

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

2nd December 2020

IMPACT OF COVID19 ON THE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SERVICE

To consider and comment on the following issues:

To accept the report as an accurate account of the impact of Covid19 on the service

Reasons:

The report provides an accurate account for Members of the impact of Covid19 on the service and the work that has taken place to support the Authority and the residents of Carmarthenshire.

To be referred to the Executive Board / Council for decision: NO

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mair Stephens (Deputy Leader)

Directorate: Chief Executives

Name of Head of Service:

Paul R Thomas

Report Author:

Paul R Thomas

Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2ND DECEMBER 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on the People Management Division

Executive Summary:

The report provides a summarised overview of how COVID19 has impacted on the work undertaken by the subdivisional elements of the People Management division within Chief Executive's department.

It is important to note that the whole Division switched to working and delivering its services from home when the first lockdown was announced and many of our services continue to be provided digitally or over the phone to help contain the spread of the virus.

Guidance for Managers and Headteachers

As a direct result of the pandemic we diverted resources from the outset to ensure UK and Welsh Government legislation and guidance was quickly interpreted and disseminated to managers and head teachers. We have dedicated resources to making sure any workforce related COVID 19 legislation / guidance is kept up to date and to support this we have created a dedicated on line resource for all people managers.

Information for Staff

We have also diverted resources to ensuring all our staff are kept up to date with changing guidelines that affect them in the workplace by creating a dedicated online resource of Frequently Asked Questions on our Intranet.

Sickness Absence Management

For the quarter 2 period to the 30th September, the overall authority result is 3.37FTE days lost, which is down 1.3FTE days lower than the same period Q2 2019-20. All of the five departments have reduced their sickness absence levels compared to the same period for 2019.20. If this trend continues, then the out-turn position at 31st March 2021, will be a significant reduction when compared with the 10.74 FTE days lost to sickness absence as reported at the 31st March 2020.

The corporate reduction of 1.3FTE for quarter two is attributable to several factors:

- Significant proportion of staff in extremely/clinically vulnerable categories have been shielding through this period and some of these staff with long term health conditions would have presented as sick under 'normal' circumstances.
- Short term absence has reduced significantly by over 50% including schools compared to 2019-20. A large number of employees have been working from home and have continued to work with minor ailments during this period which may have been reported as sickness if attendance in the office was required.
- Sickness absence due to COVID-19 symptoms/diagnosis only accounted for 0.17 FTE days lost

per employee.

£95K Exit Payment Cap – impact on pensions and redundancies

As a result of the implementation of the £95k exit payment cap, the division will work alongside colleagues in our Pensions Section to revise our discretionary compensation regulations to reflect the changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Furlough Scheme

The Authority acted swiftly following the Chancellor's announcement earlier in the year to introduce the Furlough Scheme and the Employee services team worked effectively with departments to identify 345 eligible employees. As a result, the authority has been able to maximise the financial benefit offered by the Furlough scheme.

As was the case when it was first introduced, the extended Scheme will cover 80% of furloughed employees' wages (to a maximum of £2,500 per month). The employer is responsible for paying the employer national insurance contributions and pension contributions. The Council will continue to top-up the shortfall in wages. The Government will review the policy in January 2021 to decide whether or not employers should make a larger contribution.

The ability to flexibly furlough employees will continue during the extended period of the Scheme with the same rules applying. Furlough arrangements, whether full- or part-time, can last for any amount of time, although there is a minimum claim period of seven consecutive calendar days.

Casual & Agency Staff

The division has been working directly with departments to minimise their reliance on the use of both Casual and Agency workers. This piece of work has consequently reduced the number of Casual Workers, and will be kept under review.

Casual Workers

Month	Number of casual workers
August	245
September	179
October	185

Agency Workers - Spend

Dept	April (£)	May (£)	June (£)	July (£)	Aug (£)	Sep (£)	Total (£)
Chief Executive	6,600.25	13,307.07	5,843.30	16,038.46	10,711.80	12,552.75	65,053.63
Communities	17,960.13	31,739.84	27,259.65	37,361.94	19,336.17	80,049.68	213,707.41
Corporate Services		2,367.09	503.94	2,424.36	2,519.70	1,007.88	8,822.97
Education & Children's Services	1,635.49	6,282.64	11,543.90	12,063.35	1,274.40	15,710.35	48,510.13
Education (schools)	30,288.27	127,058.32	200,279.26	208,854.53	14,077.34	191,809.92	772,367.64
Environmental Services	-22,727.30	98,331.05	110,573.65	184,458.20	83,972.95	166,786.78	621,395.33
Grand Total 2020	33,756.84	279,086.01	356,003.7	461,200.84	131,892.36	467,917.36	1,729,857.11
2019 monthly	51,560.55	728,128.08	759,567.53	852,628.27	296,284.25	443,551.07	3,131,719.75

spend							
£ Variance +/-	-17,803.71	-449,042.07	-403,563.83	-391,427.43	-164,391.89	24,366.29	-1,401,862.64
% variance	-35%	-62%	-53%	-46%	-55%	5%	-45%

Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- More than 274 documents have been written by the team, 122 risk assessments and 132 safe working practices plus guidance and other related documents as a direct result of the pandemic. Documents are constantly being reviewed and updated in line with any changes to Government guidance and legislation.
- Development of the Corporate Covid compliance checklist and the School's Covid Compliance checklist. The H&S team is now analysing the results and making follow up calls to the service managers. A summary report will be written for Gold and Silver and any necessary follow up visits made by the H&S Advisors
- The Team is continuing to support service managers in the service recovery process.
- The Team is working with the HSE on the follow up visit to schools and will do the same once the HSE make calls to the Care Homes.
- The Working Safely Team has trained in excess of 85 new carers in Domiciliary Care from the Communities department since recommencing their service in September 2020
- Health surveillance will commence in Occupational Health from 1st December 2020, following a six-month suspension given by the HSE. Electronic questionnaires were developed and have taken place in the interim. There has been a 12-month suspension for lung function test due to it being an Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP).
- Electronic Health Surveillance questionnaires will continue to be used to reduce time at the centre for employees. These are currently being enhanced and work with the resource link team has commenced to ease completion further for employees.
- Referrals to OH continue to increase and the Wellbeing Support Service appointments have increased 11% on the same period last year:
 - 20/21 - Appointments Attended Q1/Q2 – 1455
 - 19/20 - Appointments Attended Q1/Q2 – 1302
- Updated OH referral form being trialled with the use of 'Case Viewer' to improve completion and referral time for managers.
- OH virtual learning platform being developed to link in with launch of new sickness policy.
- New Health and Wellbeing intranet pages have been launched along with new Health and Wellbeing Contact form to ensure managers and staff have a more interactive way to contact the team for advice, information and support.
- E – drop in sessions has taken place with our Physiotherapists – supporting back care advice and Musculo skeletal concerns organised by our Health & Wellbeing Team
- E-discussion drop-in sessions for work life balance, kindness run by our Health & Wellbeing Team
- New and the first Virtual Health & Wellbeing Health Fayre will take place for a week Commencing

30th November – 4th December covering areas such as MSD, Stress, Mental Health, keeping active, nutrition

- Time to Change training has been researched and attended and will be offered to the 62 + network of champions as an area of interest.
- Most schools have now put forward a member of staff to be their wellbeing lead (champion) Microsoft Teams group to be formed and introduction meeting to be scheduled.
- New personal resilience module has been developed.
- New Corporate Framework for Wellbeing, to ensure consultation and communication across and throughout the authority and to support all employees.
- Communication plan to enhance the current communication methods has been developed by the Health and Wellbeing team to ensure all staff including non-office based are reached as much as possible.
- Specific departmental work from the Health and Wellbeing team will continue and some aspects will commence moving forward due to being put on hold because of COVID. To include, the pilot project in the priority schools aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of employees.
- Team wellbeing sessions being arranged for managers after health fayre, aim one before Christmas and one after Christmas, and one for HR Advisors. Hope that webinar to be recorded after trials with managers to sit on Health and Wellbeing pages.
- Mental Health Awareness training continues to be offered for all staff and managers. Further dates for January will be out soon.
- Members of the Health and Wellbeing team have been chosen to be key speakers at events due to the continued health and wellbeing work that we have been offering staff: Time to Change wales conference, Social Care Wales conference.
- Updated version of risk assessment forwarded to schools that includes advice on restarting practical subjects including PE and sports
- Forward planning meeting for Covid secure voting in Mays elections
- The manual handling training videos developed during the current Pandemic to remotely support carers are now being used by a number of other LAs across Wales and are being endorsed by the All Wales Working Group

Organisational Development (OD)

At the start of the pandemic the OD team suspended much of its day to day activity and diverted resources to support the switch to digital communication and the setting up of the Skills and Workforce Hub. The Hub has been instrumental in ensuring the skilling up and deployment of staff to critical service areas. The work of the Hub has since been suspended but is on standby should there be an increase in Critical Service Absence Levels.

The way learning is delivered to our workforce has changed with much of it now being delivered online via webinars. The design and development of a new Learning Management System (LMS) is well underway to ensure we build on this way of working.

As well as supporting the TTP recruitment process the Team has also continued to progress some key initiatives to support services to work differently. These include:

- Remote Working Toolkit for Managers
- Online Induction
- Development of a model to support Workforce Motivation
- Online learning has been developed nationally for administering Covid & Flu vaccinations & will be released following the WG launch on the Learning@Wales Platform.
- Supporting National Health & Social Care projects
 - o Infection Protection & Control (Welsh Government/Social Care Wales & Health Education Improvement Wales) – CCC practice & learning shared. WG consultation to follow liaising with Jonathan Morgan on progress /developments.
 - o Mental Health – Awareness across the Health & Social Care Workforce to support the national Workforce Strategy will be liaising with Avril Bracey on progress/developments
 - o New Social Care Induction for Registered Managers.
- Launched the KickStart scheme and are in the process of gathering expressions of interest currently being sought
- Revised the appraisal process (Recognise, Grow, Together)
- Introduced the new Competency Framework aligned to Core Values - Piloting for recruitment for front line care staff (Communities)

Transform, Innovate, Change (TIC) Team

At the outset of the Covid19 pandemic, the TIC work programme was formally suspended, so that the current staffing complement could be strategically redeployed to support and deliver critical service areas.

During the COVID19 Pandemic, most members of the TIC team were deployed to support the transport and distribution of the Free School Meals Food packages, and the Shielding Food parcels on behalf of the Welsh Government.

In totality, over 20k food parcels were delivered to our most vulnerable residents. Other members of staff were deployed to support other critical services within the division.

From a strategic perspective, the TIC team has been responsible for evaluating the Council’s response to the Covid-19 crisis to ensure that any learning and positive changes are used to inform the approach to the re-setting of services and the Councils future strategic and operational delivery framework. The review focused on the following key questions:

- *What’s gone well & how this may have contributed to better/smarter ways of working?*
- *What hasn’t gone well and why?*
- *What specific learning and examples of good practice do we need to ensure are now embedded in future ways of working?*
- *What further support/other arrangements need to be put in place to ensure that any positive changes are sustainable?*

The review also explored the following themes:

• Leadership/ Governance arrangements	• Staff
• Organisational working	• Members
• Service Delivery	• Customers

• Finance	• Communication
• Technology	• Care Homes*
• Buildings	• Schools*

* Although further specific reviews are to be undertaken in these areas by other external organisations, it was agreed to use the opportunity presented by this review to capture the initial learning within the context of a wider corporate exercise.

The approach taken was:

- The TIC Team led on the review in conjunction with colleagues from Organisational Development.
- All directors, 18 heads of service and 56 third tier managers were interviewed individually or via focus groups for managers to gather their feedback using the key questions.
- Other evidence such as the recent staff survey and customer feedback has also been utilised.
- Member feedback has been gathered via an all member survey as well as individual interviews with EBMs and Group Leaders.
- Trade Union representatives were also consulted as part of the process.

The final report will now go through the due political process.

New ways of Working (NWOW) – Workforce Framework

COVID-19 has changed the way we live, work, travel and socialise. This has impacted on our entire workforce and as a result we have had to adapt and adopt new ways of working. We have been keen to learn from this experience and so are in the process of developing a Workforce Framework that will set out why and how the Council will continue to work in these new ways. The framework focuses on workforce arrangements and associated policies that could be introduced to enable a transition to a future way of working. It recognises that many of our key service areas have to work in a different way to others but the over-arching aim is to provide a framework that enables us to provide the best service to our “customers” as well as providing a supportive and safe working environment for all our employees.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	NO
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: P R Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive, People Management

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities YES	Legal NONE	Finance NONE	ICT YES	Risk Management Issues NONE	Staffing Implications YES	Physical Assets NONE
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1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

We must make sure that we learn from this unprecedented experience as we reintroduce our services and re-set our strategic and operational priorities. We must identify our key learning points at an organisational level and across the breadth of our services. To achieve this our Transformation and Innovation and Change Team is undertaking a strategic evaluation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to inevitable widespread changes to the way in which services are delivered by local authorities. This means that it is even more critical that Local Authorities respect the needs of all service users and equalities.

We will need to reprioritise services and our resources in budget setting.

4. ICT

ICT Services will need to ensure that technology is kept in place and up-to-date to ensure we continue to meet the challenges presented by Covid19.

7. Staffing Implications

Staff wellbeing throughout the pandemic has remained a priority for the service and we continue to support our staff as the majority continue to work from home.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: P R Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive, People Management

(Please specify the outcomes of consultations undertaken where they arise against the following headings)

1. Local Member(s) n/a

2. Community / Town Council n/a

3. Relevant Partners n/a

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations n/a

EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO
HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED

Yes

Include any observations here

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THERE ARE NONE