

SERVICE UPDATE

Name of Function:	People and Organisational Development
Date:	20 February 2022
Title of Update:	Workforce Plan Progress Update
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UPDATE

In June 2019, the Staff Governance Committee **approved the Council's Workforce Plan**, setting out how we will ensure our future workforce has the capacity and capability to support the culture defined by the Guiding Principles and Behaviours approved by Committee in March 2019.

This report provides an update on progress of delivery against that workforce plan, ahead of a five-year Workforce Strategy to be presented to Staff Governance Committee in 2022.

1 Background

1.1 In August 2017 Council approved the 'Building a Council of the Future' report which set out our Target Operating Model (TOM) and the workforce we will require to deliver the TOM. ACC's Workforce Plan built on this by setting out how we would develop and deliver that workforce during 2019/20 and 2020/21.

1.2 The Workforce Plan covered the following areas:

- **Context** - How the Workforce Plan links to and supports our organisational capabilities **and the development of our culture** defined by our Guiding Principles
- Our vision at that time for our **workforce of the future**
- Developing workforce **capacity**
 - How we will **attract and retain** our future workforce with a particular emphasis on developing our internal and our young workforce
- Developing workforce **capability**
 - How we will identify the skills, knowledge and behaviours we need – our **capability framework**
 - How we will develop the required skills, knowledge and behaviours – our **workforce development plan**

- How we will manage, measure and motivate performance against these – our revised **performance review and development (PR&D) scheme.**

2 Context and Progress Updates

The workforce vision put forward in March 2019 was one of a diverse workforce changing in size and shape, with different knowledge, skills and behaviours needed..

Strong progress was made in a number of areas during 2019/20 and which stood us in good stead as the pandemic started to have a significant impact from March 2020 onwards. Many of the structures, frameworks and ways of working that we had built were tested during this time. At the same time some implementation of activities outlined within the plan were delayed or adapted in order to make best use of everyone's collective efforts and to focus on meeting the demand created by the pandemic and keeping our workforce safe and well and our services operational.

Reports have been presented to Staff Governance Committee since March 2019 where decisions were required or updates on specific areas of progress given. This update report reflects on the overall picture and will lead officers, Trade Union Colleagues, staff and Elected Members into the next cycle, where a Workforce Strategy for the next 5 years will be shaped.

3 Outcomes Achieved to Date

Developing Workforce Capacity

3.1.1 **The Workforce Plan** set out how we will **develop our capacity** to deliver. As an organisation. We face continuing recruitment challenges for a number of key roles, including Care Support Workers and Teachers which require us to look at creative and cost-effective approaches to attraction and retention. A leaner workforce, dictated by the continuing financial challenges, requires upskilling and reskilling of our existing staff to focus on delivery in our areas of growth. At the same time, the developing the young workforce agenda supports our own internal demographic aims, with an ageing workforce and the need to attract and retain young people into our workforce for the future.

3.1.2 There were three main aims described in the workforce plan related to workforce capacity:

- Responding to our multi-generational workforce
- Developing our young workforce through recruitment, support and retention approaches
- Reshaping our current workforce to support our areas of sustained and increasing demand as well as supporting health and wellbeing

3.1.3 To do this we said that we would:

- Become an employer of choice, supporting workforce diversity.
- Provide opportunities to develop our young workforce.
- Use turnover and VSER to manage areas of reduced demand.
- Retrain and move existing staff into new roles and careers to address areas of sustained and increasing demand.
- Grow our own staff to fill gaps, short and long term.

3.1.4 The actions proposed in this respect had the aim of ensuring we are able to respond to existing and anticipated organisational challenges such as the changing size and shape of the organisation, changing demand and the needs of a diverse workforce. This should benefit employees by ensuring resources can quickly be moved to where they are needed, avoiding workload stress through under-staffing or staff not having the requisite skills. A recognition of the differing needs of a diverse workforce should also result in a better – and more tailored – understanding of what motivates individuals at work.

Developing Workforce Capacity: Update Summary

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-generational workforce / workforce diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Outcomes approved on 11th March 2021 ED&I Action Plan approved on 12th April 2021 <p>Please see relevant reports: Operational Delivery Committee March 2021 – Item 10.3 - (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Operational Delivery Committee, 11/03/2021 14:00 (aberdeencity.gov.uk)</p> <p>Staff Governance Committee April 2021 – Item 13.2 - (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 12/04/2021 14:00 (aberdeencity.gov.uk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement of Equally Safe at Work accreditation March 2021 ED&I Working groups since created and sessions ongoing, delivery against action plan underway. Review of ACC processes ongoing, including recruitment & selection – with connections to external groups established Improvement of diversity data recording and reporting in progress Collaborative working group between People & Organisational Development, Education and Social Work established to tackle race discrimination in these sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing workforce diversity data analysis and reporting A number of colleagues engaged across 5 working groups Positive feedback from Equality Ambassadors Network ACC signed up to Scottish Parliament’s Equalities and Human Rights Committee’s Joint Commitment on tackling race inequality and representatives from People & Organisational Development are participating in this national work Representatives from People & Organisational Development invited to attend a ‘roundtable’ discussion on tackling racism hosted by the University of Aberdeen 	<p>Continue to deliver against the ED&I Action Plan.</p> <p>Reflect the feedback from the first cycle into future actions</p>

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
Developing our Young Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IIYP Gold accreditation achieved in March 2020 • Development of Apprenticeship scheme focused on hard to fill and critical roles. • Kickstart Internship Programme launched in May 2021. • Established Young Employee Network (YEN) in August 2019 to provide young employee voice. • Guaranteed Interview Schemes for young people, including care experienced young people in place. These guaranteed interview schemes were established in July 2019 and further expanded after agreement at Staff Governance Committee in September 2020. <p>Please see relevant report: Staff Governance Committee September 2020 - Item 9.2 - (Public Pack) Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 29/11/2020 14:00 (aberdeencity.gov.uk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved Young Person's Guarantee Employer Accreditation in February 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49 Kickstart Interns (aged between 16-24) have been recruited during the programme, a further 18 to join within the next few weeks and a final cohort going through the recruitment process to be recruited by 1 March 22. To date, 9 Interns have remained with the council, securing permanent roles. • Number of modern apprenticeships more than doubled between 2019/20 and 2021/22. Number of Graduate apprenticeships trebled from 4 to 12, between 2018/19 and 2021/22. • Proportion of our workforce in 16-24 age category has increased from 3.4% to 4.4% from July 2020 to January 2022. 	<p>Continue to work with Employability Team, City Growth to increase opportunities to support young people in the community into our workforce.</p> <p>Focus on retention of young employees, especially those in the 25-29 age category.</p> <p>Review leaver information to identify any trends.</p> <p>Continue to refresh YEN purpose and scope.</p> <p>Continue to work with managers to create apprenticeships to support resourcing gaps and increase the type of apprenticeships offered.</p> <p>Continue to work with schools to promote our jobs and careers opportunities including work placements potentially leading to apprenticeship / entry level roles.</p>

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Apprentices (Foundation, Modern and Graduate) have a workplace mentor. 	<p>Continue collaboration with DYW North East and regularly circulate and promote our opportunities including casual and part time vacancies for sharing with young people.</p>
<p>Reshaping our current workforce – Temporary Movement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> re.cr.uit scheme launched in January 2021 – the new approach to internal recruitment and movement of staff to focus on developing, upskilling and retaining our existing workforce, supporting our aims of a flexible and agile workforce. Please see relevant Staff Governance Committee reports: October 2019 – Item 9.1 (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 01/10/2019 14:00 (aberdeencity.gov.uk) April 2021 – Item 6 Agenda for Staff Governance Committee on Monday, 12th April, 2021, 2.00 pm (aberdeencity.gov.uk) September 2021 Item 6 Agenda for Staff Governance Committee on Tuesday, 28th September, 2021, 2.00 pm (aberdeencity.gov.uk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From January to December 2021, 398 internal employees were successful in moving to alternative roles within the organisation (representing 47% of all vacancies). Over 1600 employees volunteered and of that number, over 650 were mobilised into alternative roles or duties at short notice to support the pandemic including areas such as our childcare hubs, care homes and crisis support lines. Over 100 employees volunteered to support emergency response events (such as Storm Arwen) across 	<p>Ongoing review of the re.cr.uit scheme to improve the process.</p> <p>Ensure list of staff signed up to temporary movement and emergency response is refreshed on a regular basis and kept updated so available for use to support any future requirements.</p> <p>Continue to develop relief pools for job roles where there are ongoing resource shortages.</p>

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary movement of staff Protocol and scheme - created in response to the pressures of COVID-19 to enable staff to move from their existing role to support areas of the organisation with staff or skill shortages (on a voluntary basis) • Development of Emergency Response Volunteer Pool • Development of relief pools as a means of providing resilience to support our core workforce and reduce reliance on agency usage. In addition to the established relief pools for Teachers and EYPs, additional relief pools have been developed to support other critical areas of the organisation such as Cleaning and Catering. 	<p>the city, out of hours.</p>	
<p>Growing our own – development opportunities and talent pipelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a number of internal programmes to grow our own qualified employees. For example, Early Years Practitioner (EYP) Traineeships, Graduate Apprenticeships, Aspiring Senior EYP programme and HGV Drivers. • Working with managers to develop solutions for hard to fill professional shortages such as Teachers, Social Workers, Quantity Surveyors, Planners. • Since 2018/2019 we have increased the range of Apprenticeship opportunities across 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 cohorts of staff, 76 employees in total, undertook a bespoke and innovative traineeship from across the council. Of these, 63 have successfully completed the traineeship (83%) and gained permanent EYP roles. • In 2018/19, 4 employees were in GAs, in 2021/22, this has increased to 12. • Stepping into Leadership Programme for aspiring Senior 	<p>Cluster Training and Corporate Training planning documents have been issued to Clusters and SMTs for financial year 22/23 and as part of this, further data is being captured on workforce planning needs.</p> <p>Following this, Cluster Training and Corporate Training budgets will be connected to talent</p>

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
	<p>Foundation, Modern and Graduate. For example, until 2018 our Apprenticeship offering was focused on traditional apprenticeships such as Joiner, Plumber, Electrician and Gardener. Since then, Modern Apprenticeships have been introduced in Business Administration, Customer Service, Housing, Accountancy, Early Learning and Childcare, and Support Workers in Adult Social Care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of employees undertaking graduate apprenticeships (Gas) in areas such as IT, Business Management and Accountancy. 	<p>EYPs where 57 employees participated resulting in 38 employees successfully appointed to Senior EYP roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for existing refuse loader staff to undertake HGV / CPC training to be able to move to Refuse Driver role. This programme continues. 	<p>pipelining and workforce planning to ensure maximum effect. This will include continued support for re-training, upskilling and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Further exploration of supported routes into Teaching and Social Work careers.</p>
<p>Mental Health and Wellbeing and Absence Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Actions plans agreed by committee and reviewed and updated Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 03/02/2020 14:00 (aberdeency.gov.uk) (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 07/06/2021 14:00 (aberdeency.gov.uk) Mental Health First Aider Network established Mental Health support, resources, training and webinars available to staff Involvement in national awareness raising events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 number of MHFAs trained and operational Future of Work survey asking about protecting and improving wellbeing whilst working from home elicited responses that made positive reference to resources and support provided Psychological absences as a % of total absences reducing - levels in the period October – December 2021 lower than at any point during the pre- 	<p>Communication, training and support for managers and workforce around the use of Wellness Action Plans</p> <p>Continued investment in the training of mental health first aiders and evaluating the impact of this support</p> <p>Implementation of bi-annual absence data analysis, support and improvement discussions with all SMTs ECMT approval of Substance Misuse Action</p>

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence improvement activity undertaken, and progress reported into the Performance Board (see below detailed table) Substance Misuse Action Plan drafted, and Working Group set up Review undertaken of core spend on Occupational Health contract; regular fortnightly review meetings set up between Employee Relations and Wellbeing Manager and Occupational Health Service Launch of wider Financial Wellbeing support and publication of Making Ends Meet leaflet. 	<p>pandemic period April – December 2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebalancing of core and non-core spend on OH contract has allowed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) support to be provided to employees with no additional cost to services 	<p>Plan and roll out of supports identified</p> <p>Data informed decision making on the targeting of all health and wellbeing support</p> <p>Roll out of health and wellbeing survey pilot in Education followed by roll out across wider organisation</p>

Responding to our multi-generational workforce, supporting and developing our young workforce:

A number of achievements have been made in this area. In March 2020, we were awarded the Investors in Young People Gold Standard award in recognition of our work on developing our young workforce and as part of our journey, we have developed and introduced an Apprenticeship Programme, a guaranteed interview scheme for young people including for care experienced young people as well as the Kickstart Internship Programme.

In addition, we were successful in our application to become a Young Person's Guarantee Employer in December 2021 in which we have committed to supporting young people in the form of 5 pledges:

1. To prepare young people for the world of work
2. To help all young people achieve their potential
3. To invest in a skilled workforce
4. To create jobs, volunteering and training opportunities
5. To create an inclusive and fair workplace

Apprenticeship Programme

Our Apprenticeship Programme covers Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships and these have been created in a range of roles and areas across the organisation to support areas of increasing demand, hard to fill areas and to support our future workforce. The table below demonstrates the programmes expansion year on year.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Foundation Apprenticeship placements	n/a	35	23	11
Modern Apprenticeships	n/a	26	0*	59**
Graduate Apprenticeships	4	9	8	12

* As a result of the pandemic and difficulties both for employers and apprentices to undertake an apprenticeship remotely.

** This figure is particularly high due to establishing additional Modern Apprenticeship roles to support the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme.

Employability Initiatives

The Kickstart Scheme

A UK government initiative which provides funding to employers focused on providing employment opportunities for young people aged 16-24 who are in receipt of Universal Credit. The Internships are fully funded by Kickstart (via the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)) for 25 hours per week for a six month period at national minimum wage.

As a Living Wage accredited employer, we are 'topping up' the differential between national minimum wage and the living wage, using Young Person guarantee funding (a Scottish Government initiative aimed at supporting young people into employment).

Since May 2021, we have employed 49 Kickstart Interns using this initiative. As funding has been extended, we continue to employ additional Interns. A number of these young people have been successful in securing permanent employment with the council, or have moved onto employment elsewhere or to full-time education.

Graduate Internships and 25+ Work Based Internships

Two additional employability schemes have recently become available to support our younger workforce, via the North East Economic Recovery and Skills Fund (NEERSF) to support economic recovery for businesses, boost employment and enhance skill levels for people who are based in the North East of Scotland (Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire).

The NEERSF funded Graduate Internship scheme is for those who have graduated since the beginning of June 2019 to the beginning of the first lockdown of Covid-19, there are no age restriction for these internships.

The NEERSF Work-based training job creation is for people aged 25+ and is for those who are at risk of unemployment with less than 12 months gap in their career.

We have secured 5 places on each of these programmes and have identified specific areas where internships will support resourcing challenges, and are currently going through the recruitment and selection process to fill these opportunities.

Demographic Considerations

	July 2020	January 2022
Age 16-24	3.4%	4.4%
Age 25-29	10.4%	8.9%
Age 30-39	23.7%	24.5%
Age 40 - 49	23.7%	23.1%
Age 50 +	38.8%	39.1%

The table above shows the change in demographic breakdown of our workforce.

Our young workforce is defined as aged 16-24 (using the definition by Skills Development Scotland for apprenticeship funding purposes). The figure up to age 29 is also included as this is the age used to include care experienced young people.

This figure, whilst an improving picture, indicates that we need to continue to focus on the promotion of the council as an employer of choice to young people, and to invest in retaining and developing our young workforce for the future. This is in line with our commitment to the YPG, further developing our Apprenticeship Programme, engaging and working with schools, colleges and universities in the city and the development and retention of young people in the organisation.

Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)

Our equality, diversity and inclusion action plan was agreed at Staff Governance Committee in April 2021, in response to our agreed employer diversity outcomes. Following this, several staff working groups have been created. These groups have been undergoing a period of listening and learning and have been discussing suggested improvements and actions that they wish to take forward with a People and Organisational Development Advisor supporting them. Some actions have already been possible to take forward such as communications about Black History Month, sharing resources on International Day of Disabled Persons, and trialling live captioning on Microsoft Teams virtual meetings, with some other actions in progress such as the creation of an intranet hub for ED&I, a review of corporate training provisions, the establishment of a wellbeing programme for an ageing workforce and a reverse mentoring programme.

Several other actions are also being explored. In addition, groups have been encouraged to consider two larger and wider main themes – recruitment & selection and learning & culture. Sessions where groups are reviewing ACC processes and offerings are underway and have also included representatives from external organisations and groups, such as Grampian Regional Equality Council and their community network, Autism Understanding Scotland, and North-East Sensory Services, who generate wider viewpoints and perspectives. It has been and continues to be important to try and capture as many voices as possible as part of this work as any actions that the organisation takes forward should be as meaningful and inclusive as possible.

In addition to the above, and in particular around race inequality, Aberdeen City Council has since signed up to the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee's Joint Commitment on tackling race inequality and representatives from Aberdeen City Council are participating in this national work. Specific targeted work to address issues of racism in Education and Social Work has also begun with teams in People and Organisational Development, Education, Children's Social Work and the Adult Health and Social Care Partnership coming together to undertake work on this matter.

It should also be noted that the Council attained the Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation on 9 March 2021 at Bronze level, following involvement in a pilot programme. The programme was concerned with addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence and was piloted in seven councils over a two year period. It involved a range of activities including awareness raising, staff engagement, training and reviewing and developing policies procedure and practices. It was developed by 'Close the Gap' Scotland's national policy and advocacy body working on women's labour market equality. The accreditation lasts for a two year period and is then reassessed to ensure the criteria are still being met.

As is usual with work on equality, diversity and inclusion, our workforce data is unlikely to show significant immediate changes as we begin to embed programmes and make cultural shifts across the organisation. National and local data, organisational data and qualitative data were used in the development of our Equality Outcomes and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and these continue to inform this work and evidence the reason why this is a focus of our workforce strategy.

[Reshaping our current workforce to support our areas of sustained and increasing demand through retraining and internal movement and progression](#)

Internal Recruitment / Movement of Staff Scheme – re.cr.uit

In response to this workforce challenge, an innovative approach was introduced to enable staff to easily change roles within the organisation and to support our aim to create a flexible, agile workforce. The scheme, called re.cr.uit (retaining employees. changing roles. using internal talent) was approved at Staff Governance Committee in October 2019. In the period January to December 2021, 398 employees have been successful in moving to alternative roles within the organisation. This new approach takes into account an employee's 'fit' and potential to do the role with development and time, in addition to the skills and qualification requirements set out on the job profile for the role. It embeds the culture of internal progression and development into our internal recruitment process.

Temporary Movement of Staff

Since its introduction the pandemic caused significant workforce resourcing challenges. Our response to this was to develop the Temporary Movement of Staff Protocol, which set out a framework where staff could volunteer to move from their existing role to support areas of the organisation with staff shortages or where there were new / additional work demands as a result of the pandemic. Over 1600 employees volunteered and over 600 employees were mobilised into alternative roles or duties to support our care homes, childcare hubs and crisis support lines, for example.

We must now build on this cultural shift, to focus on the ability to quickly increase capacity and resilience in key areas to meet fluctuating resource demands to support the organisation and our partner organisations, where required. We can do this using both our internal and external resources to develop a more flexible agile workforce able to respond to these resourcing requirements as they arise.

Relief Pools

Relief pools are a useful method of having readily available staff to supplement the core workforce in times of resource shortage. Relief Pool Workers will have the relevant skills and experience to undertake a particular role, have been through a recruitment process, and are vetted and trained.

Relief Workers are already used to support the core workforce for some roles within the organisation and are managed within specific Clusters, for example, Relief / Supply Teachers, Relief EYPs and Relief Social Care Support Workers.

Further Relief Pools are under development for facilities roles including Cleaners, Catering Assistants and Janitors as well as Environmental Operatives / Refuse Loaders.

Further development work is ongoing to develop these relief pools into one corporate relief pool managed by one team which would have oversight of all temporary and relief resourcing, enabling a more flexible approach to resourcing across the organisation. This would include managing the volunteer pool for temporary movement of staff and emergency volunteers.

The creation of a coordinated corporate relief pool of this nature will also result in a more structured approach to managing and reducing the demand and volume of agency use which tends to be significantly higher cost.

Increasing capacity by supporting health and wellbeing and reducing absence

In the June 2019 iteration of the Workforce Plan, we identified 5 outcomes to support staff to be well and thrive at work. These outcomes were:

1. Implement the Mental Health Action Plan approved by Staff Governance Committee in 2019
2. Support managers and teams to create and maintain supportive and healthy workplaces and practices that ultimately enable a reduction in absence
3. Continue and further develop our partnership with Healthy Working Lives
4. Continue regular reporting to understand absence and support improvement by targeting specific areas
5. Address the reasons for absence with evidence-based sickness action plans.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff from Healthy Working Lives were redeployed to support the pandemic response; when Healthy Working Lives resume their former role, the partnership work with them will be picked up and progressed. Healthy Working Lives is part of NHS Scotland providing a wide range of free occupational health, safety and wellbeing advice to employers.

Absence trend information has been reported to Staff Governance Committee on a regular basis

These updates reported the absence trends experienced before and during the pandemic, which showed that absences within Aberdeen City Council were impacted in line with the national absence trends throughout the pandemic.

In support of the Workforce Plan outcomes, a number of absence improvement measures have been trialed in pilot services as set out in the table below, which also identifies the next steps that will be taken to support absence reduction across the organisation.

Change	Current Status	Next Steps
All absence recording and management to sit within a single system (CoreHR)	Complete.	
Review current process, ensuring that this is automated as much as possible (i.e. generation of letters, reports etc.)	Review undertaken. Template letters and reports available on People Anytime	Further work to be undertaken around pre-population of templates from data held in CoreHR
Ensure accurate data available to managers, to include rolling absence rates, trend analysis, long term absence data, trigger data	Absence report on absences of all direct reports available to managers and supervisors in CoreHR Managers' Portal New Aberdeen City Council absence report developed in PowerBI including rolling absence rates, absence trends, absence category breakdown, COVID data.	ACC absence report to be published on People Performance Dashboard so all managers have access to live data for their teams. Further developments to be undertaken including Supporting Attendance trigger data being added into the People Performance Dashboard
Raise profile of expectations with regard to absence levels across the service areas Scrutiny of absence data to be standing item on all Service Management Team (SMT) agendas	New report provides real time data	SMT visits by Employee Relations and Wellbeing Manager and Analytics and Insight Manager to demonstrate absence dashboard capabilities. Absence data to be added to all SMT agendas once dashboard is published.
Emphasise prevention methods via wellbeing initiatives including health checks	Progress hampered by inability to access face to face health checks during lockdown and restriction periods	Roll out of health checks and wellbeing initiatives identified through discussion with staff and union focus groups, Occupational Health, Sport Aberdeen and other partners
Explore early intervention options by seeking	Absence data now broken down by category	Further development to be undertaken to allow

potential root cause problems in areas of higher absence and addressing these	Concerns raised in Target areas around increased support for substance misuse issues. Substance Misuse Action plan drafted and working group set up.	further drilling down into subcategories of absence to identify possible areas for intervention, training and support
Explore wider options for keeping employees in work	Process drafted using Microsoft Forms to allow managers to highlight employees who cannot immediately return to substantive post but who may be able to undertake alternative duties on a temporary basis. Process to administered in the same way as Temporary movement of Staff	3MB to go to Extended Corporate Management Team for approval of process followed by launch with Leadership Forum
Review training provision for managers/supervisors to ensure it is fit for purpose, delivering the appropriate skills and knowledge	Current training provision reviewed. Absence drop-in sessions in place for target services, whereby managers and supervisors can request an individual appointment to discuss specific cases with a People and Organisational Development Advisor. Feedback has been that these sessions have been helpful, particularly in complex cases.	Update training modules Explore roll out of Absence drop-in sessions across wider Council
Targeted, partnership approach to management of long-term absence cases between manager and People and Organisational Development team	Absence support sessions have allowed greater consistency in approach to management of long-term absence cases. Issues identified with Occupational Health provider ill health retirement process; raised with Occupational Health, who have provided a dedicated resource to liaise re ill health retirement cases.	Add longest open absences to People Performance Dashboard Roll out of Absence support surgeries for managers across Council Continue to monitor Occupational Health ill health retirement process to ensure cases are progressed timeously
Review of OH requirements	Review of core contract items undertaken, and volumes adjusted to better meet needs of organisation Fortnightly review meetings set up between Employee Relations and Wellbeing	Ongoing monitoring of service provision against service level agreement

Manager and Occupational
Health Contract Manager

Monthly Management
Information provided by
Occupational Health provider

A report providing further analysis of absence data and reviewing the services provided by Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Service is being presented to Staff Governance Committee in February 2022.

The absence data for 2020 closely mirrors the national position, with absence levels fluctuating in line with lockdown and restrictions; the mitigations put in place during the pandemic, including many employees working from home and some services being stood down for a period of time, is reflected in the absence figures.

As restrictions have gradually been lifted, the data shows that absence levels are returning to a more normal, pre-pandemic level and pattern. The reduction in absences over the period of the pandemic in those services within which staff were working from home may reflect a position whereby staff were comfortable to continue working at home when they might not have felt well enough to travel into a workplace. This pattern was also identified by the Office for National Statistics in its report on Sickness Absence Statistics 2020 [Sickness absence in the UK labour market - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peopleinwork/sicknessabsence/bulletins/sicknessabsencestatistics/2020).

Home working and social distancing may also have led to less exposure to seasonal germs, another reason that sickness absence levels reduced over the period.

This report also summarises actions taken in 2021 to support absence improvement and outlines the key areas of focus for 2022.

Key areas of work undertaken in 2021 include:

- Improving absence data available
- Exploring wider options for keeping employees in some form of work where possible
- Ensuring managers have appropriate, targeted support
- A targeted approach to the management of long-term absences

Key areas of focus identified for 2022 are:

- Continuing roll out of absence data
- Ongoing scrutiny of absence data regularly by management teams
- Data informed identification of areas for targeted support/early interventions
- Continued review of management training and support

The most prevalent category of absence continues to be psychological absence, which comprises stress, anxiety, depression and mental health. As such, this remains a key area of focus going forward.

The Mental Health Action Plan, agreed by Staff Governance Committee in January 2019 has been reviewed in line with recent ACC absence data, an analysis of initiatives introduced, national strategic drivers and recent research, and an updated Mental Health Action Plan will be presented to Staff Governance Committee for approval in February 2022.

The review was undertaken through a collegiate process which included input from Trade Unions, employees and managers.

The revised Action Plan identifies measures and activities to support each of the outcomes and will ensure that appropriate support is targeted to individuals and services where it will have the most impact.

Workforce Protection during the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic required arrangements to be put in place quickly and effectively to protect the workforce whilst at the same time continuing to provide essential services to the people of Aberdeen.

Close collaboration between the Health and Safety Team, People and Organisational Development Team, Trade Unions and managers of key frontline services was required, and resulted in the setting up of the Workforce Planning and Protection Group, who met weekly throughout the pandemic.

Actions taken to protect the workforce included:

- Rapid review and roll out of Scottish Government guidance
- Standardised risk assessment templates and procedures, with support for managers in their completion
- Regular contact and input from Trade Unions
- Schedule of compliance checks to support services
- Outbreak control procedure introduced
- Reinstatement group established to ensure that nonessential services returned in line with Scottish Government timetable and guidance
- supporting Procurement Services with decisions on Covid supplies, e.g., PPE, hand gel to ensure they offered required protection of employees.
- liaison and engagement with Public Health Scotland regarding operational Covid related issues
- Increased flexibility regarding special leave for caring responsibilities introduced
- A wide range of resources and support for staff covering a number of wellbeing areas including mental health, physical wellbeing, domestic violence, substance misuse and suicide prevention. The full range of support offered was reported to Staff Governance Committee in June 2021 ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Staff Governance Committee, 07/06/2021 14:00 \(aberdeencity.gov.uk\)](#)

Developing Workforce Capability

The Workforce Plan set out in 2019 how we would **build our capability** to deliver the challenges and priorities facing Aberdeen City Council at that time and in the foreseeable future. With a smaller workforce, we needed to ensure we were supporting people to develop the capabilities needed to deliver our organisational goals. We needed to provide clarity of expectation, support employees to meet these expectations through investment in future skills, knowledge and behaviour; and provide a means of measuring, managing and motivating personal accountability.

There were three main aims described in the workforce plan related to workforce capability:

- Define Capabilities
- Support Capability
- Build Personal Accountability

To do this we said that we would:

- Create a Capability Framework, which described the individual capability required from each employee, to enable Aberdeen City Council to collectively deliver on the organisational capabilities;
- Build a Workforce Development Plan, which set out how we would develop individual capability and culture through training and development;
- Present a core programme of options to meet organisation need;
- Develop an understanding of individual need through performance review and development (PR&D)
- Create and curate a learning platform which is easy to use, access and collaborate upon
- Provide opportunity to celebrate strengths and successes and identify the right support for development needs and enable a flexible approach to careers.

Workforce Capability: Update Summary

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
Define Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability Framework created and approved with four levels • An additional level for practical workers later added and method for completion adapted to meet frontline needs. • Behaviours in Capability Framework developed through engagement – online and face-to-face with frontline employees. • Capability Framework now embedded into continuous review and development (CR&D) and has undertaken first full test and learn cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability Framework built in CoreHR – all employees are able to access and update progress. • Discovery workshops undertaken with over 100 frontline employees and managers to understand barriers. • CR&D survey 2021 undertaken by 233 employees from all across council and employee groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and reshape Capability Framework around employee groups. • Co-create frontline capability framework with frontline staff • Co-create social services capability framework with social services staff • Co-create Information services capability framework with Information services staff • Co-create People Management capability framework with People Managers • Identification of learning pathways to support development of the core capabilities • Embedding into recruit / temp movement of staff so that development is against core capabilities
Develop Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development Plan built and approved • Organisational themes and priorities for employee development approved • Learning platform created and maintained, linking indicators in the capability framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Platform accessible to all employees through website. • No. of views – themes and trends – of learning platform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a refreshed and ongoing workforce development plan using information gathered through Cluster People Development Plans.

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
	<p>to self and formal learning so that individuals could fill gaps identified through self-assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Forum established and programme of webinars, learning interventions and focus groups curated to support knowledge and skill share. • Holistic approach to Adoption & Change Management (ACM) acquired through knowledge-share during Microsoft partnership. ACM approach adopted and adapted to be used to achieve culture change for other transformation programmes. • Peer-based learning ‘champions’ approach for digital learning developed and deployed to upskill workforce to flourish in new digital workplace. • Leadership & Management Development programme developed and approved at CMT. • ECMT and CMT development programmes undertaken • Mandatory training programme developed, and completion tracked through PowerBI. • Workforce Development programme successfully shifted online to support COVID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from People Development co-ordinator on queries about Learning Platform • Membership of Leadership Forum – over 600 members • M365 adoption data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 658 users January 2020 ○ 964 users February 2020 ○ 2703 users March 2020 ○ 4561 users Feb 2022 • Membership of Digital Super Champ community - now at over 74, representing all areas of the council. • D365 ‘How I like to learn’ survey – 305 responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update organisational themes and priorities in line with future development of the TOM • Learning Platform is built within M365 dataverse and utilizes available technology to connect learning with knowledge and resources built in SharePoint intranet and communities on Yammer. • Deliver Leadership & Management Development programme • Improve evaluation of Development programme through robust KPIs

Area	Progress	Evaluation / Evidence of Impact	Next Steps
	response, enabling continuous professional development to continue in face of pandemic.		
Build Personal Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR&D refreshed and replaced with CR&D • Self-assessment against Capability Framework introduced as key component of CR&D • CR&D built on new platform, CoreHR • CR&D evaluation undertaken with frontline employees and managers through discovery workshops. • CR&D survey completed online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion data from CoreHR of CR&D • Qualitative feedback gathered during Discovery Workshops • CR&D survey 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild CR&D using feedback from all groups of employees.

3.2 Developing Workforce Capability

Define capability through building and embedding a Capability Framework

The **Capability Framework** set out the behaviours, defined by the five Guiding Principles; and the knowledge and skills, shaped by the organisational capabilities, that it was anticipated in 2019 that employees needed to develop by 2022 to increase their individual capability that would enable us collectively to deliver the Target Operating Model. It was built following workforce engagement across many disciplines, including strategic leaders, senior managers, subject matter experts and Trade Unions.

The **capability framework** was the first of its kind at ACC. It aimed to provide clarity about the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by all employees, a focus for self and service development, and enable employees to develop transferable skills that would promote movement across the organisation.

Support capability through the creation of a Workforce Development Plan

The **Workforce Development Plan** set out the development in place to support the Capability Framework. Engagement was undertaken with approximately 120 leaders and managers and with subject matter experts in each of the identified areas to ensure that the development identified will deliver the capabilities required.

The **Workforce Development Plan** provided employees with a range of options to meet any development gaps identified through the capability framework. These options were designed to suit different needs and learning styles and included a focus on self-directed, experiential learning. Employees would be empowered to seek their own learning when they want and need it and to share their own knowledge and learning with others.

Build Personal Accountability through refreshed approach to appraisal

The revised **Performance Review and Development (PR&D) scheme** sought to shift PR&D from the perceived focus as an annual one-off meeting to a dynamic series of ongoing conversations and renamed **Continuous Review & Development (CR&D)** to reflect this continuous nature. Based around the Guiding Principles, these conversations would support everyone to connect to our purpose and link these to individual objectives; give regular opportunities to discuss progress and to get recognition for good work; provide the chance to discuss support and development where that is needed; and highlight any issues which might be impacting on performance at an early stage. At the same time two-way feedback around how the line manager and the organisation are helping the employee thrive at work was to be encouraged.

Building our Capability to Deliver: key achievements and learnings

The embedding of the capability framework into the organisational psyche was achieved through an incremental process:

- By the end of 2019/20 appraisal cycle, all staff were participating in the newly revised CR&D, which included objectives, the capability framework and a development plan.
- CoreHR was launched as the new online platform for CR&D during the months of July – October 2019, mid-way through the appraisal cycle.
- Employees were encouraged to access the newly launched Learning Academy, to find learning that would enable them to be fully achieving in all aspects of the Capability Framework.
- It was anticipated that by 2020, all employees would be at least ‘developing’ in all aspects of the Capability Framework, and ‘Fully Achieving’ by 2021.

Amid this journey to shift appraisal from an annual event to an ongoing conversation and focus on continuous improvement; the pandemic struck. This inevitably had a significant impact on our ability to deliver the original intentions or the workforce development plan, required us to pivot our approach to meet the needs of the pandemic, and resulted in an extension to the intended deadline for all employees to be fully achieving in the Capability Framework – to March 2022.

A partnership and a pandemic: The impact on learning

The events of the pandemic in spring 2020 led to a rapid escalation in the need to work from home. Most office-based staff were able to conduct their work from home and stay in communication and collaboration – due to the significant investment and progress made in the digital capability of the workforce achieved through our partnership with Microsoft as part of the Microsoft Digital Modernisation Programme. This partnership started in advance of the pandemic and introduced us to a holistic approach to Adoption & Change Management (ACM), in which training is *one element* amid a range of other employee engagement techniques:

- **Executive sponsorship:** active and visible senior leadership
- **Communication:** using a variety of platforms and mixed medium, including the business reasons for change and how the change will impact and benefit employees
- **Training:** to ensure people feel capable and confident to transition to the desired future state
- **Voice:** people have access and opportunity to share their views and ideas
- **Empowering Managers:** employees are guided and coached through change by leaders who role model and reinforce the new ways of working
- **Co-creation:** people are collectively designing solutions to change challenges; and
- **Measurement:** gathering data and intelligence at regular stages to identify whether changes are having the desired impact.

This ACM approach was so successful in increasing individual and collective capability and achieving culture change, that the approach has adopted and scaled out beyond digital and technological change to be used to achieve culture change for other transformation programmes at Aberdeen City Council with a people impact.

The partnership with Microsoft enabled us to create a Digital Workplace, based in Microsoft Teams for collaboration, Yammer for cross-council communication and building communities, and SharePoint for the employee intranet. The necessity of the pandemic drove wholesale adoption of this digital change and embedded it as lasting behavioural and cultural change. The partnership and the pandemic brought about other new realisations and possibilities for learning at Aberdeen City Council:

- The transition of our intranet from a static one-directional platform to a connected dataverse has swiftly dated our learning platform and shifted the expectations from employees. Having a traditional web-based learning academy, built only in 2019, now feels clunky and outdated and unconnected with the way people naturally access information and learning. It has not possible to facilitate the interactive, participative environment imagined in the workforce plan through this platform, where everyone uploads, shares and distributes learning.
- The introduction of Microsoft Teams has created a new digital workplace for employees to work, collaborate and crucially – learn – within. Teams sites have become dynamic, organic and autonomous places where employees can engage almost as natural as in-person interactions and the ability to present digitally to peers has become an in-demand skill and a highly desirable and successful way of learning.
- The need to work remotely gave rise to a surge in need for webinars. The capability to produce webinars, which People & Organisational Development had developed for employee engagement, became another in-demand skill. With limited resource to curate webinars for all areas that needed this critical learning resource, the team upskilled and empowered their peers to deliver these sessions themselves. This has enabled colleagues from all across the council to have their voices heard and knowledge shared with colleagues and customers alike.
- Learning shared by virtual means can be recorded, retained and replayed at any time – making learning a more flexible act.

As we now reach the end of this first test and learn cycle of Building Capability, we can look back upon the key learnings from our evaluations of CR&D, the pandemic, the Microsoft partnership and the shift to a digital workplace:

- A holistic approach to the embedding of a new approach to appraisal is critical. This means that there needs to be congruence between the ethos and messaging of the new approach, the digital platform used to support conversations, and the training, tools and resources provided for employees.

- When requiring all employees to undertake a critical aspect of their roles in a new way, it needs to be simple to understand, use and access and of clear personal benefit to employees. Without this in place, these barriers will block adoption and prevent key goals being achieved.
- Whilst engagement with leaders and managers is important for building the *content* of a capability framework, moving forwards the style and language must be thoroughly owned and understood by the most frontline employees it seeks to engage, in the same way that the behavioural indicators were.
- The pandemic has enabled us to full road-test the usability of the Capability Framework and its relevance for building a resilient and flexible workforce. The Guiding Principles, embedded within the framework, have proved critical in uniting employees around our shared purpose and creating a standard of expectation for collaborative team working, continuous improvement and innovation, accountability and trust, and appreciation and recognition. At this time, however, it seems as though the length, language, detail and complexity of the Capability Framework, and the digital platform used to house it, have frustrated its aims. The five groupings of employee by level of responsibility have not resonated with all employees – with some feeding back that it doesn't feel as relevant to them as it could.
- The intended ethos of CR&D as a dynamic series of supportive and clarifying one-to-one conversations has not yet fully landed, with 1:1s and appraisal meetings still feeling separate, whilst The Capability Framework has not yet been used for internal movement of staff as originally intended.

This enables us to move into the next cycle of embedding our approach to appraisal with a renewed focus and take this learning into our new Workforce Strategy and action plans.

Developing our Organisational Culture and Managing People Change

The overarching aim of the workforce plan was to shift our culture as an organisation in line with the aspirations of the TOM, articulated by our Guiding Principles. There were important developments throughout the delivery of the workforce plan that either contributed to or demonstrated movement towards this aim. The impact of the pandemic on our culture must also be recognised and the learning taken from this as we move forwards.

Our staff check in survey held in the Autumn of 2020 gave insight into experiences of staff in a number of areas. The results were reported through a [service update](#) in March 2021 and the [action plan](#) reported to Staff Governance Committee on the 7th June 2021.

Managing People Change

Prior to the pandemic, the ACC Adoption and Change Management (ACM) approach had been developed, covering the seven pillars cited above (see *A partnership and a pandemic*) as essential for holistic culture change.

This had been developed and tested in partnership with Microsoft, initially via digital adoption. The approach was used mainly as a tool for planned change, as opposed to sudden unplanned change. However, whilst the methods may have needed to be rapidly adapted, the fundamentals proved important. For example, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for individuals and groups to work concurrently and collaboratively to achieve leadership outcomes. There was an emphasis on collective leadership over individual leadership. Examples of collective leadership in action include the regular meetings of the Covid-19 Incident Management Team (IMT), the Workforce Planning & Protection Group, Aberdeen Together and other resilience partnership structures such as the Care for People Group. These groups focused less on hierarchy and more on having the right roles, responsibilities, and expertise around the table to make decisions. This leant on the ACM approach which emphasises co-creation, voice, empowering managers and, distributed leadership. These cultural norms were accelerated at pace during the pandemic. Alongside this were elements of place-based leadership: interpreting national guidance in a local context with partners to enable quick decisions that were in the interests of the city.

Within the example of Covid, the importance of the relationship between Leadership, Culture and Communications was highlighted as messaging by leaders played a key role in obtaining trust and co-operation. ACC's covid communication was frequent, honest and timely, helping to clarify complex situations problem and gain the consensus required to be able to make decisions and formulate policies. The feedback gained from the Future of Work survey (FoW) showed that it had been able to provide a shared sense of purpose and instil trust, as aligned to our Guiding Principles.

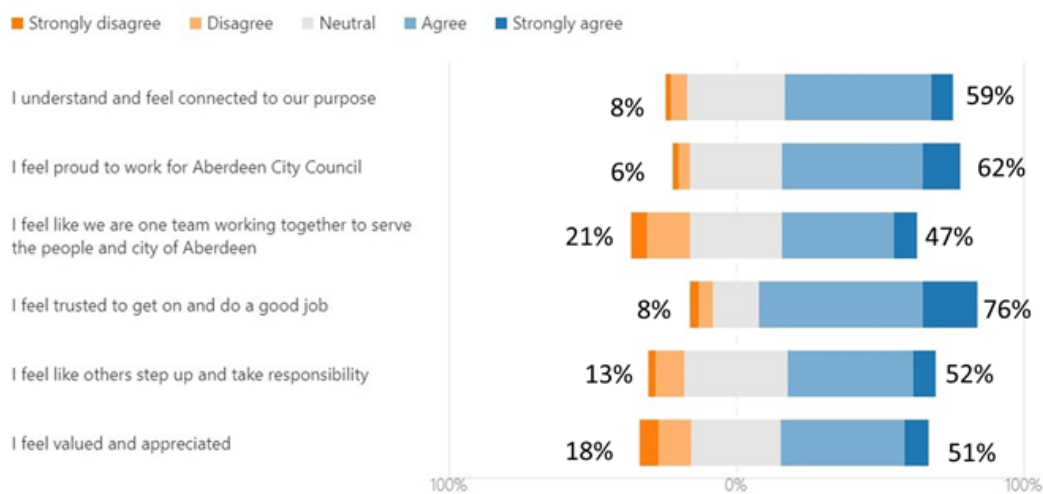
This focus on trust, as well as instilling it with the workforce, was beneficial in also reinforcing it as coming from leadership outwards, i.e., a 2-way trust. This further enabled our decision-making on new questions and dilemmas regarding people management during this time, when there was little guidance externally.

The emphasis within the Council's guidance and communications was on trusting our people and supporting them through this time. The consistent application of this employer/leadership kindness helps fulfil the four criteria for trust (ability, benevolence, integrity, predictability) cited in the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) November 2021 report, *Responsible Business Through Crisis*, by Veronica Hope Hailey. It also assisted greatly in positive partnership working with Trade Unions.

The Council's ACM approach also draws on the importance of building capacity for delivery at the point of delivery, i.e., through leaders as sponsors and through champions networks. This was still a critical point throughout the pandemic –

leaders were required to visibly lead and own rapid change, whilst at the same time empowering service managers and subject matter experts to take decisions at the level needed to respond rapidly – empowerment throughout the system rather than hierarchically.

The establishment of the Covid-19 Incident Management Team (IMT) facilitated shared understanding through the 3-minute brief (3mb) process adopted from the Council’s emergency planning arrangements. Agreement on collective action meant that messaging was more consistent and credible. Our collective organisational Purpose was clear and was reiterated throughout communications. Our established Guiding Principles acted as a strong foundation throughout the response, and this was demonstrated in the results of the FoW survey.



When the Future of Work survey was reported, the emphasis continued to be on individual and collective accountability, through the ‘Me, We, Us’ framework and the clear call to arms in terms of building positive outcomes together.

Lessons for the Future in People Change

Responding to the pandemic did not require a wholly different approach to change, but it intensified the need for each of the elements within our ACM approach, requiring action-focused and purpose-driven collective, visible, and distributed leadership. The IMT approach supported this, and these methods and cultural norms need to be emphasised and integrated into future methods of working.

Where leaders did not make use of digital to be more visible and available throughout the pandemic, it was noticed, as shown through the Future of Work survey results. This shows the need to adapt leadership and communication methods regularly and in line with changing ways of working and new technology.

Engagement sessions with frontline colleagues showed that long held beliefs about their digital capability, desire to be digitally connected and communicated

with and career and development needs were often misconceptions. This shows that leaders need to actively engage and listen openly to all staff to challenge long held assumptions about their needs, wants and capabilities.

Frequent, open, evolving communication was critical. Honesty and transparency within messages are likely to have added to their positive feedback.

Delivering training in Teams through Super Champions was very much appreciated. The approach to learning will radically shift to accommodate changing expectations and ways of working. The ACM approach already emphasised the need for training to be delivered by peers and this, as well as digital learning mechanisms will be developed for the future.

The Council saw a spike in Yammer and great response to the survey as people wanted to have their voice heard. Whilst rapid change does not always lend itself to feedback mechanisms, there are ways of quickly undertaking temperature checks which should be used regularly.

Line managers were reported positively in the FoW survey for being empathetic, supportive, and available. Much of the current literature describes a 'new wave' of leadership which has empathy, compassion, and authenticity at its core. This should be built upon in our leadership culture – so that our 'whole selves' are relevant and acknowledged at work.