

The HR Function

At
Dyfed Powys Police

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Date: 24th January 2021

What is the HR Function?

The HR function supports the delivery of the organisation's strategy and objectives through the effective management of people and performance (Wilkinson and Taylor, 2016)

The CIPD (nd) tells us that the HR function helps an organisation to deliver and meet its objectives by effectively recruiting, developing and managing performance.

HR Professionals use the New CIPD Profession Map which allows us to look at the HR functions and ask 'how good are we' and 'are doing enough'. It sets the standards that are required and helps us to champion better work and working lives.

Our objectives at Dyfed Powys Police include the attraction, retention and development of people whilst also engaging them in the work of the organisation.

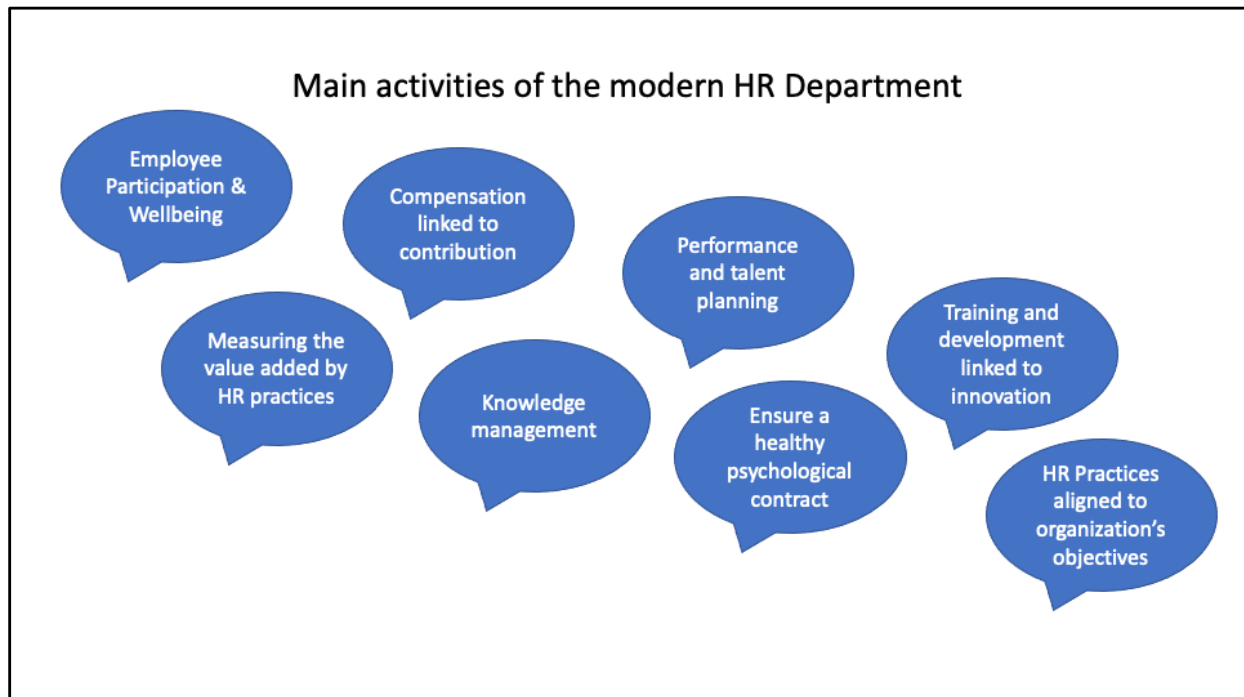
Employee well being is a priority along with ethical management, reputation-building and legal compliance.

The HR function can however be influenced by change – examples of this would be Brexit, Labour Markets and of course the current Covid pandemic which has seen our HR function alter considerably with a high emphasis now being on employee wellbeing and major changes to our recruitment processes.

Evolution of the HR Function



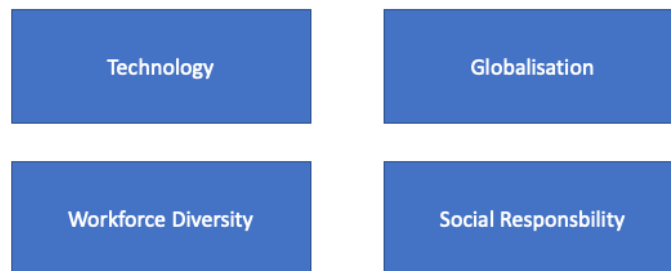
The HR function is evolving and we continually adapt to the changes. Human Resources used to be known as Personnel Management and was the main function for dealing with wages and welfare of employees and seen as the essential cogs of an organisation. It then evolved to HR Management which developed the total rewards for employees influencing the workforce and performance with the workforce becoming a resource. HR is now more strategic and the workforce are seen as an asset and integral to success due to technology and knowledge based industry. Due to automation the HR function has moved from Transactional which was the administration function to more of a Transformational function – which concentrates on change and continuous improvement. Within our HR function we have a transactional section that deals with the administration and also a strategic section.



The CIPD (2020) tell us that organisational change is happening constantly and is driven by a number of factors including customers, markets and technology and needs a structured approach to manage it effectively.

If we have a tight labour market – Recruitment and Retention dominate our function but if we have a loose labour market – Performance and Strategic initiatives dominate. Objectives that would normally have been a low priority can change as has been seen recently with employee wellbeing now being a number one priority for most organisations due to the pandemic. Another priority for the HR function is productivity and efficiency – this will allow us to increase our workforce skills levels to allow for innovation and better use of technology. Wilkinson & Taylor (2016).

Common Drivers of Change



The CIPD People Profession Survey 2020 tell us that the key trends shaping the world of work are:

Technology – remote working, automation

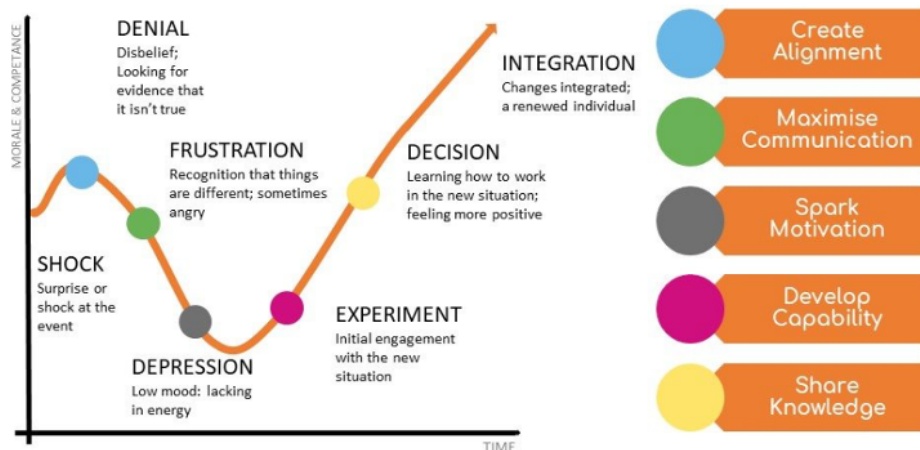
Workforce diversity – flexibility to suit needs, multicultural

Globalisation – consistent communication

Social Responsibility – trust, brand management, ethics

Research carried out by the CIPD on managing change demonstrated that the HR function has a vital role in any change management process, and is essential to the success by ensuring that the controllable areas of planning the processes and also the uncontrollable areas such as peoples differing reactions to change are dealt with appropriately. Enabling change is a core knowledge area on the new Profession map and this will ensure that HR professionals understand how to effectively manage change.

Kubler Ross Change Model



All change involves loss at some point – the Kubler Ross Five Stages model which was originally designed to understand the stages of grief is used to allow us to understand how and why people react as they do at different stages of a change process.

Change can bring about uncertainty and people move through the stages at different times and can also go back to stages – by predicting the stages we are able to provide help and support.

The first reaction is usually shock and denial – the HR function need to communicate to keep the individuals informed at this stage.

Frustration, anger and sometimes fear follows– careful consideration to emotions needed at this stage.

Depression and lack of motivation – reluctance to accepting the situation

Experiment – gradual acceptance

Gradually positivity with the new situation but still need time to adapt.

Eventually Integration – acceptance and celebration of change.

Change Management (2020) advises that the model is an indicator of ability to navigate change successfully. Change does come to an end and we should use it to grow and learn. By understanding this the HR function can successfully tailor and communicate support throughout the change process.

Communication

Top-Down



Bottom-Up



Two way



Organisations accept change in different ways – some are more accepting than others and the HR function can gain an understanding through staff surveys, focus groups and interviews. CIPD (2020) tells us that communication is the most important focus during any change process. If employees know what the changes are and the reasons for them they will be more accepting. The HR function is responsible for ensuring that the communication channels are in place prior to and during the change process. Top-down channels - Senior Managers speaking directly to employees with information on bulletins and intranet or via Line Managers.

Bottom-up channels – employees contributing to the process by collective consultation and workshops

Two way discussion – Line Managers and employees holding one-to-one meetings allowing discussion around concerns that the individual may have.

Throughout these communications the HR professionals need to ensure they are honest – underpinning and providing up to date information whether good, bad or unremarkable (CIPD 2005), whilst listening and allowing the employees to ask questions, be empathetic and continually monitoring the effectiveness of the communications.

Ulrich Three Legged Stool



The CIPD (2015) believes that there isn't just one model for structuring HR that is suitable for all organisations but the dominating practice model is the Business Partnering model by David Ulrich - mainly used in larger and public sector organisations.

It gives us the three different types of HR Functions

1. Centres of excellence – small teams of HR specialist providing solutions
2. Shared service centres – teams dealing with 'transactional' activities and can be shared across organisations
3. Business partners – working closely with Business leaders and Line managers.

The model is however a guide and individual organisations should adapt their own version to meet their needs – it may be impossible for smaller companies to follow this model due to the size of their HR function. Each strand needs to work together to produce a great workforce to achieve organisational objectives, working fairly and transparently at all times.

HR Function



Large Private Sector



Public Sector



Voluntary Sector



SME

The size of organisations and different objectives will have an impact on the type of HR functions and can be made up of variety of differing HR professionals:

HR Generalist – Can work as a team or individuals and have knowledge in all areas

HR Specialist – Knowledge in specialist areas and responsible for certain areas

HR Consultant/Outsourcing – Can be externally contracted – Generalist or Specialists – usually used by SMEs

Shared Services – Large organisations use this function to get access to a wide shared knowledge proving cost effective.

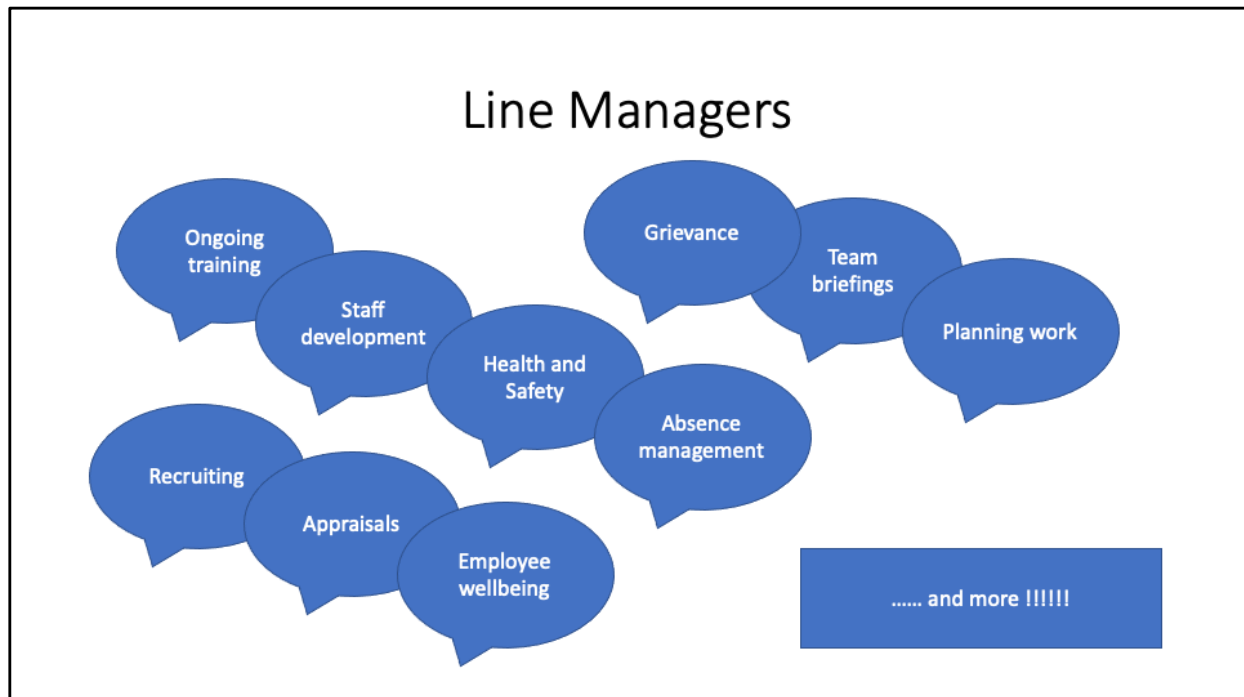
Key traits of these organisations are:

Large Private Sector – money making - function needs to add value.

Public Sector – objectives linked to service delivery. Efficiency maximized to save public money.

Voluntary Sector – cost effective. Attract new investment and staff based on values who will be valued and appreciated.

SME – Small workforce. – sole practitioners and HR consultants.



Whatever the type of HR function it is important that they work closely with Line Managers as employees will usually turn to them if they have any issues.

Line Managers are important in the delivery and achievement of HR objectives and CIPD (2020) tell us that it is essential that there is a good working relationship as they have more 'burdens and opportunities' than historically, being called upon to provide people data (especially in organisations that have outsourced their HR), motivating and engaging staff, monitoring performance and also influential in pay rises – especially performance related payments.

During the recent pandemic the support provided both ways between our HR Function and Line Managers has been heightened as the demand for information from employees has increased. Line Managers can be involved in processes whilst also carrying out their day to day work requirements and therefore need to be supported.

The HR function needs to ensure that the Line Managers have the required skills and knowledge of the people processes.

Ethics

- Fairness
- Deciding what is right or wrong
- Practices underpinning behaviour

Kew & Stredwick (2010)

The CIPD (2019) tells us that ethical values provide the moral compass by which we live our lives and make decisions. We must ensure that we do the right thing and not because of any gain to ourselves personally or financially.' Unfortunately not all companies follow this rule and more often than not they get caught out which can cause severe long lasting damage to their employer brand.

The HR function has a core ethical element and the business case for managing HR in an ethical manner covers several areas including:

To develop and maintain positive working relationships gaining trust by acting fairly and transparently.

Employer brand and reputation – individuals do not want to work for organisations that have a reputation of unethical behaviour.

Be a role model – HR function has to practice what it preaches if it expects the workforce to be ethical.

In People Management (2020) Judy Keir, HR Director at SMS tells us that as far as HR being the organization's ethical compass it should be remembered that they are only one compass point and that the CEO, board executive team and directors are equally important in acting ethically.

Lets get ethical !



CIPD (2017) informs us that there has been a diminished trust in companies due to recent scandals. Volkswagen were involved in the diesel emissions test cheating and Sports Direct paying staff below minimum wage and instilling a fear culture in employees.

The Guardian (2020) tell us that Boohoo - one of the largest online clothing retailers and has become infamous for its unethical behaviour. Overcrowded factory conditions causing health and safety concerns, non existent fire safety, wages below living wage, no holiday or sick pay and no recognition of trade unions. Even though the company have apologised and promised to work with authorities and civil partners to make the necessary changes more than 66.4% of UK shoppers have been discouraged from using the chain.

John Lewis' Partnership company is one of the most progressive UK shops. Owned by the employees with all workers having a say in how the business is operated and a share in the company profits.

Working with organisations to improve the employee rights and environmental impacts using the Ethical Trading Initiative. It does fall down in some areas including no supplier lists which is worrying especially in relation to garment workers as it is known that abuse is high in this area. They are committed to positive environmental targets in their Corporate Responsibility Report and will hopefully survive the current Pandemic and continue their improvements. Ethical Consumer (nd)



The HR function also has an important role in embedding Corporate Social Responsibility. The four pillars are:

Community - contribution– job provision , community or local project donations.

Environment. - sound environmental practices - low-emission high-mileage vehicles, biodegradable packaging.

Marketplace. - fair treatment of suppliers, contractors and shareholders.

Workplace. - fair and equitable treatment - Profit sharing, medical health care.

The Guardian (2018) tells us that research has shown that 75% of employees would take a pay cut to work for an organisation with good CSR and that 83% would stay loyal if they were able to contribute to social and environmental issues.

CSR involves the following:

- Alignment of policies and procedures
- Communicating and training on social and environmental responsibilities
- Ensure statutory obligations are met and promoted to go beyond
- Community based schemes - supporting and encouraging volunteers

It is important that the employees are involved in CSR and this can be achieved by staff surveys – enabling the organisation to decide on causes that the employees are passionate about, ensuring ‘buy in’ by being part of the decision making.

It is important for the employer brand that organisations mention their CSR in job descriptions or interviews – allowing time off for volunteering or charity matching. They can also contribute to business targets through many areas including reduced environmental costs or increased employee engagement and these outcomes are regularly measured by the HR function.

The most common evaluation tools now used are:

- HR Statistics – data gained from recruitment figures, training and development, grievance, absence and turnover, surveys, exit interviews
- Key Performance Indicators – these are the aspects of HR that are important for achieving the objectives of the organisation. They must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.
- Balance Scorecard – lists with agreed performance measures to achieve organisational objectives.

The HR function must ensure that it has systems in place to evaluate that it is 'adding value' to organisations. Previous evaluation of costs and time effectiveness did not reflect on contribution and has moved to four factors:

- Influence on strategy
- Views of stakeholders
- External benchmarking
- Internal SLA's

Analytics are a core area of the new Profession map and this has proven to be more important than ever during the recent Pandemic in Dyfed Powys Police where extensive information has been required about the people within our organisation.

There are four research designs as recommended by Anderson (2013)

- **Cross Sectional** - collection of data from a group or individuals at a set point in time.
 - Pros - useful for identifying patterns or trends – repeatable.
 - Cons – data quality dependant on survey or interview questions - difficult to assess as differing groups of participants have differing opinions.
- **Case Study** - detailed real-life investigation by interviewing or observing employees.
 - Cons – can be long, difficult and produce large amounts of qualitative data.
- **Action** - used to solve a particular problem by understanding and promoting change.
 - Cons - time consuming descriptive research rather than why things are that way.
- **Comparative** - comparisons between different groups or organisations.
 - Pros - allows to build on wisdom and errors of others, figuring out what works well and what doesn't and borrowing ideas - therefore saving valuable time.
 - Cons -not all environments have a sufficient amount in common.

CIPD (2020) tells us that research can help to improve evidence-based decision making within HR. People analytics including payroll, absence data and performance data provide the professionals with insights about their workforce.

Data can be qualitative or quantitative

Quantative can be measured and illustrated through numbers (recruitment data, productivity)whereas qualiatative can't be measured but can be subjective and illustrate individual views. (survey feedback, L&D outcomes).

Correlation is where a researcher measures two or more things, assesses the relationship between them – looking for patterns in things that happen.

Causational is when one thing happens and as a result of it happening it causes another thing to happen. If the first thing didn't happen the second wouldn't – making a cause based effect.

Relationships between the data can be investigated to establish whether they are correlated or casual.

The research report carried out by CIPD in 2017 tell us that the link between positive people outcomes and positive outcomes for the organisation is becoming more apparent and we need new solutions to fit that fit the needs of the specific organisation and workforce.

Wilkinson & Taylor (2016) tells us that over the last 15 years research into HR policies and practices and how they link to organisational performance has increased with esearch into 'best practice', 'best fit' or contingency theory to establish which is the best formula for success.

The most solid and value-added part of SHRM past and present comes from research

Kaufman

Twelve excellent companies were studied in 'Best Practice' research by Purcell at the University of Bath identifying that 'Ability, Motivation and Opportunity' were the key factors for employees to engage in 'discretionary behaviour' (going above and beyond because they care and want company success). They developed a model to help link HRM to performance but it could vary considerably when you factor in the different circumstances that could affect the outcomes ie. beliefs, personal situations which shows us that one model will never fit all.

LinkedIn details key research by the Institute for Employment Studies and the CIPD which cover areas such as impact, implementation and ethics and this has underpinned most of the work in the HR field. In their literature review they established that SHRM is not an easy concept to define and deliver. Qualitative research establishing 'how' strategies are developed 'how' well HRM works and 'how' it can be improved. The study did provide valuable information but perhaps a wider coverage of organisations would benefit as they focused more on operational HR and also more involvement of employees and line managers to compare their views on SRHM.

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