

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Staffing Committee

Date of Meeting: 15th January 2015
Report of: Interim Head of HR & OD
Subject/Title: HR and Organisational Development

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress with Human Resource (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) items.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the report.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure Members are kept up to date with HR and OD developments and that the newly adopted terms of reference are followed.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 No specific wards affected.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 No significant risks identified as a result of this update report. Risks relating to specific issues will be dealt with separately.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 No direct implications arising from this report.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 No direct implications arising from this report.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 No significant risks identified as a result of this update report. Risks relating to specific issues will be dealt with separately.

10.0 Organisational Development

10.1 Making a Difference – annual staff awards

In December a number of Making a Difference annual awards were made at a celebratory event to individuals and teams as part of the Making a Difference staff recognition scheme. Around 60 nominations were received from staff and members, resulting in more than 500 colleagues being recognised for putting residents first and making a real difference to colleagues, citizens and communities. The winners of each category are provided below:

Employee of the year for support staff 2014	Jonathan Sayer
Employee of the year for front line staff 2014	Becky Yates
First-time manager of the year 2014	Lee Hudson
Manager of the year 2014	Jonathan Potter
Team of the year for collaboration 2014 – (joint winner) Team of the year for collaboration 2014 – (joint winner)	Connecting Cheshire Partnership Supported Employment Team
Team of the year for outstanding service 2014	Youth Crime Prevention
Members' choice 2014 – joint winner Members' choice 2014 – joint winner	Lorraine Rushton Congleton and Macclesfield SMART
Corporate Leadership Board award for community impact	Housing Options
Deputy Leader's award for special public service	Tim Kingston
Leader's award for employee of the year	Sue Walczak

10.2 BIG EVENT – staff conferences

As part of our continued work to build staff engagement, the Council is to hold 4 half day conferences on the 26th and 29th January 2015 at the Lyceum Theatre in Crewe. Called the **BIG EVENT** the conferences will share and update colleagues on our journey as a Council and the opportunities and challenges ahead. At the heart of the conference is our commitment to Putting

Residents First and we will be joined by a guest speaker who will help us to explore how we can be creative and innovative in an ever changing world. This session will enable employees to reflect upon how they think and what stops them being more innovative at work, with an opportunity to put into practise some of these techniques on the day. Colleagues will take away from the conferences useful insights and helpful tips to release our collective creative potential to support the Councils continued journey of transformation.

10.3 Taleo recruitment

The Council is introducing a new and market leading employee recruitment system known as Taleo which is expected to go live on Thursday 15th January 2015. Jointly commissioned with Cheshire West and Chester and CoScious, this new system will replace the current vacancy management system which is no longer fit for purpose. On-line capability now plays a key role in attracting the talent we need, creating a positive candidate experience, managing costs and reducing time to hire. The Taleo system supports the end to end recruitment cycle from identifying the need / vacancy through to sourcing potential candidates, engaging and managing candidates through the process, completing checks and formalities and bringing them into the council. Management information will enable recruitment activities and campaigns to be monitored, reviewed and continually improved.

10.4 Workforce strategy

Recognising the transformational journey and the dynamic environment within which the Council is operating, work will commence shortly to develop the Councils Workforce Strategy for 2015/18. Broadly the outcomes of the workforce strategy are as follows:

- We have an agile, multi-skilled, engaged and high performing workforce able to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead.
- Where appropriate we attract and retain the best people from all sectors of the community to work for the Council.
- Share and deploy available resources across the Council in the best way to ensure priorities are achieved.

Built from the ground up it is likely that the strategy will include the following broad themes around culture and values, leadership and management, organisational design, pay and reward, talent maximisation and key organisational capabilities. Further information will be shared with Staffing Committee in due course.

11.0 HR Policies

11.1 Shared parental leave and pay

Shared parental leave (SPL) is a new legal entitlement for eligible parents of babies due, or children placed for adoption, on or after 5 April 2015. It provides both parents with the opportunity to consider the best arrangement to care for their child during the child's first year.

The new regulations will give parents the right to take SPL and place a duty on employers to ensure that their employees are not penalised for using their entitlement or put under pressure to cancel/change a leave notification. The new regime will allow parents to share the statutory maternity leave and pay currently only available to mothers.

The amount of leave available is calculated using the mother's entitlement to maternity/adoption leave, which allows them to take up to 52 weeks' leave. If they reduce their maternity/adoption leave entitlement then they and/or their partner may opt-in to the SPL system and take any remaining weeks as SPL. This means their partner could begin to take SPL while the mother is still on maternity/adoption leave.

SPL enables parents to share the caring responsibilities evenly or have one parent taking the main caring role, depending on their preferences and circumstances. Unlike maternity/adoption leave, eligible employees can stop and start their SPL and return to work between periods of leave with each eligible parent able to submit three notices booking periods of leave.

The HR function will shortly be reviewing its' maternity, paternity and adoption leave and pay policies and procedures in light of this legislation to make the necessary administrative changes.

11.2 Pay variance to support retention of key staff

Recognising the upturn in the jobs market and in some areas of our business severe skills shortages there is evidence of increasing turnover and the loss of staff that cite more favourable terms and conditions offered by other Authorities or private sector organisations as their incentive to leave. This is a growing issue, and we need to increase the flexibility of our pay offer so we can be more responsive to external and internal demands, whilst also ensuring fairness and equity.

A pay variance to support the retention of key staff is proposed on an exceptional basis only. In summary an additional payment can be made to retain key staff with business critical skills which would cause a significant business impact if lost. This would be achieved either by accelerating increments or by making an additional payment (if the individual is at the top of their grade). Either option would be no more than 10% of salary, reviewable annually. The individual will be required to sign a retention agreement requiring them to repay the gross value for the number of months earned within the 12 month period should they leave the Councils employment.

These exceptional payments require agreement from the appropriate member of CLB and the Head of HR. Information regarding retention payments will be provided to Staffing Committee on a quarterly basis for monitoring purposes.

11.3 Pay policy statement 15/16

Sections 38-43 of the Localism Act 2011 require local authorities to produce and publish a pay policy statement by 31st March on an annual basis. The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to pay, with particular focus on its senior employees. Staffing Committee are requested to note that work in developing the pay policy statement for 2015/16 is underway which reflects the position as at 1st April 2015. This work will take into account the recent guidance issued under the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 in relation to data on organisation structure, senior salaries, and pay multiples. Cabinet will consider the pay policy statement on 3rd February, and will make a recommendation to Council on 26th February for adoption.

Recognising the need to keep information up to date a shorter pay policy statement for 2015/16 has been developed which focuses on the Council's broad pay principles and policies which should require minimal updates each year. Further information will be provided via web based links which can be updated as appropriate – providing a relevant and reader friendly format. The key content of the pay policy statement is largely unchanged from 2014/15 – key changes being reference to retention payments (referred to in paragraph 11.2 of this report) for Chief Officers and the use of interim support to provide cover for Chief Officers where appropriate.

A copy of the draft pay policy statement will be sent to Staffing Committee members under separate cover following consideration at pre agenda Cabinet briefing.

12.0 Voluntary Redundancies

- 12.1 The Council's voluntary redundancy scheme continues to support organisational change and the delivery of the planned programme of change in the Council Plan. The effective use of voluntary redundancy in this way enables the Council to achieve its planned savings and efficiencies and also helps to maintain good employee relations within the Authority and minimises the prospect of compulsory redundancy.
- 12.2 Six people have left the Council under voluntary redundancy terms in Quarter 3, two of whom held posts within the management grades (Grade 10 or above). The total severance cost, for all six employees was £275,636, inclusive of redundancy and actuarial costs. Over the next five years, these reductions are estimated to save the Council over £1,095,555 (which is the combined accumulated costs of the deleted posts).
- 12.3 The terms for voluntary redundancy will be reviewed in September 2015.

13.0 Workforce Development and Apprentices

13.1 Towards Excellence Training Programme

Provision of 200+ blended learning sessions to ensure employer responsibilities met, including all statutory requirements (Fire, Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity) and mandatory requirements (data protection, safeguarding and risk management) continues for all Council employees, ASDVs and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector (4000 + delegates).

13.2 Virtual College

Delivery of City and Guilds accredited vocational courses in Health and Social Care, Business Administration and ATE (Adult Teaching) continues to support mainly Adult Services with Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications (200 delegates). E-Learning platform, hosting Health & Social Care SCILs and EILs distance learning programmes.

13.3 Management Institute of Excellence

Nationally recognised qualifications: Creation of four cohorts of ILM nationally recognised qualifications delivered to Council employees at level 3 for “Aspiring” and newly appointed managers, level 5 for experienced managers and **Leading ladies** cohort to promote specific management roles for women and highlight equal opportunities within the Council and liaising with MMU to enhance the qualification with specific Children Social Care Management requirements (150 delegates). Business Breakfast programme for managers in conjunction with NW Employers. Business management programme of workshops and networking events available to all Council managers looking to improve commerce and enterprise skills.

13.4 Professional Development Academy

Supporting undergraduate students in statutory practical experience environments during university course / study. Providing internship opportunities for university graduates seeking long term employment. Ensuring all graduate employees receive adequate support in their first Council role.

Addressing all regulatory professional body requirements for social workers, Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHP), occupational therapists and educational psychologists. Designing accredited workshops and conferences in conjunction with principal managers, visited by England’s Chief Social Worker and selected for inclusion in her annual address.

13.5 Apprentices & Work Experience Programme

The Council is providing 200+ work experience sessions for young adults and school children and arranging 50 apprenticeship pathways for school and college leavers into employment.

14. Employment of people with learning difficulties

- 14.1 At the last Staffing Committee meeting, a question was raised about the support offered to help bring people with learning difficulties into work. Three people with learning difficulties have been offered Apprenticeships and of these, two moved on into permanent roles in the Council. Just under 3% of Apprentices have declared a disability. In addition the Supported Employment Team supports individuals with various disabilities into paid employment. Although most of these opportunities are in external organisations, the team has supported three people with learning difficulties and another with mental ill health, into paid employment with the Council.
- 14.2 Overall, 0.98% of Council staff have declared that they have a disability. The Council does not require staff to disclose whether they have a disability or a specific type of disability. Over 43% of staff choose not to disclose whether they have a disability or not. The total number of staff with a disability may therefore be higher than the recorded 0.98%.

15.0 Education HR Consultancy

- 15.1 The team will be delivering “Accredited Safer Recruitment Training” to schools and academies in January/February and March and has also been commissioned to deliver to Children’s and Adult’s Social Care staff. During November the team delivered Intranet Training for schools staff, the purpose of the training was to develop the expertise of users in schools which in turn should result in lower volumes of phone calls by increasing self - service. The Education HR Consultancy intranet site is continually updated and developed to enhance the user experience and is a key part of the business.
- 15.2 The Gold and Silver HR consultancy packages have been operating since 1st September 2014 and as of 5th January 2015, 109 schools and academies have bought back the Gold Package and 29 have bought the Silver Package. This equates to 90% buyback which is a slight decrease on last year due to some schools joining Multi Academy Trusts which provide their own HR support.

16.0 HR Policy Review

- 16.1 As reported in the last Staffing Committee Report, a review has been carried out by Members (the Chair of the Staffing Committee and the Portfolio Holder) of the Council’s disciplinary policy and procedure to ensure that these are fit for purpose and suitable for the ongoing and changing needs of the Council.
- 16.2 The review recommended changes which have now been considered by the Corporate Leadership Board and the recognised Trades Unions prior to implementation. The changes are summarised as follows:

Disciplinary Procedure

- Enable management to appoint external specialist investigator as necessary, but in particular in relation to alleged sexual abuse or assault.
- In cases of alleged sexual abuse or assault enable the Manager responsible for the case to appoint an external expert to act as an advisor to the officer panel, and provide support to the responsible manager in reaching a conclusion in relation to the allegations and the sanctions.

Dignity at Work

- The Dignity at Work procedure has been merged with the grievance procedure to enable flexibility, and avoid duplication in process. The new policy re-emphasises that the Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment. The process itself is fundamentally unchanged with the exception that the investigators report will in future be disclosed in full to the complainant.
- The revision renames the process the Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Procedure.
- A revised Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy document has been produced to align the two procedures.

17. Attendance

- 17.1 A brief analysis of the sickness absence rates for the first six months of 2014/2015 and a report on action taken so far to try to reduce absence rates is provided in Appendix 1.

18.0 HR Performance Data

FTE by Directorate – Quarter 3 14-15 (Oct-Nov-Dec 2014):

Directorate/Service	Oct-14		Nov-14		Dec-14	
	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE
Public Health	21	17.9	21	17.9	23	17.9
Media (Communications and PR)	10	10.0	10	10.0	10	10.0
Strategic Commissioning	2952	2118.5	2956	2114.3	2947	2117.1
Adults Social Care & Independent Living	1155	864.4	1152	865.8	1145	861.4
Children's Services [□]	1174	757.8	1182	752.1	1181	761.2
Commissioning and Client Support [△]	57	53.7	54	51.3	54	51.3
Communities	565	441.6	567	444.1	566	442.1
Chief Operating Officer	669	509.7	660	504.62	663	510.5
Commissioning	49	44.0	49	44.0	51	46.6
Corporate Resources and Stewardship	392	285.1	383	278.4	379	278.0
Democratic Services and Governance	97	60.5	99	63.9	103	66.6
Legal Services	40	36.1	39	35.1	39	35.1
People and OD	54	48.3	53	47.5	52	46.5
Apprentices / Graduate Trainees	36	34.7	36	34.7	38	36.7
Economic Growth & Prosperity	379	299.2	382	302.7	384	301.9
Assets	28	27.0	29	28.0	29	28.0
Investment	88	80.0	88	80.0	88	79.7
Strategic and Economic Planning	110	100.6	115	105.6	117	107.2
Strategic Infrastructure	9	9.0	9	9.0	9	9.0
Visitor Economy, Culture and Tatton Park	143	81.5	140	79.0	140	77.0
Cheshire East Council Total	4014*	2956.2	4011*	2950.5	4010*	2958.4

NB: Employees with multiple assignments across services will appear in the headcount figures for each service, but will be counted only once in the total (CE) headcount figure. [□]: Includes Integrated Safeguarding – not included in Adults to avoid double counting. [△]: Includes PROW, Countryside and PATROL – PROW and Countryside will move under Visitor Economy, Culture and Tatton Park in January 2015's information. **Note:** within this table the Chief Executive has not been included in any of the Directorate/Service information, but is counted in the overall Cheshire East Council headcount and FTE figures.

FTE by Directorate – Quarter 3 13-14 (Oct-Nov-Dec 2013):

Directorate/Service	Oct-13 FTE	Nov-13 FTE	Dec-13 FTE
Places and Organisational Capacity	1441.3	1432.5	1426.1
Children's Services	767.3	769.2	763.6
Adults' Services	998.2	997.3	996.6
HR&OD	41.3	42.3	42.5
Apprentices	45.1	48.1	46
Finance	230.5	229.7	232.7
Legal / Democratic Services	82.9	78.5	78.4
Shared Services	130.8	131.2	114.7
Cheshire East Council Total	3,738.5	3,728.8	3,700.6

The new Oracle HR Organisation Structure was implemented within Oracle in September 2014, as a result the FTE/Headcount and Absence figures presented are no longer directly comparable between financial years; the FTE by Directorate information for 2013-14 is presented in the old Directorate/Service groups, whilst the 2014-15 information is presented in the new Directorate/Service groupings.

Headcount/FTE trend (whole council – excluding schools and casuals)

Date	Headcount	% change from previous year	FTE	% change from previous year
30 Apr 2009	6,522	n/a	4891.5	n/a
30 Apr 2010	6,155	-5.63	4582.8	-6.31
30 Apr 2011	5,860	-4.79	4385.4	-4.31
30 Apr 2012	5,449	-7.01	4080.2	-6.96
30 Apr 2013	5,103	-6.35	3880.7	-4.89
30 Apr 2014	4,403	-13.72	3232.7	-16.70
Date	Headcount	% change from previous month	FTE	% change from previous month
28 Feb 2014	4,853	n/a	3652.1	n/a
31 Mar 2014	4,828	-0.52	3631.4	-0.57
30 Apr 2014	4,403	-8.80	3232.7	-10.98
31 May 2014	3,960	-10.06	2951.8	-8.69
30 Jun 2014	3,960	0.00	2952.5	0.02
31 Jul 2014	3,960	0.00	2957.2	0.16
31 Aug 2014	3,976	0.40	2965.9	0.29
30 Sep 2014	4,011	0.88	2954.5	-0.38
31 Oct 2014	4,014	0.07	2956.2	0.06
30 Nov 2014	4,011	-0.07	2950.5	-0.19
31 Dec 2014	4,010	-0.02	2958.4	0.27

NB On 1st April 2014, 351 employees (334 FTE) TUPE transferred to ANSA and 24 employees (23.8 FTE) TUPE transferred to Orbitas. On 1st May 2014, 693 employees (193.3 FTE), including casuals, TUPE transferred to ESAR and 106 employees (100.7 FTE) TUPE transferred to CoSocius. On 1st January 2015, 71 employees (31.29 FTE) TUPE transferred to TSSL; a number of Cleaners also TUPE

transferred to schools/Academies/private companies on 1st January 2015 – these TUPE transfers will only affect the Cheshire East headcount in January 2015 as the employees were still employed by Cheshire East during December 2014.

Between April 2009 and December 2014 the Cheshire East employee headcount (excluding schools and casuals) reduced by 38.52% (a 39.52% reduction in FTE employees); between October and December 2014 the Cheshire East employee headcount decreased by 0.10%. Based upon available information, 71 employees TUPE transferred to the TSSL ASDV, and a number of Cleaners transferred to schools/Academies/private companies, on 1st January 2015 – as these employees were still employed by Cheshire East on 31st December 2014 they will appear in both the leavers information below and the December 2014 Cheshire East Council headcount above.

Leavers – Quarter 3 14-15 (Oct-Nov-Dec 2014):

Reason for leaving	Headcount of leavers
TUPE	72
Resignation	67
Retirement (Including Normal Retirement - 60/65, Early Retirement - Request, Early Retirement - 85 Rule, Ill Health Retirement with Benefits, Late Retirement - over 65)	21
Voluntary Redundancy	6
Mutual Termination	5
End of Fixed Term/Contract without Benefits	4
Unsatisfactory Probation	3
Disciplinary	2
Contract Terminated	2
Total	182

Excluding TUPE transfer staff, the Cheshire East staff turnover between October and December 2014 (*only*) is set to be 2.74% (110 leavers divided by 4012 (average) headcount). 39.56% of all leavers during Q3 in 2014-15 left due through TUPE transfers, 36.81% as a result of resignations and 11.54% following retirements. **Please note:** these figures reflect reasons for leaving recorded in the Oracle employee database.

Working days lost due to sickness absence

Figures for absence are (*calculated*) days lost to sickness absence per FTE employee:

Cumulative Absence - year to date figure:

Period	October	November	December
Q3 2014-15	6.57	7.54	8.87
Q3 2013-14	6.22	7.19	8.34

Absence within month:

Period	October	November	December
Q3 2014-15	1.08	1.03	1.36
Q3 2013-14	1.03	1.03	1.16

Based upon the available data, over the third quarter in 2014/15 the cumulative average days lost to sickness was slightly higher than the previous financial year. An analysis of the information available is provided at Appendix 1.

HR Casework

Summary of formal case work figures for October - December 2014.

	Capability	Disciplinary	Grievance	DAW
Ongoing cases in progress from previous quarter	2	2		2
New cases opened this quarter and in progress		5	4	1
Cases closed this quarter		11	2	1

Notes: Capability – as managers may start this process independently HR may not have every case recorded, unless there are complexities/sensitivities.

Claims lodged at Employment Tribunals – none this year to date.

19. Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Appendix 1 Absence report

1. Introduction

This report provides a brief analysis of the sickness absence rates for the first six months of 2014/2015 and a report on action taken so far to try to reduce absence rates. The report is based on recorded absence for March-September 2014. Overall the average number of days lost per employee for that period was 5.58. It increased to 7.54 by end November and the figure by the end of December 2014 was 8.87. Absence is running at a slightly higher rate this year than last.

The figures for previous years are shown with and without schools in Table 1, and the rest of report focuses on the situation excluding schools.

Table 1

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/2014	2014/15 Target	1/4/14 to 31/12/14
Days absence per employee (excluding schools)	11.67	12.03	11.33	11	8.87
Days absence per employee (including schools)	9.16	9.55	9.3	-	-

2. Benchmarking

The Council's absence rate for 2013/2014, including schools, was in the very middle of the range for County, Metropolitan and Unitary Councils which was reported as ranging from 6.94 - 11.24 days. However a number of councils in these comparator groups had already outsourced some of the larger services such as Waste and Recycling, Streetscape, Bereavement, Care4CE and Leisure where absence rates tend to be higher than in the core corporate services. As some of these services transferred into ASDVs in April 2014, some improvement in attendance would be expected, although the number of staff in Care4CE (where absence has also always tended to be higher than average) has not dropped significantly since April 2014.

Benchmarking data for the mid-point of 2014/15 indicates again that the sickness rate in Cheshire East Council including schools was around average. However when schools are excluded, the Cheshire East figures are higher than average, possibly reflecting that the Council still has a significant number of those services in-house, which are often outsourced in various forms by other Councils.

3. Short and long term absence and reasons for absence

Table 2 shows the balance of long and short term absence across the Council. Table 3 shows this for specific service areas

Table 2

	% of absence
Long term (>20 days)	65
Short term	35

Table 3

Directorate	Headcount	% long term absence	% short term absence
COO	665	59	41
Economic Growth and prosperity	384	43	57
Media	10	0	100
Public health	23	42	58
Strategic Commissioning Inc. Adults and Children and Families	2951	68	32

The proportion of long term absence has not varied greatly over the past few years and has tended to be around 65 - 66% of all absence.

4. Top twelve reasons for absence in 2014/2015

Table 4

Reason	% of absence in 2013/14	% of absence in first 6 months of 2014/15
Stress	14.29	17.86
Medical examination/operations	9.48	12.61
Back pain	6.65	6.19
Anxiety/fatigue/exhaustion	4.63	4.54
Depression	4.78	5.62
Broken/fractured bones	4.05	4.13
Chest/lung disorders/infections	4.32	2.35
Breast cancer		3.46
Virus	2.81	2.60
Vomiting	2.53	1.74
Bereavement		2.51
Joint problems	4.47	5.53

Many of the reasons for long term absence are not under the Council's control (e.g. diagnoses of cancer, serious long term conditions, operations or broken limbs). This suggests the main area of long term absence that the Council may be able to influence is absence related to stress.

Stress is the most common reason recorded for absence and can be caused by a combination of domestic issues and work-related matters. It is a concern that a greater proportion of absence has been attributed to stress in the first half of the year than in the previous two years. It was the reason given for 14% of absence in the two previous years but rose to nearly 18% in the first half of 2014/2015.

The Staff Survey results provided an indication of where stress is reported by staff. The Survey asked a number of questions (directly and indirectly) which provided information about sources of stress; e.g. pressure to work long hours, ability to balance work-life and home-life, managers demonstrating care and concern for their employees. The results of the survey have been reviewed in each service area to identify the causes of stress and what actions could be taken to address reported problems.

The priority for the current year in terms of HR support to managers was agreed as focussing on strategies to address long term absence. All long term absence is managed actively, with support from HR. Some cases are very sensitive, involving disability, and in some cases formal complaints made under the grievance or Dignity at Work.

The emphasis in 2014/2015 has been on providing additional training sessions targeted towards services with higher absence rates and in particular Adults and Childrens Services. The training sessions dealt with managing absence due to stress and managers have been encouraged to keep in touch with staff on a regular basis and to support staff to return to work as quickly as possible.

However as long term absence tends to be about 65% of absence and much of this cannot be reduced, this suggests that in 2015 an increased focus on short-term absence would be potentially more effective in seeking to reduce overall absence. It is recognised that managers need sound absence information so that they can contact anyone who is absent promptly, check what support may be required and encourage an early return to work. Automated ORACLE 'Alerts' have been operational for some time now and these are effective in alerting line managers when an employee has met an absence trigger and that action needs to be taken. Feedback from managers is that this is helpful particularly regarding short-term absence.

5. Services with higher than average sickness rates

5.1 Adults

The overall number of days lost per employee was 7.91 for the six months up to the end of September 2014. This is a higher rate than at the same point last year. The

total for the whole of 13/14 was 14. The number of days lost per employee in Care4CE for the first half of 2014/2015 was 8.06.

All Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers from the SMARTs in Individual Commissioning attended refresher training in May on managing attendance, with a focus on managing stress. In addition all Supervisory Support Workers in Care4CE have attended training on managing attendance in the last six months.

The current work to involve staff in redesigning the customer journey (operating model) in the social work teams has involved all staff. Feedback has been very positive and this engagement should help to ensure the forthcoming Changes in the social work teams are managed effectively and without any unnecessary uncertainty.

There has been uncertainty for the staff who work in Community Support centres and this is likely to be contributing to the level of absence in Care4CE. Managers are briefing staff as soon as there are developments to report in the decision making process and encouraging staff to express their preferences about redeployment or other options to try to get staff back to work more quickly.

5.2 Childrens

Last year the average number of days lost per employee was 11.13. At the mid-point this year the average days lost was 6, so absence is running at a higher level in this service.

The management team is actively following up from the Staff Survey by preparing a number of measures to improve staff engagement, working on specific issues identified in the survey. These measures are hoped to have an effect by the end of the year. In addition there are monthly performance meetings where absence in Childrens and Families is monitored.

6. Council-wide Stress Management

The Council treats any report that an employee is experiencing stress very seriously and takes appropriate action including referring the employee to our Occupational Health Unit and/or to the confidential and independent counselling service (Employee Assistance Programme or EAP). The EAP was introduced in April 2014 and feedback from staff and managers has been positive in that the service can be accessed very quickly and the aim is to help staff to manage a situation without going off sick. The overall rate of absence attributed to stress has not yet reflected this but will be monitored again at the end of the year.

There is also a good range of materials available to support managers and staff in building resilience and managing stress. The Director Adults Social Care has recently formed a cross-Council working group of management and union representatives to review all the resources available and make recommendations for further improvements. This group is planning to provide a calendar of events to support and promote well-being at work, a strategy to tackle stress and a series of promotions of

the materials available. An update on progress will be provided in the next Staffing Committee Report.

All the resources related to stress management are accessible to staff and managers through the intranet site and include:

- The Employee Assistance Programme:
- A Stress Management Policy – which has been developed with close reference to the HSE Guidance.
- A Guide for Employees – for managing Stress
- Employee Stress management Toolkit for managers and employees – to assist with finding the right steps of the process.
- A wide range of training courses and programmes on offer to all staff.
- A modern and succinct range of stress related training resources on Learning Lounge (the Council's e-learning suite) which are accessible by all staff from home or work.
- A 'Building Resilience' course / learning module – delivered by North West Employers to managers on the Collaborative Leadership Programme for middle and senior managers.
- Health and Wellbeing days / events which were ran in conjunction with Public Health, Leisure and other local partners. These were well attended with extremely positive feedback.
- Stress Management Checklist – for identifying the early signs and symptoms of stress.

7. Key future actions and priorities

HR will continue to support managers on complex long term cases but will also explore options for new approaches to short-term absence.

The Working Group on Stress and Resilience will make recommendations by the end of March on a series of events and communications on how to help everyone deal with the normal pressures of work, how to identify if this is becoming difficult to manage, how managers can support a positive team culture where individuals feel well supported and how staff can help themselves to cope if they are feeling that pressure is becoming difficult.

The development of a coaching culture will take time but a good start has been made and needs to be developed further to ensure staff feel supported in their work and

that managers can draw on a range of management styles. The availability of coaching has been promoted via Team Talk. The launch of the new values and of the refreshed recognition scheme are also contributing to developing a positive culture at work where staff feel valued for their individual contribution.

HR will continue to provide regular information to SMTs on absence over the year and coach managers to manage these actively and sensitively, especially if the manager has limited experience. These reports will focus on short-term absence in the first quarter of 2015 and, subject to consultation with the unions, one service would like to pilot the use of a different approach to identifying staff with frequent absence. (This is known as the 'Bradford Factor' and it factors in the frequency and also the length of absences to give a different indicator of a pattern of absence which needs attention)

An updated action plan on managing attendance will be prepared for the end-of- year report.