



## Report to Resources Committee

5 November 2013

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**Title:** Sickness Absence and Human Resources Update

**Report of:** Support Services Manager

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide the committee with an update on general HR initiatives and developments from 1 April 2013 to 30 September 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 September 2013.
4. Appendix 3 provides in a graphical format the reasons for absence within each directorate of the company for the period April to September 2013.
5. In comparing absence between April and September 2013 with same period in the previous year, the following trends have occurred.
6. The total sickness absence for the period equates to 3.52 days per person compared to 4.22 days for the same period last year which is a reduction of 16.59%.
7. 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 1.45 days per person and long term absence was 2.07 days. This compares with 1.47 days short term absence and 2.76 days long term absence for the same period last year. This represents a reduction of 1.36% in short term absence and a reduction of 25% in long term absence.

8. The biggest cause of absence was post operation recovery with 353 days lost compared to 236 days lost last year. This is an increase of 33.07%.
9. Stress related absence was 145 days for the period April to September 2013 compared to 590 for the same period last year. This equates to a 75.42% reduction.
10. 134 days of stress related absence was reported as non work related stress. This equates to 92% as non work related absence and 8% work related absence.
11. 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**

12. The company has held 13 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.
13. Three first written cautions were issued and one second written caution was issued following an absence review meeting.
14. 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. Four absence review meeting were held in the period April to September 2013 and this has assisted the return to work of two of the employees.
15. In the period April to September 2013, two employees attended an occupational health physician's appointment as a result of an absence review meetings.
16. In the period April to September 2013, seven cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)/counselling sessions were supported by the company.
17. In the period April to September 2013, 16 employees were referred to occupational health for an initial assessment. 28 employees attended an occupational health review.
18. Five employees returned to work on phased hours and duties in the period April to September 2013.
19. Management information and guidance on managing sickness absence is provided to managers on a monthly basis.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

20. We are working towards the Better Health at Work Award. Our assessment for Bronze level will take place in December 2013.

21. Assessment consists of a portfolio review of health and wellbeing activity and policies and procedures in the Company.
22. The portfolio review will be followed by a one and half hour on site assessment. The Company will be represented at the on site assessment by the main contact, a management representative and three Health and Wellbeing Advocates.
23. A report of findings is submitted to the regional coordinator for verification. The results will be communicated to the Company.
24. Employees informed us that their top three health and wellbeing priorities are healthy eating, cancer and stress. We have developed our initiatives to address this.
25. We held a 'Stress Down Day' event attended by 25 exhibitors.
26. Exhibitors were invited based on the main themes their service covered, healthy eating and exercise, physical ailments, unseen causes of stress and mediation.
27. 135 employees signed into the event (42% of the workforce) and 51 evaluation forms were received. Feedback from post employee evaluation shows the event was well received and informative for employees.
28. 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**

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

### **Other HR initiatives and Developments**

30. The chiroprapist has attended Keelman House on six occasions in the period April 2013 to September 2013. 61 appointments were attended by employees. The chiroprapist also carried out appointments at Blaydon housing office where seven employees attended.
31. The Pay Day Pamper Days have been reintroduced. Five sessions have been held and 38 employees attended appointments in the period April 2013 to September 2013.
32. We have discontinued the First Assist service and replaced with an advocacy service. The Health and Wellbeing advocates across the company have been trained to offer confidential advice and signposting to relevant services.
33. The Company have offered employees the opportunity of signing up to a Cycle to Work Scheme in October 2013. 14 employees expressed an interest.
34. The salary sacrifice scheme is operated by Cycle Solutions and allows employees to spread the total cost of a cycle over a 12 month period.

## Work Life Balance

35. In the period April to September 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

36. In the period April to September 2013 the following activities have taken place:

<b>Investigation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Progressed to Disciplinary meeting
<b>Disciplinary</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	1 Dismissal
<b>Appeals</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Not Upheld

## Grievances

37. In the period April to September 2013, there were no reported grievances.

## Bullying and Harassment

38. In the period April to September 2013 there were no allegations of bullying or harassment.

## Probity (including whistleblowing, bribery, fraud and corruption)

39. In the period April to September 2013, there were no reported incidents.

## Other HR Initiatives and Developments

### Recruitment

40. In the period April to September 2013, the company has advertised 14 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

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Method of recruitment</b>	<b>Number of applications</b>
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
Administration Assistant, Legal Recovery – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	3
Electrical Auditor - Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	3
Advice Assistant (6posts) – Customers & Communities	Internal Vacancy ring fenced to TGHC Repairs Reporting & Improvement Team Only	14
Housing Management Assistant – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	4
Project Officer – Corporate Services	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	4
Rent & Income Officer – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	10
Housing Management Assistant (Multi Storey) – Customers & Communities	Internal TGHC and Gateshead Council	10

### **Child Care Scheme**

41. The company continues to offer a salary sacrifice scheme. In September 2013, 11 employees were in the scheme.

### **Working with Gateshead Council Economic Development**

42. The Company identified a need to employ two Data Entry Clerks for a temporary period of six months to assist with scanning all documents prior to our move to the Civic Centre.

43. The Company has worked with Economic Development on the short term recruitment of the two data entry clerks. 19 applicants were received and seven were short-listed for interview. Two were offered a post.

### **Redundancy and Redeployment Policies**

44. The Company has adopted the changes in Gateshead Council's Redundancy and Redeployment Policies. The Redundancy Policy now has a reduced multiplier of a weeks pay from 1.5 to 1.25 times the number of weeks to a maximum of 37.5 weeks pay. There is a minor change to the Redeployment Policy with regards to protection. If an employee is redeployed again within a four year protection period a further four years protection would not be possible.

### **Learning and Development Activity**

#### **Employee Benefits**

45. The Company launched an employee benefits scheme, which will be delivered by Vectis. Managers attended a launch road show where they were given essential information on how the scheme works which they could then relay to their teams. The scheme can bring employees savings all year round in leading shopping brands, holidays and travel, eating out, health and wellbeing, home & electrics, insurance, legal and motoring. The benefits are offered using automatically applied discount codes, reloading shopping cards and vouchers and will vary depending on the company or service. The Company launched its own benefits platform so employees can login to view the offers and discounts available via Vectis but also can see what other benefits the company offers such as child care scheme, pension, health and wellbeing and flexible working.

#### **Sharing best practice**

46. We recognise that the key to business success are our employees and that a high level of engagement drives business performance. As part of our commitment to employee engagement, an Organisational Development Advisor contacted a leader in this field, Greggs, to discuss their strategy. Key learning points:
- Engagement needs to be lead from the top with a commitment from all levels of the organisation
  - Empowering employees to take responsibility to organise events such as charity days and social events contributes to success
  - What works in one location does not always work in another and this results in localised events and initiatives

#### **Best companies**

47. To further our objective of increasing employee engagement the company has registered for the Best Companies Engagement Survey and Times 100 list. This is the third consecutive year we have participated and the results provide invaluable information on how engaged employees are with the organisation in relation to several specific areas.

### **IIP mini-diagnostic**

48. In June 2010, the Company achieved IIP Gold and the Health and Wellbeing Award. It is a requirement that this accreditation is renewed every three years. In preparation for our assessment next year, a mini-diagnostic assessment was conducted by our IIP Specialist, Lesley Curtis.

### **Coaching**

49. Coaching continues to be delivered within the company and is proving to be a worth while intervention which offers professional growth and a variety of business benefits.

### **Qualifications**

50. Applications for professional qualifications were received during the quarter. The Company is currently supporting 13 employees with funding for professional qualifications.

### **Customer Service Training**

51. We continue to deliver our mandatory customer service training across the company. Sessions are well attended and we have received excellent feedback from attendees on how we can improve our service delivery to our internal and external customers. So far, language line and cross service working have been raised by attendees as a need to improve.

### **Making the Gateshead Housing Company Accessible**

52. In response to questions raised by employees in the customer service training, we will review and deliver the above course. This will ensure employees are aware of what to do if they need to contact language line, use an interpreter or arrange for sign language.

### **Health and Safety Training**

53. In the period April to September 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
- Risk Assessment one day course and refresher
- One day first aid training

- Water Mains Connection and L8 Regulations and how this affects what we do (one hour workshop delivered by Gateshead Council)

### **ICT Training**

54. In the period April to September 2013 the following ICT training and development has been delivered:
- E learning Module for Keystone Asbestos Register.
55. ICT are currently working on producing a series of Northgate Training manuals which will cover the tenant sign up process within Northgate. This is a work in progress and they are looking at a late December completion date.

### **Link to values**

56. 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**

57. 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**

58. 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.
59. 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**

60. The financial cost of sickness absence to the Company for the period April to September 2013 was £118,352 as compared to £146,661 for the same period last year. A saving will be made by ceasing the First Assist programme and signing posting our employees to the Health and Wellbeing advocates.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

61. 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**

62. 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**

63. 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.
64. 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**



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



### **Consultation carried out**



66. The Company's HR consultants EEF Northern and Trade 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.

### **Recommendation**

67. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the update on HR initiatives and developments.

					
<b>Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14</b>					
<b>Performance Measure</b>		<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>
<b>Number of people employed by TGHC</b>					
Male		137	140		
Female		187	181		
Permanent Employees		323	320		
Temporary Employees		1	1		
Full Time		261	259		
Part Time		63	62		
Number of starters (since 01 April 2013)		5	4		
Number of leavers (since 01 April 2013)		6	7		
Ill health retirements		0	0		
Number of employees seeking redeployment		0	0		
<b>Diversity Monitoring</b>					
<b>Gender</b>					
Male		137	140		
Female		187	181		
<b>Age</b>					
Under 18		0	0		
18 – 25		21	18		
26 – 35		108	106		
36 – 45		71	72		
46 – 55		88	84		
56 – 65		35	40		
66 +		1	1		
<b>Disability</b>					
Perceived themselves as disabled		36	43		
Do not perceive themselves as disabled		288	278		

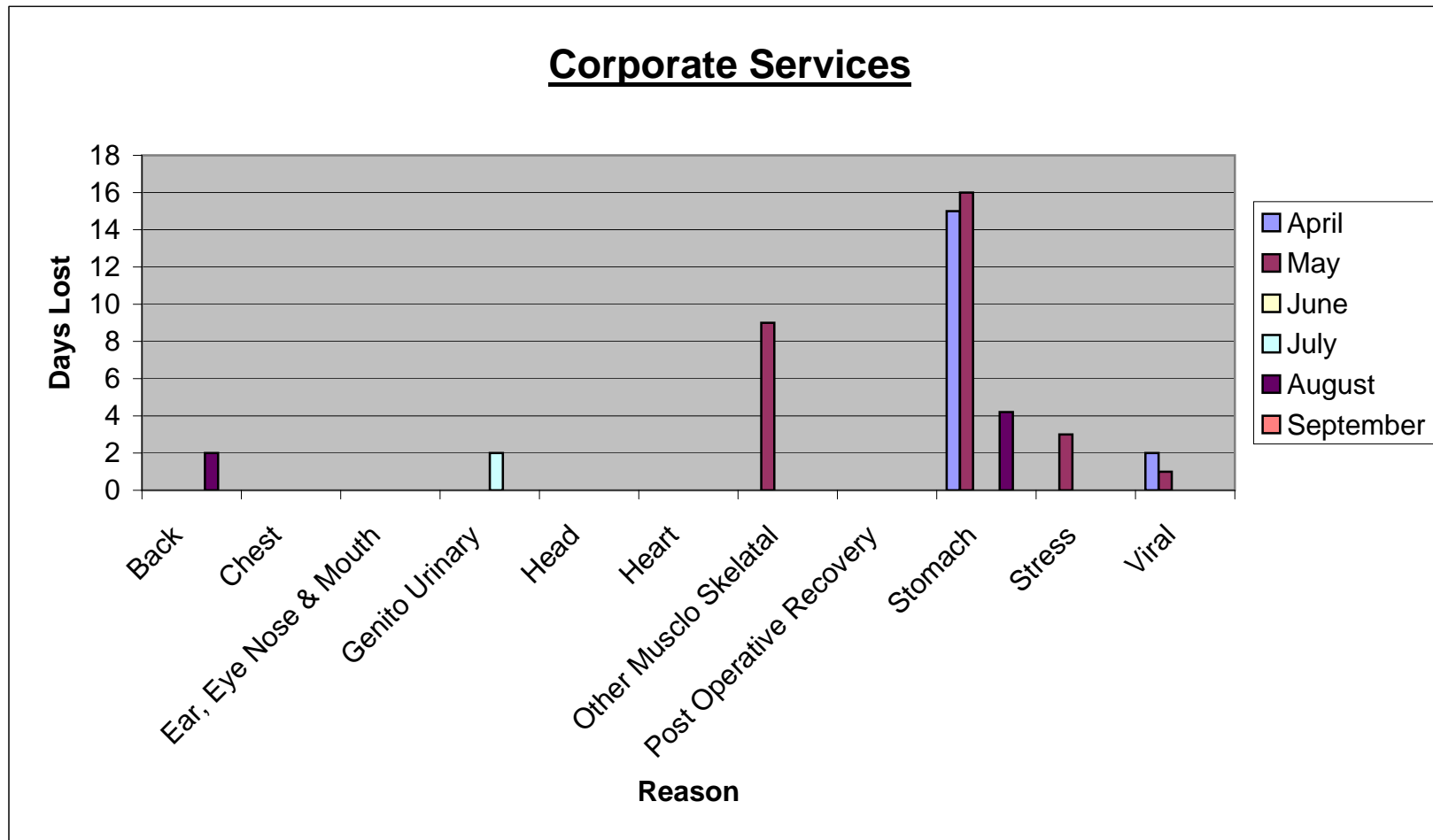
 <b>The Gateshead Housing Company</b> Working with Gateshead Council					
<b>Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14</b>					
Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
White British	310	307			
White Irish	2	2			
White Other	1	1			
White and Black Caribbean	0	0			
White and Black African	1	1			
White and Asian	1	1			
Asian or Asian British Indian	1	1			
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0	0			
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	1			
Asian or Asian British Other	1	1			
Black or Black British Caribbean	0	0			
Black or Black British African	4	3			
Black or Black British Other	1	1			
Chinese	1	1			
Other	0	1			
<b>Recruitment Monitoring</b>					
Number of BME applicants for posts					
Application for employment	12	1			
Short listed for interview	5	1			
Offered post	0	0			
Number of disabled applicants for posts					
Application for Employment	10	0			
Short listed for interview	3	0			
Offered post	0	0			
<b>HR advisory issues</b>					
Investigations	1	0			
Disciplinary	1	0			
Suspensions	1	0			
Oral Warning	0	0			
First Written Warning	0	0			
Final Written Warning	0	0			
Dismissals	1	0			
Appeals Submitted	1	0			
Stage 1 Grievance	0	0			
Stage 2 Grievance	0	0			

				
<b>Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14</b>				
<b>Performance Measure</b>	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Bullying and Harassment	0	0		
Whistleblowing	0	0		
Capability	0	0		
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>				
Total number of working days lost per employee (target 7.50 April to March 2014)	1.63	1.89		
Total number of working days lost to sickness	488.8	563.50		
Number of Occupational Health appointments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New referrals</li> <li>• Review appointments</li> </ul>	8 12	8 16		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgery appointments</li> <li>• Home appointments</li> </ul>	2 0	0 0		
Number of employee counselling/CBT sessions	7	0		
Number of Absence Management Reviews				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>	6 0	7 0		
Number of employees who have had a phased return	2	3		
<b>Learning and Development</b>				
Number of new staff receiving induction	5	4		
Number of staff undertaking professional Qualifications	4	13		

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 Occurences Short Term	Days Lost Long Term Absence	No of Occurences 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	0.37	1.22	0.15	0.09	0.00	0.69	2.32	3.57	205.40	0.23	19.00	0.46	7.00
August	0.24	1.08	0.40	0.18	0.08	0.62	2.94	3.96	185.90	0.22	17.00	0.40	6.00
September	0.46	0.92	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.58	3.52	4.22	172.20	0.17	18.00	0.41	6.00
October								4.69					
November								5.27					
December								5.76					
January								6.67					
February								7.18					
March								7.67					
Cumulative by service area										1.45		2.07	

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



## Customers & Communities

