

Registers of Scotland

RoS Board

9 March 2021

Improving Productivity

Purpose

1. This paper notes the current challenges around productivity and considers the action being taken to improve the situation.

Recommendation

2. The Board is asked to advise on any additional or different approaches to improving productivity that we could implement.

Performance Context

3. The current short-term focus on bringing productivity back to pre-Covid levels can be seen in the context of a longer-term range of measures to improve RoS' performance, covering engagement and wellbeing, service and organisational design, as well as productivity.

4. Pre-Covid significant work had been undertaken to improve **engagement** across the organisation, and this has achieved much improved results in terms of Civil Service People Survey engagement scores, a positive interim report from our Investors in People assessor and much fuller use of the formal performance appraisal system. The evidence shows that generally more engaged colleagues perform better.

5. The other significant strand of work pre-Covid has been through **technology** and **process** improvements, largely led through SAT (service alignment team). One example would be app create, taking customer data and pre-populating the application record, which changes the registration role from data input to validation, and makes us much more resilient to changes in the levels of intakes. Another would be creation of the development plan approval and buying and selling teams that collectively take applications from start to finish, rather than individuals focussing on only part of a linear process.

6. The immediate impact of Covid was a focus on switching staff to be able to work remotely, and the use of furlough to support our finances as we gradually rolled out laptops to all. The focus was on **wellbeing**, reassuring people that jobs remained secure, information on how to work well remotely, and understanding that people should do what they could in the face of challenging circumstances.

7. For the second half of this financial year, it became clear that we needed more focus on productivity. Children were back in school, staff had been provided the equipment they needed to work effectively remotely, and yet we were not returning to pre-Covid productivity levels. At the same time the housing market had picked up, so the combined result was an increase, rather than decrease in our stock levels, and falling behind target on clearing the arrear and where we expected to be on completing

the land register. We therefore created a productivity workstream under the transition project. The reductions in hours available and the reduction in productivity levels during the hours worked are shown in Annex A.

Productivity Workstream

We set a clear outcome for this workstream: to return us to pre-Covid productivity levels, with an expectation we can achieve this for our registration products by end March 2021. We made the case for being more productive, as follows:

The more productive we are

- ... the more customers we can serve and the more satisfied they are with RoS's service
- ... the less we add to our stock of cases in the short term, and the more we reduce the backlog in the medium term
- ... the more income we earn and the less we need to drawdown from the SG reserve
- ... the more we can each feel we've had a good day at work
- ... the better case we can make for a permanent wellbeing hour and sustaining a choice of blended home / workplace working in the future.

8. Three key actions have been taken: workshops with team leaders to identify blockers to productivity; improved and more widely shared information on productivity levels; and giving team leaders the permission / senior leadership support to challenge poor productivity. We have purposefully put team leaders at the centre of this work, as their pivotal role is emphasised throughout the Investors in People feedback report.

9. In terms of blockers identified, there has been follow-on activity. For example, good practice and new habits in some areas are now being shared more widely through show and tells and use of RoSnet TL forum, and SAT are considering if there are technological solutions to some issues raised. In terms of information we have created new, repurposed metrics and reports and shared them with all staff (not just TLs) through RoSnet blogs. We are then supporting TLs through the management essentials training to be able to have robust conversations and use data effectively - not to encourage simplistic managing by numbers, but as the start of a discussion around performance, taking into account individual circumstances.

10. The evidence (as set out in Annex A) indicates productivity is now trending in the right direction across registration, though is likely to fall somewhat short of pre-Covid levels for our more complex products (FRs and TPs) by end March. For these 90% would be a good result.

11. We also have evidence on the variation in productivity impacts, showing around 30% are more productive than they were in the office, 25% around the same and 45% less productive.

Next Steps: Beyond productivity to wider performance

12. For next financial year, we want to broaden out the somewhat narrow focus on productivity, to a more holistic view of **performance**, probably led by the Performance

Achievement Team (PAT). We have already started the debates around how to best assess performance in customer service and corporate areas, which may involve internal and external customer feedback. We will want to take forward the findings from the recent objective-setting, performance experiments, where teams engaged more effectively with performance management through the adoption of shorter term, collectively agreed objectives for the team.

13. Where productivity focuses on the outputs for the hours worked, broader performance considerations are whether we can enhance the hours people are available for work, such as through changes to flexi systems and reductions in absence rates. Similarly we want to consider if we need to restructure teams and redefine roles to improve efficiency, building on the experience within squads where, for example, EO colleagues take ownership of all types of application, with HEOs acting as referral points to support more complex decision-making. We expect other performance improvements in corporate areas to come through data-driven insights. The use of Microsoft teams and use of the cloud should also improve efficiency.

Implications for Corporate Plan forecasts

14. Annex B illustrates the somewhat complex interaction of operational capacity (of which productivity is one of the key drivers) and demands for our services. For next year we intend to continue the approach used this year with four scenarios. These give us a range of income outcomes, along with a differential progress on our KPIs. Work on productivity improvements moves us into the top two quadrants.

Conclusion

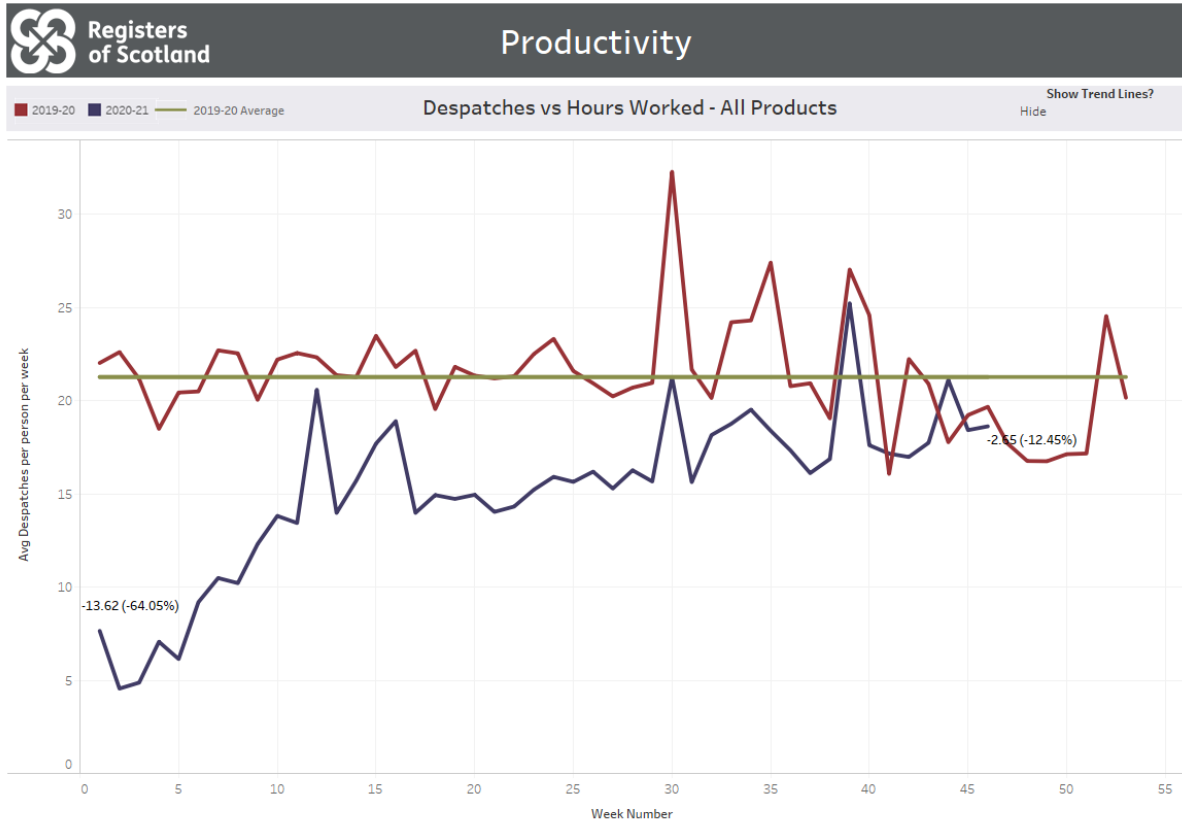
15. The recent focus on productivity appears to be supporting improvements. The next steps will be to build on this to deliver improved and sustainable performance longer term.

Accountable Officer
February 2021

Annex A: Information on Productivity Levels

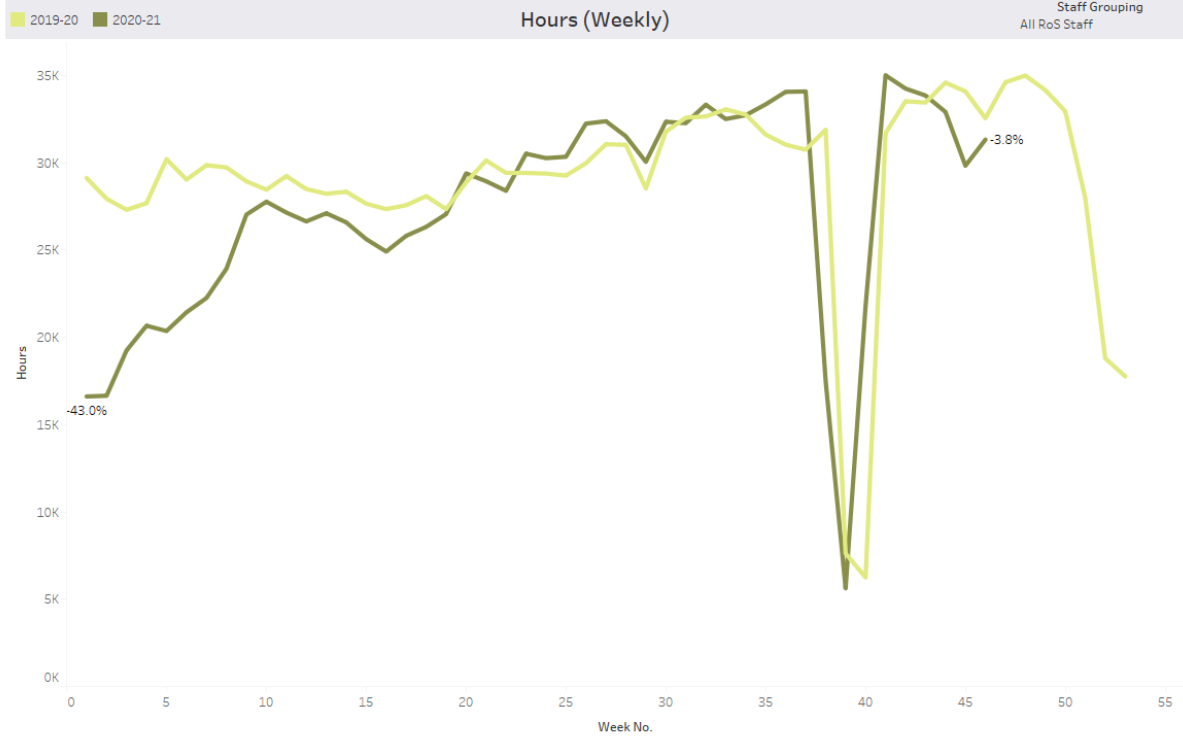
We have been collating and presenting a range of information on productivity levels.

For the transition project, we have been showing the global trend in registration productivity, using a range of graphs to illustrate the trend through time. The following overall measure for all types of registration product started the year 44% down on last year's average productivity level and has risen to match last year's level by the first week in February. (The dip in productivity from January to March 2020, pre-Covid, was largely linked to the introduction of 50 new AOs to the organisation with significant training requirements.)



Outputs were also further reduced in the first half of the year, through the reduction in overall hours worked. You will recall we used a combination of furlough for those without any laptop, and Covid hours to support staff through shorter working days where people had caring commitments or did not have suitable equipment such as monitors and chairs. In the first quarter of the year, the hours available for work were much reduced, but since around late August (week 20), productivity has been the main concern.

Hours Worked

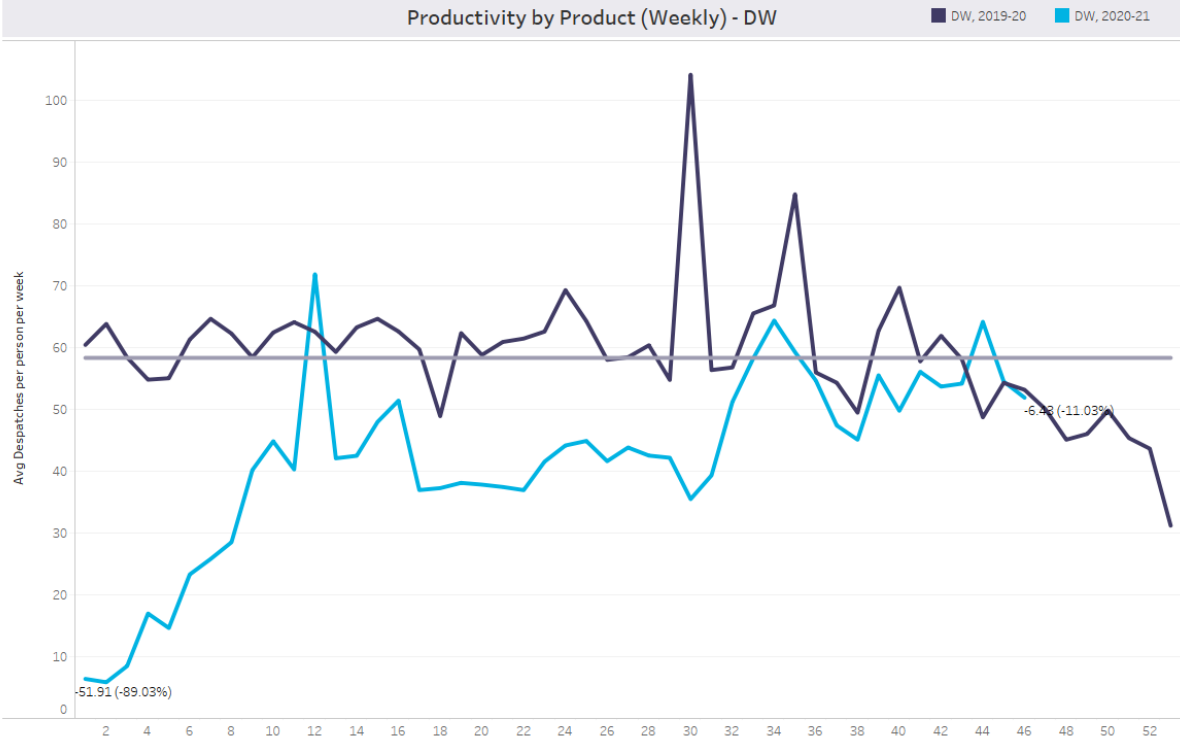


The following shows the global productivity measure for the key products. Dealings with whole (DW) dominate, making up around 80% of registrations, so outputs and productivity here drives overall income. First registrations (FRs) and Transfers of Part (TPs) are less significant in numbers, but productivity here feeds into whether stock levels and the arrear grow or reduce, and FRs feed directly into completing the land register.



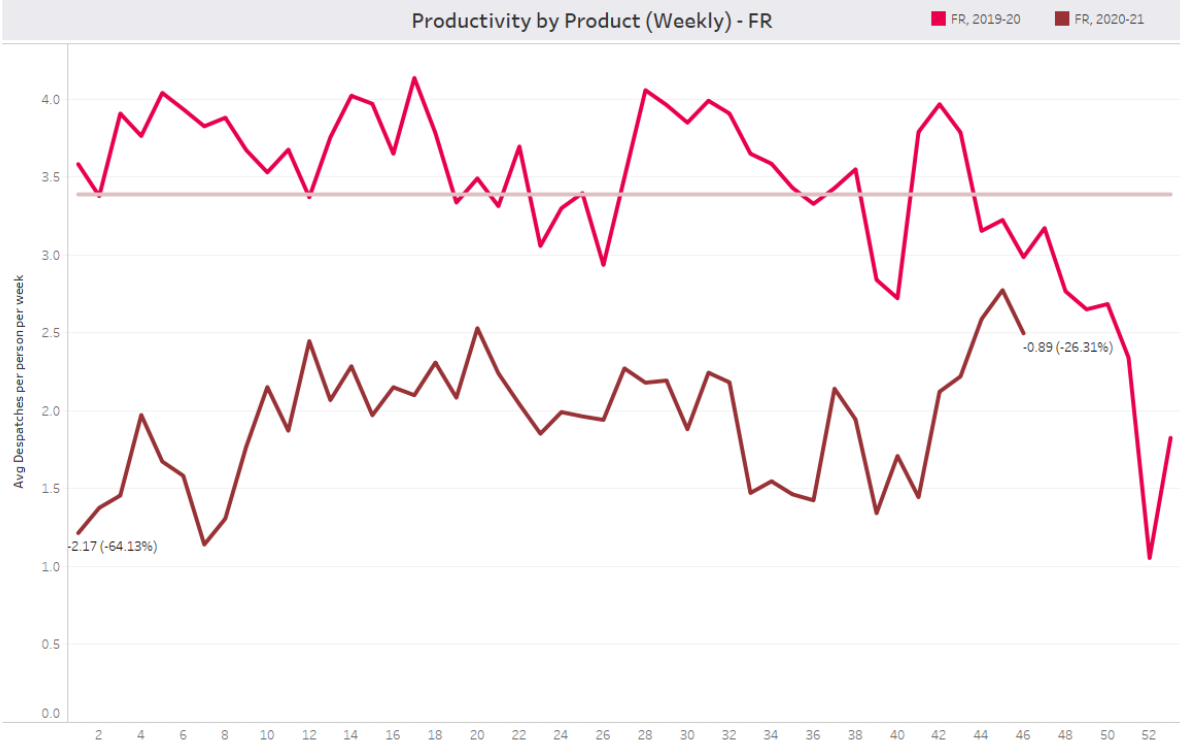
Registers of Scotland

Productivity - DW only



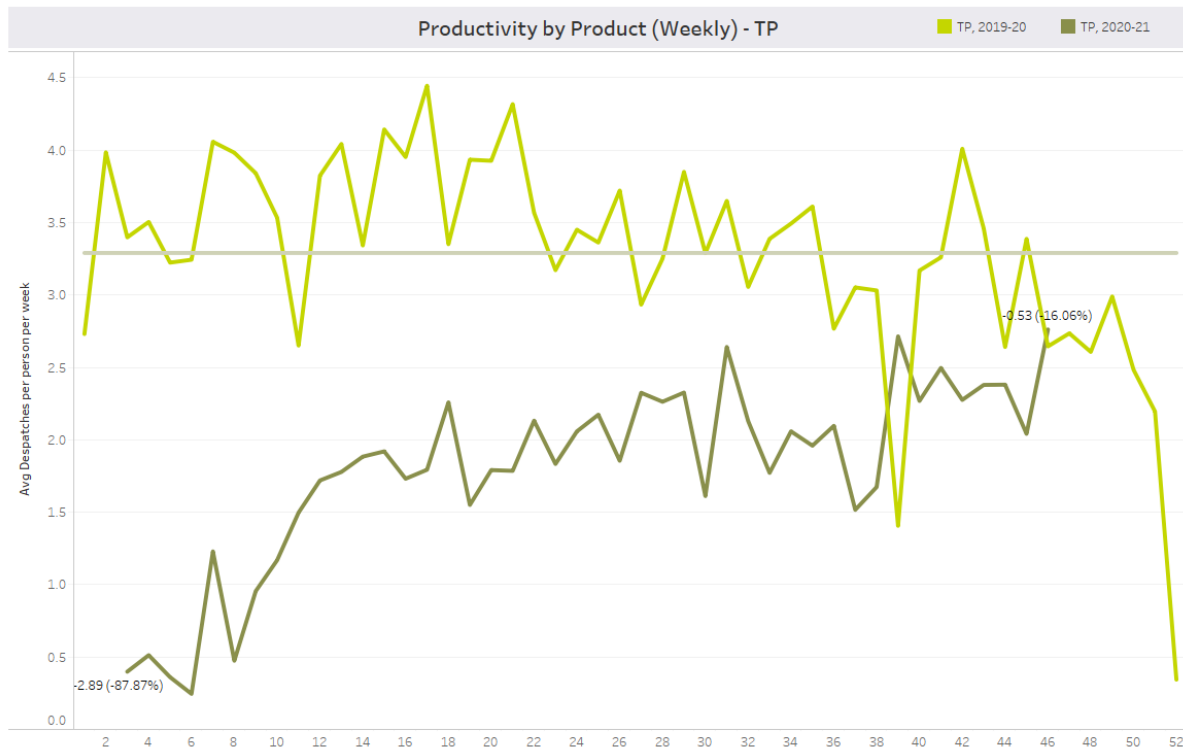
Registers of Scotland

Productivity - FR only





Productivity - TP only



BIA has for some time been producing individual productivity information for different roles and parts of a process, and we have repackaged these to give an at a glance RAG status to make them more readily useable for TLs - *Productivity on a page*. It's really encouraging to see the areas that are moving from red (below last month or last year's level) and into grey (similar to last month or last year) or even better into green (beating previous levels).

There is now a mix here of productivity at three different levels:

- global figures, like All Products, that take the total number of outputs and divide them by the total number of hours actually worked by the people in that area;
- granular figures, like DW AOs, that focus in on a part of a process, and take the outputs from that particular area and divide them by the hours actually worked by the people dealing with that part of the process; and
- the new squads, takes the outputs for the whole team and divide them by the hours worked.

Comparing January to December, this report shows us that productivity over all registration products increased by a further 1%. DWs has managed to keep up similar productivity levels, whilst facing high intakes and FRs and TPs are showing significant improvements month on month, both in the global figures and in the individual squads. Worth noting that TPs have been helping with some FR cases.

| | |
|--|--|
| Global figures (inc All support/TL) | Individual/Team figures (Ex support/TL) |
| key for RAG - | +5% |
| -5% | -5% < x < 5% |

| Global metric | Subset | Definition | Unit | Dec | Jan | Dec vs Jan | 2019/20 Average | Jan vs 2019/20 Av. |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--|---|------|------|------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| All products | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 3.3 | 3.4 | 1% | 4.1 | -17% |
| DWs | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 10.4 | 10.6 | 2% | 11.7 | -9% |
| | DW AO | DW Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 11.7 | 12.8 | 9% | 13.1 | -2% |
| | DW EO | DW Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 8.7 | 8.9 | 2% | 6.2 | 42% |
| FRs | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 0.3 | 0.4 | 11% | 0.7 | -46% |
| | Intake AO | FR Releases to plans / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 4.4 | 3.4 | -24% | 4.8 | -30% |
| | Plans AO | FR releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 2.4 | 2.4 | 1% | 2.4 | -1% |
| | Plans EO | FR Releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.8 | 0.7 | -12% | 0.9 | -21% |
| | Legal EO | FR Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0% | 2.2 | -48% |
| | Legal HEO | FR Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.5 | 0.5 | 4% | 0.9 | -48% |
| TPs | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 0.4 | 0.5 | 28% | 0.7 | -29% |
| | DPA Plans EO | TP releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.8 | 0.9 | 18% | 1.6 | -42% |
| | DPA Plans HEO | TP releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.6 | 0.8 | 19% | 1.2 | -39% |
| | DPA Single Settle/Legal AO | TP Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.9 | 1.6 | 74% | 2.0 | -20% |
| | DPA Single Settle/Legal HEO | TP Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 1.0 | 0.7 | -28% | 1.2 | -38% |
| | Ident/Intake AO | TP releases to Scan / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 1.1 | 1.0 | -8% | 5.7 | -83% |
| | Plans AO | TP releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 4.6 | 3.3 | -27% | 3.9 | -16% |
| | Plans EO | TP releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.8 | 0.9 | 18% | 1.6 | -41% |
| | Plans HEO | TP releases to legal / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.7 | 0.3 | -57% | 0.7 | -52% |
| | Legal AO | TP Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 6.0 | 4.5 | -25% | 4.1 | 9% |
| | Legal HEO | TP Releases to Despatch / hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.7 | 0.9 | 23% | 1.2 | -29% |
| Reports | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 6.4 | 5.0 | -21% | 6.6 | -24% |
| Sasines | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 1.1 | 0.5 | -53% | 3.2 | -83% |
| CAJR | | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Despatch per day per person (inc support/TL) | 11.6 | 10.9 | -6% | 15.6 | -30% |

note:

per person is 1 FTE day (7.24 h:mm)

Hours worked include Flexi and OT. (Global numbers includes WBH)

All Products include: DW, FR, TP Sasines and CAJR

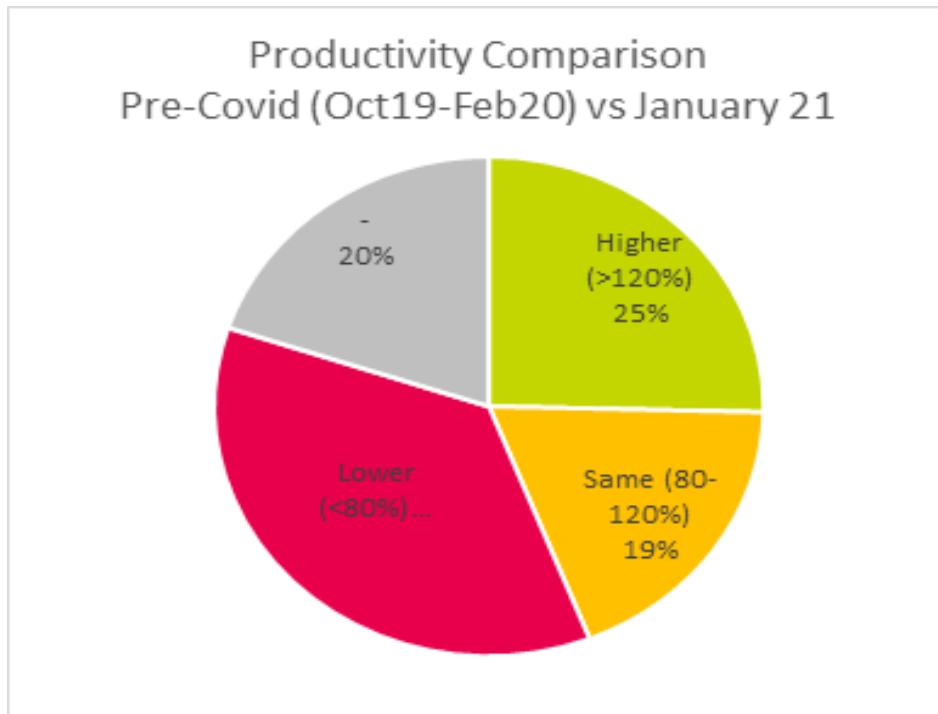
Squads Productivity review

| Squads | | Definition | Unit | Dec | Jan | Dec vs Jan |
|----------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|------|------------|
| Expedite | Total Expedite | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.45 | 0.50 | 12% |
| | Expedite TP | | | 0.43 | 0.50 | 18% |
| | Expedite FR | | | 0.48 | 0.51 | 6% |
| FR | Upfront DCU Squad 1 | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 0.37 | 0.39 | 6% |
| | Upfront DCU Squad 2 | | | 0.44 | 0.63 | 43% |
| | Upfront DCU Squad 3 | | | 0.28 | 0.61 | 115% |
| | Upfront DCU Squad 4 | | | 0.84 | 0.81 | -3% |
| | Upfront DCU Squad 9 | | | 0.50 | 0.46 | -8% |
| | Upfront Non-DCU Squad 10 | | | 0.41 | 0.31 | -24% |
| | AWG Squad 5 | | | 0.26 | 0.20 | -24% |
| | AWG Squad 6 | | | 0.52 | 0.57 | 8% |
| | AWG Squad 7 | | | 0.31 | 0.18 | -41% |
| | AWG Squad 8 | | | 1.47 | 0.27 | -82% |
| TP | Katrine | All despatches / total hours worked | Av. Apps per day per person | 1.47 | 0.99 | -33% |
| | Leven | | | 0.70 | 1.18 | 69% |
| | Lomond | | | 0.52 | 0.74 | 41% |
| | Sheil | | | 0.88 | 1.17 | 32% |
| | Tay | | | 0.87 | 0.87 | 0% |

Pre and post Covid comparison.

BIA has also updated its analysis of how individual people's productivity within registration has changed over the last few months. Comparing January 2021 to the 5 months pre-Covid, there is still a considerable range across individuals, but the trend is in the right direction.

As we reported previously using October figures, for around about a fifth of people (shown in grey) their roles had changed so a comparison was not available / appropriate. Of the rest, in October just over half were less productive working remotely – this has now reduced to 45% in January; about a fifth were more productive – this has now increased to over 30%; and the rest were working at around the same rates as in the office – this has now reduced to nearly a quarter.



Annex B: Corporate Plan 2021-22 Scenarios

The combination of forecast operational capacity and demand for our services leads to a range of potential outcomes. The work on productivity aims to shift us to the top two quadrants. For budgeting purposes with SG, we will be using a mid-point of the income outcomes.

Key internal drivers:

Productivity levels
Flow improvements
- squads
Process improvements - reuse of data / automation
Resourcing levels

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Outcome scenario: Slow market, optimised despatches</p> <p>Associated indicators: Intakes – 70% Productivity – 90% Turnaround in 35 days – 90% Total stock – Decreasing 2018 cases cleared in 12 months Hours worked – 100% Income – £65.0m</p> | <p>Outcome scenario: Busy market, optimised despatches</p> <p>Associated indicators: Intakes – 100% Productivity – 95% Turnaround in 35 days – 90% Total stock – Maintained 2018 cases cleared in 12 months Hours worked – 100% Income – £90.2m</p> |
| <p>Outcome scenario: Slow market, minimised despatches</p> <p>Associated indicators: Intakes – 70% Productivity – 75% Turnaround in 35 days – 60% Total stock – Decreasing 2018 cases cleared in 18 months Hours worked – 90% Income – £65.5m</p> | <p>Outcome scenario: Busy market, minimised despatches</p> <p>Associated indicators: Intakes – 70% Productivity – 75% Turnaround in 35 days – 60% Total stock – Increasing 2018 cases cleared in 18 months Hours worked – 90% Income – £79.0m</p> |

Notes

- All indicators % of pre-covid forecast levels, i.e. forecasts set in 2019-20, and averaged over 2021-22
- 2018 arrear eradication excludes complex TPs & related cases

Key external driver:

Market activity levels, customer update of digital services