

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
11 April 2019



Report sponsor: Don McLure, Strategic Director of Corporate Resources
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ITEM 5

Attendance Management Project Update

Purpose

- 1.1 To update the committee on recent progress,
- 1.2 The Attendance Management Project Group continues to provide direction in order to support the aim of reducing sickness absence rates in the Council.
- 1.3 At the end of February 2019, the full time equivalent days lost per employee was 11.96 days over the 12 month rolling period, against a current Council target of 11.5 fte days for 2018/19.
- 1.4 Return to Work compliance has been steadily improving over the last 12 months with on average a 3-5% monthly increase within each service area. The Council's current RTW compliance for February 2019 is 72.2% as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 Director absence targets have been set for each Strategic and Service Director for each of their teams which will take effect from April 2019. Committee to note the targets as set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.6 Data on sickness absence rates is presented to Directorate Management Team meetings and Corporate Leadership Team Performance Board on a monthly basis.

Recommendation

- 2.1 For Personnel Committee to note the updated absence data and the continued support from the Project Group, with the aim of reducing sickness absence rates in the Council.

Reason

- 3.1 Personnel Committee have requested that an update on attendance management is a standing agenda item and it is a corporate priority.

Supporting information

- 4.1 The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has confirmed their commitment to managers managing attendance and delivering an improvement in performance. Monthly data reports on sickness absence rates are presented to Directorate Management Team meetings, and also to the CLT Performance Board.

- 4.2 The Project Group continues to meet and the action plan is currently being updated to reflect the current and future priorities. The Project Group has been extended to include Heads of Service and managers from high absence areas. This will help inform and update the action plan which will be shared with the Corporate Leadership Performance Board. The Health, Wellbeing and Attendance Action Plan is set out in ***Appendix 3***.
- 4.3 Directorate targets have now been developed and issued to all Directors. The targets were developed after the Health, Wellbeing and Attendance Team (HWAT) carried out a review of absence across the Council. The team identified 4 common factors in areas with high absence which consisted of:
- Age profile of the workforce (staff between 45 – 65, taking more absence)
 - Non office based operational model
 - High number of FTE within the service
 - Poor sickness absence performance from the previous year.
- Five services were identified as meeting all four common factors as listed above, therefore making them more vulnerable to high sickness absence as set out in ***Appendix 2***.
- 4.4 In order to reduce the impact of the factors above, the HWAT have the following support in place for managers to access to ensure that they are effectively managing their employee's health, wellbeing and attendance:
- **Health and Attendance Clinics** – available weekly for all managers to assist with health, wellbeing and attendance issues. The clinics will now include a HR Adviser.
 - **FirstCare system** – all support/management actions should be recorded on FirstCare under the employee notes tab.
 - **Absence monitoring on FirstCare** – allows managers to record what action/support is being taken with regards to absence management.
 - **Training** – there are a range of courses available to managers to assist with effectively managing health and attendance. These include; health, wellbeing and attendance new manager Induction, stress management for managers, using FirstCare effectively, effective return to work interviews, effective OH referrals, effective health, wellbeing and attendance conversations and stress risk assessment.
- 4.5 Mental Health and stress related absence is the biggest cause of sickness by absence spells and working days lost across the organisation. This is particularly high within People Services where every 1 in 3 days lost to sickness absence is mental health related. The HWAT have contacted Peoples Service Director to arrange for Mental Health First Aid to be promoted and set up across the service, along with looking at other ways of supporting the service.
- 4.6 The HWAT have recently started reviewing all attendance triggers that have been hit on the FirstCare system since January 19 – February 19. A process has been agreed with CLT where the team contacts managers to get an update on what is happening with their employee. Advice and support is then offered to management to

ensure that the correct management support is applied. HWAT will advise managers on the informal stages of attendance and when cases are escalated to the formal process, this will then be supported by the HR Advisors.

- 4.7 Mental Health First Aider training is in place to recruit and Train 100 Mental Health First Aiders. The Council currently has 88 accredited Mental Health First Aiders trained and a further 16 will be trained by end of March 2019. A review of the Mental Health First Aider provision is also scheduled in March 2019 and a further report presented to CLT in April.
- 4.8 FirstCare now has an absence monitoring tracking facility which has been added to the system. This allows managers to track and update any action that they are taking when employees are hitting absence trigger alerts. This makes it easier for managers to use and keep all of their health, wellbeing and attendance support and actions in one central system, as well as allowing the HR and HWAT Teams to run reports on where employees are in the management progress.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 Not applicable.

Other options

- 6.1 Do nothing. This is not considered to be a viable option, as the Council needs to reduce the current levels of sickness absence and work towards achieving the current sickness absence performance target of 11.5 FTE days lost.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Managing attendance in a more consistent and timely way should reduce costs of covering sickness absence, in addition to significantly improving productivity.

Legal implications

- 8.1 There may be an increase in legal challenge dependent on any changes in the Council's approach to managing attendance.

Other significant implications

- 9.1 None identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	N/a	
Finance	N/a	
Service Director(s)	Nicola Sykes, Director of HR and OD	
Report sponsor	Don McLure, Strategic Director of Corporate Services	
Other(s)	Diane Sturdy, OD Manager	

Background papers	None
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List of appendices:

Appendix 1 - FirstCare data slides (mental health, RTW and days lost per fte)

Appendix 2 - Director Targets

Appendix 3 - HWAT action plan document