



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
14 September 2023

ITEM 5

Report sponsor: Heather Greenan, Director of Corporate Management
Report author: Adele Ashmore, Strategic HR Manager

Colleague health and wellbeing update and Quarter one Attendance Management Performance

Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the colleague health and wellbeing approach the Council is taking to support all colleagues across the Council during 2023/24 and provides the headlines of the Council's attendance management quarter one performance for 2023/24.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the colleague health and wellbeing offer that is available to the Council's colleagues, and the importance of supporting colleagues to take personal responsibility for their wellbeing.
- 2.2 To note that from 1 June 2023, the Council has moved from an externally hosted absence reporting platform to colleagues contacting their manager if they are absent from work due to ill health.
- 2.3 To note the Council's attendance management performance for quarter one of 2.78 FTE days lost and a year-end forecast of 11.11 FTE days lost for 2023/24, against a year-end target of 10.5 FTE days lost.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that Personnel Committee is aware of the continued focus on colleague health and wellbeing, and the context in which that focus is operating and the quarter one attendance management performance.

Supporting information

- 4.1 We will continue to keep the focus on the health and wellbeing of our colleagues during 2023/24.

4.2 Occupational Health and Wellbeing approach

Personnel Committee have regularly received updates about the ongoing work of the Occupational Health and Wellbeing service, and the continued development of the Council's health and wellbeing approach previously.

The Council provides an in-house, doctor-led Occupational Health service. We moved from a nurse-led appointment service in 2022, both to improve the quality of advice and reports written and because qualified occupational health physicians can carry out the full remit of an Occupational Health service.

The referring manager now receives the full Occupational Health report within 24 hours of the appointment, to support them to manage the absence quickly and efficiently.

The Occupational Health service continues to perform well against service level agreements, delivering appointments within 5-10 days of receipt of the referral.

The service delivers above local benchmarks where appointments are offered within 21 days whilst being at maximum capacity due to the increased focus of managing absence effectively.

An integral part of our wellbeing offer is the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is externally hosted. Colleagues can access information and advice on a range of health and financial matters, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Our usage is at 4.5%, above an industry average of 1.7%. A total of 13 new counselling cases were opened in June and 14 in July. Figures are from 1st June to 31st July. To note, People Services directorate remains the highest user of the counselling service at 72% of all sessions during this period.

The average take-up remains at 7 counselling sessions each. The most popular format for the session was telephone consultations.

The top three reasons for accessing counselling sessions across all council directorates were anxiety, women's health and work-related conflict. Personal Issues accounted for 64% of access and work-related issues accounted for 36% of access which is an increase on the last report. Whilst the data of who accesses counselling is never disclosed to the Council, headline figures of levels of take up are shared at a directorate level.

The focus now is with managers in the People Services directorate to understand, from a business partnering approach, what actions can be taken to understand and address the recent rise in work related matters.

As services continue to focus on relevant actions to reduce the absence levels, an analysis of average working days lost due to sickness absence is currently being carried out, this may relate to the increase in counselling sessions.

Further work on absence analysis is underway, with a working group established to bring together good practice and actions to support the reduction of absence whilst reviewing people services action plans.

4.3 **Absence reporting impacts**

Effective from the 1 June 2023, colleagues ring their manager if they are unwell, rather than ringing an externally hosted absence reporting line. We anticipated that this early contact with a line manager when a colleague is unwell, would help to see a positive impact on the number of absent colleagues across the Council from an early engagement approach. Communications to managers and colleagues on how to administer the Attendance Management process has been distributed and workshops completed for managers on how to input an absence has been positively received. Whilst it is too early to forecast a long term and ongoing positive decrease in the number of days lost in each quarter, the data for quarter one is encouraging that early intervention at the earliest stage of absence will continue to have a positive impact for colleagues and attendance performance.

4.4 **Attendance Management Performance for 2023/24**

The Council's performance on attendance for the current financial year quarter one result of 2.78 FTE days lost shows a positive decrease against the quarter four 2022/23 period actual result of 3.00 FTE days lost. This is a positive decrease when compared to quarter one 2022/23 where the period result was 3.24 FTE days lost.

The quarter one result gives us a year-end forecast of 11.11 FTE days lost which would be 0.61 days higher than the year-end target of 10.5 FTE days lost, but positively lower than the 2022/23 13.34 FTE days lost end of year result.

Effective from the 1 May 2023, following the Senior Leadership restructure, a number of department and team changes were implemented in the Council's organisational structure. The current year to date position by Directorate has been split to show the number of days lost under the previous Directorate names and new Directorate names:

April 2023:

Corporate Resources - 0.28 FTE days lost
People Services - 1.67 FTE days lost.
Communities and Place – 0.94 FTE days lost

May and June 2023:

Chief Executive's – 1.12 FTE days lost and year end forecast of 6.18 FTE days lost.
Peoples Services - 1.92 FTE days lost and year end forecast of 10.57 FTE days lost.
Place - 2.64 FTE days lost and year end forecast of 14.54 FTE days lost.

The top 3 absence reasons for quarter one are as follows:

1. Stress/Anxiety - 21.05% of all absence. (not including Depression/Psychological illness related absences)
2. Musculoskeletal - 17.24% of all absence.
3. Operations Post operative recovery & other hospital treatments - 6.87% of all absence.

4.5 **Future focus for 2023/24**

Our focus throughout the remainder of 23/24 is defining our Wellbeing Strategy, as this will form an integral part of our Council People Strategy. The recently established People and Culture Programme Board will oversee the development and implementation of the strategies, underlining the importance of positive health and wellbeing for our colleagues.

Our prevention focussed wellbeing approach supports our vision of ensuring that health and wellbeing is embedded in everything we do and championed at all levels and across all functions, so that positive wellbeing becomes part of our culture.

We recognise that wellbeing does not start and end in the workplace. We want to empower our colleagues to make informed choices and engage in positive health and wellbeing behaviours so that they can thrive at the Council and beyond. We will build on the work that we've been doing over the last 12 months to support colleagues to make these informed choices.

We will be exploring the following actions during 2023/24:

- Potential to develop our existing mental health champion network into an overarching wellbeing champion network to signpost colleagues on a range of health and wellbeing issues.
- Improve the understanding of occupational health and wellbeing and developing a culture of wellbeing – by regular team discussions to ensure that our comprehensive wellbeing offer is understood, complemented by a wellbeing programme running throughout the year.
- Provide appropriate guidance based on national campaigns and relevant research in line with our NHS partners. This will provide information to our workforce to allow them to make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing. We will maximise all opportunities with collaborate with partners.
- Provide the support and tools needed to make healthy choices, so that our colleagues can continue to take responsibility for improving their own health and wellbeing.
- Develop a wellbeing activity calendar, and all the activity associated with the planned actions to be supported by the identified champion network.

In addition, services will continue to focus on relevant actions to reduce the absence levels and an analysis of average working days lost due to sickness absence has been carried out, looking at our local data and within the national context.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 Public and Stakeholder engagement has not been required for this report.

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 health and wellbeing.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Services may be impacted financially due to capacity or resourcing issues to deliver services. This can create additional budget spend which will need to be accounted for.

Legal implications

- 8.1 None arising from this report.

Climate implications

- 9.1 None arising from this report.

Other significant implications

- 10.1 Colleague health and well-being is a risk on the Council's strategic risk register which is monitored regularly and performance is reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny. This paper contains actions which helps to mitigate the risk.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal Finance Service Director(s)	Heather Greenan, Director of Corporate Management	31/08/2023
Report sponsor Other(s)	Liz Moore, Head of HR and OD	30/08/2023

Background papers:
List of appendices: