operations and Customer Care. The programme will initially focus on Contact Centre Operations with progression onto the Customer Care programme for those employees who do not already hold this qualification. As a pilot, the NVQ's will initially be targeted at employees in the Repairs Reporting Team. This will ensure all existing employees within the repairs team are trained and qualified to NVQ level 2.

The programme of NVQ's will, where possible, be funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Additional funding is required for those employees who already hold an existing level 2 qualification, however, the Contact Centre Academy has committed to providing both qualifications at no additional cost to the company.

The initial pilot programme will be aimed at 15 employees with the view to rolling it out to the new members of the repairs team during 2009. Each NVQ will take approximately 16 weeks to complete and will be mapped to the particular job roles of those employees in the repairs team. There are mandatory units which must be completed along with additional optional units which will be selected and agreed by the company.

A session will be arranged for the Academy to introduce the NVQ's to those involved and explain what will be involved in the programme. In addition, the benefits to both the company and the individuals of attaining such qualifications will be covered.

The initial programme will commence early January 2009. The NVQ assessors will attend Keelman House weekly and will see each individual for one hour. A workshop will be arranged to cover some key elements of the agreed units.

A service level agreement will be made with the Academy which will set out their requirements and expectations along with the company's expectations and success criteria. This will be measured by the Academy to ensure the programme delivers to expectations. Regular meetings will take place to monitor the implementation of the programme.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

39 DATE AND TIME OF MEETINGS 2009

RESOLVED – That the following schedule of meetings of the committee during 2009 be approved: -

Tuesday 3 March 2009 at 10am
Tuesday 16 June 2009 at 10am
Tuesday 8 September 2009 at 10am
Tuesday 15 December 2009 at 10am.

40 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Tuesday 3 March 2009 at 10am in Board Room 1, Keelman House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Fifth Avenue, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.

41 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated categories of the company's Access to Information Rules.

42 MINUTES (Category 1)

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 23 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

43 EMPLOYEE FORUM (Category 7)

The minutes of the meeting of the Employee Forum held on 8 October 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.



Report to Human Resources Committee

4 March 2009

Title: Changes to Employment Law 2009

Report of: Director of Finance

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on changes to Employment Law 2009.

Background

2. This year we will see a number of changes to employment legislation that are set to impact upon every workplace.

Employment Act 2008

3. The 3-step statutory discipline and dismissal procedures contained in the Employment Act 2002 will be repealed. The Employment Act 2008 ('the Act') became law on 13 November 2008 and it is understood that it will come into force on 6 April 2009. The main changes that the Act will bring are: -
 - Repealing the statutory dismissal, disciplinary and grievance procedures, which will be replaced, by the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (the ACAS Code). A draft ACAS Code was published by ACAS in November 2008 and is due to be put before Parliament for its approval. The ACAS Code is available on; <http://www.acas.org.uk>
 - Giving employment tribunals discretion to increase or reduce awards by up to 25% if the employer or employee unreasonably fails to comply with the ACAS Code.
4. The Act also includes provisions concerning the tribunals' powers, the extent of ACAS's role in resolving disputes, trade union membership, changes to the methods of enforcing the national minimum wage and changes to the employment agencies regime.

There is no impact relating to the repealing of the statutory dismissal, disciplinary and grievance procedures. The company continues to follow the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

Working Time Regulations

5. From 1 April 2009, the statutory annual holiday entitlement will increase from 4.8 weeks (24 days for full-time employees) to 5.6 weeks (28 days for full-time employees). The relevant legislation caps the total amount of statutory holiday at 28 days. The employer can decide if bank holidays are included in this statutory minimum.

There is no impact to the company as a result of the regulations. Employee holiday entitlement exceeds that of the Working Time Regulations with a minimum entitlement of 25 days plus eight bank holidays.

Flexible Working

6. The Government has confirmed that the extension of the right to request flexible working to parents of children up to the age of 16 will be implemented in April 2009. Therefore, after April 2009 qualifying employees will be able to request flexible working in order to care for a child under 16 years old, where they are the parent, adoptive parent, foster parent or guardian of that child or the spouse, civil partner or partner of that person. Currently, qualifying employees are able to request flexible working in order to care for a child under six years old.

There is no impact to the company as a result of an extension to the flexible working legislation. All employees are able to request flexible working.

Implementation of the Temporary Agency Workers Directive

7. The Government has been under pressure for a number of years now to ensure that rights of agency workers are equal to those of comparable permanent staff. The Government has now confirmed that they intend to introduce legislation, which would entitle an agency worker after spending 12 weeks in a job to equal basic rights with comparable permanent employees. However, at this stage it is unclear when this legislation will be implemented although the Government has indicated that it hopes to introduce it in 2009.

We await the introduction of the government legislation. Agency workers are engaged in exceptional cases and only when all alternative avenues have been explored.

Equality Bill

8. It is anticipated that the Equality Bill ('the Bill') will be passed in the 2009 Parliamentary session, although given the complexity of some of the issues covered by the Bill the Government has not yet confirmed the date. The White Paper published by the Government and the Government's response to consultation indicate that the Bill will include the following main measures: -
 - Creating a single equality duty for public bodies. This will bring together the existing duties in relation to race, disability and gender, and create new public sector duties in relation to gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.
 - Outlawing discrimination on the grounds of age in the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the carrying out of public functions.

- Harmonising the definition of indirect discrimination across all strands of discrimination.
- Harmonising the concept of justification in cases of indirect discrimination, direct age discrimination and disability related discrimination, as a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.'
- Increasing transparency in relation to equality issues. Public bodies will be required to report on important equality areas: gender pay and employment of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.
- Allowing employers to take positive action to address under representation of particular groups when selecting between two equally qualified candidates.
- Providing protection against discrimination for people who associate with transsexual people and protecting transsexual people against indirect discrimination and discrimination in the exercise of public functions.
- Outlawing clauses in employment contracts that prevent employees from discussing their pay.
- Strengthening enforcement, for example, by widening tribunals' powers to make recommendations.

The introduction of the Equality Bill will have a significant impact. A draft Single Equality Bill 2009-2012 is in development to meet the changes anticipated in the Bill.

Link to values

9. This report links to the company values of
- A commitment to all our employees - *celebrating our successes*.
 - Being positive and responsive - *constantly striving to achieve excellence*.
 - Being motivated, trained, and committed across the company - *delivering efficient and effective services*.
 - Embracing equality - *valuing difference*.
 - Caring and respecting – *the people we work for and with*

Impact on tenants

10. There is no direct impact of this report on tenants.

Risk Management Implications

11. This report will assist in managing two of the company's strategic risks: -
- Failure to sustain improvements
 - Failure to recruit and retain suitable staff.

Financial Implications

12. The costs of providing training related to these initiatives can be met from the existing annual budget.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. The company's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer is an integral part of every aspect of the company's activities.

Value for Money implications

14. We continue to monitor our progress in order to maximise service delivery to tenants and customers. Value for money principles are followed in all aspects of the service to include compliance with working time regulations, work life balance requests, statutory dismissal process and agency workers.

Consultation carried out

15. The company's HR consultants EEF Northern have been consulted on aspects of the report.

Recommendation

16. The committee is asked to note the comments in this report.

Report to Human Resources Committee

4 March 2009



Title: Sickness Absence and HR Update

Report of: Director of Finance

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on general HR initiatives and developments.

Background

2. As previously requested, this report provides the committee with the following information: -
 - Data digest
 - Sickness absence update
 - WLB update
 - Disciplinary and Grievance update
 - Other HR initiatives and developments.

Data Digest

3. Attached at Appendix 1 is an analysis of the key HR data to provide the committee with an overview of the company's performance and key priorities.

Sickness Absence Update

4. Attached at Appendix 2 is an analysis of the sickness absence levels for the period from April to January 2009 together with comparisons to last year and that of the top quartile performance for ALMOs as a whole.
5. Appendix 3 provides in a graphical format the reasons for absence within each department of the Company for the period April 2008 to January 2009.
6. The total sickness absence for the period April 2008 to January 2009 equated to 8.89 days (compared to 10.96 days for the same period last year). This equates to a 19% reduction in the 10 month period.
7. The company has set a target of 10.25 days absence per employee for the current year (an improvement of last years performance of 12.4 days), with a

planned reduction over the next three years to reduce our lost days due to sickness to be in line with the top quartile set by Housemark, which is currently 9.5 days. If absence continues at the levels as the first 10 months we are likely to achieve 10.6 days.

8. Short term absence relates to periods of absence less than 15 working days in duration with long term absence greater than 15 days in duration. In the period April to January 2009, short term absence was 4.2 days and long term 4.6 days. This compares with 4.1 days short term absence and 6.8 days long term absence in the same period April 2007 to January 2008.
9. Depression and anxiety with the effect of stress is still the biggest cause of absence. In the period April to January 2009, 1,229 days were lost to stress this compares to 1,273 days lost in the same period last year and equates to a 3.7% reduction.
10. In the period November 2008 to January 2009, viral illness was the biggest cause of absence with 307 days lost to absence as compared to 238 in the same period last year which equates to a 23% increase.
11. 151 employees (37%) have achieved 100% attendance in the period April to January 2009 compared to 128 employees (33%) for the year ended 31 March 2008.

Managing Sickness Absence

12. The company has held 40 sickness counselling interviews in the period April to January 2009 triggered in response to four periods of absence or two periods of 15 days or more in a rolling 12 month period.
13. Two employees have attended counselling in the period November 2008 to January 2009.
14. In the period April to January 2009, 48 employees attended a Health and Safety stress awareness course.

Smoking Cessation

15. Smoking cessation sessions have been held at Birtley Housing Office in January 2008. Five employees attend weekly with another three employees attending on an ad-hoc basis. Four employees have stopped smoking since attending the first session.

Fitness Testing

17. Fitness testing appointments have been arranged for 23 February, 2 March and 23 March 2009. The assessment includes blood pressure, weight, heart rate, lung capacity and body mass index (BMI). Employees receive a print out of their statistics and practical advice on managing fitness. Each session accommodates 9-10 employees.
18. An Occupational Health Involvement Group including an occupational health nurse, Unison, GMB, health and safety, managers and employees has met in

February 2009 to review policies and plan a programme of activities. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

Work Life Balance

19. The company continues to promote work life balance policies and supports applications. The following applications have been processed in the period April 2008 to January 2009: -

9 Applications to change to compressed hours

11 Applications to reduce working hours

1 Application to increase hours

2 Application for term time working

Of these;

23 All applications were approved.

Disciplinary and Grievance Update

20. The following have been carried out during the period December 2008 to January 2009: -

- One employee suspended pending investigation in relation to misconduct (January 2009).
- One investigatory interview specifically in relation to procedural irregularities (January 2009).
- One managerial interview in relation to attendance (January 2009).
- One extension to probationary period related to attendance (January 2009).
- One grievance in relation to fair treatment (January 2009).
- One stage two grievance in relation to fair treatment (December 2008).
- One final written warning in relation to misconduct (December 2009).

Employee Benefits

21. A group of managers and employees met in January 2009 to review our employee benefits. A sample of benefits is contained in the employee benefit statement. The group are exploring non-cashable initiatives and how we promote these to employees. A further report will be presented to the next meeting of this committee.

Job Evaluation

23. 42 appeals to the job evaluation grade have been submitted to Human Resources and we anticipate the outcomes being known in April 2009. We are following the same appeal process as the Council.

Recruitment

25. In the period April 2008 to January 2009, the company has advertised 17 external vacancies and 20 expressions of interest to internal employees. 723 applications were requested for the external vacancies and 478 returned. 109 employees provided an expression of interest for 20 vacancies.

26. Five managers have been accredited in recruitment and selection in the period November 2008 to January 2009.

Shortlisting for Awards

27. The company has been shortlisted in the Tyneside and Northumberland area for the prestigious North East Business Awards in the category of Employer of the Year. The category is sponsored by Public Health North East. A written proposal detailing our HR practices, policies and approach to employee health and well being was submitted and an interview held with representatives from the sponsors.
28. We are one of three companies shortlisted. The winner will be announced at an evening event on 19 March 2009. Each local winner will then go forward to the regional final.
29. The company has also been selected as one of three shortlisted finalists in the Equality and Diversity in the Workplace category of The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) North East of England Human Resource and Development (HRMD) Awards in association with the Evening Chronicle. The winner and two runners up will be announced at an event on 12 March 2009.

Link to values

- 26 This report links to the following company values: -
- Being honest, accountable and transparent – *delivering excellent services with integrity.*
 - Being motivated, trained and committed across the company – *delivering efficient and effective services*
 - Being caring and respecting – *the people we work for and with*
 - A commitment to all our employees – *celebrating our successes*
 - Embracing equality – *valuing difference.*

Impact on tenants

30. Sickness absence impacts on the level of service provided to tenants. Every effort is taken to keep this to a minimum. The launch of employee initiatives will assist in the recruitment and retention of employees and indirectly lead to improved services to tenants.

Risk Management Implications

31. This report will assist in managing two of the company's strategic risks: -
- Failure to sustain improvement
 - Failure to recruit and retain suitable staff.

Financial Implications

32. The financial cost of sickness absence to the company for the period April to January 2009 was £331,231. The cost of sickness for the period April to January 2008 was £408,244.

Equality and Diversity Implications

33. The company's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer is an integral part of every aspect of the company's activities.

Value for Money implications



34. We continue to manage sickness absence in order to maximise service delivery to tenants and customers. Value for money principles are followed in all aspects of the service to include work life balance requests, recruitment and employee initiatives.

Consultation carried out

35. The company's HR consultants EEF Northern have been consulted on aspects of the report.

Recommendation

36. The committee is asked to note the report.

				
Staff Monitoring & Development Data				
Performance Measure		Actual 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Year to Date (Jan 09)
1. Number of people employed TGHC				
a) Staff	Male	139	160	148
	Female	191	203	210
	Total	330	363	358
b) Manual	Male	48	45	45
	Female	4	6	4
	Total	52	51	49
c) Total number of employees		382	414	407
2. Numbers of new starters (since 1st April)		52	80	58
3. Numbers of employees leaving (since 1st April)		45	45	33
a) Number of voluntary leavers		35		31
b) Number of retirements		4		1
c) Number of ill health retirements		2		0
d) Redundancy (lack of work)		0		0
e) Death in service		0		0
f) Temporary contract ended		0		0
g) Dismissal		4		1
4. Training				
a) Number of new staff receiving induction		52	45	58
b) Number of staff undertaking professional qualifications		17	17	17
5. Staff Welfare		12.43 days	10.25 days	8.89 days
a) Total number of working days lost due to sickness		4234	4243	3327
b) Number of referrals made to occupational health		69	70	82
c) Number of employee counselling sessions		24	25	27

Performance Measure	Actual 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Year to Date
6. HR Advisory Issues			
a) investigations	10		8
b) disciplinary	2		1
c) Suspensions	3		3
d) Oral Warning	1		0
e) First Written warning	0		1
f) Final Written warning	4		1
g) Dismissals	4		1
h) Appeals submitted	2		0
i) No of grievances submitted	3		5
j) Stage 2 Grievance			1
k) Bullying and Harassment			1
7. Diversity Monitoring			
a) Number (and %) of senior management posts filled by women	4.8 of 20 24%	25%	5.8 of 22 26%
b) Number of senior management posts filled by persons from BME communities	0	1.6%	0
c) % of company employees from minority ethnic communities	2.9%	3%	2.7%
d) Number of BME applicants for			
i. Employment	69	80	28
ii. Short listed for interview	14	15	10
iii. Offered post	1	1	1
e) Number of disabled applicants for			
i. Employment	59	60	16
ii. Short listed for interview	18	20	7
iii. Offered post	3	2	1
8. Commendations/Recognition of Achievement			
a) Long service awards	4	0	0
b) Golden Heart Nominations	110	120	63
Winner of Golden Heart – Team Rent and Income Team (May 08)			
Winner of Golden Heart - Individual David Lorraine – ICT (May 08)			

Performance Measure		Actual 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Year to Date
9. Staff Monitoring				
a) Gender				
	Male	49.34%	50%	47.4%
	Female	50.66%	50%	52.6%
b) Age				
	Under 18	0%	0%	0%
	18-25	13.46%	14%	11.79%
	26-35	27.18%	28%	28.75%
	36-45	17.68%	19%	19.41%
	46-55	26.39%	24%	24.82%
	56-65	15.3%	15%	15.23%
c) Ethnicity				
	White British	97.1%	96%	96.56%
	White Irish	0	0	.25
	Asian – Pakistani	2.11%	2%	3.19%
	West Indian		1%	0%
	Chinese	0.79%	1%	0%
e) Disability				
	Perceived themselves as disabled	24% 54 of 220	24.5%	24.5% 54 of 220
	Do not perceive themselves as disabled	75%	75.5%	75.5%

Sickness Absence Summary Sheet 2007 - 2009

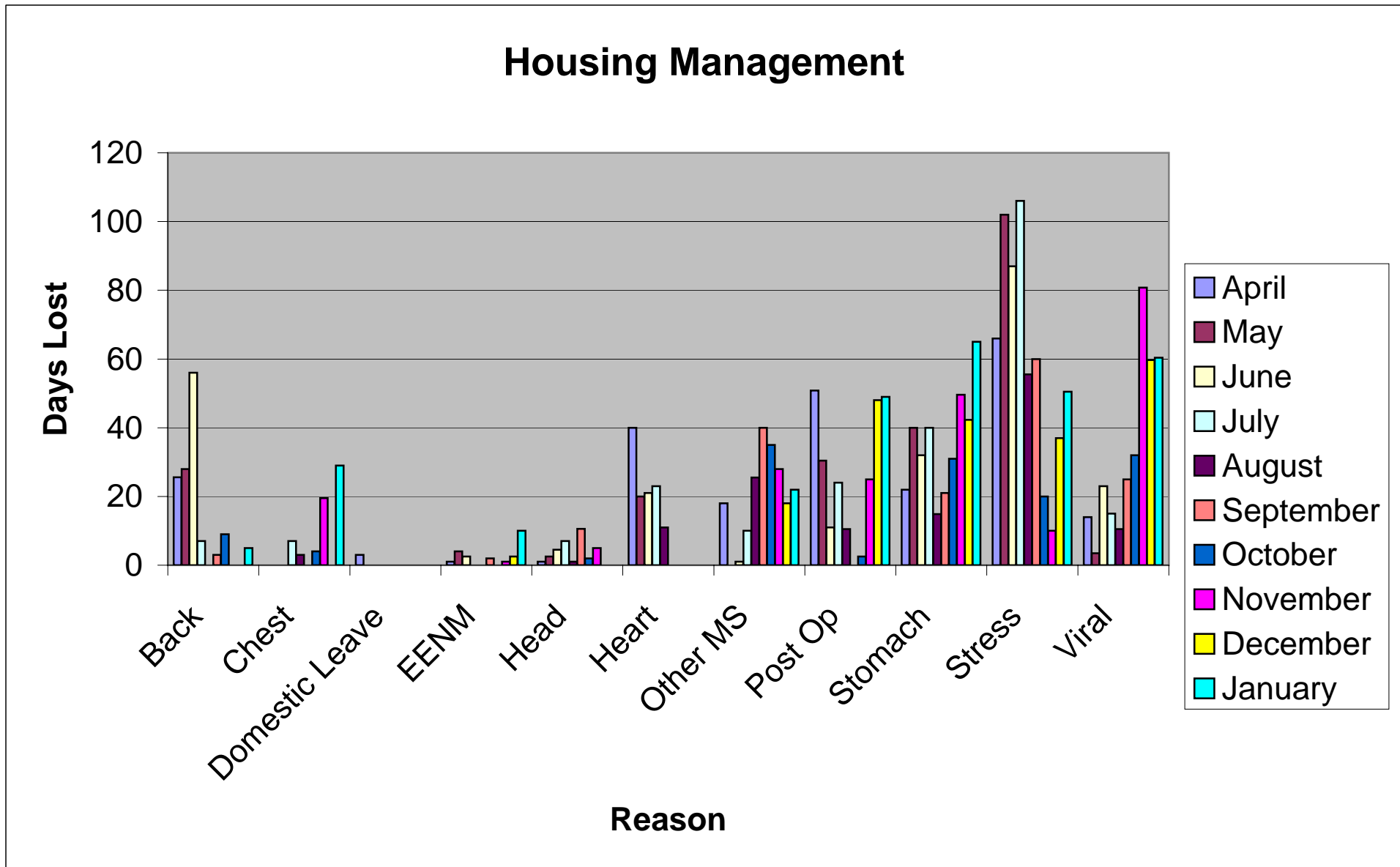
Appendix 2

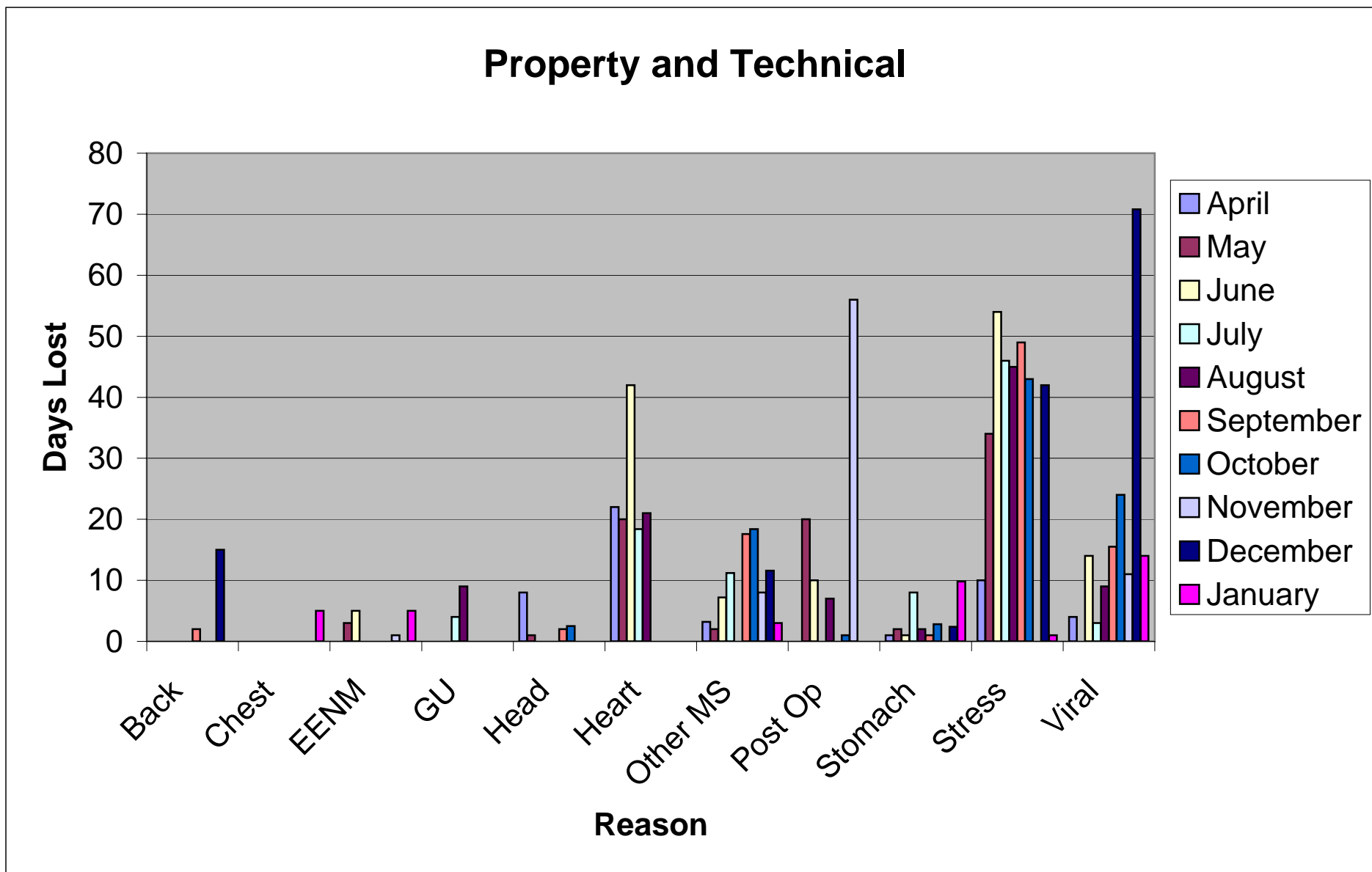
Actual Days lost per employee per month to date

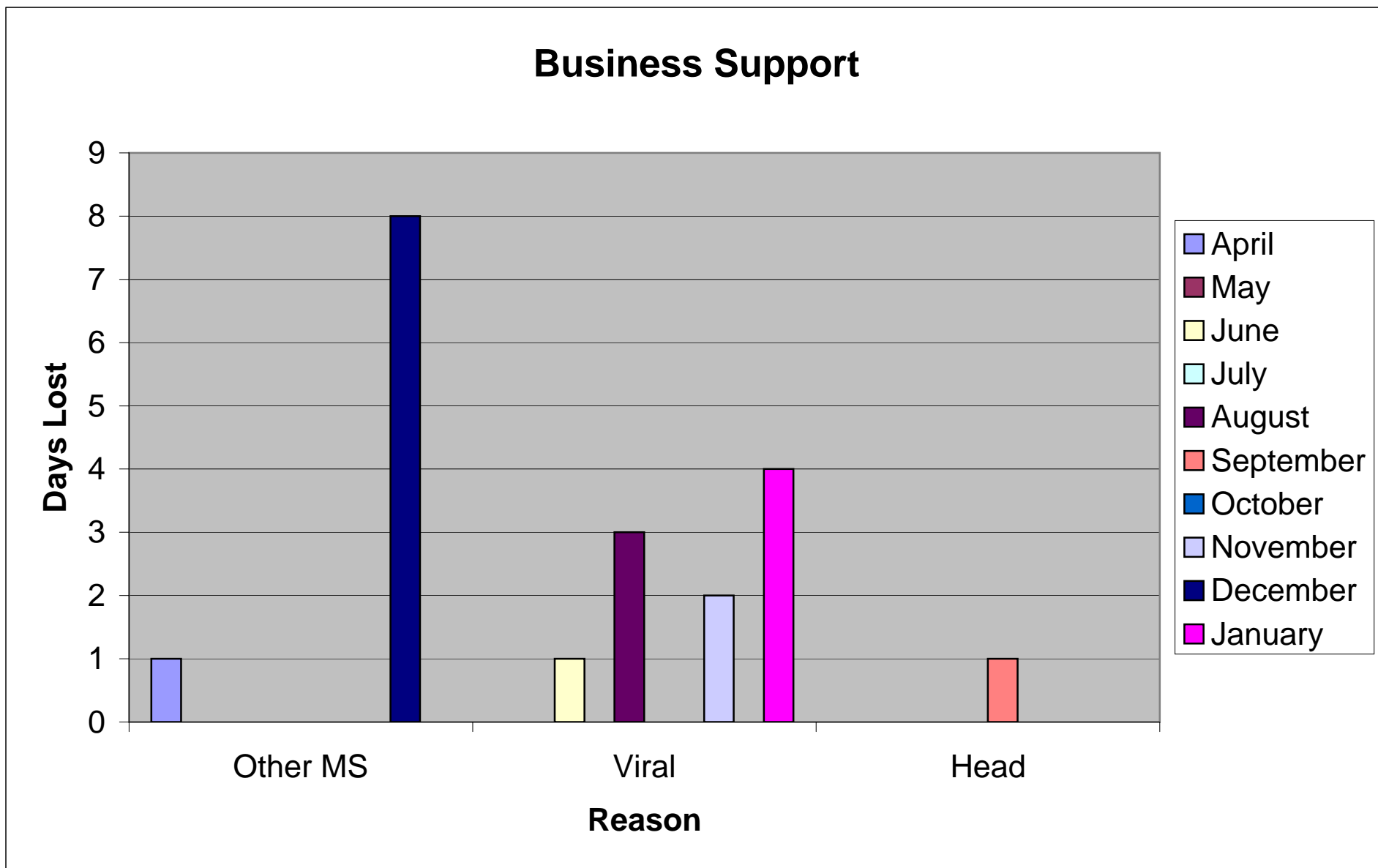
	HM	Prop & Tech	Business Support	Finance & lct	Group Man.	All employees TGHC	TGHC cumulative	DCLG & House Mark	No of Occurrences	Days Lost per month	Days Lost Short Term Absence	Days Lost Long Term Absence
2007/08												
April	1.14	0.86	0.20	0.07		0.92	0.92	0.79	37	300.5	0.16	0.76
May	1.18	0.19		0.07		1.16	2.08	1.58	49	382.5	0.36	0.80
June	1.56	1.34	0.02	0.71		1.38	3.46	2.37	57	448.9	0.42	0.96
July	1.99	1.05	0.14	1.08		1.50	4.96	3.16	54	532.5	0.48	1.02
August	1.64	0.67	0.33	0.49		1.05	6.01	3.95	49	407.0	0.40	0.65
September	1.35	0.63		0.07		0.97	6.98	4.74	46	317.3	0.41	0.56
October	1.23	0.84	0.17	0.33		0.95	7.93	5.53	53	320.8	0.51	0.44
November	1.36	0.97	0.07	0.00		1.07	9.00	6.32	51	346.2	0.45	0.62
December	0.83	0.83		0.10		0.72	9.72	7.11	38	241.5	0.38	0.34
Jan	1.27	1.78		0.18		1.24	10.96	7.90	62	419.7	0.55	0.69
Feb	0.94	0.34		0.23	0.63	0.69	11.65	8.69	35	237.3	0.33	0.36
March	1.02	0.57	0.60	0.00		0.78	12.43	9.48	41	281.3	0.35	0.43
Cumulative by service area	15.51	10.07	1.53	3.33	0.63	12.43			572	4,236	4.80	7.63

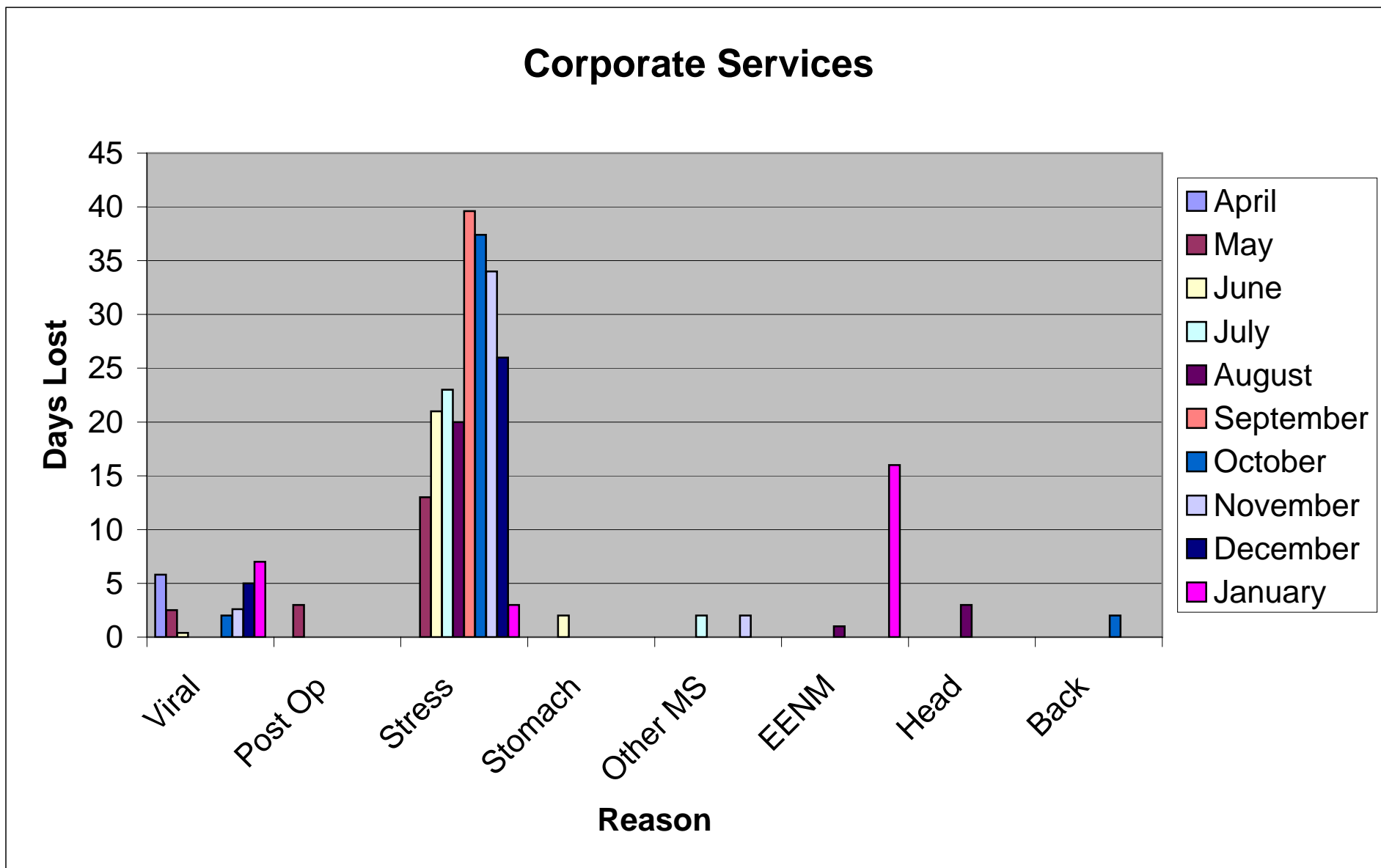
	HM	Prop & Tech	Business Support	Finance & lct	Group Man.	All employees TGHC	TGHC cumulative	DCLG & House Mark	No of Occurrences	Days Lost per month	Days Lost Short Term Absence	Days Lost Long Term Absence
2008/09												
April	1.21	0.55	0.07	0.18	0.00	0.90	0.90	0.79	42	327.4	0.36	0.54
May	1.00	0.94	0.00	0.55	0.00	0.90	1.80	1.58	36	330.9	0.27	0.63
June	1.01	1.54	0.06	0.67	0.00	1.05	2.85	2.37	53	400.6	0.46	0.59
July	1.02	1.01	0.00	0.70	1.60	0.94	3.79	3.16	49	356.2	0.58	0.36
August	0.62	0.88	0.67	0.21	0.00	0.66	4.45	3.95	45	251.9	0.31	0.35
September	0.64	1.15	0.07	1.13	0.83	0.82	5.27	4.74	52	310.3	0.34	0.48
October	0.59	0.97	0.00	1.28	0.34	0.69	5.96	5.53	67	263.1	0.23	0.46
November	0.88	0.85	0.38	1.11	0.00	0.89	6.85	6.32	64	331.5	0.53	0.36
December	0.87	1.58	0.52	0.87	0.00	1.05	7.90	7.11	76	392.1	0.63	0.42
January	1.23	0.43	0.32	0.73	3.20	0.99	8.89	7.90	79	363.9	0.51	0.49
February								8.69				
March								9.48				
Cumulative by service area	9.07	9.90	2.09	7.43	5.97	8.89			563	3327.9	4.22	4.68

* Days Lost = No of days absence / FTE in the service











Report to Human Resources Committee

4 March 2009

Title: Learning and Development Update

Report of: Director of Finance

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on the progress and activity of the Staff Development function.

Background

2. The Staff Development function has evolved over recent months and has seen varied activity. Several innovations have been used to increase the knowledge of employees in key subject areas with the ultimate aim of increasing performance and business benefit.

Management Development Training

3. The programme was launched in June 2008 for 63 middle managers. Six modules are now complete and the evaluation feedback received has been excellent.
4. 57 managers completed the first five modules and have been presented with a certificate in Developing Leadership Skills. Modules completed are: -
 - Applying the Values of The Gateshead Housing Company
 - Leading a Team (the role of the manager)
 - Managing Performance
 - Managing Change
 - Building Cohesive and Sustainable Communities
 - Managing Difficult and Sensitive Situations.

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

5. NVQ level 2 (equivalent of five grade A-C GCSE's) in Contact Centre Operations and Customer Service will be delivered to 14 employees in the Repairs Reporting team. This will be delivered by Sunderland Contact Centre Academy who will visit Keelman House on a weekly basis. Each qualification will take approximately 16-20 weeks to complete. Following completion of this initial programme it is proposed to roll out the two qualifications to the remaining

employees within the Repairs team. Employees will enrol 24 March 2009 and commence the programme of work 4 March 2009.

Skills Pledge

6. The company is signing the Skills Pledge which is a voluntary, public commitment made by an organisation of any size to invest in the skills of its workforce through training and development to at least NVQ level 2 which is the equivalent of five grade A-C GCSE's. Further information can be found at the Learning Skills Council website.
<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/whatwedo/employer/skillspledge.htm>

Workbooks

8. The company has committed to developing a resource library to enable employees to learn through a variety of methods. Workbooks have been purchased and are currently being issued to employees who requested them through their appraisal or 1-2-1. Work based tasks are also being developed to embed the learning in the context to which it will be applied. Evaluation of this resource will be monitored.

E-learning

9. Gateshead Council is working with Ivy Learning Services Ltd to provide ICT and personal development training via e-learning. 24 employees of the company attended a demonstration session on 18 February 2009 at Keelman House. The demonstration provided an overview of the courses available and how to access them.

Additional Training

10. In addition to the training advertised in the on-line prospectus, there have been two team events delivered to Repairs Reporting Team and Business Support Teams. The bespoke events were designed and delivered by a Staff Development Officer to encourage cohesion, team and self awareness, empowerment and planning for the future. Both events were successful with feedback being very positive and future actions being committed to by the teams.

Link to values

11. This report links to the company values of
 - A commitment to all our employees - *celebrating our successes*.
 - Being positive and responsive - *constantly striving to achieve excellence*.
 - Being motivated, trained, and committed across the company - *delivering efficient and effective services*.
 - Embracing equality - *valuing difference*.

Impact on tenants

12. The impact of this report will be continued and improved customer service through a well trained and responsive workforce.

Risk Management Implications

13. This report will assist in managing two of the company's strategic risks: -
- Failure to sustain improvements
 - Failure to recruit and retain suitable staff.

Financial Implications

14. The costs of these courses and initiatives can be met from the existing annual budget.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. All training is accessible to all employees and through targeted training as detailed in this report. We train employees to meet the needs of the diverse community which they serve.

Value for Money implications

16. Through an increased use of internal delivery and development value for money is being achieved. We aim to use the most beneficial methods of delivery to maximise the return for the benefit of the company and customers.

Consultation carried out

17. A number of the courses delivered and developed were identified by employees, as part of the annual appraisal process.

Recommendation

18. The committee are asked to note the comments in this report.