

Attendance management and wellbeing update

Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Council's performance on attendance management at Quarter 2 2020/21.
- 1.2 To provide an update on the usage of the Council's external Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) during Quarter 2 2020/21.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To note that the Council's performance on attendance management Quarter 2 for 2020/21 was 2.73 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.36 days lost per FTE for the period.
- 2.2 To note the usage of the Council's external EAP during Quarter 2.

Reasons

- 3.1 To ensure that Personnel Committee is aware of the Quarter 2 performance on attendance. In addition, Personnel Committee requested an update on the usage of the external EAP during Quarter 2.

Supporting information

- 4.1 **Attendance management performance for Quarter 2 2020/21**
 - 4.1.1 The Quarter 2 2020/21 period actual of 2.73 days shows a decrease from the Quarter 2 2019/20 period actual where the result was 2.89 days lost per FTE. The Quarter 2 result of 2.73 days lost is higher than the quarterly target of 2.36 days. It is a slight increase compared to the Quarter 1 2020/21 performance of 2.24 days lost per FTE.
 - 4.1.2 The top 3 absence reasons across non-schools were Stress/Anxiety which was 28.66% of all absences, absences categorised as Other which was 10.08% and Coronavirus: COVID19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses make up the top 3 at 9.01%.

- 4.1.3 The Quarter 2 period falls during the global COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore Coronavirus:COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) as the third highest reason for sickness absence during this period is perhaps not surprising. In Quarter 1 of 2020/21 it was the second highest reason for absence, so we have seen a slight decrease in Quarter 2.
- 4.1.4 Managers continue to offer support and advice to colleagues absent due to stress/anxiety and to support their return to work. Significant effort has been made during the pandemic to provide colleagues with an extensive wellbeing offer. The Council has continued to provide colleagues with information, advice and signposting to a range of internal and external wellbeing advice and support. This includes the support available from the Council's external EAP, and further information about the usage of this service is detailed in paragraph 4.2 below.
- 4.2 **Employee Assistance Programme – EAP**
- 4.2.1 The Employee Assistance Programme, or EAP, is provided by an external company, AXA, to enable Council colleagues to access confidential support and reliable information on a range of issues. It is available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Counsellors are available and can refer colleagues for scheduled counselling sessions, where appropriate, either by phone, face-to-face or online. A range of advice is also available on other matters, including health and financial matters. The EAP also provides a suite of on-line information which colleagues can access at their convenience.
- 4.2.2 The Personnel Committee at its meeting on 16 November 2020 asked for information about the EAP's recent usage. Specifically, the Personnel Committee were interested to know if the usage of the EAP had increased in Quarter 2 from Quarter 1.
- 4.2.3 The following anonymised information has been provided by the EAP:
- A total of 59 counselling sessions were accessed in Quarter 2, compared to 44 in Quarter 1. These are one to one sessions, either face to face or by telephone.
 - There has been a total of 264 hits/clicks on the AXA website, compared to 182 in Quarter 1.
 - There was a 49% increase in hits/clicks on the mental wellbeing support page on the AXA website. This guidance is used for managing one's own wellbeing, demonstrating that colleagues are using the information available to them.
 - During Quarter 2, 22 % of all hits/clicks were on the COVID support page, which includes information on how to look after yourself in the new normal.
- 4.2.4 The increased usage figures may not be surprising in the current pandemic circumstances. The EAP is one of a number of wellbeing support options the Council makes available for its colleagues. Promoting the range of wellbeing support available to Council colleagues has been, and remains, a priority during the pandemic.

4.3 Wellbeing approach

4.3.1 To assess the wellbeing of colleagues during the pandemic, the Council has carried out a couple of short surveys. The first was in June 2020 and the encouraging results of that survey were shared with Personnel Committee on 16 November 2020. A further on-line survey has taken place in November, primarily aimed at those colleagues who were working some, or all, of their contracted hours on a remote basis. There were 1096 on-line surveys completed, and the headline results are as follows

- 87% of respondents knew how to access wellbeing support
- 76% felt connected to their teams/service
- 84% felt well-informed about what was happening in the council
- 90% felt safe with current working arrangements
- 64% felt valued by senior managers

The majority of respondents knew how to access wellbeing support, and felt well informed and connected to their teams.

4.3.2 There is a slight (2-3%) downward trend from the responses in June, but this could be expected due to the longer-term nature of the pandemic and working from home for longer. The results are still positive overall, and managers have been reminded to maintain all the support meetings and contact that they have in place with their teams. Senior management are also considering how they can maintain visibility with their teams.

4.3.3 As reported at Personnel Committee on 16 November 2020, creating a wellbeing culture where we offer a range of wellbeing information and advice, and where we take personal accountability for our own wellbeing, supports a culture where colleagues feel valued and appreciated.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 Council senior managers on the focus on leadership development and wellbeing.

Other options

6.1 Do nothing. This is not considered to be a viable option, as the Council is committed to supporting colleagues to take personal ownership of their wellbeing.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 None directly arising.

Legal implications

8.1 None directly arising.

Other significant implications

9.1 None identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal		
Finance		
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor	Simon Riley, Strategic Director of Corporate Resources	
Other(s)	Liz Moore, Head of HR	

Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	None