![Cyngor Abertawe Swansea Council]

Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations

WORKFORCE Scrutiny Working Group - 29 March 2021

Impact of the Pandemic on the Workforce

Purpose	To provide the working group with an update on the impact of the pandemic on the workforce.
Content	This report uses workforce data to highlight: agile and remote working, corporate support delivered to staff, and HR&OD issues and challenges over 2020/21 during the pandemic.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided.
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor David Hopkins (Deputy Leader)
Lead Officer(s)	Sarah Lackenby and Geoff Bacon
Report Author(s)	Becky Jones, Sian Williams, Adrian Chard, Jo Harley, Craig Gimblett

1. Introduction

1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic placed significant pressure on the Council's workforce. That pressure varied across services and became multi-layered throughout 2020. Initially the first lockdown saw some national reporting requirements suspended as local Councils all shifted resources into the response effort. Emergency structures were established and resources were prioritised towards Covid-19 activities. However, as the pandemic developed throughout the year with the easing, lifting, and then subsequent return of multiple lockdowns, this brought a different kind of pressure for managers and staff. This meant sustaining the Covid effort whilst managing business as usual. The Council established the new Track, Trace and Protect service (TTP). Managers continue to juggle resources around Covid priorities, ensuring the well-being and safety of the workforce and encouraging staff to still take leave so they have time to rest and recuperate.

2.   Agile working and use of technology

2.1   The Council had already been delivering an agile working programme for several years when the pandemic hit. This is a project led by Property Services supported heavily by Digital Services colleagues to deploy appropriate technology. This means that most office based staff had already been using the latest equipment and technology by the start of 2020. Use of Council buildings had significantly changed. However, at March 2020 new ways of working were still being embedded and not all the digital tools were being used on a daily basis. The impact of the pandemic with regards agile working includes:
- Most computer based roles were able to immediately work from home
- Where there were gaps the Digital Services team deployed the agile working equipment quickly
- Call Centres had previously only been office based. Accelerated work between Digital Services and the supplier moved all call centres to homeworking in time to support shielding residents, including the Common Access Point in Social Services
- The homeworking model relies heavily on the quality of the person's home broadband. Where staff lived in very rural areas with poor internet access MyFi devices were deployed
- Use of digital tools such as Microsoft Teams and email increased significantly and has continued to date, e.g.
    o There were 8.1m emails between January and March 2020. This increased to 13.8m emails between April and June 2020
    o There were 238,000 chats and messages in Teams between January and March 2020. This increased to 715,000 between April and June 2020.

2.2   In Summer 2020 a survey was undertaken to assess staff well-being and perception around the new homeworking arrangements during lockdown. Response to the survey was very high with staff feeling very positive about homeworking. In addition, a high percentage indicated they would like to continue with flexible working once lockdown lifted. Most respondents also did not feel they needed ICT training, showing a high degree of digital competence in using the tools available. There were some issues highlighted around the need for additional equipment such as monitors, keyboard, appropriate chairs etc. These have subsequently been addressed. Key areas of agile working support provided for staff and managers during the pandemic includes:
- Interim 'Home working during COVID' document produced and circulated to all staff and managers
- Launch of claim form for reimbursement of ICT equipment to support working at home during Covid
- Communication sent out to all staff to complete DSE risk assessment. Information added to staffnet with advice on 'assessing your work space'
- Office furniture made available for staff to set up at home
- Briefing note sent out as a reminder to managers and includes useful links

to relevant staffnet pages relating to DSE assessment; training and purchasing equipment.

2.3   As part of the Council's Recovery Plan from the pandemic a working group has been established to support the delivery of the Workforce Planning aspects. Property Services is leading this group for agile working and have teamed-up with HR&OD to review the Agile Working Policy and support the future accommodation strategy. In addition, a separate Leadership Team workstream (Heads of Service) has been established, led by the Head of Service Centre and Strategic HR&OD Manager. The future strategy around agile working in the 'post-covid world' touches many cross-cutting aspects including: community hubs, customer contact, climate change, city centre recovery, and accommodation.

3.   Headcount/FTE

3.1   As indicated in the table below, in the first nine months of the 2020/21 financial year headcount and FTE has increased in all Directorates.

This is due to resourcing the Test Trace and Protect (TTP) teams in the Resources Directorate. Additional numbers in the Place Directorate are as a result of the recruitment of additional cleansing operatives, Rangers and apprenticeships/ traineeships. Social Services numbers have increased as result of filling vacancies and responses to Covid. There has been a reduction in employee numbers in Education due to internal re-structuring.

|	@31/3/20		@31/12/20	
Directorate	**Headcount**	**FTE**	**Headcount**	**FTE**
Place	2545	2281.1	2582	2324.6
Resources	632	573.81	669	608.3
Education (incl. Schools)	5904	4436.7	5843	4403.6
Social Services	1866	1565.4	1944	1623.9
TOTAL	**10,947**	**8657.01**	**11,038**	**8960.4**

4.   Age Profile of the Workforce

4.1   The Corporate Age Profile (Headcount excluding Schools) is as follows:

16-21 = 147 (2.5%)
25-30 = 1383 (23.5%)
40-49 = 1581 (27%)
50-54 = 1049 (18%)
55-59 = 974 (16.5%)
60-64 = 568 (9.5%)
65-69 = 150 (2.5%)
70+ = 29 (0.5%)

The youngest employees are 16 years of age and the eldest is 86. The

disparity in age ranges, as illustrated in the graph below will be considered as part of the HR&OD Strategy and strategic workforce planning activities.
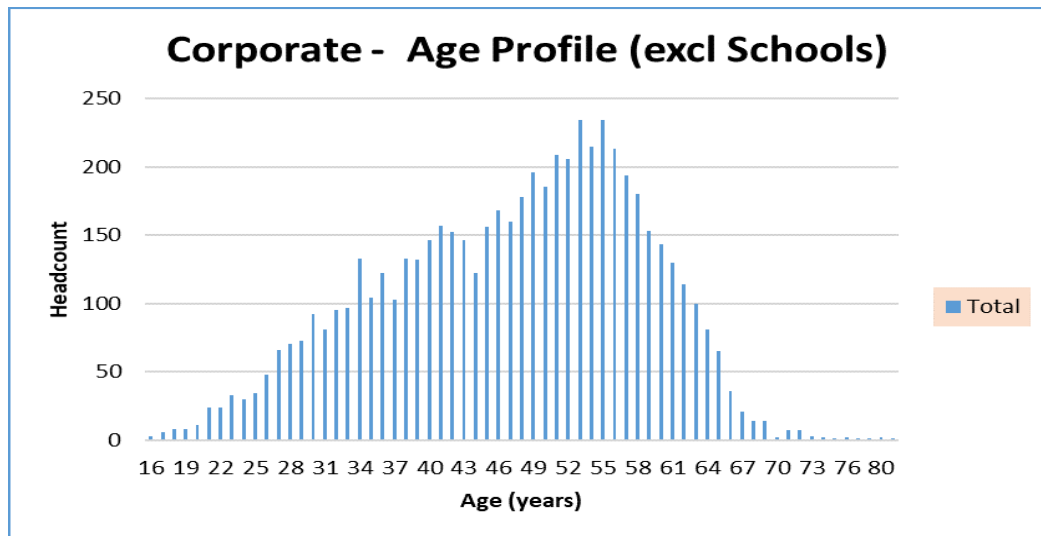
4.2 There has been no major variance in the age profile as a result of Covid. The age profile in the TTP team is as follows:

Age Range	Male	Female
16-20	0	0
21- 30	4	19
31-40	3	36
41-50	8	28
51-60	10	29
61+	5	9

5. Grade profile (post count)

5.1 Excluding Chief Officers, HOS, Soulbury and centrally employed teachers, 60% of posts are occupied by women, 40% occupied by men. The numbers in grades 5 and 6 are almost equal.

The only grades with more men than women are Grade 7 and Grade 12 (but it is almost equal split).

5.2 This has largely remained unchanged as a result of Covid. The recruitment of 118 fixed term employees into the TTP team has been at the following grades:

Role	Grade	Number
Administrator	5	2 (both female)
TTP Advisor	6	45 (10 male/ 35 female)
TTP Tracer	7	66 (17 male/49 female)
TTP Line Management /Data Analysts	9	5 (3 male/ 2 female)

6.   Permanent / Temporary Split

6.1   The composition of the workforce is as follows;

Employment Status	Female (Headcount)	Female (Percentage)	Male (Headcount)	Male (Percentage)
Full-Time (Permanent and Temporary)	1426	22.6%	2107	33.3%
Part-Time (Permanent, Temporary, Jobshare and Seasonal)	2425	38.4%	363	5.7%
TOTAL	**3851**	**61%**	**2470**	**39%**

6.2   There has been no significant impact on employment status as a result of Covid. The split of full-time and part-time hours in the TTP team is as follows:

Employment Status	Male	Female
Full-Time	28	68
Part-Time	2	20

7.   Staff Turnover
Due to Covid-19, as expected, employee turnover rates have been low and is expected to continue during 2021/22. Turnover rates for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2020 are as follows;

NonSchools Workforce		
Directorate	Leavers	% Turnover
Directorate - Place Total	48	0.82
Directorate - Resources Total	23	0.39
Education Total	43	0.74
Social Services Total	68	1.17
Grand Total	184	3.16

8.   Agency Workers

8.1   An Internal Audit review of the Management of Agency Workers took place during 2020/21. This review identified pockets of non-compliance with the Policy which are being addressed with respective service areas and through a revised Management of Agency Workers Policy which is currently in consultation with the intention to implement and re-launch in early 2021/22.

The following is a summary of Agency Worker numbers as at 31st January 2021:

Directorate	Numbers
Place: Corporate Building Services (1) Cultural Services (1) Highways & Transportation (12) Housing & Public Health (1) Planning and City Regen (1) Waste, Parks & Cleansing 141	157
Resources; (Comms & Marketing and Digital & Transformation, HR&OD)	4
Social Services (all Adult Services)	4

8.2 As a result of COVID, two agency workers were appointed into the HR&OD Team to support the recruitment and training of employees into the TTP team. Within Social Services, approximately 10 Agency workers were additionally brought in via the ongoing contract with RST, to provide initial cover during Covid.

9. Sickness Absence

9.1 Specific dedicated resource has been provided to support Managers in the management of sickness absence cases. As can be seen from the table below, sickness absence rates across the Council have reduced significantly from 13.38 to 7.77 working days lost per FTE during the pandemic. This is below the Council's target rate of 10 days FTE. This includes Covid related absences.

*WDL= Working days lost

Directorate	Service Unit	*WDL per FTE(2019/20)	*WDL per FTE (1/4/20-31/12/20)
Place	Corporate Building Services	15.39	8.49
Place	Cultural Services	10.66	8.69
Place	Highways and Transportation	19.14	8.90
Place	Housing and Public Health(PLACE)	13.10	6.34
Place	Planning and City Regeneration	8.83	4.31
Place	Property Services	20.48	12.07
Place	Waste Parks and Cleansing	17.01	11.34
Place	**TOTAL**	**15.16**	**8.54**
Resources	Communications and Marketing	5.91	3.42
Resources	Digital and Transformation Services	6.13	2.78
Resources	Financial Services and Service Centre	8.66	4.69

Resources	Legal Democratic Services and Business Intelligence	6.37	4.33
Resources	**TOTAL**	**7.40**	**3.92**
Education	~NULL~	11.50	11.12
Education	Achievement and Partnership Services	20.12	5.9
Education	Education Planning and Resources	31.73	22.54
Education	**TOTAL**	**28.62**	**18.11**
Education	**Schools TOTAL**	**7.85**	**3.46**
Social Services	Adult Services	24.35	20.36
Social Services	Child and Family	23.69	9.74
Social Services	Commissioning Hub	17.61	4.85
Social Services	Directorate Reports	15.85	8.66
Social Services	Tackling Poverty Service	9.09	8.94
Social Services	West Glamorgan	12.17	5.77
Social Services	**TOTAL**	**22.30**	14.88
Authority	**TOTAL**	**13.38**	**7.77**

10. Specific Response to Covid-19 from HR&OD

10.1 **Volunteering and Re-allocation of Resources**
During the course of the pandemic, HR&OD supported Directorates in the redeployment of employees. In particular, with regard to Social Services there were 66 staff in Adult Services who were redeployed from their substantive posts.

During the early stages of the Pandemic, HR&OD co-ordinated the Council-wide list of staff available for redeployment into alternative roles. This was in addition to localised redeployment undertaken by Directorates, e.g. Support for food banks, support for those residents shielding etc.

10.2 **TTP Activities**
113 Council employees were temporarily redeployed into the TTP teams. The vast majority have now returned to their substantive roles with 10 currently remaining in the TTP service. The workforce and managers were supported with recruitment, selection, induction and training of both internal and new external staff into TTP.

10.3 **Employee Relations Activities**
To support Trade Union and employee engagement, regular weekly and subsequently fortnightly meetings continue to be held with Trade Unions to

consider and consult on HR and Health & Safety issues and concerns. This has included:
- Agreement on management of Employee relations and consultations around organisational change during Covid
- Agreement on additional support to BAME workers during Covid, which has been recognised as an example of good practice across Wales
- Agreement on risk assessments across service areas facilitating the return to services with employees in a safe and working environment
- Agile Working.

11. Corporate H&S Training

The Corporate H&S training team have continued to support the workforce and managers via the following activities during the pandemic:
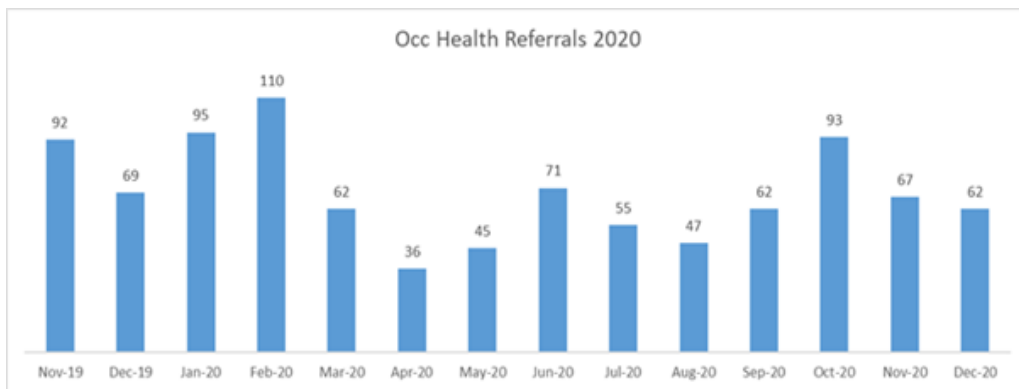- At the beginning of the pandemic the training team sourced a Manual Handling application and delivered guidance via Teams to new staff members within Social Services Domiciliary Care, Residential and Day Service Settings covering all aspects of the All Wales Manual Handling passport remotely including modules A-F
- Delivery of Competency Based Assessment training to Social Services Domiciliary Care
- On-line First Aid Awareness Sessions to schools staff to ensure staff felt confident in providing first aid whilst at the emergency childcare hubs
- On-line delivery of Epilepsy Awareness training within Parks/Cleansing
- On-line delivery of Manual Handling Risk Assessment training to a service within Social Services
- On-line Working at Heights training for new caretaker staff within Education
- The development of an E-learning Food Safety Awareness course so staff could work from different settings during the pandemic
- Two Manual Handling Teams were set up to ensure advice and guidance could be provided to Residential Care Managers as well as Domiciliary Seniors in relation to Manual Handling, the teams have now expanded to include the Day Service settings
- Providing advice and guidance in relation to Children Handling for several different Education establishments
- Review of the current People Handling Risk Assessment forms utilised within Social Services
- Assisted H&S Officers in the consultation and development of the organisation's BAME guidance framework and BAME risk assessment
- Created the Red Alert for CPR during Covid
- Providing advice on TTP including isolation advice, or any other queries with regards to staff that have been asked to self-isolate.

12. Occupational Health

12.1 During the pandemic the Occupational Health service continued to be delivered remotely to support the workforce, in line with national guidance and including the following:

- Face to face assessments continued based on risk
- Advising about complex cases for schools with return to work plans,
- Health & safety liaison, Covid risk assessment related
- Provided Covid health information to HR for FAQs to staff
- Set up the ALAMA assessments for complex referrals after Covid risk assessment
- Any new starters for TTP that complete employee health questionnaires that need contact from Council advisors are prioritised to speed up recruitment
- Advice sent to Managers when they refer employees in to Occupational Health has been amended to include some Covid related information.

Occupational Health Referral statistics from November 2019 to December 2020 are given in the table below:

Occ Health Referrals 2020

Nov-19: 92, Dec-19: 69, Jan-20: 95, Feb-20: 110, Mar-20: 62, Apr-20: 36, May-20: 45, Jun-20: 71, Jul-20: 55, Aug-20: 47, Sep-20: 62, Oct-20: 93, Nov-20: 67, Dec-20: 62

12.2 **Stress Management and Counselling Service**

The Stress Management and Counselling Service changed the Helping Hands service provision into a 'Psychological First Aid Support Service' for front line workers immediately at the start of the Covid -19 pandemic. This entailed retraining over 25 volunteers in a new way of supporting employees, including new processes, procedures and training developed in a very short space of time.

From the first referral dated 20th April 2020 to 31st December 2020 the Psychological first aid service facilitated by Helping Hands volunteers and volunteer counsellors has delivered weekly support to over 1000 front line workers and managers and continues to do so.

The evaluation of the service has shown that within four weeks of receiving weekly psychological first aid calls; front line workers resilience and wellbeing scores increased. Feedback from front line workers and managers has been positive throughout, with employees feeling grateful that this service has been put in place by the organisation to support them.

The psychological first aid support service has been developed to ensure all front line workers have support in place whenever they need it during this really difficult time. Different from the way other organisations have delivered

similar support services, the initial contact was initiated by the service rather than by the employee. The reasoning for this was that busy employees going through a stressful period are far less likely to phone for support themselves; therefore the support was offered to all front line employees via initial telephone contact from a trained psychological first aider.

Along with the Psychological first aid weekly calls the service also developed online training that could be easily accessed via intranet or sent via email to managers. These training courses and information packs included, stress management, psychological first aid for front line workers, preventing burnout, email stress. These courses and the information packs have been evaluated as being extremely useful to both front line workers and managers during the pandemic.

The service is also supporting private care homes who did not have any form of psychological support for their employees during the pandemic. All front line workers are prioritised for counselling referrals in order to prevent sickness absence.

13.   Assessment

13.1   Significant activities have been undertaken across the Council to support both the organisation and residents during the pandemic. Social Services has been the priority focus, however all Council services have contributed to supporting residents during the pandemic. This report shows how flexible the workforce is, staff taking on alternative emergency duties and adapting quickly to the new environment.

13.2   As the report highlights, the Council was well placed to shift to homeworking. The staff survey from 2020 provides a helpful steer from the workforce on how to move forward into a 'new normal'. Staff would like to continue to work flexibly and digital skills are high. Sickness has significantly reduced however further analysis is being undertaken to understand this. Although the reduction is positive it needs to viewed with caution. The Welsh Government is exploring opportunities to encourage the Welsh workforce to continue to work from or near home. The Council is well placed to deliver this alongside the strategy of local Community Hubs. However this is a highly strategic point as community hubs, customer contact, climate change, city centre recovery, agile working and accommodation are all inextricably linked.

13.3   The report also highlights the significant corporate support and advice provided to managers and the workforce during the pandemic in order to keep everyone safe, maintain mental health and well-being as much as possible, and continue to deliver services and support to residents.

13.4   There are areas to address as part of the Council's workforce strategy and plan and these form part of the overall Covid Recovery plan.

Background Papers: None

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