



Report to Resources Committee

4 November 2014

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 April 2014 to September 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 2014 to 30 September 2014.
4. Appendix 3 provides in a graphical format the reasons for absence within each directorate of the company for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.
5. In comparing absence between 1 April 2014 and 30 September 2014 with the same period in the previous year, the following trends have occurred.
6. The total sickness absence for the period equates to 4.13 days per person compared to 3.52 days for the same period last year which is an increase of 14.76%
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 1.74 days per person and long term absence was 2.39 days. This compares with 1.45 days short term absence and 2.07 days long term absence for the same period last year. This represents an increase of 16.67% in short term absence and an increase of 13.39% in long term absence.

8. The biggest cause of absence for the period April 2014 to 30 September 2014 was Stress related with 422 days lost compared to 145 days lost last year. This is an increase of 65.64%.
9. 258 days of stress related absence was reported as non work related stress. This equates to 61.14% as non-work related absence and 38.86% work related absence.
10. Of the 422 days lost to stress related absence 10 employees reported non-work related stress and 6 employees reported work related stress
11. Post operation related absence was 305.70 days for the period April 2014 to September 2014 compared to 352.60 days for the same period last year. This equates to a 15.34% decrease.
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 19 sickness absence review meetings (short term) in the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 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. Three first written cautions were issued and one final written caution was issued following absence review meetings.
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, and reasonable adjustments to the working environment and ill health retirement.
16. 17 absence review meetings were held in line with procedure two in the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.
17. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, seven employees attended an occupational health physician's appointment as a result of an absence review meetings.
18. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, 42 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 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, 65 occupational therapy sessions were supported by the company.
20. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, 24 employees were referred to occupational health for an initial assessment and 23 employees attended an occupational health review.

21. Nine employees returned to work on phased hours and duties in the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.
22. One former employee has been approved ill health retirement.
23. Management information and guidance on managing sickness absence is provided to managers on a monthly basis.

Health and Wellbeing

24. 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.
25. The Company continues to work with Gateshead Council to more closely align our services through sharing information and initiatives.

Other HR initiatives and Developments

26. The Company continues to offer a 'pay day pampers' and chiropody service from the Occupational Health suite at Gateshead Civic Centre. Employees are now offered a wider range of appointment dates and times. We will continue to offer these initiatives off site, subject to demand, whenever possible.
27. The Company continues to work towards the North East Better Health at Work Award, Silver accreditation. Assessment will take place late November 2014.

Work Life Balance

28. In the period April 2014 to September 2014, the following work life balance applications have been approved:

No of Applications	Type of Work Life Balance Request
3	Application to reduce working hours
1	Application to increase working hours
1	Application to change working pattern

On 30 September 2014, 52 of 318 employees have a work life balance. This equates to 16.35% of the workforce. Approved work life balance requests are as follows:

- 11 employees work compressed hours
- 30 employees work reduced hours
- 2 employees work increased hours
- 8 employees have changed their working pattern
- 1 employee works term time only

Investigation and Disciplinary

29. In the period April 2014 to September 2014, there was one formal investigation and there were no disciplinary hearings or appeals.

Grievances

30. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, there were no reported grievances.

Bullying and Harassment

31. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, there were no allegations of bullying or harassment.

Probity (including whistleblowing, bribery, fraud and corruption)

32. In the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014, there were no reported incidents.

Other HR Initiatives and Developments

Recruitment

33. In the period April 2014 to September 2014, the company has advertised eighteen jobs. Two jobs were ring fenced to company employees only, fourteen were advertised across the Company and Gateshead Council and two adverts went external due to no interest internally.

Employment Law Updates

34. During the period members of HR attended a free Employment Law update which focussed on:-
- The right to unpaid time off to accompany a pregnant woman to ante-natal appointments. With effect 1 October 2014 the right to time off will apply to an employee (or agency worker) who is in a 'qualifying relationship' with a pregnant woman.
 - Military reservists new rights for employers and employees. To date, employers have been able to claim expenses in respect of any additional costs incurred in covering/replacing the reservist of up to a maximum of £110 per day. In addition to these expenses, from 1 October 2014, small and medium employers will also be able to apply to the Secretary of State for a payment of up to £500 per month for each complete month a reservist is absent from work.
 - Employment Tribunals now have the right to order equal pay audits (subject to certain exceptions), where it is found that an employer is in breach of equal pay law under the Equality Act 2010 (i.e. have lost an equal pay claim brought on or after 1 October 2014).
 - Increase in the National Minimum Wage rate 1 October 2014

It is to be noted that one employee falls within the national minimum wage. We have adopted Gateshead Council pay grading structure this means that the

employee will receive 1 increment with effect 1 October 2014. The company are compliant with the activities outlined in the Employment Law update.

Child Care Scheme

35. The company continues to offer a salary sacrifice scheme. In September 2014, eleven employees were in the scheme.

Learning and Development Activity

Training Delivered

37. The impact of welfare reforms and changing economic climates has contributed to changes in the types of situations for Rent and Income Team Officers. A Building Emotional Resilience session has been delivered that cover personal strategies for identifying and managing emotional challenges of work and life. The emphasis is building the ability to 'bounce back' rather than break under pressure when things get tough. The session was a big success with employees reporting improvements in sleep patterns and other areas of their work and life.

Investors in People (IiP)

38. A meeting was held with Lesley Curtis, IiP assessor to develop a continuous improvement plan.

Sharing Best Practice

39. The Housing Company continues to be an active member of the regional Investors in People Network.
40. The Housing Company attended the Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults sub training groups that address the challenges of safeguarding training for company employees and the wider partnership group.
41. Discussions have been held with Gateshead Council's Organisational Development team to establish areas where we can work more closely and effectively on training development and delivery.

The Sunday Time Best 100 Companies

42. To monitor our employee engagement we have registered with The Sunday Times Best 100 Companies 2015. This is our fourth consecutive year of participation and the results provide invaluable, comparable information on how engaged employees are with the organisation. The initial submission has been prepared and all the necessary information has been provided to Best Companies to enable all employees to take part. Information has been given to employees on the survey, which will be received on Wednesday 15th October.

Health and Safety Training

43. In the period April 2014 to September 2014, the following Health and Safety training has been delivered:

- City and Guilds confined spaces training with 12 building surveyors

- Asbestos training - job specific with the Repairs Team
- Refresher training with fire marshals and first aiders in the use of evac chairs on civic centre escape routes
- CDM (Construction Design Management) training carried out with specific groups to fulfil company obligations

ICT Training

44. In the period April 2014 to September 2014, the following ICT training has been delivered:

- An Adobe Captivate e-learning session was created to demonstrate how to create Notepad entries correctly within Northgate. This was distributed to all employees via a Team Brief.
- Training guides have been provided to key users within Housing Offices for the Document Management System (DMS). The guides detail how to scan and index customer documentation (e.g. housing files, letters) into the DMS and how to retrieve existing documentation from the Northgate Housing System.

Link to values

45. 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

46. 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

47. Manager's not managing sickness in accordance with the policy has been identified as an operational risk and controls and future actions are in place to mitigate the risk.

48. 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

49. The financial cost of sickness absence to the Company for the period April to September 2014 was £140,700 compared to £118,352 for the same period last year.

Equality and Diversity Implications

50. 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

51. 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

52. The initiatives and prevention work that has been introduced over the past year has had a positive impact on the health of our employees. The clearest measure of this is the achievement of Investors in People (IiP) and Health and Wellbeing Award and the Better Health at Work Award Bronze level and continuation to Silver level in November 2014.
53. 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 stress.

Environmental Implications

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

Consultation carried out

55. 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

56. The views of the committee are sought on 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
Number of people employed by TGHC				
Male	137	136		
Female	182	182		
Permanent Employees	315	310		
Temporary Employees	4	8		
Full Time	257	260		
Part Time	62	58		
Number of starters (since 01 April 2014)	0	5		
Number of leavers (since 01 April 2014)	6	4		
Ill health retirements	1	0		
Number of employees seeking redeployment	0	0		
Diversity Monitoring				
Gender				
Male	137	136		
Female	182	182		
Age				
Under 18	0	0		
18 – 25	18	17		
26 – 35	95	95		
36 – 45	80	79		
46 – 55	78	79		
56 – 65	44	45		
66 +	3	3		
Disability				
Perceived themselves as disabled	35	32		
Do not perceive themselves as disabled	284	286		



Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14

Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Ethnicity				
White British	305	306		
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	3	2		
Black or Black British Other	1	1		
Chinese	1	1		
Other	0	0		
Recruitment Monitoring				
Number of BME applicants for posts				
Application for employment	4	1		
Short listed for interview	3	1		
Offered post	0	0		
Number of disabled applicants for posts				
Application for Employment	0	1		
Short listed for interview	0	1		
Offered post	0	0		
HR advisory issues				
Investigations	0	1		
Disciplinary	0	0		
Suspensions	0	0		
No Further Action	0	1		
Oral Warning	0	0		
First Written Warning	0	0		
Final Written Warning	0	0		
Dismissals	0	0		
Appeals Submitted	0	0		
Stage 1 Grievance	0	0		
Stage 2 Grievance	0	0		
Capability	0	0		
Bullying and Harassment	0	0		



Employee and HR Monitoring Digest 2013/14

Performance Measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Whistleblowing	0	0		
Employment Tribunals	0	0		
Health and Wellbeing				
Total number of working days lost per employee (target 7.50 April 2014 to March 2015)	2.00	2.13		
Total number of working days lost to sickness	592	626.50		
Number of Occupational Health appointments	30	17		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New referrals • Review appointments 	13 17	11 6		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgery appointments • Home appointments 	30 0	17 0		
Number of employee counselling/CBT sessions	43	64		
Number of Absence Management Reviews	27	9		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Term • Long Term 	14 13	5 4		
Number of employees who have had a phased return	3	7		
Learning and Development				
Number of new staff receiving induction	0	5		
Number of staff undertaking professional Qualifications	13	7		

Appendix2

2014/2015	Customers & Communities - Customer Services	Customers & Communities Neighbourhood Services	Customers & Communities Property Services	Corporate Services Finance	Corporate Services Support Services	All employees TGHC	TGHC cumulative	2013/14 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	0.44	1.61	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.91	0.91	0.54	270.20	0.25	24.00	0.66	10.00
May	0.65	1.05	0.22	0.29	0.00	0.74	1.65	1.02	220.20	0.29	19.00	0.45	7.00
June	0.49	0.30	0.26	0.36	0.00	0.35	2.00	1.63	101.60	0.22	25.00	0.13	2.00
July	1.04	0.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.62	2.62	2.32	184.10	0.29	19.00	0.33	5.00
August	1.00	0.57	0.94	0.23	0.12	0.68	3.30	2.94	200.00	0.27	22.00	0.41	6.00
September	1.06	0.78	1.40	0.00	0.00	0.83	4.13	3.52	242.40	0.42	29.00	0.41	6.00
October								4.23					
November								4.88					
December								5.52					
January								6.46					
February								7.59					
March								8.58					
Cumulative by service area	4.68	4.90	2.95	0.88	0.12	4.13	14.61	49.23	1218.50	1.74	138.00	2.39	36.00

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

BV12

excludes temp employees with <12 months service

Customers & Communities 2014

