



Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding Performance in relation to Sickness Absence provided by the Director of Human Resources, Performance & Communications

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give a summary of the challenges around managing attendance across the Council identifying good practice and areas requiring support. This report provides an indication of the ‘health’ of the Council as an organisation.

2. Background

2.1 Sickness absence is part of the Corporate Health – Sustainable Future Council Section within the Corporate Plan. The target for 2014/15 was to reduce the days lost to a maximum of 9 days per employee per year. This to be reduced on an annual basis, 2015/16 target is set at 8 days.

3.0 Performance in relation to sickness absence

3.1 The Corporate Plan Performance Report shows that there has been a slight reduction in the level of both long and short term sickness absence during 2014/15 with overall levels of sickness absence reducing from 11.07 days per employee in 2013/14 to 10.40 days per employee during 2014/15. There was an increase in sickness absence during Quarter 3 and 4 which could be due to a combination of factors.

3.2 The table below details the actual sickness absences (days per employees) for quarters 1 to 4 for 2014/15:

Directorate	Days lost 2014/15 Q1	Days Lost 2014/15 Q2	Days Lost 2014/15 Q3	Days Lost 2014/15 Q4	TOTAL DAYS LOST 2014/15	TOTAL DAYS LOST 2013/4
Adult and Communities	2.76	2.35	3.12	2.81	11.04	13.17
Children, Young People and Families	2.36	3.1	3.17	3.42	12.05	12.16
Public Health	0.84	4.47	11.00	4.24	20.55	11.06
Development, Environment & Culture	1.59	2.35	2.65	2.01	8.60	10.32
HR, Performance & Communications	1.73	2.43	2.23	1.37	7.75)
Finance, Property and Information Services	2.84	2.49	1.99	2.47	9.79) 9.55*
Legal and Governance	0.32	0.48	3.27	2.49	6.56)

**Reported previously as Corporate Services*

3.3 Across all the Council's Directorates there has been the following good practice:

- an increase in the number of Managers carrying out timely Long Term Ill Health meetings with referrals to the Occupational Health Unit
- earlier returns to work following long term sickness absence
- sickness absence included on Management and Trade Union Liaison agendas
- management requests for support from the Wellbeing Team
- increased number of Managing Attendance Meetings undertaken
- earlier terminations of employment on the grounds of ill health

3.4 There are still a number of areas for development across the Council which require support in order to achieve a cultural change in relation to the management of sickness absence:

- Managers reluctant to address persistent intermittent sickness absence particularly where they feel the employees are genuinely ill, irrespective of the levels of absence
- Managers feel unable to address sickness where this relates to a disability
- Managers tendency to extend a sanction with only one employee progressed from Stage 2 of the Managing Attendance Procedure to a dismissal meeting
- Managers allowing employees to remain in employment even when clear medical evidence from the Occupational Health Unit would support a dismissal on the grounds of ill health
- Managers feel they are unable to contact employees who are absent from work due to sickness

3.5 Employee Wellbeing Advisors are analysing monthly trigger reports to identify where sickness absence is particularly high or specific illnesses are prevalent. Contact is made with managers to implement targeted interventions to support employees at work and reduce sickness absence. Additionally, the Wellbeing Team have:

- a new Well@Work webpage with signposts to key organisations with advise and support for employees including Mental Health, Be Active, Smoking and Substance Misuse awareness
- developed a single Managing Attendance policy and Guidance which is scheduled for Cabinet during June 2015
- developed a suite of Well@Work training courses on BOLD including Stress Management for Managers, Smoking Awareness, Personal Resilience, Healthy Eating
- reported issues and statistics to the Council's SMT agenda on a quarterly basis
- supported Managers in the implementation of current sickness absence policies and procedures particularly where Managers have failed to undertake timely welfare and Managing Attendance meetings
- managed on a casework basis ensuring employees are back at work sooner by looking at duties they can undertake until they are able to return to the full duties of the post