



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Human Resources Report for Executive Advisory Body

Dignity, fairness, respect.

Organisational Growth

As at 30 April 2024, headcount was [REDACTED] from April 2023. Agency headcount peaked at 4,214 in November 2023.

Work is required in 2024-25 to review our longer-term staffing requirements and while some areas still need to grow, others need to reduce. We require to assess our workforce design with key aims of understanding where efficiencies could be released and reviewing the size and shape of our organisation to ensure it is supporting our client needs, is aligned with organisational priorities and affordable within our budget.

[REDACTED]

Resourcing

Key Activities

Focus on preparation and impact assessment of Oracle ATS. Conducting 'train the trainer' sessions and leading the communication strategy for the rollout.

Talent and Employability Initiatives

Prioritising talent acquisition with a specific emphasis on enhancing employability within our recruitment processes (Veteran, Care leaver or apprentice).

These initiatives are designed to seamlessly integrate with existing recruitment activities, ensuring a cohesive and inclusive approach. Plans are in place to scale these programmes throughout 2024, demonstrating our commitment to social responsibility and diverse talent pipelines.

Launching '**Success Profiles**' to replace 'Skills for Success' competency framework. Aligning assessment frameworks with the broader Civil Service standards.

Operational Resourcing Tool Development to streamline large-scale recruitment. Aiming to reduce resource demands, improve candidate experience, and ensure high-quality hires.

Risks and Issues

Oracle ATS Cutover Period

From 29th July to 14th October 2024, no new entrants can be processed due to Oracle ATS cutover plans.

Engagement sessions have been led by the team to ensure business areas are prepared, with contingency plans established.

Focus on Supporting Candidates with Protected Characteristics.

There is a risk of a decline in the excellent results of the volume recruitment project, particularly in terms of supporting candidates with protected characteristics. Emphasis on retaining focus to prevent slippage and ensure ongoing support and positive outcomes for all candidates.

Concurrent Introduction of Success Profiles and Oracle ATS

Introducing Success Profiles alongside Oracle ATS may present a significant change for our internal customers. The team is collaborating with SG core colleagues to align communication plans and ensure a cohesive approach.

Impacts/Mitigations

We continue to work closely with hiring managers and business areas to support the resourcing of critical roles. There has been a significant increase in the requests to recruit roles which the team are prioritising and working with divisions to deliver, however this level of resource requirement does have an impact on our right sized team.

A data led approach has allowed resourcing decisions to be made using both qualitative and quantitative data improving approaches and success rates.

Specifically in the digital space, our approach this year has led to a fill rate of over 80% and significant reduction to time to hire across the board compared to other government agencies.

Capability & Leadership

Key Activities

We have updated the Service Offering and continue to develop our Leadership and Strategic Capability offer whilst delivering Client Services benefit induction learning events.

Some of our key deliverables in the last 6 months:

- 522 learners have attended Leadership events (Ignite and Leadership Resilience)
- 1,194 learners have attended Operational events
- 3,304 learners have signed up for our Learning at Work Week events

We continue to design and deliver several benefit learning plans including Winter Heating Payment, Carers Support Payment and Adult Disability Payment. We are currently developing Pension Age Winter Heating Payment and Pension Age Disability Payment Learning plans and will be starting work soon on Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance learning plans.

We are expanding our robust evaluation process to cover more events; we have received over 1,000 responses to our surveys since Nov 2023.

Risks and Issues

Availability of operational and decision-making guidance continues to be challenging causing bottlenecks in the design process of learning plans.

As volume recruitment ceases and we continue in a period of sustain and develop, we are required to develop the benefits training material beyond minimal viable product and deliver cross skilling training.

Affordability constraints will drive team resources and capacity, driving a focus on priority learning interventions.

Management learning evaluation outputs are positive however we are not seeing this flowing through to behaviours of managers. Workshop scheduled to critically review content and update as required.

Impacts/Mitigations

An organisational design review of the Organisational Development teams has taken place and updated Service Offering has been created.

Organisational Development are now set up correctly to deliver on key business priorities and are working in collaboration with Organisational Design to support the performance interventions.

Our design team continue to proactively engage with Social Security Programme colleagues to capture anticipated changes to benefit processes to deliver updated learning to benefit delivery teams.

Our recent Learning at Work Week session themes were derived from the People Survey outputs. Early feedback on this is overwhelmingly positive and will drive our continuous development offering themes.

A review of line management training has been undertaken and a new management development brochure is about to be launched that will provide clearer signposting to the training interventions available.

Wellbeing

Key Activities

[REDACTED] colleagues have been supported to return to work from long term absence over the last quarter (January to March 2024).

Wellbeing Partners continue to deliver learning and awareness sessions to colleagues to address our main reasons for absence. These have included sessions on anxiety, stress and burnout, resilience and change, suicide awareness, balance and setting boundaries and men's mental health (we have plans to run a men's wellbeing event in June). We have also developed online learning on the menopause and introduced menopause cafes which have been well received.

People Advice and HR Business Partners are working closely with senior managers to ensure the right support is being provided for colleagues who report as unfit for work, ensuring early support is put in place.

Risks and Issues

Sickness absence has [REDACTED] average working days lost. This increase is being seen across UK workforces with the CIPD reporting the highest sickness absence rates in a decade at 7.8 average days and 10.6 in the public sector. The average for organisations our size across all sectors is 8.7 days.

Mental health related absence continues to be the main reason for absence and is a key focus for our activity. Again, this is a common factor reported by CIPD. We are seeing the average length of our mental health absences decreasing by 1 day.

We continue to see much more complex casework where colleagues have multiple conditions impacting on their attendance.

Impacts/Mitigations

We are continuing our focus on working closely with individuals who are long term absent to support them to return to work and have restructured the People Advice team to provide targeted interventions in this area. We are seeing the average length of our long-term absences decreasing and have had some good news stories with colleagues who have been absent long-term return to work or benefit from a career break. Overall caseload remains at around 4.5% of headcount.

Colleagues continue to provide excellent feedback on the counselling and wellbeing service. The Wellbeing Partners continue to develop our interventions to address the common themes they see developing and we are actively promoting our Employee Assistance Programme to supplement our internal offering.

Strategic Design

Key Activities

Strategic Workforce Planning and Design is developing best practice ensuring we evolve into the right shape and size to deliver our organisational goals within budget. New Staffing Principles, aligned to Workforce Design Principles and Resourcing Controls, will support managers to align priorities with existing skills and capability before considering additional recruitment.

We are delivering an organisational approach to performance to support our desired performance culture which has been piloted in child Disability Payment and is being implemented across Adult Disability Payment, Health and Social Care and other enabling functions.

We are consulting with colleagues to develop our People Plan which will be published in autumn 2024. The People Plan will continue to align with and support delivery of our Charter and Corporate and Business Plans as well as the Equalities Strategy, Staffing Principles etc.

Risks and Issues

In the face of budget challenges, consistent application of the new staffing principles across the organisation is necessary to align budget and headcount to deliver strategic priorities.

Poor implementation of the approach to performance could result in uncertainty and unrealistic expectations for colleagues, adversely impacting morale and negatively influencing client experience. We have developed bespoke learning to enable and equip colleagues to understand, manage and measure performance.

Capacity across agency to engage in consultation on the revised People Plan may be limited due to criticality of maintaining client service delivery. Additional constraints may surface through implementation of Oracle from October 2024. We will continue to work with appropriate teams to monitor and mitigate these risks for the duration.

Impacts/Mitigations

We are building a community of practice to learn and share knowledge. The Staffing Principles form the first part of a wider toolkit which will include improved data modelling to aid strategic decision making both in divisions and across the organisation.

Following the pilot of the new performance approach in Child Disability Payment, we have seen a significant increase in our performance capability, colleague engagement and manager capability which will now be rolled out to other areas of the organisation. This is a significant step towards achieving our desired performance culture.

By September 2024, up to 400 colleagues will have an opportunity to engage in development of the People Plan, providing an opportunity to improve the employee experience, while involving our people in decision making which affects them.

Corporate Transformation

Key Activities

The go live date for Oracle Cloud has been formally confirmed as 7 October 2024. User Acceptance Testing of the HR elements of Oracle Cloud has completed but with no Agency involvement. The Programme focus has moved to user familiarisation using Model Office.

Corporate Transformation have commenced a significant communication initiative to manage the impact of the implementation and associated system outage prior to go live.

We have commenced implementation of the Operational Resourcing Tool aligned to go live of the Recruitment Module of Oracle Cloud in October 2024 working with SOVA as our supplier.

We will be starting engagement with Scottish Government on the implementation of Success Profiles to align with Oracle Cloud which is the recruitment and performance replacement for the Skills for Success competency framework.

Risks and Issues

It has been clarified that Oracle Cloud will not wholly meet the accessibility requirements of the Agency. As such we have made formal representation to the Scottish Government Shared Services Programme to work collaboratively to remedy/mitigate accessibility issues.

The Programme has issued a detailed 'cutover' plan for Oracle Cloud implementation in October 2024. This has identified a series of handling risks and issues around resourcing deadlines, system access and work arounds that has informed our staff engagement strategy.

Post-closure of testing activity, the Agency has had limited sight of Oracle Cloud workflow or processes and are currently engaging with Programme around challenges with understanding post go-live issues to enable business readiness. This includes the requirement for timely training.

Impacts/Mitigations

Our Corporate Transformation Programme is continuing to work with teams across the organisation to prepare our people for the significant impacts the implementation of Oracle Cloud will bring. Engagement activity will continue as we approach launch to ensure all colleagues are aware of the changes to systems and processes.

The delivery of the Oracle Cloud system overall is progressing and the period June – August 2024 will be crucial in preparing Agency staff for go-live.

Communication and engagement plans to raise awareness and summarise the impacts of the upcoming changes are being developed and delivered. These will include any arrangements and actions managers and colleagues will have to take in the lead up to go-live. Our communications will align with Scottish Government to ensure consistency and accuracy.