



Northumberland

County Council

Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10 June 2019

Annual Update Report for Workforce (2018/19)

Report of the Executive Director of HR/OD and Deputy Chief Executive

Portfolio Member: Councillor Nicholas Oliver, Cabinet Secretary

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an annual position statement in relation to workforce related areas of assurance, workstreams/associated action plans and progress to date within key areas for Northumberland County Council for the full financial year of 2018/19.
- Provide members with an overview of the monitoring and actions taken during the period from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 in accordance with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy for employees.
- To provide assurance to the Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee that there is provision and monitoring in place to achieve necessary Key Performance Indicators relating to the workforce on an ongoing basis.

Recommendations:

The recommendations are:

- Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.
- Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive an annual update of this report for every financial year.
- Members are recommended to note the whistleblowing data that is contained in the body of the report and the ongoing work to promote a safe environment for staff to raise concerns through various mechanisms across the Council.
- Support the continued use of Safecall across the Council as a mechanism for staff to raise whistleblowing concerns accordingly.

Links to the Corporate Plan

The Northumberland County Council (NCC) Corporate Plan (2018-21) has identified a number of core strategic priorities and supporting key themes of which the following are particularly relevant to the workforce:

- We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone (How)
- We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for (Living)
- We want you to love where you live (Enjoying)
- We want you to have access to the things you need (Connecting)
- We want you to achieve and realise your potential (Learning)
- We want to attract more and better jobs (Thriving)
- We want to make a difference (Success Measures)

HR/OD have also published a Service Statement 2019-2021 that is reviewed and updated annually.

Background

An integral part of the Council's success in delivering high quality services to the population of Northumberland is based on the workforce of the Council. This report gives an overview of the employment and workforce related issues which are overseen by the Council's Workforce Committee. The Workforce Committee is a sub-committee of the Corporate Leadership Team and provides assurance and accountability in relation to all Workforce matters.

Current data

1. The Council currently employ 4,307 staff and 3749.6 FTE (as at 31.3.19) an increase of 82 staff and a decrease of 4.9 FTE from the previous year (31.3.18)
2. The number of staff employed in schools by Northumberland County Council has decreased to 4104 staff and 2749 FTE (as at 31.3.19) a decrease of 484 staff and 406 FTE from the previous year (31.3.18). For the purposes of this report the HR performance only relates to NCC directly employed staff.
3. Labour turnover for 2018/19 is 11.82% which is lower compared to the LGA reported average of 13.4% labour turnover rate nationally.

Workforce Committee

1. The Workforce Committee has established and is regularly reviewing a wide range of metrics which are used to manage and monitor compliance and best practice with workforce related issues across the whole council.
2. On a monthly basis, Managers and Directors through the Workforce Committee are asked to provide a full position statement relating to their area of responsibility. In advance of the meeting, Managers and Directors are provided with their position statement data which is mapped against a suite of workforce metrics for their area. Managers and Directors are then responsible for providing

an overview of their current performance and planned performance against the required compliance levels for each set of workforce metrics.

3. Focussed attention continues to be on absence management which is a key challenge for the Council but also to other key performance indicators such as induction, statutory and mandatory training and appraisal for example.
4. The Workforce Committee also monitors the progress of the HR/OD Strategy which for 2018/2021 has five workstreams of activity, all which impact on the workforce across all areas of the council as stated in the links to the Corporate Plan.

Update on the HR/OD Strategy for 2018/21

The HR/OD Strategy for 2018/21 has been aligned to the Corporate Plan. The five workstreams of activity are -

- **A healthy and productive workforce (Living)** - We will cultivate a work environment where the health, safety and wellbeing of staff is of paramount importance including continuing our commitment to Healthy Working Lives. We will support the continued development of our shared Occupational Health Service with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- **Creating a positive culture (Enjoying)** - We will create a reward culture that moves away from a traditional approach to one which recognises contributions at all levels. We will translate excellence into policies and procedures to support the delivery of a performance management culture. We will drive the Council's commitment to equality and diversity through the implementation of the Single Equality and Diversity Scheme.
- **Enabling and engaging everyone (Connecting)** - We will support managers in increasing their awareness and taking responsibility for their people management activities. We will invest in all our employees and managers to ensure they are equipped to manage the change process and take responsibility for their decisions and actions.
- **Continued development and learning / talent management & succession planning (Learning)** - We will establish career pathways, encourage and enable staff to achieve their full potential in whatever way they wish their career to develop. We will identify and nurture talent early on to support effective succession planning. We will invest strategically in staff to inspire and equip them to shape, influence and lead.
- **Attracting and retaining great people (Thriving)** - Establish modern and tailored recruitment and retention strategies that promote Northumberland County Council and the area as a great place to work/live. Recruit staff on the basis that they are the best or have the potential to be the best.

HR Function and Structure

The HR/OD team has been reconfigured on a temporary basis in order to cover some secondment and maternity leave which has offered some positive changes to individuals to stretch and develop them.

There has been the successful establishment of a shared post of an “Equality and Inclusion Lead” with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust which has paid dividends in terms of raising our profile amongst staff and the community locally, regionally and nationally of being a truly diverse organisation.

We have entered into an informal partnership agreement with Engie who provide HR services to schools within North Tyneside so that they provide management support to our HR Schools Team within Northumberland. This team has reduced significantly in size and schools are unique in the way that they receive HR Services and by partnering with colleagues in North Tyneside this offers a more strengthened skills base for schools. The arrangement does not absolve Northumberland County Council of the responsibility for schools HR but it does provide some capacity and expertise in relation to this area.

We have established a dedicated Recruitment Team for the Council which has been received very positively by applicants and managers during 2018/19 within the HR function. This service previously sat within Employee Services within Finance and was a processing/transactional service. By establishing a dedicated Recruitment Team within HR this changes the function to be professionally HR led and with new revised policies and procedures this is proving to be a strong first window and interaction with the public and applicants.

We have established a dedicated Health & Well being Co-ordinator role to ensure HR/OD strategies in regards to Health and Wellbeing are being adopted throughout the organisation which has already delivered positive results.

Key Performance Metrics

Learning and Development Performance

Performance Appraisal

During 2018/19 the total % of all staff who had a performance appraisal recorded was 83.52%. This is under the expected level of performance of at least 85% and all areas have remedial action plans for 2019/20.

Need (Headcount)	Number completed (Headcount)	%	Total remaining (Headcount)	%
4307	3597	83.52%	710	16.48%

Work is now underway to ensure that managers and employees are aware of the data recording requirements relating to the performance appraisal process. All employees and their managers who have not completed their appraisal for 2018/19 have been formally written to outlining the organisations expectations. Should they not engage next year it will be considered in line with the Council’s Disciplinary Policy.

Appraisal completion has been good, however there is a notable element within the feedback received from the Staff Survey that the quality of an appraisal is not always consistent. The team are working to review the content of the appraisals in light of the new values which have been developed and also giving consideration to the method of

the appraisal which works for each staff group e.g. group appraisals. Work will be undertaken on this during 2019.

Workforce Committee have agreed schedules for achievement of appraisals with Directors/Head of Service and then monitor the performance levels achieved by Directorate and service on a monthly basis to ensure the appropriate performance levels are achieved for 2019/20.

Statutory and Mandatory Training

A revised Corporate Training Needs Analysis (TNA) has been developed for all Northumberland County Council staff which will be monitored for compliance directly by Workforce Committee.

The 11 core subjects that all employees are required to undertake are as follows:

- Equality and Diversity – 3 yearly refresher
- Manual Handling awareness – 3 yearly refresher
- Safeguarding Children awareness – 3 yearly refresher
- Safeguarding Adults awareness – 3 yearly refresher
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – annual refresher
- Fire Safety awareness – annual refresher
- Health and Safety awareness – one off
- Stress Awareness – one off
- FOI and Subject Access refresher – one off
- PREVENT awareness or WRAP – one off
- Infection Prevention and Control - one

The Council’s OD team have worked alongside HR colleagues to embed support for talent management and development at all levels across the Council. For 2018/19 we had a highly successful set of achievements in relation to Statutory and Mandatory Training and Appraisal completion which has been well embedded across the organisation. The overall final position for the Council as at 31.3.19 is outlined below.

Appraisal	Fire Safety	GDPR	Equality & Diversity	Manual Handling	Safeguarding Children	Safeguarding Adults	Health & Safety	Stress Awareness	FOI Subject Access	Prevent	Infection Control
83.52 %	85.02 %	86.51 %	90.64 %	88.58 %	92.45 %	91.34 %	93.92 %	92.41 %	93.24 %	91.90 %	83.68 %

Any compliance/performance issues are raised by the Executive Director of Human Resources & Deputy Chief Executive with the relevant Director/Head of Service and compliance will be discussed on a quarterly basis by the Executive Leadership Team in the form of a formal Workforce Assurance report.

Personal and Professional Development

There is strong feedback both anecdotally and within the Staff Survey for 2018 that the Council is heavily committed to training and developing its staff not only with their statutory and mandatory training but also training to help employees do their job better

and also increase their personal and professional development. During 2018 the Council has successfully delivered a number of initiatives to support Corporate talent management and development alongside local initiatives by each department and these are:

- Over 350+ Apprenticeships from levels 1 - 7 exceeding the Councils Public Service Duty (PSD) to have 2.3% of workforce as apprentices. Currently NCC figure is 3.7% of workforce are apprentices.
- We have increased our apprenticeships by 40% from 2017/18
- The introduction of a new career pathway network which enables individuals to see their talent management opportunities across a wide range of subjects including leadership and management
- We have blended our approach to combine local talent acquisition and high quality learning and development to sit alongside and complement national programmes of delivery. In the past 2 years we have supported 20 graduates offering exceptional training, mentoring, professional qualifications and initiatives that give back to communities, whilst helping to develop a rewarding career within Local Government and in professions such as Health & Social Care, Human Resources, Accountancy, Information Technology, Leadership & Management.
- Our graduate programme provides the perfect opportunity to bring bright, talented and ambitious people in to the heart of the organisation

Case Management

The HR Advisors work on a ratio of 1:500 employees and the case profiles for 2018/19 are as follows:

No of cases 2018/19	Finance	Place	Children's Services	Adult Services	HR/OD	Total
Disciplinary Cases	10	39	10	18	2	79
Grievance/Dignity at Work cases		5	6	4		15
Absence mgt/ Health & Well being policy cases	2	20	5	7	1	35
	12	64	21	29	3	129

In 2018/2019 we have undertaken 5 cases of mediation using trained facilitators, 2 in Children's Services, 2 in Schools and 1 in HR/OD.

Our cohort of trained coaches have received 76 nominations for coaching from NCC employees that result in an average of 3-5 sessions with a coach for career, leadership or personal/professional development coaching in 2018/2019.

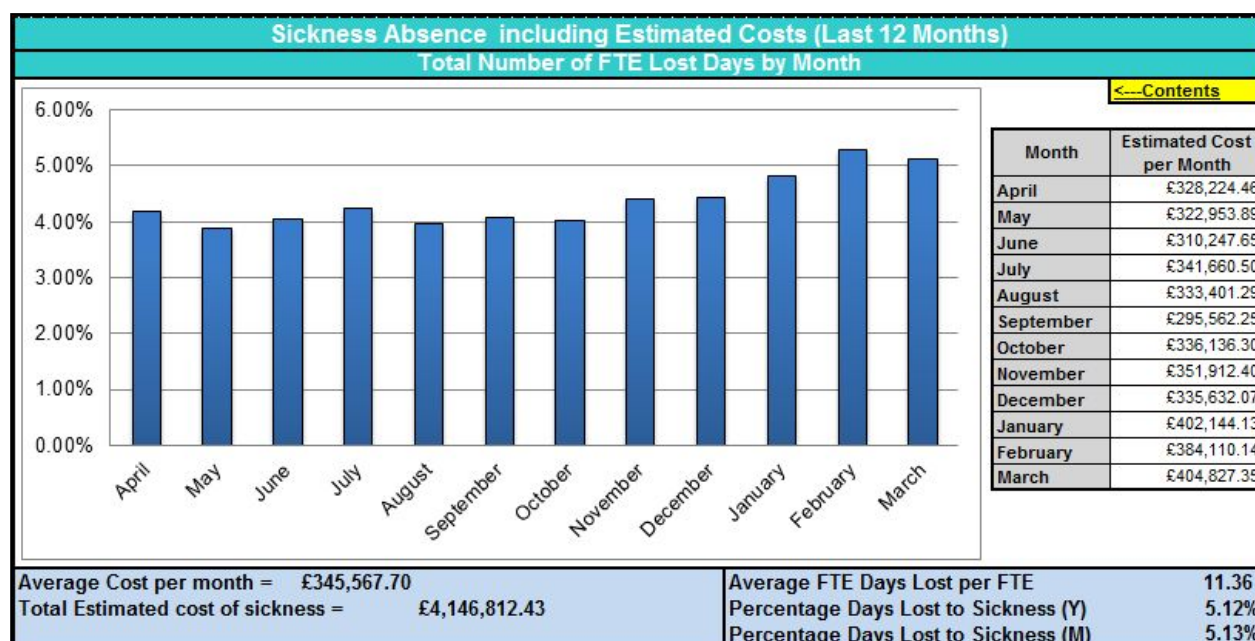
Health and Wellbeing

The shared service for Occupational Health with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is now well established and staff are now offered a county wide Occupational Health Service. A Shared Services Management Board is in place to review and manage the service and activity and quality is being reviewed on a regular basis. The Occupational Health service team are now well known within the Council and the team are working closely with managers to ensure that they focus in on key issues, particularly managing sickness absence. A Health & Wellbeing Co-ordinator was appointed in November 2018 and has launched a number of initiatives including yoga classes, clubbercise, beginners running, weigh and go, geneology and ancestry sessions with the Archives team, a staff choir and lunchtime health walks. The Co-ordinator has recruited a cross section of employees to act as Health & Wellbeing Champions to help promote good workplace health.

Sickness Absence

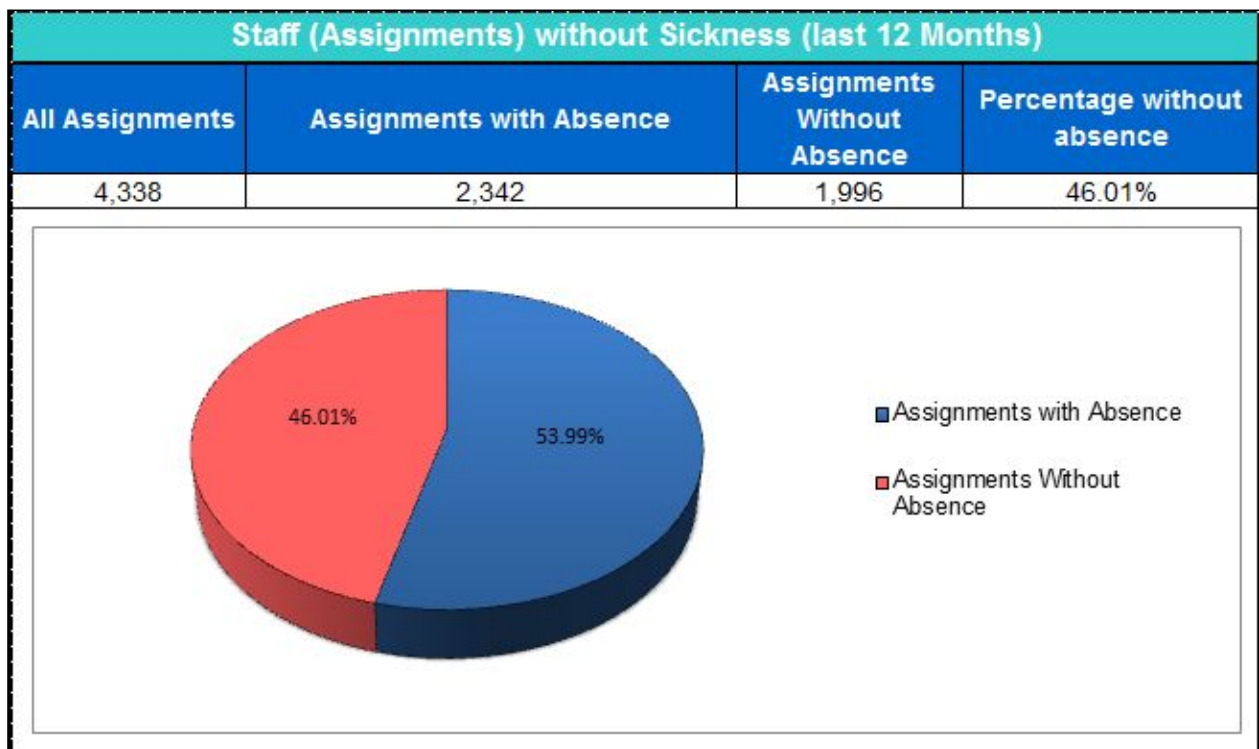
Sickness absence for 2018/19 had an annual cost of £4.14m. The average number of FTE lost days per FTE is 11.36, benchmarked against an estimated average of 8.8 per annum nationally.

Sickness absence continues to be above the Workforce Committee target of 7.5 days per FTE. The WFC report highlights specific trends and areas with high absence levels in each service area. Specific departments will be scrutinising data and will be undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence. The Health and Wellbeing Policy was introduced in October 2018 and is now embedded into HR practice. HR Advisers work with managers to ensure all cases of sickness absence follow the processes in the policy. Pilot groups are going to begin to support employees with ongoing mental health issues through a toolkit approach. Following the pilot, it is hoped that the mental health support will roll out to all departments by the end of 2019.



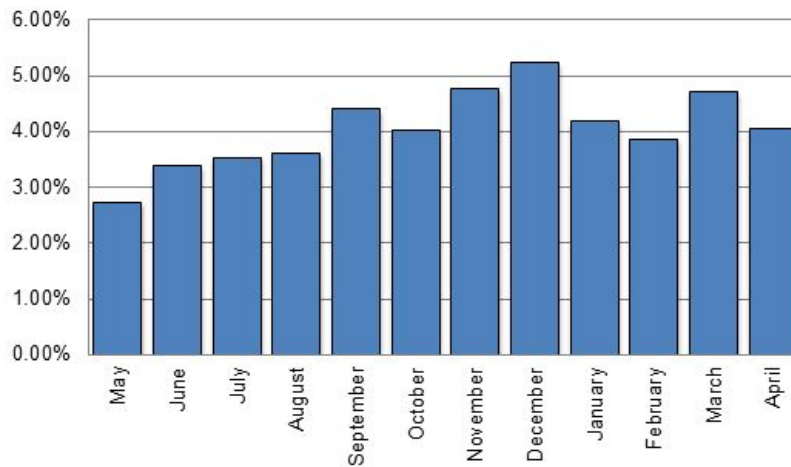
The cost of sickness absence by Directorate (see tables) similarly shows the greatest areas being Adult Services, Place (Local Services) and Children’s Social Care where the headcount is significantly higher. Reporting of sickness absence using e-business is being actively promoted and providing information to managers and HR representatives at a local level is proving useful to managers in helping them identify trends, patterns and local issues. Work will continue on refining this information throughout 2019/20 so that as much information as possible will be provided in an automated way and will be accessible to all managers and supervisors within the organisation at all levels.

It is recognised that nearly 54% of all staff assignments have had some absence due to sickness during the last twelve months (as outlined below).



FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Finance Directorate

[<---Contents](#)



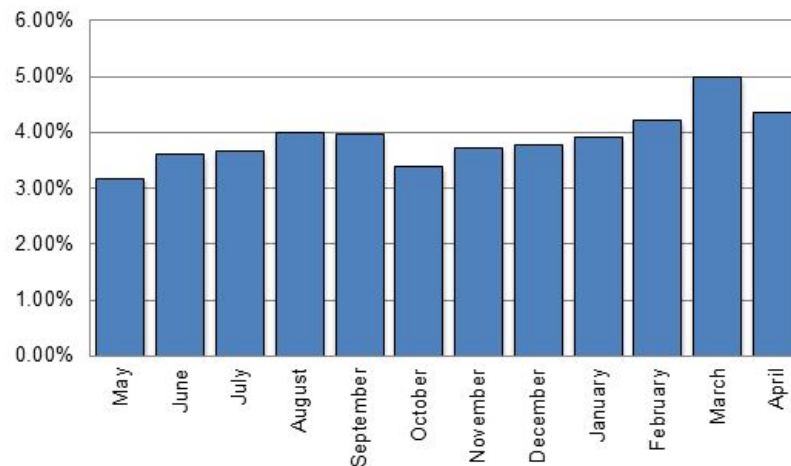
Month	Estimated Cost per Month
May	£36,587.83
June	£41,088.91
July	£49,536.78
August	£48,177.76
September	£49,992.18
October	£52,889.67
November	£60,282.62
December	£63,210.77
January	£56,025.23
February	£31,047.17
March	£43,104.34
April	£38,743.30

Average Cost per month = £47,557.05
 Total Estimated cost of sickness = £570,684.56

Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 14.45
 % Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 6.51%
 % Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 4.05%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Fire and Rescue Directorate

[<---Contents](#)



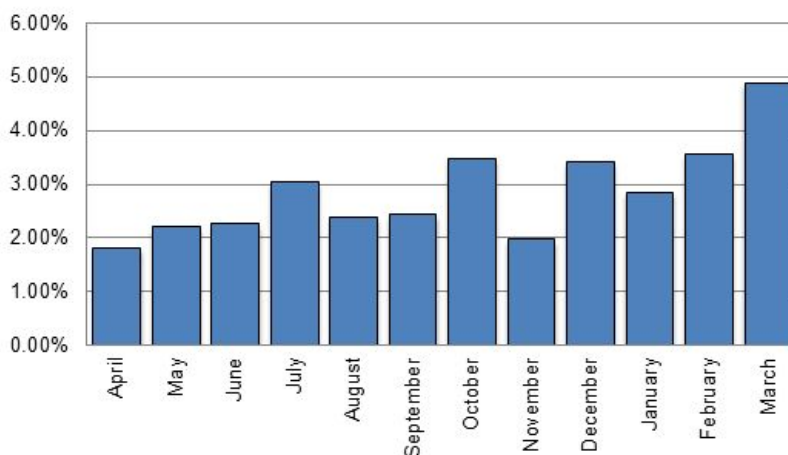
Month	Estimated Cost per Month
May	£29,902.24
June	£30,719.56
July	£33,241.57
August	£37,736.83
September	£32,348.36
October	£32,644.93
November	£33,974.82
December	£20,731.15
January	£23,612.76
February	£21,816.78
March	£27,392.34
April	£24,765.40

Average Cost per month = £29,073.89
 Total Estimated cost of sickness = £348,886.74

Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 10.25
 % Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 4.62%
 % Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 4.35%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Human Resources & OD Directorate

[<---Contents](#)



Month	Estimated Cost per Month
April	£6,477.31
May	£8,151.38
June	£6,512.93
July	£14,140.50
August	£11,661.88
September	£10,744.19
October	£17,661.49
November	£9,739.54
December	£15,829.24
January	£14,408.69
February	£31,862.75
March	£45,876.07

Average Cost per month = £16,088.83

Total Estimated cost of sickness = £193,065.97

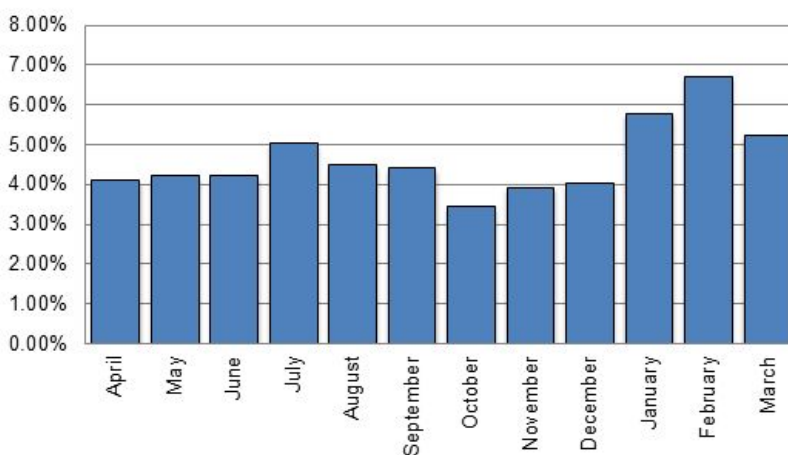
Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 4.29

% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 1.93%

% Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 4.88%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Place Directorate (Local Services)

[<---Contents](#)



Month	Estimated Cost per Month
April	£78,054.29
May	£88,009.81
June	£80,172.37
July	£100,638.07
August	£93,673.61
September	£78,636.28
October	£69,966.42
November	£75,928.27
December	£73,229.08
January	£115,018.46
February	£116,282.97
March	£96,262.58

Average Cost per month = £88,822.69

Total Estimated cost of sickness = £1,065,872.22

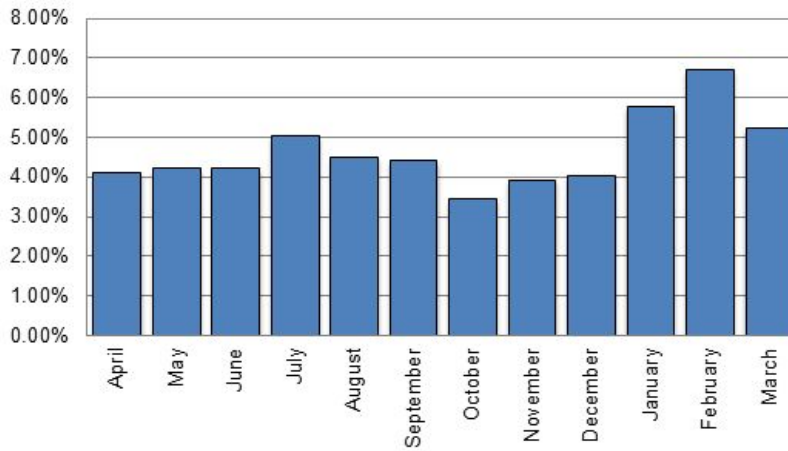
Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 12.17

% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 5.48%

% Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 5.23%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Place Directorate (Local Services)

[←Contents](#)

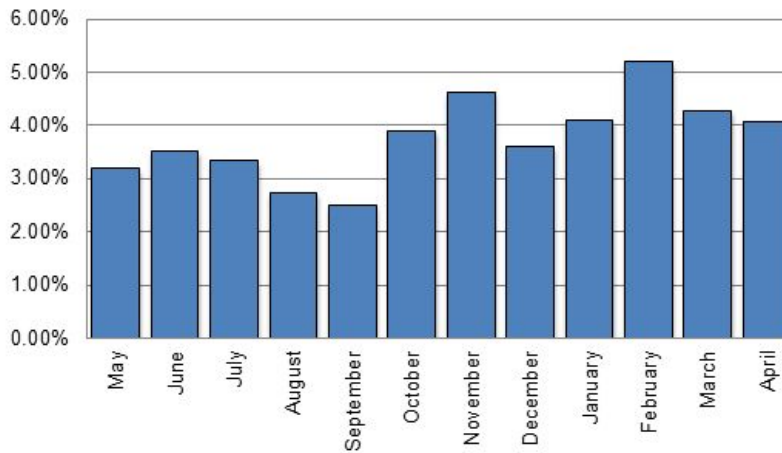


Month	Estimated Cost per Month
April	£78,054.29
May	£88,009.81
June	£80,172.37
July	£100,638.07
August	£93,673.61
September	£78,636.28
October	£69,966.42
November	£75,928.27
December	£73,229.08
January	£115,018.46
February	£116,282.97
March	£96,262.58

Average Cost per month =	£88,822.69	Average FTE Days Lost per FTE	12.17
Total Estimated cost of sickness =	£1,065,872.22	% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months)	5.48%
		% Days Lost to Sickness (Month)	5.23%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Place Directorate (Planning & Economic Policy)

[←Contents](#)

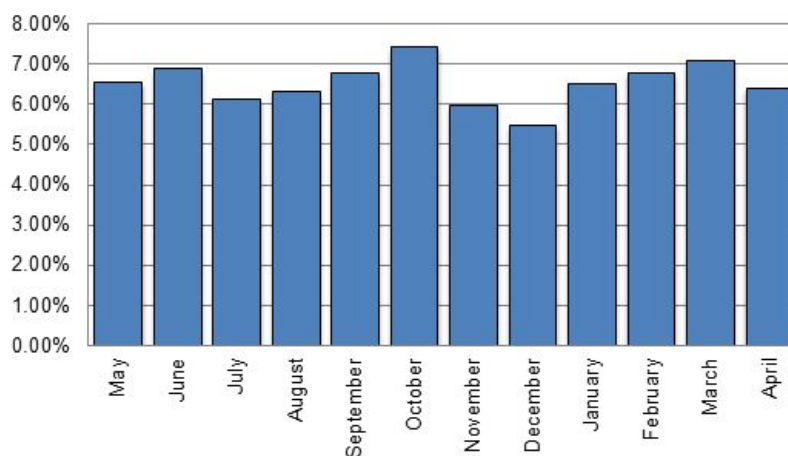


Month	Estimated Cost per Month
May	£12,098.95
June	£11,937.06
July	£9,929.56
August	£10,274.94
September	£9,162.18
October	£13,820.44
November	£15,757.78
December	£11,753.58
January	£14,978.53
February	£16,669.79
March	£14,287.77
April	£14,109.69

Average Cost per month =	£12,898.35	Average FTE Days Lost per FTE	9.84
Total Estimated cost of sickness =	£154,780.25	% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months)	4.43%
		% Days Lost to Sickness (Month)	4.08%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Adult Services Directorate

[<---Contents](#)



Month	Estimated Cost per Month
May	£67,255.50
June	£65,289.02
July	£60,561.68
August	£65,346.22
September	£60,998.80
October	£75,862.92
November	£57,891.49
December	£50,658.02
January	£66,035.89
February	£58,025.33
March	£55,130.13
April	£52,080.96

Average Cost per month = £61,261.33

Total Estimated cost of sickness = £735,135.96

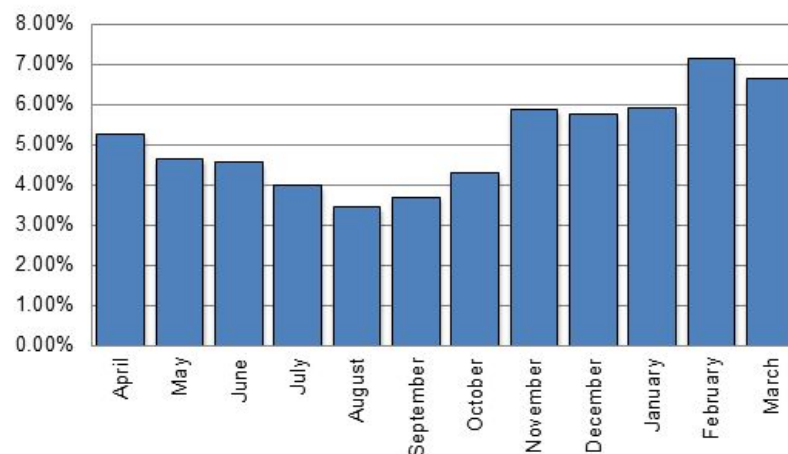
Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 17.56

% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 7.91%

% Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 6.38%

FTE Lost Days by Directorate Including Cost - Children's Services Directorate - Children's Social Care

[<---Contents](#)



Month	Estimated Cost per Month
April	£53,577.52
May	£54,186.80
June	£47,992.27
July	£43,949.90
August	£40,429.49
September	£37,609.52
October	£51,619.18
November	£66,970.22
December	£63,350.03
January	£71,407.91
February	£74,894.73
March	£84,700.76

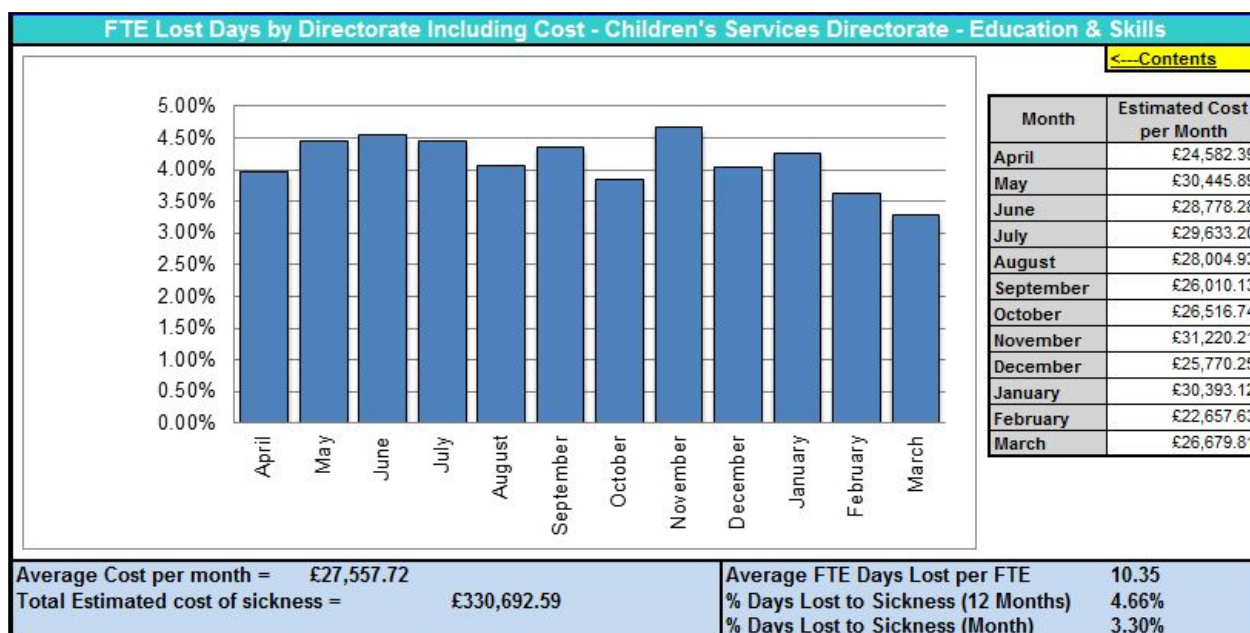
Average Cost per month = £57,557.36

Total Estimated cost of sickness = £690,688.34

Average FTE Days Lost per FTE 12.95

% Days Lost to Sickness (12 Months) 5.83%

% Days Lost to Sickness (Month) 6.63%



Work is ongoing to promote wellbeing with staff with the key health and wellbeing initiatives for 2018/19 identified as:

- Mental health
- Musculoskeletal
- Healthy lifestyle

Information is analysed to ensure that each directorate understands their sickness absence information with FTE lost days by Directorate information and the associated costs being provided to managers and the Workforce Committee on a monthly basis. The introduction of a broader Health and Wellbeing strategy has been well received by staff and followed the introduction of a Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator role for the Council. It is expected that the benefits of this role will be amplified during 2019/20. Improving the Health and Wellbeing Agenda has been a key priority during 2018/19 to combined with the launch of the revised Health and Wellbeing Policy in October 2018. New activities introduced have been:

- Local weight management
- Local health monitoring clinics
- Fitness classes such as clubbercise and yoga
- Couch to 5k running group facilitated by a colleague
- Guided walks
- Ancestry talks
- Choir

Sickness Absence costs comparative 2018/19

	Absence costs 2019	Absence costs 2018	Ave days lost 2019	Ave days lost 2018	% days lost to sickness 2019	% days lost to sickness 2018
Total NCC	£4,146,812	£4,131,083	11.36	11.44	5.12	5.15
Finance	£572,328	£521,381	14.56	9.04	6.56	4.07
Fire & Rescue	£363,414	£510,347	10.11	12.17	4.55	5.48
HR & OD	£193,065	£149,484	4.29	6.67	1.93	3.00
Place (Local Services)	£1,065,872	£1,066,923	12.17	12.24	5.48	5.51
Place (Planning & Economy)	£149,331	£127,213	9.38	8.24	4.22	3.71
Adult Services	£754,719	£904,816	17.81	20.57	8.02	9.26
Children's Services	£330,692	£318,709	10.35	10.62	4.66	4.79

Agency Staffing

Numbers of agency staffing is regularly reviewed by the Workforce Committee with usage and reliance on agency staffing reducing throughout the Council during 2018/19. We are working with local authority colleagues across the region to ensure that we set standardised frameworks and agreed rates, particularly for challenging areas such as social workers etc which has proved very positive for the North East in managing the challenges that agency staffing costs and quality pose.

Monitoring of agency staffing and overtime has commenced in granular detail across directorates and further work needs to be done to address this work locally by directorate. The areas with the highest level of overtime and agency staffing are within the Place and Children's Services directorates which we now have oversight of the usage and commissioning which has enabled Senior Managers to establish the quantum of the issue.

The introduction of IR35 legislation has given rise to agencies wishing to engage to negotiate rates and this has afforded us the opportunity to transfer some agency workers from agency rates to NCC fixed term contracts which is cost efficient and provides more stability within the workforce.

In order to continue to review the reliance on agency staffing and overtime, work will continue to take place during 2019/20 to consider establishing an internal staff bank which will offer staff the opportunity to register for work at any department/area within the Council (dependent upon their skills and experience) and this will ensure we have a more flexible workforce and reduce existing costs.

	2018/19 As at 31.3.19
Total NCC Agency Workers	131
Total Number of Fixed term employees	452
Total FTE of Fixed term employees	395.7
Total Overtime Costs 2018/19 *	£7,525,541
Chief Executive Directorate	0
Total NCC Agency Workers	0
Number of Fixed term employees	0
FTE of Fixed term employees	0
Overtime costs	0
Finance Directorate	
Total NCC Agency Workers	20
Number of Fixed term employees	36
FTE of Fixed term employees	31.6
Overtime Costs	£275,286
Fire & Rescue	
Total NCC Agency Workers	0
Number of Fixed term employees	21
FTE of Fixed term employees	20
Overtime Costs	£1,227,925
HR/OD	

Total NCC Agency Workers	3
Number of Fixed term employees	82
FTE of Fixed term employees	70.6
Overtime Costs	£589,903
Adults	
Total NCC Agency Workers	0
Number of Fixed term employees	46
FTE of Fixed term employees	32.7
Overtime Costs	£884,803
Place	
Total NCC Agency Workers	72
Number of Fixed term employees	152
FTE of Fixed term employees	147.7
Overtime Costs	£2,900,490
Children's Services	
Total NCC Agency Workers	36
Number of Fixed term employees	111
FTE of Fixed term employees	93
Overtime costs	£1,647,134

- Please note overtime figures may change due to further claims that may not be already actioned

Fixed Term Contracts

Fixed term contracts are now monitored monthly by the Workforce Committee using a RAG rating so there is notice for those that are due to come to an end immediately and those that are longer term. All fixed term contracts and honoraria have an end date so that they are regularly reviewed.

Fixed Term Contracts								
Directorate and Service	Non-Apprentice Contracts				Apprentice Contracts			
	Contracts with no expiry date	Contracts Expired	Contracts Expired in next 3 months	Contracts Expired in after 3 months	Contracts with no expiry date	Contracts Expired	Contracts Expired in next 3 months	Contracts Expired in after 3 months
NCC Total	0	5	117	232	0	1	28	88

Equality and Diversity

Work is ongoing to actively promote and recruit further E&D Allies amongst the workforce and the Council's LGBT, Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, Menopause and Andropause and Carers Network groups which are run jointly with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and continue to be well represented.

Stonewall has released its Equality Index for 2019 and NCC has been ranked in 5th place among local authorities. The Council has re-entered the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index after a short gap and has successfully achieved an entry in the top 100 at =86th place overall is the 7th highest local authority within the rankings which is an excellent achievement.

The Council also took part in the first ever Northumberland Pride celebrations in Alnwick on Saturday 2nd June 2018, this included a march and celebration event and has co-sponsored the event for 2019 which takes place on Saturday 1 June 2019. Along with this a programme of work has been undertaken to support LGBT+ inclusion, including the development of policies to support staff such as the Transitioning at Work Policy, an LGBT+ Equality Champion - Patrick Price who is the equality lead across the Trust and Council and work is being done by equality allies to make the organisation more inclusive.

The Council has for the second year running produced its Gender Pay Gap Report and during 2017/18 had one of the lowest Gender Pay Gaps within public sector organisations across the region. There has been a slight change in the 2018/19 analysis but this has produced similar results. The Council's Gender Pay Gap report is now published on the Council's website

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/equality/NCC-Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-31-March-2018.pdf>

Whistleblowing

The Council has for a number of years had a Whistleblowing Policy however, this was reviewed formally in 2017 and relaunched across the organisation.

The Council introduced Safecall in August 2017 and this is the first full year of monitoring which has taken place in accordance with the usual methods of whistleblowing together with the use of Safecall.

Safecall is an external company which provides a helpline and promotional materials to support staff to raise concerns either anonymously or directly and staff or members of the public can contact Safecall via email or by telephone directly. Safecall's advisors are trained individuals with many of them being ex-police officers. The total costs payable to Safecall during 2018-19 were £4,086.75, based on £0.95 per head.

Whistleblowing Reports during 2018-19

During 2018-19 there were 23 issues/allegations reported in line with the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

Service	Format of report	Details	Category of allegation/report	Current status of issue/allegation	Outcome
Local Services	Other	Anonymous letter	Bullying	Closed	Informal Resolution
Adults / Children's / Schools	Other	Anonymous letter	Bullying	Closed	Recommendation made
Adults / Children's / Schools	Formal Whistleblowing	Form	Client Care	Closed	Training and Management Action
Adults / Children's / Schools	Other	Letter to service manager	Employment practices/behaviours	Closed	Informal Resolution
Property Services	Safecall	Report following call	Illegal substances being sold in the workplace	Closed	Recommendation made
Local Services	Other	Verbal report	Bullying	Closed	No action required
Planning	Safecall	Report following call	Employment practices/behaviours	Closed	Recommendation made
Education & Skills	Other	Letter to Chief Executive	Employment practices/behaviours	Closed	No action required
Children's Social Care	Other	Letter of complaint to Manager	Non-compliance with formal processes	Closed	Training and Management Action
Planning	Other	Facebook message to Comms	Employment practices/behaviours	Open	Investigation continuing
ARCH / Advance Northumberland	Formal Whistleblowing	Form	Non-compliance with formal processes and management practices/behaviours	Closed	Training and Management Action.
Local Services	Formal Whistleblowing	Form	Employment practices/behaviours	Closed	Recommendation made
Property Services	Other	Anonymous letter to Chief Executive	Employment practices/behaviours	Closed	No action required
Advance Northumberland	Other	Anonymous letter to NCC	Fraud	Closed	No action required
Property Services	Other	Complaint	Employment Practices/behaviour	Closed	Training and Management Action

			urs		
Fleet	Safecall	Report following call	Employment practices/behaviours	Open	Ongoing investigation
Neighbourhood Services	Exit Questionnaire	Form	Employment practices/behaviours (Health and Safety)	Closed	Training and Management Action
Planning	Other	Letter of complaint	Employment Practices/Behaviours	Closed	Training and Management Action (Addressed as part of another process)
Council wide	Other	Letter of complaint	Employment Practices/Behaviour	Closed	Training and Management Action
Youth Offending Service (Childrens)	Safecall	Report following call	Employment Practices/Behaviour	Closed	Training and Management Action
Information Services	Safecall	Report following call	Employment Practices/Behaviour	Closed	Recommendation made
Information Services	Safecall	Report following call	Employment Practices/Behaviour	Closed	Informal Resolution
Information Services	Other	Exit Interview	Employment Practices/Behaviour	Closed	Recommendation made

Source of referral:

Of the 24 referrals made they were as follows:

Directorate	Number of referrals
Local Services/Place	9
Adults, Children's, Education	6
Advance Northumberland	2
Property	2
Council wide	1
Corporate Services	3
Total:	23

Format of referral:

Format	Number
Other	12
Form	3
Safecall	5
Exit Questionnaire	3
Total:	23

Nature of referral:

Nature of referral:	Number
Bullying	3
Employment Practices/Behaviours	15
Client Care	1
Illegal Substance sales	1
Non compliance with formal processes	2
Fraud	1
Total:	23

Outcomes from referral:

Outcome	Number
Informal Resolution	3
Recommendation made	6
Training and Management Action	8
No action required	4
Investigation Ongoing	2
Total:	23

Staff Survey Information relating to whistleblowing questions

The information below is the information which was provided by staff as part of the Staff Survey. The Staff Survey responses provide some context to the actual whistleblowing claims which are made which is reassuring to know that we are focusing on the right areas for the action plans.

Q12d. If you were concerned about unsafe working practices, would you know how to report it?	Yes	2440
	No	194
	Don't know	209
Total		2843

Q13a. I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe working practice.	Strongly agree	1066
	Agree	1341
	Neither agree nor disagree	324
	Disagree	115
	Strongly disagree	38
Total		2884

Q13b. I am confident that the Council would address my concern.	Strongly agree	584
	Agree	1145
	Neither agree nor disagree	817
	Disagree	203
	Strongly disagree	73
Total		2822

This is the councils average % of staff reporting a positive answer.

Q12a.	In last month, have not seen errors/near misses/incidents that could hurt staff	88.38%
-------	---	--------

Q12b.	In last month, have not seen errors/near misses/incidents that could hurt customers / service users	92.20%
Q12c.	The last time I saw an error, near miss or incident that could have hurt staff or customers / service users, I reported it / a colleague reported it	77.18%
Q12d.	Knows how to report unsafe working practises	92.63%
Q13a.	I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe working practice	83.46%
Q13b.	I am confident that the Council would address my concern	61.27%
Q14a.	The Council treats staff who are involved in an error, near miss or accident fairly	41.51%
Q14b.	My organisation encourages us to report errors, near misses or accidents	69.33%
Q14c.	When errors, near misses or accidents are reported, my organisation takes action to ensure that they do not happen again	53.84%
Q14d.	We are given feedback about changes made in response to reported errors, near misses and accidents	41.63%

Staff Survey Data

The Staff Survey has produced a record 71% return for a full census survey which is an excellent result. Picker Institute were the provider of the survey in 2018 and there have been challenges with them regarding their analysis of the data and having this provided back to the Council in a timely matter of which this is being addressed. The findings have been shared with all Heads of Department and employees and there are areas to celebrate and there are also areas in which further work needs to be done. Overall the findings and free text comments give us some strong themes to continue to support our work on Staff Engagement and the action plan themes are now in place from April to October when we will survey staff again.

For the first time in the 2018 staff survey we asked staff about their financial wellbeing, this showed that a significant proportion of staff have concerns this area and over the course of 2019/2020 we will be piloting and working towards introducing a range of staff initiatives to support staff with their financial wellbeing as this can be a significant contributory factor for staff stress levels.

The Staff Survey data (provided below) suggests that there are some areas where further work is required on the above themes and this has been covered as part of the action planning process for Staff Survey

There will continue to be ongoing awareness raising as part of the action planning to assist with supporting the action planning.

Achievements

The Council has been shortlisted in the national Municipal Journal (MJ) awards for the Workforce Transformation category on the work that has been done by the Council to embrace wider workforce engagement with Apprenticeships, individuals with additional needs and offering career development to staff through a range of interventions including graduate development. The finalists will be notified of the result on 26th June 2019 in London.

Conclusions

There has been significant work progressed within 2018/19 within the HR/OD team however there is still much to achieve and work continues on regularly refreshing the HR/OD Strategy.

Recommendations

The recommendations are:

- Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.
- Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive an annual update of this report for every financial year.
- Members are recommended to note the whistleblowing data that is contained in the body of the report and the ongoing work to promote a safe environment for staff to raise concerns through various mechanisms across the Council.
- Support the continued use of Safecall across the Council as a mechanism for staff to raise whistleblowing concerns accordingly.

Implications arising from this report

Policy	None
Finance and value for money	The workforce is of significant cost to the Council and therefore it is essential that the workforce performs well to ensure that the Council achieves value for money in relation to service provision.
Legal	None.
Procurement	None.
Human Resources	As included within the report.
Property	None.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	All HR policies and procedures are subject to an equality impact assessment.
Risk Assessment	Risks relating to the ongoing health and wellbeing of staff are managed locally.
Crime & Disorder	None.
Customer Consideration	Improved staff performance will impact on the quality of customer experiences.
Carbon reduction	None.
Wards	All.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	initials
Finance Officer	
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Human Resources	NO
Executive Director	Kelly Angus
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Oliver

Author and Contact Details

Estelle White
HR Manager
estelle.white@northumberland.gov.uk

Kelly Angus

Executive Director of HR/OD & Deputy Chief Executive
Kelly.Angus@northumberland.gov.uk
Tel: (01670) 623134