

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	17th March 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets
Report author	Gary Williams – Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services Louise Dougal – HR Services Manager
Title	Staff Absences and Turnover in Denbighshire during 2020/21 & 2021/22

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report provides staff absence and turnover data for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To provide up to date information on the current absence and turnover statistics.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee:

3.1 considers and discusses the Absence and Turnover data provided, along with the associated documentation; and

3.2 determines if any further monitoring of staff absence and turnover rates are required.

4. Report details

Staff Absence

4.1. Appendix 1 provides a detailed breakdown of Sickness Absence for the current and previous financial years. The Covid Pandemic has had an impact on absence figures. The key data is highlighted overleaf.

4.2. Total Absence Data and comparisons:

Absence – Denbighshire County Council Total					
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	April – Dec 21
Denbighshire	8.4	8.3	8.1	6.5	7.1
Wales	10.4	10.5	11.2	8.4	

4.3. The Council had the lowest absence rate for Welsh local authorities in 2019/2020 and was on a downward trend for absence. In 2020-2021 our sickness rate was considerably lower which was in line with other Welsh authorities mainly due to social distancing measures and working from home.

4.4. In the period April to December 2021, the sickness rate has increased and we are likely to end the year at approximately 9 days lost per employee. This is higher than our normal figure pre pandemic.

4.5. The top 3 reasons for absence have remained consistent over the past 3 years, however the amount of absence which was due to colds and flu in 2019/2020 was 10% whereas this was much lower, under 5%, in 2020/2021. We have the new absence type of Covid which has increased each year. The figures also indicate an increase in Depression / Anxiety. The absence broken down to service areas is as follows, the orange highlighted areas indicate an increase:

Service	19/20 (%)	20/21 (%)	21/22 (%) Apr - Dec
Business Improvement and Modernisation	6.75	4.47	2.93
Community Support Services	12.21	10.87	12.43
Communities & Customers	8.29	8.45	5.39
Education & Children Services	7.66	9.47	9.7
Finance & Property	5.79	6.08	5.54
Highways, Facilities & Environmental Services	9.97	7.43	6.95
Legal, HR & Democratic Services	4.34	6.79	2.46
Planning, Public Protection & Countryside Services	4.37	3.55	5.24

4.6. Absence has increased in the frontline services as highlighted in orange above. It is anticipated that sickness absence will remain at an increased level for the following 2 years due to the removal of social distancing measures, the added illness of Covid and the backlog of treatments and surgeries for staff.

Staff Turnover

4.7. Below is the turnover figure for DCC compared to the Local Authorities in Wales, this is based on the percentage of staff who leave the employment of the Council:

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Denbighshire	11.1	9.3	8.6	9.3	7.5
Wales	11.6	11.4	11.2	10.8	8.2

4.8. Our turnover figure is below average, however, there has been a significant increase in turnover in two of our frontline service areas, i.e. Highways & Environmental Services by approximately 6% and Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services by approximately 4%.

4.9. During 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 the biggest group of leavers were in grade 4 or below positions with the common reason for leaving being resignation due to personal reasons, the next big group of leavers fell within the grade 10 and above group with the common reason for leaving being retirement.

4.10. The biggest group of grade 4 and below are found in Highways and Environmental Services, mainly within our Catering and Cleaning positions.

4.11. In summary, Covid has seen a negative impact on our attendance and turnover figures in our frontline services. Non frontline services have been less effected.

4.12. Attendance figures have increased over the last 9 months and are likely to continue to increase.

4.13. The workforce has been resilient during the pandemic, services have continued to be delivered and staff have been redeployed into new roles to support new council requirements, i.e. track, trace and protect service, supporting the shielding and vulnerable residents with food deliveries, additional support in care.

4.14. There has been no significant impact on service delivery, however some areas are experiencing challenging times in recruitment and retention issues across all service areas which have been identified through the workforce planning activities recently carried out within services.

4.15. Appendix 2 is the draft Corporate Workforce Plan which is being consulted upon with the Corporate Executive Team (CET) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Appendix 3 is a copy of the delivery plan which lists a number of actions to support the recruitment and retention of the workforce.

4.16. The delivery aims of the workforce plan focus on the following areas:

- Leadership & Management
- Recruitment and Retention of Talent
- Enabling High Performing, Engaged and Empowered Workforce
- Develop a Flexible and Agile Workforce
- Support Health & Wellbeing

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1. The workforce is an important asset to the council and together deliver services and corporate priorities. The workforce plan outlines our commitment on how we will enhance and develop our workforce, now and in the future to deliver the best possible service to our residents.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. The additional financial costs comes from back filling frontline line posts with temporary staff, i.e. refuse collector, cook. However, the non-financial costs come for the additional pressures on managers, teams and employees in services to carry out additional work and training.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. Not applicable

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. CET and SLT have been consulted on the Corporate Workforce Plan. The final draft version is attached in appendix 2.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. The main risks associated with high absence levels and increased turnover for the Council are a reduction or disruption to productivity, increased recruitment costs, time spent to train new employees, reduction in employee motivation and morale for other employees and additional workloads for existing staff.

10.2. To address the risks of absence: over the past 2 years absence management has been difficult due to the situation of the pandemic, we have an established policy and procedure in place, an occupational health service to support managers and dedicated HR officers to support early interventions and long term solutions. We also have a number of new tools to support wellbeing in the workplace. Managers with support from HR need to ensure that the policy and procedure is applied consistently across the council.

10.3. To address turnover, recruitment and retention issues across service areas, service workforce plans have been completed and have identified service specific issues, the corporate workforce plan has identified a Recruitment and Retention delivery action plan.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

11.2. Section 7.4.2(b) outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Council in relation to policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular services areas.