

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee

1st July 2020

Report of the Director of Organisation Development and Policy

Covid Workforce Initiatives Report

1. Purpose

To update ACOS on the workforce initiatives implemented as a result of the Covid pandemic.

2. Background

Since the end March 2020, interim guidance and dedicated workforce initiatives have been implemented for both managers and employees regarding the utilisation and wellbeing of our workforce in response to the Covid pandemic. During this period we have established additional regular engagement forums with trade unions, implementing a weekly strategic dialogue with regional representatives and branch secretaries and weekly interfaces with departmental representatives supported by Senior HR Business Partners.

3. Interim Workforce Response

Our interim changes to workforce policy have been made at pace and in response to the Government announcements on lockdown from 23rd March 2020. These changes have aimed to improve workforce flexibility, remaining under continual review, and include the following:

- Interim changes to the flexi-scheme to enable greater workforce flexibility.
- Updated guidance on annual leave and other leave provisions.
- Guidance on recording and payment during self-isolation and Covid-19 related sick absence, with SAP system changes to automate and support more accurate data recording.
- Interim Average Payments Policy for Relief Workers.
- Sent home protocols to provide clarity and guidelines where needed for employees who were unable to work from home.
- Coordinated employee testing referrals supporting managers to ensure symptomatic employees were referred for testing in the first 5 days.

Workforce surveys have been undertaken to enable greater understanding of our workforce ability and limitations, with both a health survey and skills and redeployment survey being conducted across all employees. This information has been utilised both within departments and centrally to support our overall workforce response, with particular focus on redeployment of our workforce to support critical roles.

4. Resourcing Approaches

A central internal Resourcing Hub has been implemented to provide a conduit to support resource utilisation and redeployment across all departments and in conjunction with partner organisations to support the wider system resource challenges. The Council have redeployed 379 employees across all departments into priority roles predominantly residing within Adult Social Care and Health.

The Resourcing Hub is underpinned by revised workforce supply and demand guidance, deploying shortened recruitment processes for emergency roles and revised interim vacancy control processes to enable us to be more responsive. At the outset of lockdown, we wrote to former employees seeking their interest in re-engagement with the Council, with those who registered their interest being signposted to departments to consider suitability aligned to the priority roles in the Council.

This has been further supported by the provision of minimum standard training to ensure rapid availability of staff for key roles (such as care workers) which has been scoped, developed and implemented at pace, utilising our Derbyshire Learning Online system to provide alternative approaches to delivery given the social distancing restrictions.

5. Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing has and continues to be been crucial throughout our response to the Covid pandemic.

We have implemented a wellbeing system for employees which consists of 5 levels of support. Level 1 focuses on general support through to more specific and specialist individual support at level 5.

- Level 1 consists of advice and guidance. We have a dedicated wellbeing site for employees hosted on Our Derbyshire as well as a Covid specific area. This area hosts both the advice and guidance we have issued (for example working from home and PPE) and also has links to external and internal specific physical and mental health support sites.
- Level 2 is access to our Mental Health First Aider Network with dedicated contact details. Queries at this level are triaged via our Occupational Health Team and directed to the right level of support.
- Level 3 involves the provision of a smartphone app 'Thrive' which employees can download. This app provides access to mental health support based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) principals as well as signposting employees to other support which is available.
- Level 4 focuses on the provision of an Employee Assistance Programme. We have initially commissioned this for 6 months. This provides a telephone helpline for employees and family members within the same household. It includes advice and guidance around a range of issues which could be causing

employee anxiety and mental health issues and includes up to 6 sessions of 'light touch' counselling. The service is completely confidential and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. There is also access to a dedicated website which contains advice and factsheets on a range of topics.

- Level 5 is aimed at those employees who require a more detailed intervention and is accessed via the triage service provided through our Occupational Health Team (aligned to Level 2). This consists of the provision of support from our in house counselling service supported by other specialist colleagues where required.

From the outset of the pandemic, Health and Safety and Public Health colleagues have worked together to produce and amend PPE guidance in line with the national guidance. Alongside this the Council established a PPE sub-group and a PPE ordering and distribution hub to ensure services are able to obtain the required PPE for employees. Initially emergency supplies of PPE were also provided to the PVI sector and Health partners where supply issues existed. Following initial issues with the availability and quality of some PPE items, the Council has managed these to ensure a continuous supply of PPE is available. The PPE sub-group continue to liaise with the PPE distribution hub, Health and Safety and Public Health colleagues, issuing additional guidance where required. PPE stock levels are assessed on a daily basis and the quantities that establishments are able to order are adjusted accordingly. The PPE sub-group are also working closely with the Local Resilience Forum supply chain to access stocks where required.

6. Next Steps

Our focus from a workforce perspective now focuses on planning for organisational recovery and we continue to engage with Trade Unions throughout our approach. The following is now underway to ensure continual review of our workforce initiatives as the pandemic evolves

- We have deployed an 'Our Spirit' employee pulse survey to gain feedback from colleagues on our response to the pandemic. The results will help inform our future response to the pandemic and also align to our longer term employee engagement approach, with four areas being explored as follows:
 - o Your wellbeing, morale and mental health.
 - o Your ways of working (and the interim terms applied to enable flexibility).
 - o Our Support to You - Have you felt supported by your management team, senior management and the Council.
 - o Our Future – Your perceptions on the future and what you would like to see from the Council.
- We are reviewing our interim changes to workforce policy to address the following areas:
 - o Our future pay policy for those employees who are shielding.
 - o Annual Leave balances and future approach to carry forward.
 - o National guidance on requirements for quarantine/self-isolation aligned to overseas travel and NHS treatment.

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing colleagues continue to work with Property and Asset Management to support and enable return to the workplace where required aligned to service priorities.
- From a Learning and Development perspective, we continue to review our schedule of planned learning programmes and prioritise those which can be developed and delivered through alternative methods to enable core training to continue.
- To support continued focus on employee wellbeing, we are scoping the potential to provide elements of our wellbeing system through a defined package to Schools within our traded services offering, whilst considering alignment to our longer term wellbeing strategy.
- Finally, we are reviewing all lessons learned to date regarding the workforce impacts and initiatives deployed as a result of the pandemic, considering where we can amend our people processes and policies going forward, whilst ensuring we continue to align to national guidance as this evolves.

7. Officer Recommendation

ACOS notes the progress in deploying the workforce initiatives outlined in this report in response to the Covid pandemic.

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