

Item: 11

Title: Workforce update

Gweithredu / Action required	For information and approval.
Amseru / Timing	Routine
Argymhelliad / Recommendation	That the Board notes the contents of this report and ratifies the decision taken in relation to the Voluntary Early Release Scheme between board meetings on 22 and 23 March 2025.
Risg / Risk	<p>CR1 – People and skills – ensuring that we retain and acquire the skills mix in key areas to ensure we deliver the best services.</p> <p>It also aligns with Risk Appetite RA8 – an eager appetite to helping our people do things differently and better.</p>
Cyllid / Finance	Budgeted replacement vacant /new roles.
Amcan Cynllun Corfforaethol / Corporate Plan Objective/Amcan Rhaglen/ Programme objective	To grow and improve as an organisation
Ecwiti, Amrywiaeth a Chynhwysiant / Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	We are committed to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion features in all we do with our people at Llais.
Cyfathrebu / Communications	<p>Please tick one of the following boxes if this activity will have an impact on:</p> <p>Internal: our people <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>External: our customers/partners/stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>External: our organisation's reputation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Cymeradwyaeth / Approval/Clearance	Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services

Trafodaethau/ Penderfyniadau Blaenorol / Previous discussions/decisions	December 2024 update report. Out of Committee report relating to Voluntary Early Release Scheme to board on 22 March 2025.
Awdur/ Cyflwyno / Author/presenting	Director of People, Well-being and OD/ Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services
Dyddiad / Date	12 May 2025

Cefndir / Background

This report is to update Board on the progress of key workforce matters. This includes the voluntary early release scheme, recruitment and organisational development activities.

This report also seeks ratification of the Board decision in-between meetings, set out below in the Voluntary Early Release Scheme 2025 update section.

Board will recall discussions on receiving a workforce dashboard at future meetings. This dashboard will form part of the suite of dashboards currently being designed by our Power BI expert. The Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee will have received an update on key workforce data in its meeting on 15 May.

Manylion / Detail

Current vacancies

Below is a summary position of recruitment activity at Llais.

Role	Stage of recruitment
People and OD Manager	Live advert – closing date 12 May
Fixed Term Regional Director (Neath Port Talbot and Swansea region)	Live advert - closing date 13 May
Complaints Advocate (maternity cover)	Role offered and awaiting pre-employment checks
Complaints Advocate (Tenovus funded role)	Role offered and awaiting pre-employment checks
Fixed Term Board Secretary	Live advert – closing date 21 May
Governance & Risk Manager	Live advert – closing date 22 May

Voluntary Early Release Scheme 2025 update

In March 2025 the Board agreed to adopt and open the Voluntary Early Release Scheme for a limited period. The Scheme was open from 3 March 2025 to 31 March 2025.

The Board received an out of committee report on 22 March 2025 via email, where the Board were asked to approve 12 business cases for the Voluntary Early Release Scheme. Approval was received by email from the Board on 22 and 23 March 2025.

This report provides a formal update on the process including a summary of the number of staff who made an application for early release and the final number of staff who left the organisation. This report seeks the Board's ratification of its decision taken in between Board Meetings. In total, 15 applications had been submitted under the scheme. 2 were subsequently withdrawn by the applicants for personal reasons. The panel therefore received and considered 13 applications submitted by their managers.

From the initial consideration of the applications, 1 application was rejected as the panel did not feel that it was a suitable role to be replaced or removed.

Of the remaining applications, detailed scrutiny of the business cases identified an opportunity for a significant workforce redesign - with the potential to replace a range of job roles transferred over from Llais' predecessor organisations with newly designed Llais specific roles covering some key leadership and professional areas.

The panel therefore agreed that role outlines for 3 potential new roles should be drawn up to inform further consideration and development of the business cases by the supporting managers. These new Llais specific roles were:

- Band 7 Head of Engagement and Complaints Advocacy
- Band 5 Community Engagement and Insights Officer
- Band 4 Community Engagement and Insights Support.

These new roles would create a new reporting and accountability relationship between regional and national lead officers – with line management responsibility within the region and professional accountability directly to national leads.

All applicants were expected to receive independent legal advice, funded by Llais to the sum of £350 (plus VAT), to ensure they were fully aware of the implications

of accepting the offers. Staff wishing to proceed with their applications needed to send fully completed and signed settlements, together with legal certificates, back to workforce by 16.00 on March 31, 2025, in order to proceed.

2 applicants subsequently withdrew prior to the deadline. 10 employees chose to leave the organisation via VERS.

New role development

Head of Engagement and Complaints Advocacy – a draft Job Description has been created and shared with our staff for comment/feedback. This consultation ended on 3 May 2025. All comments have been reviewed to inform an updated Job Description and Person Specification which will now be submitted for formal job evaluation.

The new **Community Engagement and Insights Officer** and the **Community Engagement and Insights Support** roles are currently in initial draft stage, with input sought from key stakeholders in readiness for sharing a draft Job Description with our staff as part of a wider consultation before submission for evaluation.

People Services Business Partner - This role was refined for Llais requirements from an existing role and confirmed at the required indicative banding. The **People Services Support Assistant** role has been developed specifically to meet the needs of Llais people team and is currently with the Job Evaluation team for job matching and consistency checking in order to confirm the pay band.

It is hoped that the evaluation will be confirmed within the next month. Both of these roles will then form part of a re-structure within the people team. This will require consultation with Trade Unions and affected staff. We expect this to start imminently and be concluded withing the minimum prescribed time frame specified in the policy.

Business continuity

Some of the approved business cases included temporary cover requirements to allow departments and regions to continue to operate with minimal disruption to services while the new roles were designed, developed and recruited to. The people team have been proactively working with Regional Directors and Operations managers to understand the immediate needs of the services and sourcing temporary workers to assist us in this period before we have the new roles fully established.

Staff sickness

The period January to March 2025 (Quarter 4) saw a significant increase in the overall sickness absence percentage from 3.84% in Quarter 3 to an average of 8.62% in Quarter 4 against an organisation expectation of 3.30%.

Closer examination of the reasons recorded indicated the usually expected seasonal reasons for sickness absence i.e., cold, cough, flu, etc. However, there was also a higher than usual amount of absence attributed to anxiety, stress, depression or other psychiatric illnesses.

This needed closer examination. We did this by liaising with line managers and reviewing fit notes to understand the specific stated causes for the absence.

During Quarter 4, 14 employees were identified as on long term absence for the above reasons. 8 of these started their sickness absence in calendar year 2024.

Following liaison with line managers, the breakdown was:

4 x Employees – Work related stress (29% of stress related illness)

10 x Employees – Bereavement and other personal related stress (71% of stress related illness).

Current situation

Since quarter 4, we have seen an improvement in stress related sickness levels. 11 of the 14 staff absent in quarter 4 have returned to work. The remaining 3 staff are still absent (one of which is work related).

It therefore appears that while we had an unusually high number of staff absent for the above general reason at the same time, the specific cause of their anxiety, stress, depression or other psychiatric illnesses was varied and unrelated.

As a responsible employer, while we can't do anything to prevent personal stress related illness that can't be anticipated, it's important that we provide a suitable well-being and support service. Our existing arrangements provide a comprehensive range of support options, and are kept under regular review.

Managers have been reminded of the signs to be vigilant for specifically relating to stress and encouraged to act proactively if any are observed. They have also been

reminded of the services available to staff via the people assistance programme to support staff with their well-being.

We will continue to monitor our sickness absence rates and carry out a comparative review of the situation at the end of quarter 1 (April – June 2025).

Staff well-being: progress on actions

We continue to be committed to ensure there is a focus on staff wellbeing, following the staff wellbeing survey last year. We also continue to commit to a co-produced way of working in improving wellbeing. We utilised the staff conference, where we gathered people's thoughts and ideas. Each table at the conference was assigned a theme from the survey and were led through a facilitated discussion by a member of the workforce or communications, insights and engagement team. We asked our staff to focus on how improvements could be made, rather than focusing on the negatives.

We gathered a number of insights through these facilitated discussions, with outcomes ranging from 'quick wins' e.g., doing more to promote the 15-minute wellbeing break to longer term changes e.g., national standards for Llais roles. Some of this work is more in-depth than others and links directly with other actions that sit under our overall strategic objectives, wider strategic equality objectives and cultural change programme e.g., review of career pathways, learning and development review and action plan etc.

Whilst further progress has been limited by capacity issues, particularly where resources have been adversely impacted through staff changes, this work has been incorporated into the workplan for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing. Consideration will now be given as to whether it is necessary to consider using temporary workers to support this piece of work while we recruit substantively to vacant roles, in addition to the Workforce team and the Head of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion continuing to work together to move this forward.

Learning and development update

Managers have been asked to identify any additional training needs and submit requests to the workforce team. To date a number of opportunities have been delivered this quarter including all staff sessions, bespoke development sessions which are detailed below. Additionally, a bespoke e-learning module is at an

advanced development stage which is directly linked to the introduction of a new policy which will be rolled out to our people shortly.

An all-staff online session was hosted in conjunction with 'Stamma' (The British Stammering Association). 48 staff attended the live interactive event with a recording remaining available for those who were unable to attend or wish to revisit sections. This session received very positive feedback from participants.

All staff also attended social care training in the last three months. There are more modules to be delivered in the next month. The training provided an introduction to social care and also included training on suicide awareness, to equip staff should they receive contact with someone who is feeling suicidal.

We currently have 6 members of staff undertaking Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) courses at various levels. These are at nil cost to Llais as they are funded by Welsh Government. Further learning has also been provided to nominated staff by ACAS on 'Managing the unmanageable'.

We have also facilitated 12 peer to peer sessions for all engagement staff and deputy regional directors on a range of communication and insight topics. These included communication planning, working with neurodiverse people, engaging with people with learning difficulties, Welsh language standards and equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Workforce Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee will be receiving an update on learning and development, to include information relating to mandatory e-learning at the 15 May 2025 meeting.

We have already carried out some work with our staff on identifying role based skill requirements and related learning and development needs. This along with an exercise to determine the business needs for learning and development will inform a strategic approach to learning and development. This exercise is within the people team's 2025/26 annual plan.

We are currently recruiting to the People and OD manager role, following the departure of the previous post holder. It is likely to be necessary to bring external resource to support this work, while we recruit to the vacant role.