



Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations

WORKFORCE Scrutiny Working Group – 02 February 2022

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 provide an update on workforce issues and challenges over 2021/22 during the pandemic.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided.
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor David Hopkins (Deputy Leader)
Lead Officer(s)	Adam Hill, Adrian Chard, Rhian Millar
Report Author(s)	Adrian Chard, Supported by Craig Gimblett , Rhian Millar and Geoff Bacon

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 and 2021 and continuing into 2022. During this time, emergency structures have been established and resources prioritised towards Covid-19 activities. However, as the pandemic continues, this has brought a different kind of pressure for managers and staff. This meant sustaining the Covid effort whilst managing business as usual.

A report was produced for the Workforce Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 and this subsequent report provides an update on activities since then.

2. Agile working and use of technology

Prior to the pandemic Swansea Council through the collective transformational actions of Property, HR and ICT colleagues had already begun the successful implementation of the agile working strategy. This enabled an almost seamless transition to working from home for the vast majority of staff.

Beyond the physical adaptations required to the office environments and the ability to access the necessary ICT equipment, the most relevant recent change has been the agreement and introduction of a revised Agile Working Policy. This new HR policy gives greater power to the employee to work in an agile manner, whilst ensuring the needs of the business continue to be met.

This is now informing decisions on the future accommodation strategy which will continue to see a reduction in the office estate but ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of the evolving hybrid working model.

3. Headcount/FTE

- 3.1 As indicated in the table below, in the first nine months of the 2020/21 and up to December 2021, headcount and FTE has increased in all Directorates.

In Place, there has been an increase in Traineeship roles (especially in Waste Management) which then result in permanent posts at the end of the Traineeship. Some areas have also received external funding to create specific roles e.g. Workways.

In Resources, the vast majority of headcount increase relates to additional TTP and vaccination-line staff recruitment.

In Education and Schools this has been as a direct result of COVID due to the need to have additional staff in catering and cleaning. Schools have also received funding for additional staffing for pupil catch up.

In Social Services, aside from internally investment significant funding has been received to create additional posts particularly in Social Workers, Community Care Assistants and Care staff across Residential Care and Day Services, but there has been an increase in a variety of posts across the rest of the Directorate such as the Community Equipment Service, Commissioning Team etc. There remains significant recruitment and retention issues within this Directorate which we are seeking to address.

	@31/3/20		@31/12/20		@31/12/21	
Directorate	H'count	FTE	H'count	FTE	H'count	FTE
Place	2545	2281.1	2582	2324.6	2633	2373.48
Resources	632	573.81	669	608.3	852	763.46

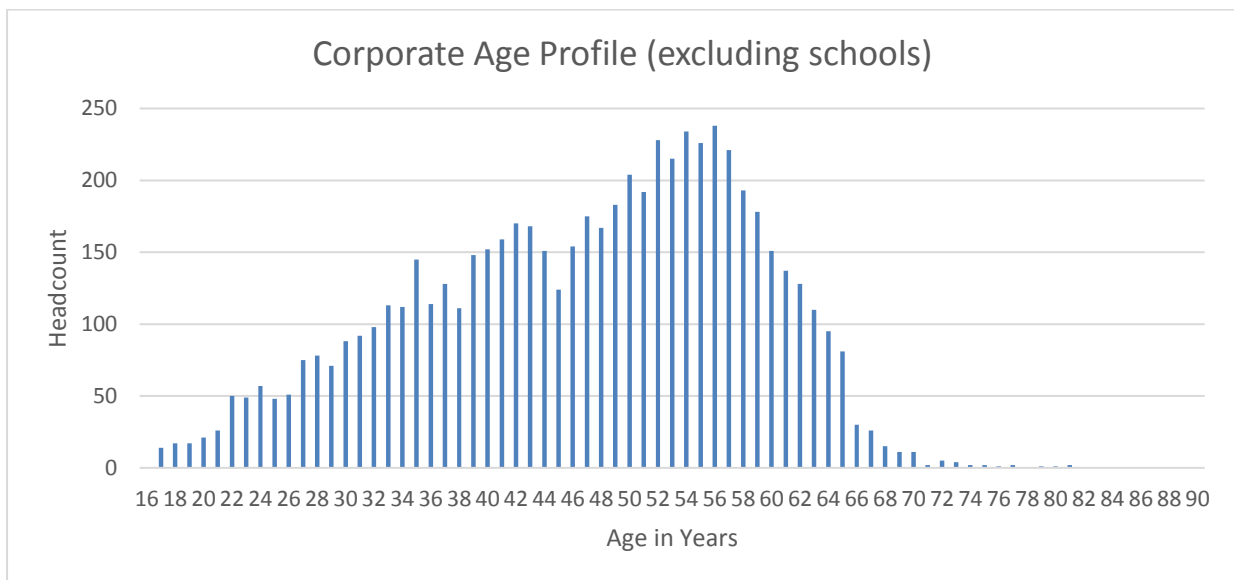
Education (incl. Schools)	5904	4436.7	5843	4403.6	6025	4569.99
Social Services	1866	1565.4	1944	1623.9	1965	16458.59
TOTAL	10,947	8657.01	11,038	8960.4	11,475	9365.52

4. Age Profile of the Workforce

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

Age Range	Number	Percentage
Age 16 to 24	251	4.00%
Age 25 to 29	323	5.15%
Age 30 to 39	1149	18.32%
Age 40 to 49	1603	25.56%
Age 50 to 59	2129	33.94%
Age 60 to 69	784	12.50%
Age 70+	33	0.53%

The youngest employees are 16 years of age and the eldest is 81. The disparity in age ranges, as illustrated in the graph below will continue to be considered as part of the HR&OD Strategy and strategic workforce planning activities.



In respect of the TTP team there has been no major variance in the age profile as a result of Covid. The updated age and gender profile in the TTP team is as follows:

TTP		
Age Range	Female	Male
Age 16 to 24	28	4
Age 25 to 29	13	9
Age 30 to 39	33	9
Age 40 to 49	40	11
Age 50 to 59	38	13
Age 60 to 69	17	8
Age 70+	0	0

5. Grade profile

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).

This has largely remained unchanged as a result of Covid.

6. Permanent / Temporary Split

The composition of the workforce, excluding schools, as at 31st December is as follows;

Employment Category	Female	Female Percentage	Male	Male Percentage
Full-Time (permanent and Temporary)	1580	25.19%	2197	35.03%
Part-Time (permanent, temporary, job-share and seasonal)	2125	33.88%	370	5.90%
Total	3705	59.07%	2567	40.93%

There has been no significant impact on employment status as a result of Covid.

7. Agency Workers

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 have been addressed with respective service areas and through an updated Management of Agency Workers Policy.

An updated Agency Worker report was provided to the Audit Committee in October 2021 summarising Agency Worker numbers as follows;

		Mar-20	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21
Place	Corporate Building Services	0	1	7	6	6	6	0
	Cultural Services	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Highways & Transportation	18	10	10	11	11	11	10
	Housing & Public Health	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Planning and City Regen	0	1	1	1	1	2	2
	Property Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Waste, Parks & Cleansing	138	149	154	159	159	165	168
	Place Total	157	163	173	178	178	185	181
Social Services	Adult Services	4	2	2	2	2	13	15
	Child & Family Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Resources	Digital and Transformation	0	1	1	2	2	1	1
	GRAND TOTAL	161	166	176	182	182	199	198

There has been an increase in Agency Worker numbers engaged in Social Services in July and August. However, this only equates to 81.75 hrs during the month of August, the majority being engaged to cover for sickness due to Covid in key areas that required continuity of care.

The largest number of Agency Workers are in Waste Parks & Cleansing, where a headcount of 168 equates to an FTE of 111 due to part-time working. Of that figure, 20 fte were required to provide cover due to Covid.

In August, there were 31 current permanent vacancies covered by agency staff. This will reduce to circa 11 by this time next year, and then to virtually zero through the 2023 Traineeship. To address areas where Agency workers have previously been engaged to cover permanent roles, 64 new permanent roles have been recruited into since 2017, including 41 through traineeships. An additional 10 Trainees have recently been recruited, and it is intended that a further 10 trainees will be recruited early in 2022.

8. Sickness Absence

Specific dedicated resource is now in place 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 in 2019/20 to 7.72 in

2020 and increased to 8.11 in 2021.16.62 in 20/21. This is below the Council's target rate of 10 days FTE and includes Covid related absences.

Management of Absence Officers have been appointed to support managers in Education, Place and Social Services in the pro-active management of sickness absence in those Directorates and particularly in Service areas where sickness absence is at its highest.

Directorate	Service Unit	*WDL per FTE(2019/20)	*WDL per FTE (1/4/20-31/12/20)	WDL per FTE (APR 21 to DEC 21)
Place	Corporate Building Services	15.39	8.49	12.79
Place	Cultural Services	10.66	8.69	9.18
Place	Highways and Transportation	19.14	8.9	11
Place	Housing and Public Health(PLACE)	13.1	6.34	9.56
Place	Planning and City Regeneration	8.83	4.31	3.45
Place	Property Services	20.48	12.07	3.78
Place	Waste Parks and Cleansing	17.01	11.34	14.78
Place	TOTAL	15.16	8.54	10.84
Resources	Communications and Marketing	5.91	3.42	5.35
Resources	Digital and Transformation Services	6.13	2.78	4.86
Resources	Financial Services and Service Centre	8.66	4.69	5.89
Resources	Democratic Services and Business Intelligence	6.37	4.33	8.3
Resources	TOTAL	7.4	3.92	5.66
Education	~NULL~	11.5	11.12	0
Education	Achievement and Partnership Services	20.12	5.9	9.86
Education	Education Planning and Resources	31.73	22.54	14.04
Education	TOTAL	28.62	18.11	26.2
Education	Schools TOTAL	7.85	3.46	3.67
Social Services	Adult Services	24.35	20.36	19.17
Social Services	Child and Family	9.74	11.77	11.26
Social Services	Commissioning Hub	4.85	3.85	4.35
Social Services	Directorate Reports	8.66	7.21	6.93
Social Services	Tackling Poverty Service	8.94	10.38	8.17
Social Services	West Glamorgan		5.77	9.7
Social Services	TOTAL	22.3	14.88	14.45
Authority	TOTAL	13.38	7.77	8.11

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

Volunteering and Re-allocation of Resources

As stated in the previous paper, during the course of the pandemic, HR&OD supported Directorates in the redeployment of employees.

Staff, in the main, have returned to their substantive roles as services have resumed although it is recognised that there may be a requirement for further redeployment in the event of future lockdowns.

TTP Activities

The TTP team continue to be supported by the ICT team, in the provision of IT equipment and support and HR&OD, recruitment, selection, induction and training of both internal and new external staff into TTP.

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.

In addition, Trade Unions have been engaged in Social Partnership Workshops to develop working relationships with the Council and Focus Group discussions on development of the proposed Workforce Strategy.

10. Corporate H&S Training

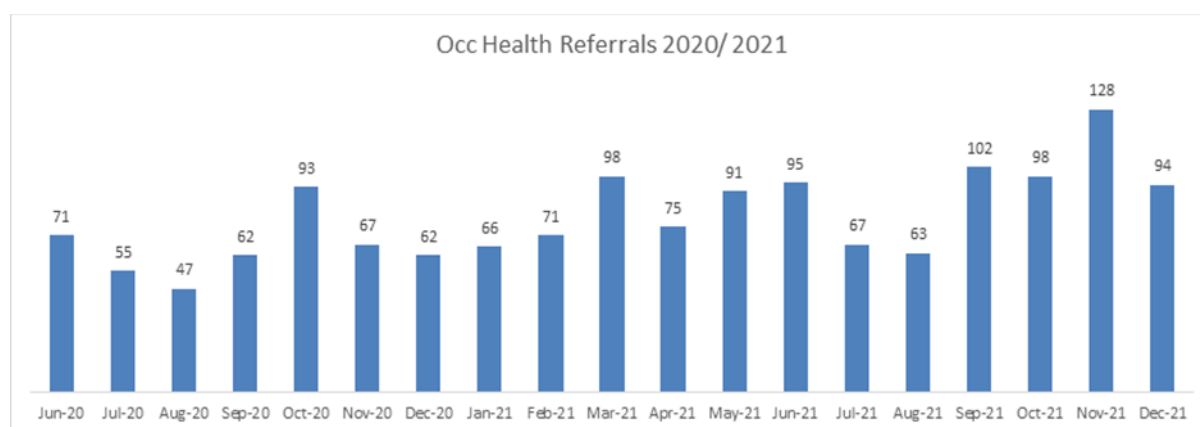
The Corporate H&S training team have continued to support the workforce and managers in a range of activities during the pandemic as reported previously. Those activities are continuing.

11. Occupational Health

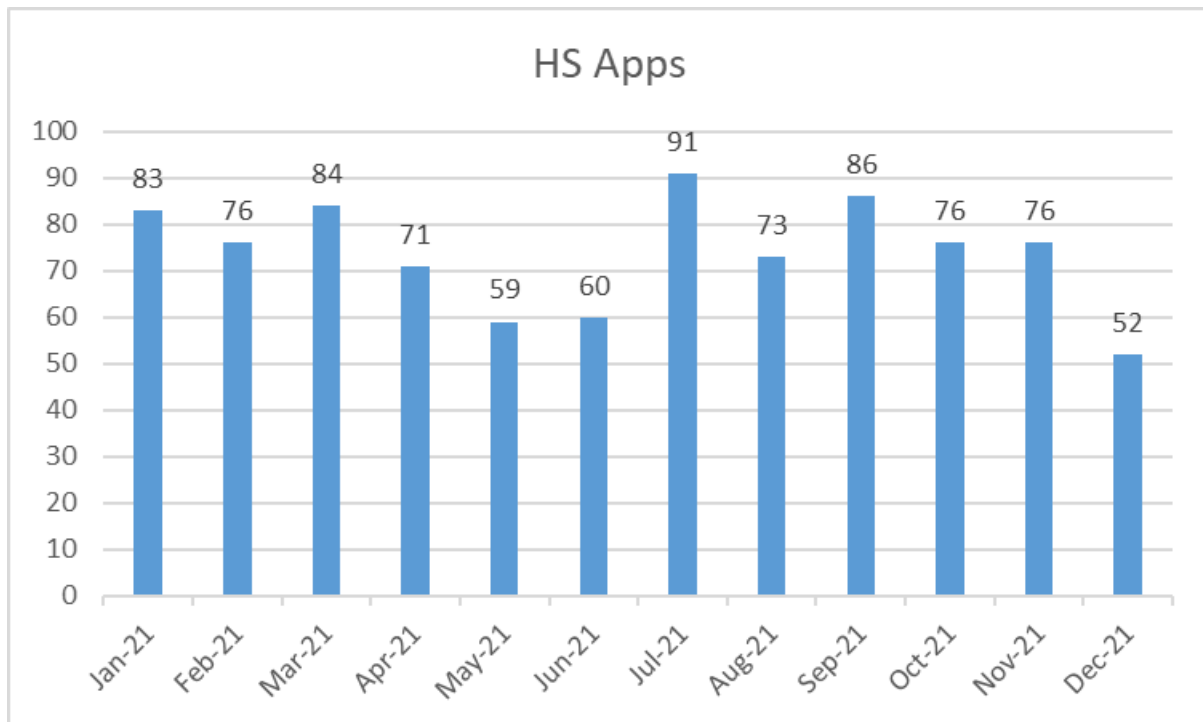
During the pandemic the Occupational Health and Stress Management and Counselling services continue to be delivered remotely to support the workforce, in line with national guidance.

The SMAC Physiological support project, has been extended, utilising our internal and external contract counsellors and helping hands volunteers until April 2022, The number of external OHA clinics has also increased to 3 per week, and 1 OHP clinic per week to reduce waiting times, until April 2022. The continuation of both these arrangements will be reviewed.

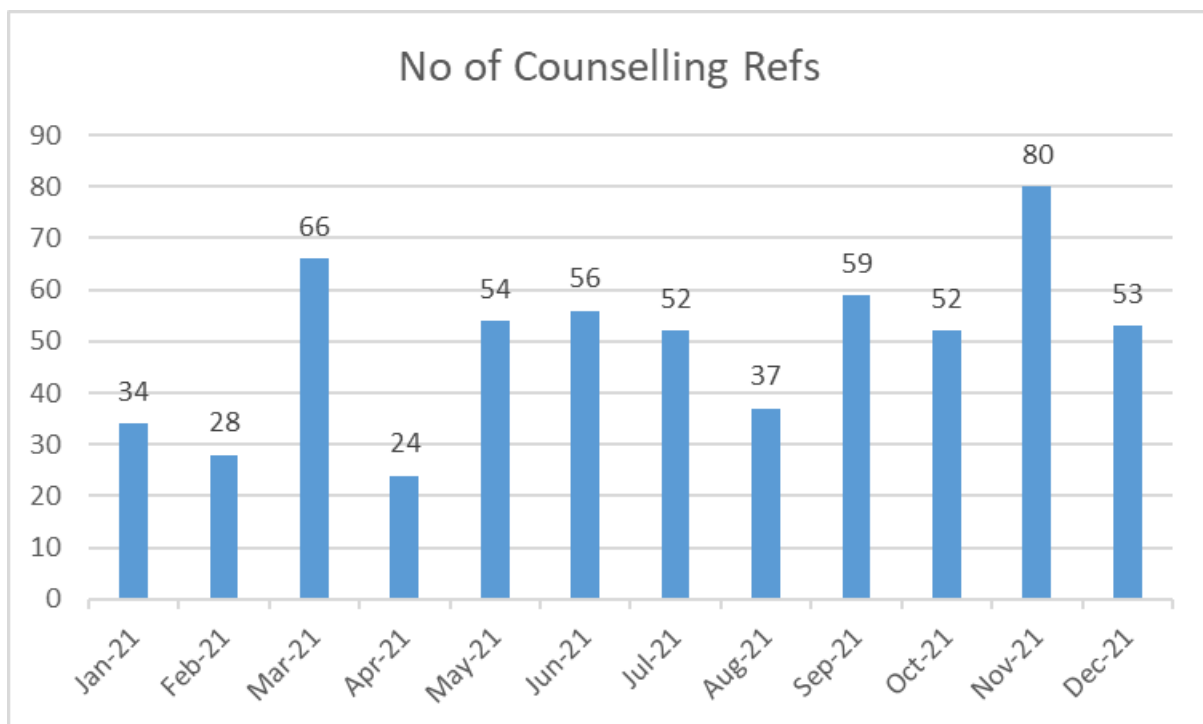
The number of Occupational Health during the course of 2021 is 813. The monthly number of referrals up to December 2021 is as follows;



In addition there were 887 Health Surveillance appointments, which is a legal requirement for certain roles to check, lung, skin, hearing and vibration to make sure the workforce are not being made unwell through working activity, as follows;



There were 595 Counselling referrals during 2021 as demonstrated below. In addition there were 986b psychological support referrals providing “softer touch”, check in calls and basic talking therapies for low risk employees.



12 Staff Survey

During the course of 2021/22 a Staff Survey has been undertaken and the results attached as Appendix 1. These results have been discussed with CMT to help inform next steps. As part of the survey, employees were asked to comment on the

key Strands of the proposed Workforce Strategy Groups and an analysis of the results are included in Appendix 1. As part of the ongoing consultation process, Focus Groups have been held with Trade Union representatives and a cross section of employees to further consider the strategic proposals.

13. Proposed Workforce Strategy

Consultations are continuing with regard to the development of a proposed Workforce Strategy for 2022/25. A final draft will be submitted to Cabinet in February. A number of activities have already commenced to support Strategic activities and Recovery Fund monies have been approved to support the delivery of many of the elements in the nine key Strands identified as follows;

- Theme 1 Leadership and Management**
 - Strand 1 - Culture and Behaviours
 - Strand 2 - Future Leadership
 - Strand 3 – Future Shape of the Organisation
- Theme 2 A Workforce Fit for the Future**
 - Strand 4 – Future Workforce
 - Strand 5 – Recognising Performance
- Theme 3 Being an Employer of Choice**
 - Strand 6 – Recruitment and Retention
 - Strand 7 – Workforce Development
- Theme 4 Workforce Wellbeing and Inclusion**
 - Strand 8- Supporting Our Workforce
 - Strand 9– Equality in the Workplace

14. Overall Assessment

All service areas are continuing to undertake significant and challenging activities to support the organisation and residents during the ongoing pandemic. Social Services continues to be the priority focus, however this report re-affirms the flexibility of the workforce, particularly in adapting quickly and positively to new working environments and, in some cases, new roles and skills.

The report also highlights the continued 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.

There continues to be a high level of employee and trade union engagement across Directorates in this report. 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.

Appendices;

Appendix 1 Staff Survey Outcomes

Contact: Adrian Chard
Date: 19th January 2022

Staff Survey Outcomes

Staff Survey Outcomes Scrutiny

1. Introduction

The sixth annual staff survey was completed from the 16th July until the 17th September. The survey was made available online via our internal and external websites and hard copy surveys were made available to staff at all of our satellite locations

It was the first time we had undertaken a staff survey since 2018 and the focus was very much on the impact of Covid and our recovery as a Council. As such many of the questions included in the survey are new and we cannot make comparison to previous years.

2. Survey Response

993 people completed the survey providing a 14% response which is 10% less compared with 24% response rate last time. Only 46 hard copies were completely. This drop in response rate could be a result of more staff working from home and feeling less connected to the Council. It could also be a result of workload issues as we recover from the pandemic. Measure to increase the response rate to future surveys will need to be explored.

3. Workforce Strategy

As part of this year's Staff Survey statements and questions were included as part of the wider consultation the Council's proposed Workforce Strategy.

4. Key Results from 2021 survey

4.1 Impact of Covid

Staff Wellbeing: We asked staff to rate their wellbeing before and after Covid

- **Current level of wellbeing**
57% (Happy, contented, relaxed)
- **Level of wellbeing before Covid**
63% (Happy, contented, relaxed)

This demonstrates a decrease of wellbeing ratings of 6% amongst staff

Where do you work from: We asked staff where they worked from now and before Covid

- **Home** – 80% currently, 5% before Covid
- **Office** – 6% currently, 77% before Covid
- **On site** – 7% currently, 9% before Covid

This demonstrates a huge shift to home working as a result of the pandemic which is to be expected.

Returning to work: We asked their feeling about returning to the office/on-site

- **I am confident my workplace is safe to return to** – 66%
- **I am confident about travelling to my workplace safely** – 90%
- **I am happy to return to the office/on site when allowed** – 66%
- **I am not worried or anxious about returning to the office/on site** – 62%

This demonstrates that some measures need to be put in place to increase staff confidence in returning to work

4.2 Most Positive

Most positive areas this year:

- **I am trusted to do my job**
96% compared to 92% last year – **a increase of 4%**
- **I have regular contact with my manager**
88% - New question
- **I have clear direction and know what is expected of me**
88% - New question

4.3 Least Positive

Least positive areas this year:

- **I am more productive now than I was 12 months ago**
69% - New question
- **I feel connected to what's happening at work**
77% - New question
- **I am happy with my work life balance**
77% - New question

4.4 Harassment and Bullying

Overall the number of staff who state they have experienced harassment, bullying or abuse has decreased compared to the last survey. There has been a 1% increase in incidents from service users compared to last time.. Although 77% (303) of those who state they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse did not report it. 14% more than the last survey.

Q) In the last 12 months have you personally experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at from from...?

Service users	Yes - 17%	164	compared to 16% last year	a increase of 1%
Managers/ team leader	Yes - 6%	60	compared to 8% last year	a decrease of 2%
Colleagues	Yes - 6%	54	compared to 8% last year	a decrease of 2%
Members	Yes - 2%	18	compared to 2% last year	no change

Q) If yes to any of the above – Did you report it?

- Yes – 23% compared to 38% last timer – **a decrease of 15%**

- No - 77% (303) of those who state they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse did not report it compared to 63% last time – **an increase of 14%**

5. Trade Union Engagement

We met with the trade union representatives to discuss the low response rate to the survey and get their views on how this could be improved in the future. Their suggestions and our comments are outlined below:

Suggestion to Improve Response Rates	Comments
Send out via work or personal mobile phone numbers to those staff with no internet access	We would have to explore this but there may be issues with GDPR about use of mobile phone numbers for this purpose. Staff would have to give us permission. It may not be easy to complete a survey of this nature via a mobile phone due to the number of questions and the need for free text comments
Make better use of internal communications mechanisms such as Catering and Cleaning newsletter and other departmental communications	Agreed, we will ensure we link up with departments to use all existing mechanisms. Due to the timing of the survey this year just before the summer holidays we were unable to send out via Catering and Cleaning as we have done in previous surveys.
Offer an incentive	This has been raised previously, but this would contradict the need to maintain confidentiality as staff would need to provide contact details to take part in any incentive offer
Send out with the payslips	We have done this in the past and survey returns have been minimal via this approach. Happy to do so for future survey if CMT feel its needed
Provide an envelope for survey return	We will provide envelopes for the next survey
Provide sealed boxes for people to place completed surveys in	We always use ballot boxes and are happy for the to be sealed in the future to increased confidence in confidentiality

6. Staff Survey Results on Workforce Strategy

6.1 Background

As part of this year's Staff Survey statements and questions were included as part of the wider consultation the Council's proposed Workforce Strategy.

6.2 Responses to Workforce Strategy Statements

The Workforce Strategy covers a number of Themes and Strands and it is gratifying to note that 805 (92.8%) of respondents believed that these were the right areas for the Strategy.

Responses to the individual strands are as follows;

Strand 1- Culture and Behaviours

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand the Councils Vision and Values	183 (19.9%)	645 (70.2%)	83 (9.0%)	8 (0.9%)
I believe the Councils Vision and Values are the right ones for the future.	139 (15.8%)	636 (72.2%)	98 (11.1%)	8 (0.9%)

Strand 2 - Future Leadership

I believe we have the right skills to lead the Council in the future	119 (13.2%)	645 (71.4%)	118 (13.1%)	21 (2.3%)
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Strand 3 – Future Workforce

I believe that we have the right structures and ways of working for the future	96 (10.6%)	553 (61.0%)	225 (24.8%)	32 (3.5%)
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Strand 4 – Recognising Performance

My manager communicates expectations and feedback on performance clearly and professionally	290 (31.5%)	479 (52.1%)	115 (2.5%)	36 (3.9%)
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Theme 3: Being an Employer of Choice

I would recommend Swansea Council as a good employer?	225 (24.5%)	590 (64.2%)	87 (9.5%)	17 (1.8%)
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Strand 5 – Recruitment and Retention

We have the right tools to help us recruit and retain the best employees for the future.	98 (10.8%)	484 (53.5%)	261 (28.9%)	61 (6.7%)
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Strand 6 – Workforce Development

I am supported in my personal and professional development	222 (24.2%)	475 (51.8%)	169 (18.4%)	51 (5.6%)
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Strand 7- Supporting Our Workforce

My Health and wellbeing is supported	213 (23.2%)	528 (57.5%)	140 (15.2%)	38 (4.1%)
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Strand 8– Equality in the Workplace

The Council treats issues of equality and inclusion seriously.	270 (30.3%)	544 (61.0%)	60 (6.7%)	18 (2.0%)
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The most positive responses have been in respect of the Council's vision and values, equalities and being an "employer of choice" where over 90% agreed/strongly agreed with the respective statements. The least positive responses to statements, where there was disagreement to the statements in relation to recruitment (35.6%), Future Workforce- in relation to structures (28.3%) and Workforce Development (24%).

Additional support is being given to address recruitment issues in Social Services and to make the recruitment process more accessible. Although it is recognised that more work needs to be done on that front.

In order to achieve budgetary savings, the Corporate L&D team has been under-resourced but additional temporary resource has been brought in to provide additional support. There is, however, an ongoing prioritised need to support on TTP recruitment and training activities that continues to take a significant amount of resource away from that team.

Prior to receipt of the Survey results, and as discussed at CMT, an additional Strand on the “Future Shape of the Organisation has been added to the Strategy with the objective to “achieve an organisational design and structure that is fit for the future needs of the Council.

6.3 Summary of responses to Workforce Strategy Questions:

Although there were nearly a thousand responses, only a fraction of respondents actually provided comments on these questions as detailed in the following table.

Question	No of comments	% of responses
Culture and Behaviours	193	20
Future leadership	182	19
Future workforce	214	22.5
Recognising performance	213	22.5
e-recruitment	285	30
Equalities	174	18
Workforce development	223	23.5
Supporting Workforce	228	24
Operational support	196	20.7

Equalities is very important to the Council but it raised the least number of comments by the workforce respondents.

Across all questions, most comments were on the current recruitment policy and associated processes, followed by workforce support and workforce development.

6.4 Summary of themes:

The common themes that emerged from responses were as follows;

- Recruitment process out of date and too slow, and perceived to be unfair (nepotism cited, qualified staff overlooked in favour of time served)
- Redeployment - too many people redeployed when not able to undertake the role competently or are put ahead of qualified staff more suited to the role
- Recognition – needs to be fairer, and say thank you sometimes enough
- Pay – pay structure is not competitive, job evaluation not competitive
- Better appraisals process / check-ins
- Lack of training opportunities (and lack of budget)
- No career development and lack of progression opportunities
- Training not supported (no time to train, requests denied –including request to learn Welsh - training out of date/not relevant)
- Deal with performance issues and bullying
- Support Welsh language more effectively
- Designated HR people that understand the directorate and service areas and provide consistent advice

6.5 Staff Survey Suggestions

Suggestions to support addressing the issues identified include the following;

- Listen to staff
- Trust staff
- Support working from home, allow employees choice of where and when to WFH or in the office (some want to come back to office/stay home), better equipment and allowance to help pay increased bills
- Succession planning and workforce planning needed across all service areas
- Better (and more up to date) policies and procedures that support staff, and staff trained on them to provide consistent advice (Service Centre) and managers to implement them consistently
- More HR and Training resources to support workforce development (continuous professional development, coaching and mentoring, better training opportunities not just e-learning, signposting and access to external free training)
- More training opportunities: more apprenticeships, apprenticeships for professions and technical posts, graduate programme, traineeships, placements etc.
- More career opportunities, including better promotion to schools (ambassadors), colleges and labour market generally (Sell Swansea as an employer), work experience, shadowing, job rotations
- Re-introduce Career grades
- Better appraisal processes (actually have appraisals in some areas)
- More support across all areas, but particularly OH (reduce waiting times), and increase available HR support, acknowledge and deal with stress.

6.6 Comments on Individual Strands

Strand 1; Culture and Behaviours (193 comments/ 20% of responses)

The highest number of responses for this question related to:

- Better communication
- Inclusion and diversity
- None/not applicable
- Deal with bullying (comments)
- Lead by example
- Trust staff
- Training, development opportunities

Strand 2; Future Leadership (182 comments/ 19% of respondents)

- Leadership – more training, lead by example, clarity
- Training – more specific leadership training, modernised and relevant
- Promotion opportunities and clear career development paths to leadership roles
- Visibility – managers too remote, back to the floor, understand the front line
- Communication – keep staff informed and use more accessible methods

- Workforce planning and succession planning – support to do it right
- Listen to staff

Strand 3; Future Workforce (214 comments/ 25% of respondents)

- Recruitment – recruit more staff, replace leavers, fill vacancies, faster, more diversity, before people leave, reduce workloads, younger people
- More training opportunities
- More progression opportunities
- More apprenticeships
- Invest in staff
- Succession planning
- Listen to staff

Strand 4; Recognising Performance (213 comments/ 22.5% of respondents)

- Recognition (say thanks, fairer, some recognition)
- Never recognised
- Better pay, pay overtime, bonus pay, Performance related pay
- Better appraisals
- Give feedback
- Rewards (extra leave, birthday off, long service award)

Strand 5; Recruitment (285 comments/ 30% of respondents)

- Faster and more up to date process needed
- Access to consistent HR recruitment support if needed
- Better T&Cs (better pay, rewards and benefits)
- Pay structure not fit for purpose – cannot recruit as salary out of kilter with other Local Authority and/or private sector
- More progression opportunities, career grades, shadowing and mentoring
- Retention programmes and incentives
- Value staff
- Reduce workloads, fill vacancies

Strand 6; Workforce Development (223 comments/ 23.5% of respondents)

- More training opportunities (internal and external)
- Time to train, approve more training, increase budgets and invest in staff
- Support professional development, CPD and train in formal qualifications
- Better appraisals and career development discussions
- Support technical training and apprenticeships
- Provide more role specific relevant training

Strand 8; Supporting the Workforce (228 comments/ 24% of respondents)

- OH provision (reduce waiting times, more resources, more up to date provision)
- Working from home (more mental health support, more flexibility in working hours etc.)
- Reduce workloads and recognise stress
- More check-ins
- More support tools for managers
- Better communication and access to support on offer

Strand 8; Equalities (174 comments/ 18% of respondents)

Many respondents took the statement to refer to 'fairness' in the workplace rather than 'Equalities' as we define it as an organisation. Therefore the responses were not quite what we were looking for. However, from the comments made, the following themes have emerged:

- Recruitment process is not fit for purpose
- More support needed for working parents
- More training on this area needed for all staff
- We are pretty good at this already, don't need to change it
- More Welsh speakers and more Welsh requirements in roles needed
- Better policies on this
- Reduce workloads and increase staff numbers to support overworked employees
- We should lead by example (as a Council)

HR Functional Support (196 comments/ 20.7% of respondents)

In amongst the comments relating to individual Strands, the following common comments were made in respect of HR functional support.

- Dedicated HR for services/directorate (knowledge of area sometime crucial for consistent advice)
- Consistent, accurate and accessible advice
- More practical support (recruitment, capability, disciplinaries)
- More HR resources needed to support managers
- Too much HR activity now with Managers
- Not enough support to staff (returning from sick etc.)

6.7 Employee Focus Groups

Following receipt of the Staff Survey results Focus Groups were held with Trade Union Representatives and a cross-section of employees on each of the Key Themes. There were also consultation sessions with Members through the Equalities and Future Generations forum.

The key messages from these exercises were as follows;

- Employees welcomed the engagement and want more of it.
- The Key Themes and Strands identified in the Strategy are the right ones.

- There was a recognised need for the Council's Principles, Values and Behaviours to be reviewed and refreshed.
- Workforce Planning was seen to be key to the development of the future workforce, particularly in succession planning.
- There was need for consistency in applying good leadership practices across the Council.
- Better and more consistent performance and development discussions need with staff.
- The opportunity should be taken to seek cross-Council efficiencies in organisational structure.
- Pay and grading was a key issue in that we were not competitive or attractive and the current job evaluation scheme needed to be replaced.
- Recruitment practices and processes in themselves were poor. We don't sell ourselves well.
- Greater investment and consistency needed in L&D provision.
- Recognised need for investment in health and wellbeing- not pro-active enough during Covid.
- Greater engagement need with equalities communities.

All of these comments are being taken into consideration in development of the Strategy.

