

Report to Resources Committee

6 May 2014



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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 31 March 2014 including 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.

**Sickness Absence Update**

3. Attached at Appendix 2 is an analysis of the sickness absence levels for the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
4. Appendix 3 provides in a graphical format the reasons for absence within each directorate of the company for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
5. In comparing absence between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 with the same period in the previous year, the following trends have occurred.
6. The total sickness absence for the period equates to 8.58 days per person compared to 7.67 days for the same period last year which is an increase of 10.61%.
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 3.10 days per person and long term absence was 5.48 days. This compares with 3.34 days short term absence and 4.34 days long term absence for the same period last year. This represents a reduction of 7.74% in short term absence and an increase of 20.80% in long term absence.

8. The biggest cause of absence was post operation recovery with 756 days lost compared to 420 days lost last year. This is an increase of 44%.
9. Stress related absence was 630 days for the period April 2013 to March 2014 compared to 918 days for the same period last year. This equates to a 45% reduction.
10. 418 days of stress related absence was reported as non work related stress. This equates to 66% as non-work related absence and 34% work related absence.
11. Since 2006/7, we have consistently reduced sickness absence every year and we are therefore disappointed at the increase this year which can be attributed to long term absence as employees recover from operations. We will review our initiatives to build employee resilience, management information about planned surgery to establish likely recovery periods, reasonable adjustments and support to prepare for a return to work. We are pleased to report that we have continued to reduce short term absence, stress related absence and the numbers of occasions of absence.
12. A personal support package continues to be provided to employees who are absent due to stress to include occupational health, occupational therapy, home visits, counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

### **Managing Sickness Absence**

13. The company has held 25 sickness absence review meetings (short term) in the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. 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.
14. Eight first written cautions were issued and one second written caution was issued following an absence review meeting.
15. 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.
16. 21 absence review meetings were held in line with procedure two in the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
17. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, four employees attended an occupational health physician's appointment as a result of absence review meetings.
18. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, 12 cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)/counselling sessions were supported by the company.

19. We continue to work with an Occupational Therapist who specialises in supporting individuals with impaired mental wellbeing. During the period October 2013 to March 2014, 34 occupational therapy sessions were supported by the company.
20. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, 28 employees were referred to occupational health for an initial assessment. 52 employees attended an occupational health review.
21. 14 employees returned to work on phased hours and duties in the period April 2013 to March 2014.
22. Management information and guidance on managing sickness absence is provided to managers on a monthly basis.

### **NE Health and Wellbeing Award**

23. Representatives from the Health and Wellbeing Advocacy Group attended a presentation evening at The Stadium of Light in March 2014.
24. The event was organised by Amacus Ltd in conjunction with the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Representative advocates were presented with a Bronze Level award in recognition of the health and wellbeing activity in Company.
25. Workplace Health Advocates are meeting with Amacus Ltd in April to determine the requirements to progress to Silver Level Award. Activities to achieve the award will be planned during the period April 2014 to March 2015.

### **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Engagement and Wellbeing Award**

26. We have submitted an entry for employee engagement and wellbeing to the CIPD – North East Branch for consideration.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

27. 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**

28. The Company continues to work with Gateshead Council to more closely align our services through sharing information and initiatives.
29. We have contributed to scoping meetings in relation to a proposed replacement for the PSE system for payroll and HR.

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

30. The Company continues to offer a chiropody service from the Occupational Health suite at Gateshead Council. Employees are now offered a wider range of

appointment dates and times with the Chiropodist who attended Keelman House and out based housing offices. We will continue to offer off site Chiropody to out based offices on request.

31. Pay Day Pamper Days are also administered via Gateshead Occupational Health Service which offers employees a wider choice of appointment times and dates.

### **Work Life Balance**

32. In the period April 2013 to March 2014, the following work life balance applications have been approved:

<b>No of Applications</b>	<b>Type of Work Life Balance Request</b>
9	Applications to reduce working hours
3	Application for compressed hours

### **Investigation and Disciplinary**

33. In the period April 2013 to March 2014 the following activities have taken place:

<b>Investigation</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
3	1 Progressed to Disciplinary meeting
<b>Disciplinary</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	1 Dismissal
<b>Appeal</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Not Upheld

### **Grievances**

34. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, there were no reported grievances.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

35. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 there were no allegations of bullying or harassment.

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

36. In the period April 2013 to March 2014, there were no reported incidents.

### **Other HR Initiatives and Developments**

#### **Recruitment**

37. In the period April 2013 to March 2014, the company has advertised 21 jobs. 3 jobs were ring fenced to employees of the Company only. 18 were advertised across the Company and Gateshead Council, 3 then went externally as we were unable to recruit to the positions.

## **Child Care Scheme**

38. The company continues to offer a salary sacrifice scheme. In March 2014, 13 employees were in the scheme.

## **HR Hits the Road**

39. The HR/OD team were 'out and about' visiting local offices. The informal visits were designed to give employees and managers an informal setting to ask any questions about assessments and the recruitment process in general. A session is also planned in April for Caretakers at Warwick Court.

## **Flexi Scheme**

40. We have adopted the Council's flexi system to record and monitor clockings in and out of the Civic Centre and Housing offices. The system is web based with a work flow system. We are developing our training and a management information.

## **ISO 14001 accreditation**

41. Following relocation to the Civic Centre we have reviewed our approach to the management of environmental issues as most of the activity required to achieve the standard is no longer within our control. We remain keen to follow the environmental policy and maintain the principles that have been established through the working group. The cost of accreditation, valid for three years is £1600, with each annual audit inspection £2500 per year. We therefore seek the committee's approval to let the ISO14001 accreditation lapse in June 2014 which will also result in a financial saving of £9,100 over three years. We would continue to monitor our performance against the ISO principles through the working group and continue to implement best practice.

## **Decommissioning of Keelman House**

42. The decommissioning of Keelman House is progressing well and the building is expected to be empty by the end of April 2014. It should be noted that additional work carried out by the company's Administration Team has resulted in a substantial reduction from the initial forecast of Dilapidations submitted by the Landlord. Subsequently a £49k saving has been agreed with the Landlord's representative.
43. A large amount of furniture and fittings have been donated to local charity organisations throughout the Borough. The remainder is to be divided between the Council's Facility Management for storage and the unwanted items are to be donated to the British Heart Foundation.

## **Exit Interviews**

44. In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, 18 employees left the Company. Of these, 12 exit interviews were held with an HR advisor 6 employees did not have an exit interview for the following reasons:-

1 was dismissed

1 employee was on maternity leave and did not return  
1 employee was absent due to ill health  
3 employees did not to attend the planned interview

45. All employees were contacted and given the opportunity of an exit interview with an option to complete the exit interview form without an HR advisor and return in the post.
46. Of the 12 exit interviews carried out general comments indicate:
- The majority of employees enjoyed working for The Gateshead Housing Company
  - Employees indicated they had a good relationship with colleagues and management
  - Employees would return to work for the company in the future

## **Learning and Development Activity**

### **Communication Training**

47. In response to employee feedback from Customer Service sessions and Best Companies, some new, specific training for managers was developed and delivered by an OD Advisor. The three sessions which were called “Communication – Do you know what I mean?” and were facilitative and participative, offering managers some tips and techniques along with the opportunity to discuss best practice in this key area. The evaluations were excellent and there is scope to plan in further sessions.

### **Performance Management Training**

48. As the appraisal cycle begins for 2014, a new course was developed and delivered by an OD Advisor. This session was a refresher for experienced managers or an introduction for managers new to the appraisal process. The session focussed not only on appraisals but included all aspects of performance management. It provided clarification and information on tools available to support managers, including coaching.

### **Investors in People (IiP) Survey**

49. The company is being re-assessed for Investors in People Accreditation in June 2014. An IiP Survey was carried in February 2014 and 34% (111 of 325) employees responded to the survey which covered areas of the IiP standard. The results have been used to populate an IiP Action Plan and shared with the IiP working group and employees via a team brief.

### **Mentoring**

50. The companies mentoring scheme has been re launched and publicised in the core brief to ensure all employees have the opportunity to be either a mentor or mentee. The mentor supports the mentee by using development techniques such as questioning, listening, clarifying and reframing during discussions which may involve sharing their knowledge in a particular area or subject to help them

develop both personally and professionally. Mentoring has many benefits which can include increased progression opportunities, increased confidence and motivation, personal skill and professional development.

### **Health and Safety Training**

51. In the period April 2013 to March 2014, the following health and safety training has been delivered:

- Asbestos Awareness
- Appointed first aider training (3 days with test to become a first-aider)
- COSHH Interactive
- COSHH - classroom
- 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**

52. In the period April 2013 to March 2014 the following ICT training has been delivered:

- Informal training for asset management team in Microsoft Project.
- Keystone Asbestos Register E-Learning. 35 individuals from across the company completed an e-learning module.
- Northgate v6 Tenancies Signup manuals (currently in production and review by Housing Management)

53. A Northgate V6 training manual has been created for Sheltered Housing covering recording contact details for older persons. This has now been implemented as the procedure is up and running.

54. Also, another new manual has been created for users of Northgate – entitled Creating a New Person. This procedure is used across the business (i.e. new tenancies, household members, etc.)

### **Link to values**

55. 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**

56. 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**

57. 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.
58. 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**

59. The financial cost of sickness absence to the Company for the period April to March 2014 was £289,476 as compared to £264,699 for the same period last year. There is a financial saving of £9,100 over three years should ISO 14001 lapse in June 2014. We have also agreed a saving of £49k to the original cost of dilapidations associated to the decommissioning of Keelman House.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

60. 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**

61. 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 and as shown in this report, the decommissioning of Keelman House.

### **Health Implications**

62. 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 and the North East Health and Wellbeing Award Bronze level.

63. 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**

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

### **Consultation carried out**

65. 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**

66. The views of the committee are sought on
- (i) The decision to let ISO 14001 lapse in June 2014
  - (ii) Whether it is satisfied with the update on HR initiatives and developments.





### Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14

Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
<b>Number of people employed by TGHC</b>				
Male	137	140	143	139
Female	187	181	187	186
Permanent Employees	323	320	325	320
Temporary Employees	1	1	5	5
Full Time	261	259	263	259
Part Time	63	62	67	66
Number of starters (since 01 April 2013)	6	10	20	21
Number of leavers (since 01 April 2013)	5	11	12	18
Ill health retirements	0	0	0	0
Number of employees seeking redeployment	0	0	0	1
<b>Diversity Monitoring</b>				
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	137	140	143	139
Female	187	181	187	186
<b>Age</b>				
Under 18	0	0	0	0
18 – 25	21	18	20	22
26 – 35	108	106	106	101
36 – 45	71	72	75	76
46 – 55	88	84	84	82
56 – 65	35	40	42	41
66 +	1	1	3	3
<b>Disability</b>				
Perceived themselves as disabled	36	37	36	38
Do not perceive themselves as disabled	288	284	294	287



### Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14

Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White British	310	307	316	311
White Irish	2	2	2	2
White Other	1	1	1	1
White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0	0
White and Black African	1	1	1	1
White and Asian	1	1	1	1
Asian or Asian British Indian	1	1	1	1
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	1	1	1
Asian or Asian British Other	1	1	1	1
Black or Black British Caribbean	0	0	0	0
Black or Black British African	4	3	3	3
Black or Black British Other	1	1	1	1
Chinese	1	1	1	1
Other	0	1	1	1
<b>Recruitment Monitoring</b>				
Number of BME applicants for posts				
Application for employment	12	1	0	0
Short listed for interview	5	1	0	0
Offered post	0	0	0	0
Number of disabled applicants for posts				
Application for Employment	10	0	2	0
Short listed for interview	3	0	2	0
Offered post	0	0	Ongoing	0
<b>HR advisory issues</b>				
Investigations	1	0	1	1
Disciplinary	1	0	0	0
Suspensions	1	0	0	0
No Further Action	0	0	1	1
Oral Warning	0	0	0	0
First Written Warning	0	0	0	0
Final Written Warning	0	0	0	0
Dismissals	1	0	0	0
Appeals Submitted	1	0	0	0

 <b>The Gateshead Housing Company</b> Working with Gateshead Council					
<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>	
Stage 1 Grievance	0	0	0	0	
Stage 2 Grievance	0	0	0	0	
Capability	0	0	0	0	
Bullying and Harassment	0	0	0	0	
Whistleblowing	0	0	1	0	
Employment Tribunals	0	1	1	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	2.00	3.06	
Total number of working days lost to sickness	488.8	563.50	600.80	920.70	
Number of Occupational Health appointments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New referrals</li> <li>• Review appointments</li> </ul>	8 12	8 16	7 15	5 9	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgery appointments</li> <li>• Home appointments</li> </ul>	2 0	0 0	2 0	0 0	
Number of employee counselling/CBT sessions	7	0	14	29	
Number of Absence Management Reviews					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Term</li> <li>• Long Term</li> </ul>	6 0	7 0	5 7	7 14	
Number of employees who have had a phased return	2	3	4	5	
<b>Learning and Development</b>					
Number of new staff receiving induction	6	4	10	1	
Number of staff undertaking professional Qualifications (report in Qtr 2)	4	13	13	13	

## Appendix 2

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	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	0.91	0.94	0.15	0.11	0.09	0.71	4.23	4.69	213.50	0.35	31.00	0.36	5.00
November	0.43	1.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.65	4.88	5.27	195.50	0.21	20.00	0.44	7.00
December	0.52	0.98	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.64	5.52	5.76	191.80	0.13	19.00	0.51	9.00
January	0.42	1.56	0.00	0.07	0.05	0.94	6.46	6.67	283.50	0.22	22.00	0.72	11.00
February	0.81	1.85	0.00	0.04	0.00	1.13	7.59	7.18	340.60	0.40	22.00	0.73	12.00
March	0.83	1.51	0.19	0.12	0.05	0.99	8.58	7.67	296.60	0.34	35.00	0.65	10.00
<b>Cumulative by service area</b>	<b>6.27</b>	<b>13.53</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>8.58</b>			<b>2573.80</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>276.00</b>	<b>5.48</b>	<b>86.00</b>

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

BV12

excludes temp employees with <12 months service

### Corporate Services

