

# **Cabinet Member response to the recommendations of the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee on Workforce Strategy and New Ways of Working Opportunities**

## **General comments**

I welcome the recommendations from the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee on this important matter.

I have considered each of the recommendations agreed by the committee on 20 March 2024 and my responses are as follows:

### **Recommendation 1**

With regards to sickness absence across adult services, consideration be given by the Cabinet Member for Adult Services to the following to further support employees and the potential reduction of sickness absence going forward:

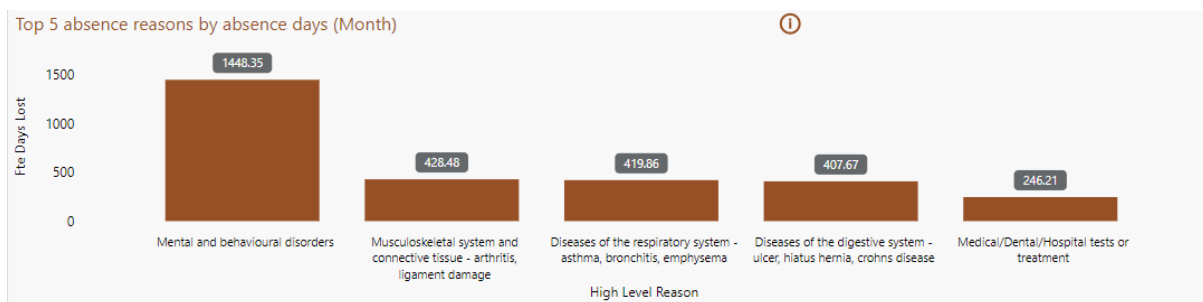
- a) Identification of additional early intervention practices to support staff in areas with high prevalence of sickness absence resulting from mental health challenges.

### **Response:**

- We have digital sickness absence dashboard for trends and sickness absence patterns across the directorate. The dashboard has been developed by People Services in close liaison with the directorate. Senior managers across the directorate have access to the dashboard and the data is updated monthly. The data is historic and shows what has already happened. There is more work required to shift our approach to being more pro-active and we are in the process of refreshing of our absence management processes as part of the corporate People services review.
- HR Business Partners are working collaboratively with Heads of Service and Service Managers to reinforce the importance of appropriate intervention practices and timely wellbeing support. We are exploring how we can better link absence performance into managers individual performance targets for the coming year.
- HR Business Partners are working with operational Heads of Service and Service Managers across all services to data cleanse Oracle Fusion. Short term absence recording in Oracle has been reviewed to ensure accuracy and managers follow the corporate sickness policies to support staff to return to work.
- Occupational health referrals for any absence that might be linked to mental health are made on day 1 of the absence as we have seen an increase in

mental health sickness across the council and in Adult Services. As shown below mental health and behaviour disorders are Adult Services top sickness reason.

- As the recommendation suggests, early intervention can be effective in reducing mental health sickness and managers and staff have a number of tools available to support this for example the Employee Assistance programme and the Supporting Good Days at work initiative. There is also a wealth of wellbeing material available for staff and managers on the intranet and a number of courses and seminars for staff to take part in.

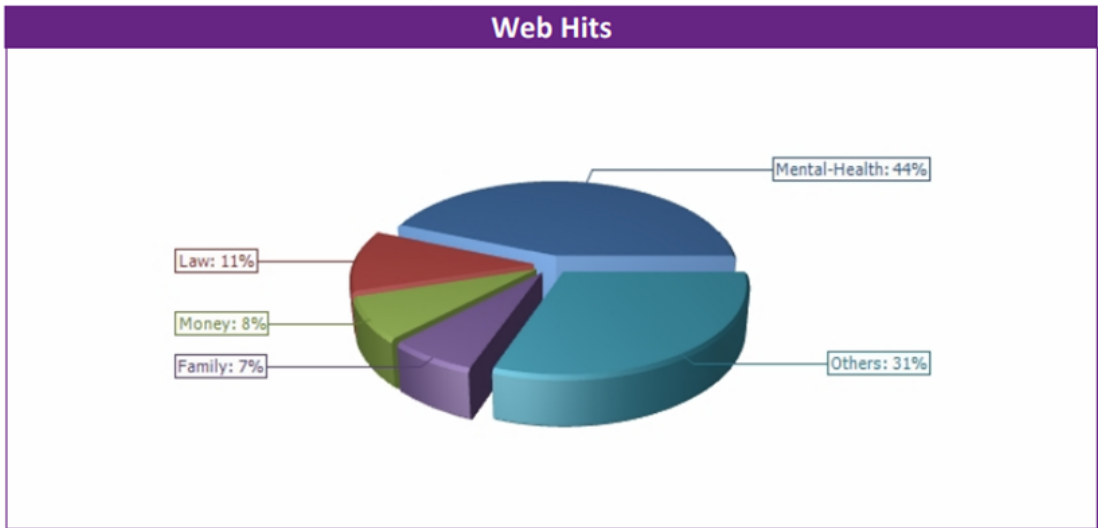


- b) Analysis of uptake and impact on the provision of employee support offered to staff to include feedback on staff experience – how the support is accessed, staff journey, outcomes etc.

### Response:

- The Supporting Good Days at Work report has now been received and is currently going through its governance to the corporate Peoples Board prior to being shared with staff and the Scrutiny committee.
- Below are some high level stats relating to the number of people accessing the Employee Assistance Programme and the primary reason. We do not have directorate specific data as the service is anonymous to encourage people and their families to reach out for assistance:

UTILIZATION REPORT  
**Lancashire County Council EAP (not schools)**  
 April 01, 2024 - April 30, 2024



Web Hits	1/4 - 30/4		4/2024 - 4/2024	
	#	%	#	%
Addiction	24	1.88%	24	1.88%
Family	88	6.89%	88	6.89%
In-Focus	21	1.64%	21	1.64%
Law	142	11.12%	142	11.12%
Managers	52	4.07%	52	4.07%
Mental-Health	558	43.70%	558	43.70%
Money	99	7.75%	99	7.75%
Newsletter	18	1.41%	18	1.41%
Older-People	46	3.60%	46	3.60%
Video	64	5.01%	64	5.01%
Wellbeing-Discounts	4	0.31%	4	0.31%
Wellness	73	5.72%	73	5.72%
Work	88	6.89%	88	6.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>100%</b>

- The directorate's recruitment and retention plan utilises insights gathered from the recent staff surveys conducted within Adult Services. The survey highlights several core strengths that are key in shaping our strategies. It demonstrated 83% of respondents feel integrated into their teams, underpinned by strong management support, with 87% acknowledging that managers genuinely care about their employees. Additionally, a significant majority appreciate the open communication channels and the opportunities for personal and professional development provided. 88% of employees also feel accepted and can express their true selves, pointing to an inclusive workplace culture.
- However, the survey also brought to light some areas needing attention, such as workload management, fair compensation, and the effectiveness of current technologies, which over half of the staff find lacking. Furthermore, concerns around change management and personal involvement in organisational changes were evident, with many feeling excluded from meaningful participation.
- Part of the year ahead workplan within the People Services that supports across the organisation is to review the employee engagement framework and how we

listen to our people around what is important to them. We know we have further work to do in this area and this planned activity will begin with understanding what elements of the current arrangements are working effectively and what might need to be different.

- Adult services has a network of Wellbeing Champions and teams have been coming together for 'face to face' time to continue to build their work based support networks. Feedback from staff has been very positive. The directorate also has a number of staff groups including for Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees.
- c) Further analysis on the definition of mental health sickness absences and reasons behind absence to ensure level of appropriate support is identified and offered to employees.

**Response:**

- This includes a full review of our absence categories at an organisational level, better reporting, earlier access to support, improving manager skills when managing and supporting difficult or challenging employee situations and better promotion of all the support mechanisms available to our employees to not just support when they are unwell, but how to stay well whilst at work.
  - The county council is an equal opportunities employer and actively encourages people with disabilities and protected characteristics to apply for roles. Some people will have existing mental health illnesses which they are managing on a day to day basis and some people at various stages of their life and work will experience a mental health episode. Not all employees will want to openly discuss their mental health issues with colleagues or managers, and assistance and support such as that offered by OHU and the EAP are critical elements of the support available.
- d) Matter of indoor clean air be reviewed through analysis of the impact of respiratory illnesses, potential prevention practices that could be undertaken in line with health and safety policy measures, impact on premises and cost analysis.

**Response:**

- Adult Services will continue to promote seasonal vaccination programmes and other infection prevention and control measures to prevent respiratory illnesses in the workplace and in settings where services are delivered
- The county council will review indoor air quality in line with our health and safety obligations towards our employees and industry best practice based on evidence.
- Public Health will conduct an evidence synthesis and review of the Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report on Air Pollution.

## **Recommendation 2**

With regards to strengthening recruitment and retention across adult services, further consideration be given by the Cabinet Member for Adult Services to the following:

- a) An 'Attraction Policy' for recruitment to support what more could be done to further highlight Lancashire County Council as an employer of choice.

### **Response:**

- The Corporate People Services has recently been redesigned and part of that redesign has resulted in the creation of a talent team. The Talent team are charged with connecting with individuals who may not be actively looking for work right now, so may not see our vacancies and engaging with these individuals to showcase our employer brand and what we can offer. This is a step change for us and part of the strategic response to the current high level of vacancies and recruitment challenge we have.
- The new Talent team in People Service will lead on a full refresh of our employer brand and will create for the business an 'Attraction Policy' for recruitment to support what more could be done to further highlight Lancashire County Council as an employer of choice.
- Specifically for Adult Services, there is now a dedicated team of people business partners who solely support Adult Services and part of that team consists of a dedicated service when it comes to attraction, recruitment and selection.
- We need to understand what our attraction routes are for every type of role, so we are marketing them in the right places. We also need to improve our candidate monitoring and metrics such as time to hire and time to start date so we can regularly show how we are improving on this. This is part of the workplan for this coming year as an organisational wide programme of work.
- There is a role for managers in this, waiting until a closing date to review applicants and move to interview is working against us in that we are losing talented people whilst they wait for responses from us – fast, efficient and effective recruitment processes led by inspiring managers will make a fundamental difference to our recruitment campaigns.
- When an employee decides to leave us, it is often too late to intervene. Research shows that counteroffers might help someone to stay but on average they eventually leave within 12 months. Performance discussion, wellbeing catch ups and feeling valued through our 1:1 and supervision process is critical part of a retention of key skills programme.
- Across this financial year, the corporate People Services team will be working to introduce a series of interventions that flow from the recent workforce planning exercise where our data has shown us what interventions are needed – one of these interventions will be the development of a 'stay interview' process rather than

focusing our efforts on 'exit interviews' – both are required but if we get 'stay' right, then 'exit' should be reduced.

- This corporate work compliments the work we have undertaken across Adult Services with Talent team colleagues to improve our visibility, engagement and overall candidate experience. These initiatives include:
  - **Careers Fair Attendance:** Pre-booking attendance at a variety of locations across the Northwest
  - **Digital Improvements:** refreshing and redesigning our Careers Landing Page [Careers in Adult Services - Lancashire County Council](#)
  - **Marketing Material:** Designing new marketing materials including pull up banners, feather flags, table clothes, note pads, pens all now have a consistent Adult Services branding across all services.
  - **Video Production:** We are developing a professional video to sit within the careers landing page to showcase all the roles across Adult Services.
  - **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns:** We are undertaking a 3month campaign with Indeed.
  - **Advert Refresh:** Adult Services have refreshed the adverts to improve consistency, highlighting all the benefits for working at LCC which include Vivup, flexible working, great annual leave, and a great pension scheme.
  - **Apprenticeships:** we are advertising 10 external apprentice opportunities, funded through DHSC grant

- b) Provision of information to all county councillors to help support/promote messages around recruitment and in particular information to councillors on vacancies/recruitment challenges in their areas.

**Response:**

- The Adult Services directorate has produced leaflets which advertise posts across a range of services. The leaflets contain a QR code to a direct link to the Adult Services Careers web pages and includes a list of the benefits of working for LCC. The leaflet is available on C First for county councillors to access as an electronic version of the leaflet and we can provide hard copies of the leaflet on request.
- c) The centralisation and analysis of information collated as part of Exit interviews to further understand trends and identify early intervention practices.

**Response:**

- The corporate People Service already have a centralised approach to the collation of Exit Interview information. Data from completed exit interviews is collated and sent to each directorate for analysis. Within Adult Services the data is used to produce graphs and tables each month which summarise the number of leavers and the primary reason for leaving.
- Information on 'leavers' is shown in the directorate's workforce dashboard and Heads of Service can review the information to find out which individuals are leaving and undertake 'stay' interviews where appropriate to find out if there are

any adjustments that can be made to encourage the person to remain with the council.

- d) A review of the processes for staff Exit interviews to include how they are undertaken, when, by whom and the potential utilisation of different platforms to receive information.

**Response:**

- As referenced above, organisation wide we are in the process of crafting new material that can be shared at advert, interview and offer stage around benefits, why work for us etc. We are also exploring how we might use total rewards as an approach to show the value of employment with us, rather than just salary. Salary package is one value but if we were to show pension contribution, benefits, employee assistance etc, the package that each member of staff receives looks very different.
  - During the recent monitoring period 1<sup>st</sup> October 23 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 24 there were 118 departures from Adult Services. There are efforts being made to collect exit interview data, including communications highlighting the importance of completion and guidance for team managers.
  - A number of actions are being taken forward:
    - Analysis from Workforce Planning Exercises: Earlier this year, a comprehensive workforce planning exercise was conducted with Heads of Service (HoS) by the People Service team. The findings from this exercise are expected to provide useful insights into staff retention and turnover.
    - Awaiting the 'Supporting Good Days at Work' Report: This report is anticipated to offer valuable intelligence on workforce dynamics.
    - Monthly updates to Heads of Service: monthly emails are shared with Heads of Service detailing upcoming departures and summarising reasons for leaving as recorded in the workforce dashboard. This approach aims to enable Heads of Service to engage directly with departing employees, ensuring the leavers process has correctly been followed with exit interviews being undertaken.
    - Further comms from Director of Quality and Improvement/Principal Social Worker has been shared to reiterate the importance of Exit Interviews.
- e) Implementation of 'Stay' interviews to be further explored to include ways to support managers to retain staff, career pathways for employees, and particularly targeted to those areas where workplace mental health challenges are increasing, and those areas showing greater sickness absence rates.

**Response:**

Please see responses above in relation to stay interviews.

- In April 2024, the council launched 'Leading Lancashire' – which is our new leadership framework. The first level is intended for Executive Directors and Directors, with a complementary framework for Heads of Service coming in June/July and a further framework for all other people managers in late Summer.

This is a critical part of putting in place clear expectations around managing our people and delivering better services and makes very clear the expectations that are placed on our leadership and management staff when it comes to their teams and performance. During 2024 the framework will be launched for all managers, embedded and evaluated.

- f) An action plan to be identified and reported back to the committee on the challenge in recruitment of occupational therapists, what the impact is on services such as Disabled Facilities Grants, any agreements in place with NHS Trusts to support this work and plans in place to reduce current wait times.

**Response:**

- Adult Services is actively addressing the challenges with Occupational Therapy (OT) recruitment and retention. Vacancy rates are high within the OT service and in services where OT posts are also utilised for example Urgent Care, Acute services, and Prisons.
- The Community OT Service, which supports the use of Disabled Facilities Grants in conjunction with District Councils and provides equipment, aids, and adaptations, has worked hard to manage their workload and meet demand. Despite having a quarter of its OT positions vacant, the service has successfully reduced the number of individuals waiting over 28 days for an OT assessment from 1,016 in March 2023 to just 269 in March 2024. This achievement highlights the team's diligence in maintaining service levels.
- Moving forward, without a current formal agreement with NHS partners since the Section 75 agreement ended in March 2022, proposals are being considered to further enhance OT services. These include exploring advanced technological solutions to support and streamline the initial access and signposting processes and increasing the prominence and importance of OT within the directorate's new structure as part of the approach to improve people's independence and reduce people's reliance and need for formal services.

Please see below for information on current (April 2024) OT vacancies:

Service	OT Establishment	Vacancies	Agency Use
Community OT Service	61 FTE	22.95% (14)	3
Reablement	11 FTE	9.09% (1)	1
Urgent Care, Acute & Prisons	16 FTE	68.75% (11)	0



<b>TOTAL Establishment:</b>	<b>88 FTE</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>
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- LCC offers a diverse range of apprenticeship programmes across various levels, directly benefiting Adult Services and broader organisational functions. These include:
  - Accountancy/Taxation Professional - CIPFA (Level 7)
  - Adult Care Worker (Level 2)
  - Assistant Practitioner (Health) (Level 5)
  - Business Administrator (Level 3)
  - Chartered Manager (Level 6)
  - Data Analyst (Level 4)
  - Employability Practitioner (Level 4)
  - Lead Adult Care Worker (Level 3)
  - Lead Practitioner in Adult Care (Level 4)
  - Leader in Adult Care (Level 5)
  - Occupational Therapist (Level 6)
  - Operations/Departmental Manager (Level 5)
  - Rehabilitation Worker (Visual Impairment) (Level 5)
  - Senior Leader (Level 7)
  - Social Worker (Level 6)
- In October 2024, the People Service, Talent and Performance team will draft a new specification and develop a procurement plan for Apprenticeships. This will enable a thorough exploration of potential new courses suitable for Adult Services, such as the Community Health and Wellbeing Worker Apprenticeship (Level 3). This particular Apprenticeship is targeted to be piloted with a small cohort suitable for Social Care Support Officer roles, providing an alternative pathway for those looking to enhance their qualifications without pursuing advanced roles like Occupational Therapy or Social Work.
- Further discussions with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) are progressing regarding the commissioning of a new cohort for the Occupational Therapist (OT) apprenticeship, scheduled to begin in January 2025. As well as a master's level Social Worker qualification, currently under development also likely to be available from January 2025 onward.
- Adult Services have recently received £300k of DHSC grant to support 10 additional SW Apprentices for a September 2024 intake. This is in addition to the 10 SW Apprentices that the directorate takes on every year.