



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
23 June 2022

ITEM 06

Report sponsor: Simon Riley, Strategic Director
of Corporate Resources
Report author: Adele Ashmore – Acting
Strategic HR Manager

Attendance management – Quarter 4 - 2021/22

Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Council's performance on attendance management at Quarter 4, 2021/22.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note that the Council's performance on attendance management for Quarter 4 2021/22 was 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.12 days. Quarter 3 also showed 3.67 days lost for each full-time equivalent making the two periods comparable.
- 2.2 To note that if the COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses were removed from the attendance management data, the Quarter 4 performance would be 10.75 FTE days lost.
- 2.3 To note that a report will be brought to the September Personnel Committee meeting which updates the Committee on the positive approach of the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing offer.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that Personnel Committee is aware of the Quarter 4 performance for the year 2021/22.

Supporting information

4.1 Attendance management performance for Quarter 4 2021/22

The top three reasons for absence in Quarter 4 are:

1. Stress/Anxiety: 18.30%, a decrease of 0.15% on Quarter 3 (position 1)
2. COVID-19 related illnesses: 16.05%, an increase of 2.23% on Quarter 3 (position 2)
3. Musculoskeletal: 12.28%, a decrease of 0.06% on Quarter 3 (position 3)

The top three reasons for absence in Quarter 4 whilst remain the same, COVID-19 has been the only absence reason to show an increase on the data from Quarter 3, with all other absence reasons showing a decrease.

The increase of COVID-19 cases may be linked to the relaxing of the COVID-19 regulations over Quarter 4. On Monday 4 January 2022, the Cabinet Office warned UK Public Sector employers to prepare for worst-case-scenario staff absence rates of 10-25%, the reported 16.05% still puts us within the expected range of COVID19 related absence rates for the Council.

Directorate	FTE days lost Quarter 1	FTE days lost Quarter 2	FTE days lost Quarter 3	FTE days Quarter 4 year end position	2021/22 - FTE End of Year Target
Communities and Place	2.82	3.35	3.91	14.12	8.1
Corporate Resources	1.45	2.04	2.41	8.33	7.0
People Services	2.66	3.22	4.23	14.43	9.6
	Overall year-end as at 31/03/2022 (including COVID-19)				12.81
	Overall year end forecast as at 31/03/2022 (excluding COVID-19)				10.75
	Overall year-end target				8.5

All Directorates have reported an FTE day loss greater than their year-end target which was to be expected after what has been a challenging period for the country and the Council as whole in managing within the context of a global pandemic.

The overall year end forecast at the end of Quarter 3 was 12.14 FTE days, at the end of Quarter 4 the overall year end is reported as 12.81 FTE days, slightly over forecast. Whilst there was a decrease on the number of Stress/Anxiety absences along with Musculoskeletal cases for Quarter 4, the increase of COVID related absence pushed the Council above the end of year forecast of 12.62 FTE days.

Throughout 2021/2022, Personnel Committee were informed of the impacts of the COVID 19 absence rates for each quarter correctly forecasting when an increase in cold/flu virus transmission and COVID-19 absence levels would be expected. Whilst we saw a slight increase over Quarter 4 on the number of confirmed COVID-19 absence cases as at the 1 April 2022, the government have replaced all domestic

COVID regulations with guidance as follows:

- The government guidance now refers to symptoms of a common respiratory infection such as COVID-19 and we are now in the living with COVID phase.
- There is no longer a legal requirement for colleagues to self-isolate, however, if they have symptoms of a common respiratory infection such as a high temperature then they are advised to stay at home until they feel well.
- The pandemic has moved from a crisis/ pandemic response and we are now working towards returning to business as usual.
- There is now a small number of people who are considered at higher risk from COVID-19 (formally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable). The majority are now well protected by vaccinations and are no longer considered at a substantially greater risk than the general population. Government advice for this group is to take care to avoid routine coughs, colds and other respiratory viruses.
- The government is currently defining it's plan for COVID-19 autumn booster programme. Initial guidance states this will be to increase population immunity and protection against severe COVID-19, specifically hospitalisation and death over the winter period.

The Council has seen sickness absence rates reduce year on year from 2018/19 to 2020/21. This has been a very encouraging trend, and whilst the absence rates have seen an increase in 2021/22, the increase needs to be seen in the context of both the direct and the indirect impact of the continuing pandemic.

Whilst there remains uncertainty with regards to the likelihood, timing and severity of any potential future wave of COVID-19 in the UK, in the year ahead it is anticipated that COVID-19 related cases will decline. HR review on an ongoing basis the Council's approach to COVID-19 and the associated guidance in collaboration with Occupational Health and Wellbeing, Public Health and Health and Safety colleagues.

As noted at the last Personnel Committee meeting, the HR team and the Strategy and Performance Team are working on a joint approach to determine future attendance targets, as well as capturing the positive trend on reducing absence and mapping future actions. These will include, but aren't limited to;

- departmental targets will be monitored and reported to Service Directors
- service action plans will continue to be owned by the Head of Service, supported by advice and coaching as appropriate from HR Business Partners
- bite-size coaching presentations delivered by HR to support managers to confidently manage attendance.

The joint work by the HR team and the Strategy and Performance Team will be captured in a "Turning the Curve" report, which will also detail the positive approach of the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing offer.

4.2 Occupational Health and Wellbeing approach

Occupational Health continues to perform above industry benchmarks with its delivery of Occupational Health appointments for colleagues. We are currently well within our service level agreement, delivering appointments within eight days or less.

Management reports are issued within 48 hours of the appointment attended, and 100% performance is currently achieved.

The focus now is on annual health surveillance Driver Assessments within Street Pride, aiming to achieve 100% completion by February 2023.

We have successfully launched the employee assistance mobile app with the first set of data about usage being available mid-June. This is another positive addition to our wellbeing approach to support our colleagues and families, which they can access on the go and at the touch of the button.

We will be reviewing our health and wellbeing strategy and we will provide a further update at the next Personnel Committee.

We continue to keep our focus on the health and wellbeing of our colleagues and Occupational Health continues to perform well with its delivery of Occupational Health appointments and services for colleagues.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 Public 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 wellbeing.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 None directly arising from this report.

Legal implications

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

Climate implications

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

Other significant implications

10.1 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	13/06/2022
Other(s)	Liz Moore, Head of HR	04/06/2022
Background papers:	None	
List of appendices:	None	