



Report to Resources Committee

10 September 2013

Title: Sickness Absence and Human Resources Update

Report of: Support Services Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on general HR initiatives and developments from 1 April 2013 to 30 June 2013 to include sickness absence, and learning and development activity.

Employee and HR Monitoring Digest

2. Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is an analysis of the key employee data and HR monitoring to provide the Committee with an overview of the company's performance and key priorities. There are no areas to highlight

Sickness Absence Update

3. Attached at Appendix 2 is an analysis of the sickness absence levels for the period from April to June 2013.
4. Appendix 3 provides the reasons for absence within each directorate of the company for the period April to June 2013.
5. In comparing absence between April 2013 and June 2013 with same period in the previous year, the following trends have occurred:-
 - The total sickness absence for the period equates to 1.63 days per person compared to 3.01 days for the same period last year which is a reduction of 45.85%
 - Short term absence is defined as a period of less than 15 working days in duration and long term absence is greater than 15 days in duration. Short term absence for the period was 0.83 days per person and long term absence was 0.80 days. This compares with 0.87 days short term absence and 2.14 days long term absence for the same period last year. This represents a reduction of 4.60% in short term absence. Long term absence has decreased by 62.62%.

- The biggest cause of absence was post operation recovery with 164.6 days lost compared to 197 days lost last year. This is a decrease of 16.45%
 - Stress related absence was 35.8 days for the period April to June 2013 compared to 393.6 for the same period last year. This equates to a 90.9% reduction. There was no reported stress absence in April 2013 and this is a clear indication that our health and wellbeing initiatives are effective in reducing absence caused through stress.
6. A personal support package continues to be provided to employees who are absent due to stress to include occupational health, home visits, counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Managing Sickness Absence

7. The company has held six sickness absence review meetings (short term) in the period. These meetings are triggered in response to four periods of absence or two periods of 15 days or more in a rolling 12 month period.
8. Two employees were issued with first written cautions following an absence review meeting. One employee was issued with a second written caution. One employee is now being managed under procedure two and no caution was issued.
9. Under procedure two an absence management review (long term absence) considers an employee's health and future employability with the company. Options discussed at the absence reviews include phased return to work, redeployment, work life balance, reduced hours, reasonable adjustments to the working environment and ill health retirement.
10. In the period April 2013 to June 2013, two employees attended an occupational health physician's appointment as a result of absence review meetings.
11. In the period April 2013 to June 2013, seven cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)/counselling sessions were supported by the company.
12. In the period April 2013 to June 2013, eight employees were referred to occupational health for an initial assessment. Twelve employees attended an occupational health review.
13. Two employees returned to work on phased hours and duties in the period April 2013 to June 2013.
14. Management information and guidance on managing sickness absence is provided to managers on a monthly basis.

Health and Wellbeing

15. We will be assessed for the bronze level of the Better Health at Work Award in November 2013. This requires the Company to hold 3 health and wellbeing events from April 2013 to October 2013. The aim of each event is to increase knowledge on a range of health and wellbeing topics.

16. In March 2013 employees were encouraged to complete an online survey (Health Needs Assessment) to determine health and wellbeing priorities for the three events. Employees who could not access the survey online were offered the option of completing the survey in paper format. The aim of the survey was to understand the following:-
 - What health issues are important to employees
 - The ways in which employees would like to receive health information
 - How they would like to take part in health improvement activities.
17. 158 online surveys and three paper surveys were returned which equated to a 50% response rate.
18. The priorities raised by employees were; fitness, healthy eating and weight management and cancer care.
19. Rather than just a one-off event, a week-long promotion and activities took place to include fitness, healthy eating and lifestyle changes.
20. National Walking Month was held Monday 13 to Friday 17 May. The aim was to highlight the benefits of the exercise and how it can easily be incorporated into everyday life.
21. Employees were also encouraged to take part in the company's '**Why 'weight', get walking**' challenge. 12 teams registered for the event with 118 employees taking part (37% of employees) by setting up walking teams within their department. In a period of 5 days employees had logged 32,016 minutes, almost 534 hours or just over 22 days.
22. The Health Needs Assessment identified that almost 30% of respondents would like further information on cancer care. Julie Tucker, Health Improvement Specialist on bowel and breast cancer screening, from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead was commissioned to provide briefings on the subject to employees.
23. The briefings took place over a two-month period and were delivered at housing offices and Keelman House. 123 (38%) employees attended a cancer awareness briefing.
24. Although we have had success in our management of stress, this was still the biggest cause of absence in the period April 2012 to March 2013. We therefore dedicated our third event to stress. The "Stress Down Day" event did take place on 21 August 2013 and will had 23 exhibitors. We will update the Resource Committee in the next quarter of outcomes.
25. The event promoted local services available to support employees to include healthy eating, exercise, volunteering, counselling, drug and alcohol and financial support.
26. We continue to investigate initiatives that will help us to better understand the causes of depression, anxiety and stress. We aim to use the knowledge gained in this area to research new initiatives to assist employees to manage their condition and remain in work.

Information Sharing

27. The company continues to work with Gateshead Council to more closely align our services through sharing information and initiatives.

Other HR initiatives and developments

28. The chiropodist has attended Keelman House on three occasions in the period April 2013 to June 2013. Twenty-eight appointments were attended by employees. The chiropodist also carried out appointments at Blaydon housing office where seven employees attended.
29. The Pay Day Pamper Days have been reintroduced. Three sessions have been held and 24 employees attended appointments in the period April 2013 to June 2013.

Work Life Balance

30. In the period April to June 2013, the following work life balance applications have been approved:

No of Applications	Type of Work Life Balance Request
3	Applications to reduce working hours
2	Application for compressed hours

Investigation and Disciplinary

31. In the period April to June 2013 the following activities have taken place:

Investigation	Outcome
1	Progressed to Disciplinary meeting
Disciplinary	Outcome
1	1 Dismissal
Appeals	Outcome
1	To be heard by the Resource Committee September 2013

Grievances

32. In the period April to June 2013, there were no reported grievances.

Bullying and Harassment

33. In the period April to June 2013 there were no allegations of bullying or harassment.

Whistleblowing

34. In the period April to June 2013, there were no reported incidents.

Other HR Initiatives and Developments

Recruitment

35. In the period April to June 2013, the company has advertised 7 jobs as follows:

Job title	Method of recruitment	Number of applications
Housing Manager – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	8
Older Persons Housing Manager – Customers & Communities	Internal to TGHC employees only	5
Administration Assistant Housing Services – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	3
Leasehold Officer – Corporate Services	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	19
Customer Service Assistant – Customers & Communities	Advertised Externally	80
Technical Clerk – Corporate Services	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	5
Administration Assistant Housing Services – Customers & Communities	Advertised Externally	128

Child Care Scheme

36. The company continues to offer a salary sacrifice scheme. In June 2013 thirteen employees were in the scheme.

First Assist Employee Care Service

37. The Employee Care service provides employees with 24 hour health and wellbeing services including counselling, legal and financial information 365 days a year.
38. The scheme costs £1,231.20 per year based on the employee headcount. Our monitoring indicates very low usage of the scheme by employees which has been widely promoted. We have consulted with Trade Unions and Employees and we will be ending the scheme in October 2013. It is our intention to ensure employees receive the support they need through Health and Wellbeing advocates who have been trained to offer confidential advice and signposting to relevant services.

Learning and Development Activity

Diversity, Dignity and Respect Awareness

39. A Diversity, Dignity and Respect Workshop was held in May which used interactive drama to educate and empower employees on this key subject. The session was a 'mop up' for employees who had not attended the previous programme which was rolled out across the company.

Customer Service Training

40. In response to a need identified by senior managers, a bespoke session was developed by the Organisational Development Team and delivery began in June. Using the latest techniques to facilitate learning, the consistent messages and tools of customer service have been re-enforced, receiving excellent feedback. This is an on-going programme which is mandatory training for all employees.

Needle stick and bodily fluids training

41. This session was delivered by an external provider in response to feedback from the Caretaking service on the need for more awareness in this important area. The bespoke session was delivered to Caretakers.

Safeguarding Training Needs Analysis

42. The company is an active member of the Safeguarding Adults and Children's boards and accesses the borough wide training opportunities available. To identify future requirements, a training needs analysis was circulated with updated processes and procedures, to identify the requirement for further training. Of the responses received to date there are 109 employees requiring further training in Safeguarding Adults and 159 for Safeguarding Children, however work is being done with the Council to refine reporting processes and accuracy of information to inform the plan going forward.

Qualifications

43. To align the application process for qualification funding support with the appraisal cycle, applications were invited in April. There were 6 new applications received, 3 were approved, 3 were declined and 4 employees continue to study.

Health and Safety Training

44. In the period April to June 2013 the following health and safety training has been delivered:
- Asbestos Awareness
 - COSHH Interactive
 - Driving Safety
 - DSE Interactive
 - Fire Safety
 - Health and Safety for Managers
 - Induction Safety Interactive
 - Manual Handling Interactive

- Office Safety Interactive
- Stress Management

ICT Training

45. In the period April to June 2013 the following ICT training and development has been delivered:
- E learning Module for Keystone Asbestos Register. This online module created in-house, introduces key users to the basics of the Keystone Asset Management Software, in particular the Asbestos Register module. During the period April to June 2013 35 users have completed the module

Link to values

46. This report links to the following company values: -
- Being honest, accountable and transparent
 - Being motivated, trained and committed across the company
 - Being caring and respecting
 - A commitment to all our employees
 - Embracing equality

Impact on Customers

47. Sickness absence impacts on the level of service provided to customers. Every effort is taken to keep this to a minimum. Managing absence and delivering in our commitment to have a well trained and responsive workforce will directly lead to improved services to customers.

Risk Management Implications

48. Manager's not managing sickness in accordance with Policy has been identified as an operational risk and controls and future actions are in place to mitigate the risk.
49. Absence due to an epidemic has also been identified as an operational risk and if there was an epidemic which significantly reduced the workforce, this would be addressed through the Business Continuity Plan once it has been launched and gone live.

Financial Implications

50. The financial cost of sickness absence to the company for the period April to June 2013 was £54,975 as compared to £104,901 for the same period last year.

Equality and Diversity Implications

51. The company's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer is an integral part of every aspect of the company's activities. All training is designed to meet the diverse needs of the community and employees.

Value for Money implications

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

Health Implications

53. The initiatives and prevention work that has been introduced over the past year have had a positive impact on the health of our employees. The clearest measure of this is the achievement of Investors in People (IiP) Gold award and Health and wellbeing award.
54. The company's commitment to learning and development is embedded in the Investors in People award (IiP) and is applied consistently across the company. Our approach to provide tailored learning will have a positive impact on employee's health and overall wellbeing and will minimise any stress.

Environmental Implications



55. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.



Consultation carried out



56. The company's HR consultants EEF Northern and Unions have been consulted on aspects of the report. Trade Unions are always consulted prior to any changes being implemented and we continue to enjoy a good relationship with them. A number of the courses delivered and developed were identified by employees, as part of the annual appraisal process.

Recommendations

57. The views of the committee are sought on whether the committee is satisfied with the update on general HR initiatives and developments.
58. The committee is asked to note the ending of the First Assist Employee Care Service.

					
Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14					
Performance Measure		Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Number of people employed by TGHC					
Male		137			
Female		187			
Permanent Employees		323			
Temporary Employees		1			
Full Time		261			
Part Time		63			
Number of starters (since 01 April 2013)		5			
Number of leavers (since 01 April 2013)		6			
Ill health retirements		0			
Number of employees seeking redeployment		0			
Diversity Monitoring					
Gender					
Male		137			
Female		187			
Age					
Under 18		0			
18 – 25		21			
26 – 35		108			
36 – 45		71			
46 – 55		88			
56 – 65		35			
66 +		1			
Disability					
Perceived themselves as disabled		36			
Do not perceive themselves as disabled		288			

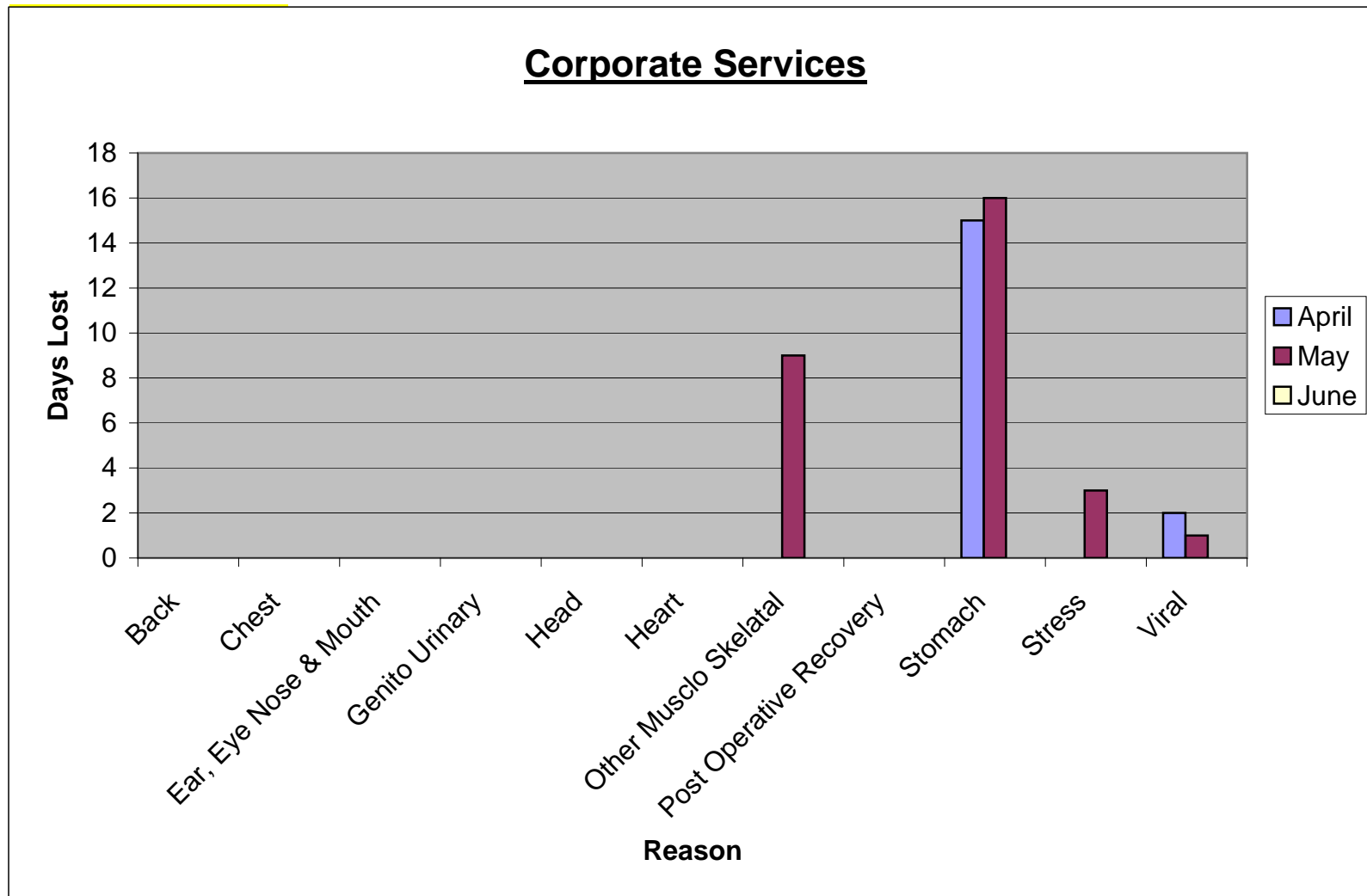
 The Gateshead Housing Company Working with Gateshead Council					
Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14					
Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	
Ethnicity					
White British	310				
White Irish	2				
White Other	1				
White and Black Caribbean	0				
White and Black African	1				
White and Asian	1				
Asian or Asian British Indian	1				
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0				
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1				
Asian or Asian British Other	1				
Black or Black British Caribbean	0				
Black or Black British African	4				
Black or Black British Other	1				
Chinese	1				
Other	0				
Recruitment Monitoring					
Number of BME applicants for posts					
Application for employment	12				
Short listed for interview	5				
Offered post	0				
Number of disabled applicants for posts					
Application for Employment	10				
Short listed for interview	3				
Offered post	0				
HR advisory issues					
Investigations	1				
Disciplinary	1				
Suspensions	1				
Oral Warning	0				
First Written Warning	0				
Final Written Warning	0				
Dismissals	1				
Appeals Submitted	1				
Stage 1 Grievance	0				
Stage 2 Grievance	0				

 The Gateshead Housing Company Working with Gateshead Council					
Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14					
Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	
Bullying and Harassment Whistleblowing Capability	0 0 0				
Health and Wellbeing					
Total number of working days lost per employee (target 7.50 April to March 2014)	1.63				
Total number of working days lost to sickness	488.8				
Number of Occupational Health appointments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New referrals • Review appointments 	8 12				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgery appointments • Home appointments 	2 0				
Number of employee counselling/CBT sessions	7				
Number of Absence Management Reviews					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Term • Long Term 	6 0				
Number of employees who have had a phased return	2				
Learning and Development					
Number of new staff receiving induction	5				
Number of staff undertaking professional Qualifications (report in Qtr 2)	4				

Actual Days lost per employee per month to date

2013/2014	Customers & Communities - Customer Services	Customers & Communities Neighbourhood Services	Customers & Communities Property Services	Corporate Services Finance	Corporate Services Support Services	All Employees TGHC	TGHC Cumulative	2012/13 TGHC Cumulative	Days Lost per month	Days Lost Short Term Absence	No of Occurrences Short Term	Days Lost Long Term Absence	No of Occurrences Long Term
April	0.54	0.72	0.03	0.35	0.38	0.54	0.54	0.95	161.00	0.34	29.00	0.20	3.00
May	0.15	0.70	0.19	0.59	0.65	0.48	1.02	2.06	144.50	0.23	21.00	0.25	4.00
June	0.59	0.95	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.61	1.63	3.01	183.30	0.26	23.00	0.35	6.00
July								3.57					
August								3.96					
September								4.22					
October								4.69					
November								5.27					
December								5.76					
January								6.67					
February								7.18					
March								7.67					
Cumulative by service area													

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



Customers & Communities

