Department for Communities

Staff Engagement

May 2017

People Manager Engagement Sessions

A staff survey was held in September 2016. Based on feedback there were a few areas that needed to be improved. These were:

- **Communication**
- **Appraisals**
- **Engagement with staff**

The Departmental Management Team decided to hold an engagement event where all people managers would be invited. The event was held in the Crochan, Y Ffwrnes, Llanelli on the 23/24 March 2017. A group of 70 staff were invited to each session, keeping numbers small to enable and encourage everyone's views and ideas on how we can improve the communications and engagement within the Department of Communities.

The sessions were held over two days for a period of 3 hours, a variety of staff from each division were in attendance. Staff were seated in groups of 10 which included a Head of Service which facilitated two workshops.

211 people were invited to the sessions, 147 (70%) attended with 64 (30%) declining or not attending.

The workshop discussions were based on the following:

- What is working well?
- What could be improved?
- What do you need to know that we don't tell you?
- Lean thinking
- How we can improve communication?
- How can appraisals be made more effective?
- How do you personally commit to the service you manager?
- Reflection on communication
- Next steps moving forward

Key themes which developed from discussions included:

Appraisal process

Managers were unclear of what information needed to be recorded during the appraisal process. Managers felt clarification on the whole process was needed and wanted to understand the value of the process. "Tick box exercise" was a comment which was repeated frequently.

HR Recruitment Process

Attendees felt that the HR recruitment process was difficult and that addressing sickness issues was lengthy. The period of temporary staff being in post before being made permanent was unsatisfactory.

Communication

Emails:

It was clear that managers felt that email was being overused, and that people were using emails to avoid having difficult conversations face to face and using emails as an audit trail to cover themselves.

Fact to Face:

Managers felt that face to face contact was essential to build relationships and suggested a way of doing this with their staff was to use more of the Skype facility. Communication being two way was raised by numerous managers.

Engagement:

More staff away days/engagement events or divisional workshops would be welcomed. Some divisions thought that engagement could be patchy. Managers felt that visibility and open door policy was important. It was suggested that future staff survey's should be anonymous to achieve better results.

Challenge

It was felt that people should address difficult and challenging situations and have the right conversations.

Change

Building staff confidence and trust, to embrace and adapt to change. Don't assume that people know everything about the division or department.

Forms

Managers expressed frustration with form filling, that this was creating barriers eg form filling to move a desk.

Training

Training needed to be linked to learning and development and skills set to the post. It was requested that staff development should be the same across different sites within the same division and that services should look at opportunities for causal staff to undertake training. The need for Skype training was discussed widely.

Business Plans

It was recommended that business plans should be adapted to a one page key action document so that staff would read and commit too.

IT Equipment

Better Wi-Fi, and equipment for working more 'agile' is needed. Staff to be allowed to purchase what they need with advice and guidance to ensure correct kit is purchased.

Celebrating Success

It was suggested that we promote good news stories/success more and discussions with staff on how this should be done should take place.

Work Commitments

It was suggested that staff were doing over and above therefore staff were reluctant to go for promotion because they could see how hard the manager was working. Some staff were not able to take a break in the day and felt drained when leaving work.

Excessive working hours and poor retention of Social workers was discussed.

It was felt that employees should be empowered to do their jobs and it was acknowledged that services run well because employees are so committed.

Management

Visibility of managers was deemed important

Focus Groups

Following the People Manager event it was decided by Departmental Management Team that three focus groups should be held with a variety of front line staff from different divisions to give them the opportunity to engage and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. These were held at the beginning of May in Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli. 37 people attended and the workshops were facilitated by Robert Jenkins, Lead Business Partner (OD).

Feedback from discussions have been grouped into key themes and are listed below:

Appraisals and Supervision

From discussions that took place some people did not understand the purpose of supervision and appraisal and were intimidated by the process. There is an inconsistent approach to appraisals and staff felt that this needed to be streamlined to be more regular and consistent.

Communication

It was felt that face to face was the best way to communicate, but people understood this was not always possible.

Team meetings, face to face discussions and the sharing of information were key in what is working well within the Department.

Staff felt that there was too much reliance on emails. IT systems were not fit for purpose and that training was needed in on Skype ect. Suitable kit/IT access should be supplied.

Engagement in Service Improvement

From the feedback received it was felt that Service Improvement was done from the top down and this needed to be changed as Service Improvement needs involvement with everyone.

Staff felt that there was too much reliance on emails. IT systems were not fit for purpose and that training was needed in on Skype ect. Suitable kit/IT access should be supplied.

Training

Staff thought that training and regular professional development was important but time wasn't being freed up for staff to go on training.

What is working…….?

Well	Not Working Well
• Face to Face communication • Team meetings • Regular contact • Skype • Access to information	• Volume of emails • Culture of accountability (email trail) • Lack of sufficient IT equipment • Access to client information • Sharing information between teams and divisions • Not enough staff resources • Lack of communication • Appraisals and Supervision – confusion, lack of understanding regarding appraisals and that it is a tick box exercise. • Too much change • Lack of IT Training for Skype • Inter departmental knowledge

Next Steps

• Arrange for a staff survey to be circulated during June. (Feedback from the event suggested that survey should be made anonymous, questions regarding gender, age and division to be omitted to ensure more open and honest views, by doing these changes it should increase the number of responses).
• Organise a People Manager Engagement event to be for October 2017.
• Clarification to staff and managers regarding the Appraisal Process.