

Quarterly Workforce Report

Introduction



This is a new format for the existing quarterly workforce report which aims to raise awareness of the size and makeup of the workforce and of the issues that affect it. When appropriate it provides the opportunity to explore and discuss issues identified from analysis of the data arising from workforce transactions.

The first section of the new report will give the key observations from the data that has been analysed for the quarter. This will be followed by a themed commentary which will provide a deeper analysis and insight into a specific topic that is current for the council. The indicators at the end of the report will give an instant view of selected trends over the last year to see the wider picture of what is changing in the workforce. We are proposing the following key themes to be chosen when most relevant and applicable:

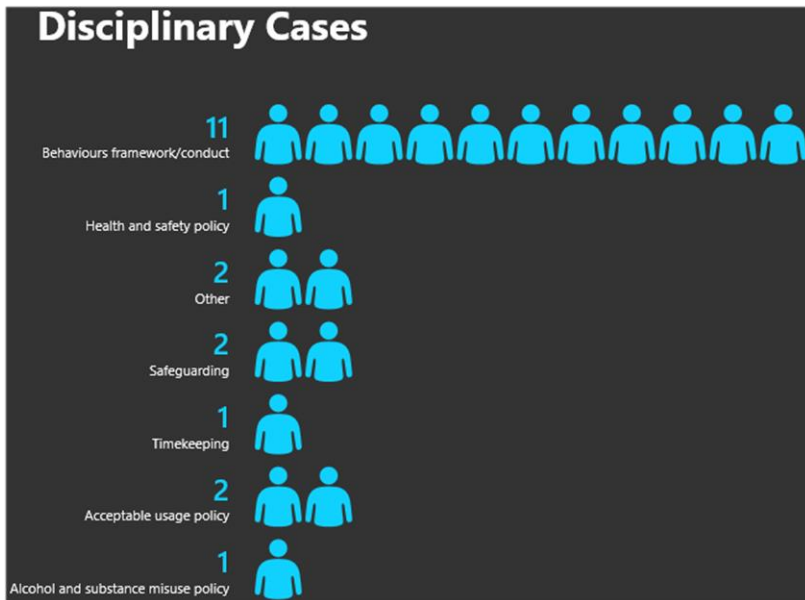
- Sickness absence
- Employee turnover
- Resourcing and recruitment
- Employee costings
- Apprentices
- Employee engagement
- Under25s/demographics
- Agency

Quarterly Workforce Report

January – March 2017

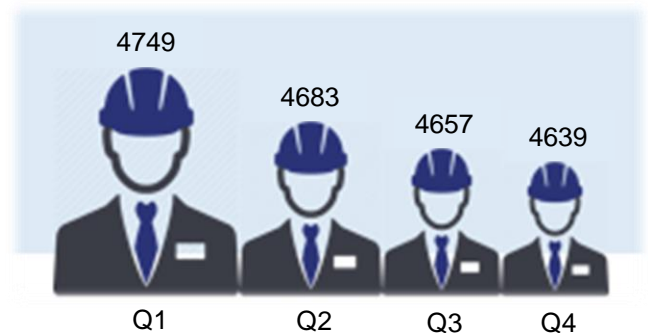


Key Observations



The number of new disciplinary cases in this quarter has increased, with 11 new cases breaching the Behaviour Framework or Code of Conduct policies. The 2016 staff survey highlighted that 96% of respondents were clear on how they were expected to behave. HR business partners are working with services to address workforce issues when they arise. The updating and relaunch of the Behaviour Framework will help clarify what is expected from our staff in terms of behaviour and conduct with colleagues and the public and therefore we might expect that there will be a decrease in these cases.

Although there has been an overall decrease in voluntary turnover this quarter, the trend towards a reduced workforce continues to be significant. The reduction this quarter is mostly attributed to redundancies across the council with the largest number being in Finance due to restructures and employees coming to the end of temporary contracts.



Our reliance on agency staff to fill critical positions is significantly reducing. This acknowledges our resourcing strategy and the success of our social media campaigns to fill vacancies. The largest decrease was seen in Operational Children's Services. Although Waste and Environment still have the most agency staff for short term demand and sickness/holiday cover, the number used has fallen this quarter and is due to our arrangement with Hills to cover all vacancies with agency staff.

9472

the number of
days lost this
quarter to absence

Wiltshire Council has seen an unusually large increase in days lost due to absence this quarter. Wiltshire Council lost 9472 days this quarter due to absence. On average over the last 4 financial years, Wiltshire Council saw a 6% increase in absence days in this quarter due to seasonal factors. Based on this trend we would expect our sickness absence rate for this quarter to be around 2.2 days lost per FTE, however it was 2.7, this is 23% higher than trends would suggest.

Back office functions were the most adversely affected by this seasonal influence, with People and Business and Legal and Governance seeing an increase of 72% and 89% respectively, or an additional day per quarter in both cases.

The highest absence rate across directorates at the council continues to be in Waste and Environment where work is being undertaken to establish reasons for the high absence and if there are any preventative measures we can put in place.

The council lost the equivalent of 146 working days (at a potential cost of £1.2m based on an average salary) in the quarter. This means 4.1% of the workforce capacity was not utilised. Where services would cover using agency staff this cost would increase by a further 25% to £1.5m based on an average cost for agency staff. Some services which can cover reasonable sickness levels within their establishment may not feel the financial consequences, however frontline services can find this significant pressure on already stretched budgets.

“Wiltshire Council was underutilised by 4.1% [due to absences]”



Electoral Services Capacity Utilisation

The team most affected by underutilisation through absence was Electoral Services whose establishment was underutilised by 12%, or to put it another way the service was running at 88% capacity. Absence rates of these levels need to be carefully managed, to avoid impact on services especially during peak demand.

Sickness reasons of ‘chest and respiratory’ and ‘cold/flu and other infections’ both saw significant increases in absences this quarter, which confirms the season has influenced absence.

There has also been a 38% increase in medium term sickness. Part of this has been a trend towards more ‘chest and respiratory’ and ‘cold/flu and other infections’ appearing in the medium-term sickness bracket. There is evidence that a virulent cold/flu strain was circulating during this period. Our figures suggest that the availability of the flu vaccine to staff did not stop our sickness figures rising for these reasons this year.

Medium term sickness is most prevalent in operational social care services (both adults and children’s) whose increased exposure to the public compared to office based staff may increase the risk of contracting viruses.

“Chest and respiratory and cold/flu and other infections both saw significant increases”

THEMED COMMENTARY

2028 – the number of days lost this quarter due to stress/depression/mental health/fatigue

2028 days is the equivalent of losing 31 full time staff in this quarter alone due to stress/depression/mental health/fatigue. This is an additional 513 days compared to last quarter, a 34% increase. This remains consistently the largest contributory reason for absence (at 31% of days lost) and was also the largest increase this quarter. Action has been taken to make managers more aware of mental health so we would anticipate seeing a reduction in these types of absences in future reports.

As a council, sickness absence has remained almost static over the last 6 years, seeing only a slight upward trend. This could be due to increased awareness of the need to input sickness into our SAP system or could be a genuine increase.

The figures presented in this report are reliant on the accuracy of the information provided by managers across the council. We are aware that some services consistently record low or zero sickness rates and that there is a degree of late reporting.

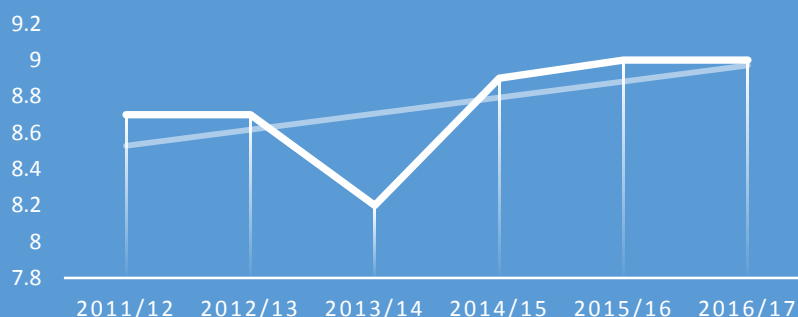
In this quarter, it was noted that 121 managers (with an average span of control of 7 staff) did not record any sickness in SAP. There is a high seasonal probability for sickness so it is likely that there will have been cases where sickness absence was not recorded. HR are working with services to address this.



We are currently exploring whether there is a correlation between levels of staff engagement and sickness absence. Initial analysis shows that the service area with the highest percentage of absence due to stress (business change performance and governance in the Adults Commissioning directorate), not only has a high employee engagement index score but also scores positively against staff survey questions that indicate situations which may lead to stress, i.e. unmanageable workload, long hours, poor work life balance or working conditions. Although in some isolated cases we might see an indication of possible causes of absence.

In the staff survey, almost half of the respondents in Safeguarding and Quality Assurance answered negatively to having satisfactory working conditions, whilst 1 in 4 absences in the quarter were due to chest/respiratory problems. We currently don't have enough information to know where the staff are based or what their specific problem with their workplace is, however it could be argued that the working conditions may be a contributory factor to sickness absence. This will be explored further with the head of service and occupational health/HR business partners.

SICKNESS ABSENCE CHANGE OVER THE YEARS



In the Conference and Reviewing team 4 in 5 respondents did not agree with their workload being right for the time they have, whilst negative responses were also prevalent in questions such as having the right balance between work and home life (2 in 5) and having to regularly work excessive hours (1 in 2). This area also reported many absences due to work related stress (1 in 4 days lost) and 'other – unspecified'. Anecdotal feedback would suggest that there is potentially an issue in terms of burn out in some roles in the service which may be influencing their staff's health. More work will be done to explore the correlations between employee engagement and sickness absence.

“The Bradford factor is a way of calculating actionable scores based on absence patterns”

The Bradford factor is a way that companies can manage sickness in their workforce through a process of calculating a score based on absence patterns and provides a platform to find trigger points for sickness absence. It works on the principle that frequent short term absences are more disruptive to service delivery than intermittent long term absences as you can acquire additional or distribute current resource to cover a long-term absence, therefore scores are weighted due to frequency. There is ambiguity surrounding interpreting the scores however an example of trigger points and actions are shown below:

Score	Action	No. of Wiltshire Council Staff who have hit these triggers this quarter
0-50 points	No action required	1223
51 - 200 points	Consider Issuing a Verbal Warning	123
201 - 400 points	Consider Issuing a First Written Warning	28
401 - 600 points	Consider Issuing a Final Written Warning	9
601+ points	Consider Dismissal	6

The Bradford Factor is not currently used within the council. Managers can choose to run trigger reports on sickness where employees exceed a certain number of days within a period, however at present the use of these reports by managers is not consistent and this could be due to manager awareness. Unlike the Bradford factor, there is no framework within the council to provide consistent outcomes based on an employee's sickness record. Whilst there are already measures in place to manage frequent or long term absence, the advisory team and occupational health to come up with some appropriate measures on an individual basis. However, measures based on the Bradford factor scores detailed in the table could be used to ensure a more consistent approach to how we deal with sickness absence. The table also details the current number of staff who would meet these triggers in the quarter.

Whilst there are a small number of employees where a pattern of sickness can be seen there is no service where this is prevalent, the 4 members of staff are spread between 4 different services and a split of reasons between things such as stress, muscular/skeletal, stomach, headache/migraine and no reason given. It is difficult to assess whether these are genuine reasons or whether there is a degree of apathy towards working Monday and this sample is too small to determine any correlation with employee engagement.

4 employees had 75% - 100% of their absences falling on a Monday

QUARTERLY WORKFORCE Measures

Quarter ended: 31 March 2017

Staffing Levels					
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Trend
Headcount	4749	4683	4657	4639	▼
FTE	3648	3615	3547	3527	▼
Agency worker use (equivalent number of FTE's used during quarter)	113	122	117	95.9	▼
Ratio of managers to employees	1:9	1:9	1:9.9	1:10.2	▲
FTE of managers	487	477	456	445	▼
Number of redundancies made during quarter	28	43	30	25	▼
Ratio of starters to leavers (FTE)	1:1.1	1:1.1	1:1.4	1:1.1	▬

Sickness Absence						
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Jan – March 16	Trend
Working days lost per FTE	2.1 days	2.1 days	2.1 days	2.7 days	2.5 days	▲
% of total absences over 20 days	52.4%	54.5%	47%	42.9%	46.1%	▼

Health and Safety RIDDOR related injuries					
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Trend
No. of workplace incidents/injuries reported	5	3	1	2	▼

New Disciplinary, Grievance and Absence Cases					
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Trend
Disciplinary cases	11	17	15	20	▲
Grievance cases	1	2	0	2	▬
Absence cases	68	107	129	202	▲

Voluntary Staff Turnover						
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Jan – March 16	Trend
% staff turnover	2.6%	2.7%	2.4%	2.2%	2.3%	▼
% <1 year turnover rate	5.9%	3.4%	4.8%	3.2%	4.5%	▼
% Under 25's voluntary turnover	6.4%	6.3%	6.1%	1.9%	3.1%	▼
Average leavers' length of service	7.3 years	7.7 years	9.2 years	8.4 years	7.7 years	▲

Employee costs						
Measure Relating to Quarter	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Jan – March 16	Trend
Total paid in salaries to employees (non casual)	£26.05m	£25.68m	£25.68m	£25.08m	£25.86m	▼
Total paid in salary to casual employees	£0.41m	£0.43m	£0.48m	£0.40m	£0.39m	▬
Total salary pay	£26.46m	£26.11m	£26.16m	£25.49m	£26.26m	▼
Total paid to agency workers	£1.43m	£1.40m	£1.43m	£1.15m	£1.55m	▼
Median employee basic salary	£20,456	£20,456	£20,456	£20,456	£20,253	▬

Why this is important: Clear budgetary constraints mean that keeping track of this information is vital. Whilst we are seeing a reduction in contracted employees we may see some services using **alternative resourcing options on a more regular basis such as agency workers, consultants** or casuals. This information will highlight whether this is happening or not.

Additional financial information					
Measure <i>(If the figure is negative a saving has been achieved)</i>	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Trend
Cost of sick pay	£0.72m	£0.69m	£0.71m	£0.85m	▲
FTE change due to employee hour changes	-5.8	-15.0	-4.9	-6.2	▼
Cost/saving of employee hour changes	-£126,813	-£343,335	-£80,357	£-165,370	▼

Why this is important: Sick pay amounted to £2,989,600 across Wiltshire Council during the 2016-17 financial year and therefore this is a substantial area of spend that should be minimised whenever possible. FTE changes indicate where services may be looking to employees to work more hours than they previously have done to cover gaps where a reduction in the headcount of employees has been made. It could also be an indication that services are adopting a more positive approach to flexible working.

Employee Diversity						
Measure	April – June 16	July – Sept 16	Oct – Dec 16	Jan – March 17	Jan – March 16	Trend
% < 25	6.7%	6.8%	6.5%	6.7%	6.5%	▬
% 55 and over	24.7%	24.7%	24.7%	24.9%	24.4%	▬
% Female	70.1%	70.1%	69.9%	70.0%	70.2%	▬
% Part-time	42.6%	42.5%	43%	43.6%	42.9%	▲
% Temporary contracts	6.4%	5.9%	5.5%	5.5%	7.3%	▼
% Black or Minority Ethnic	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	▬
% Disabled	3.2%	3.2%	3.4%	3.6%	3.1%	▲