Sickness Absence – Update and predicted outcome for 2012-13

PURPOSE

1. To report on the sickness absence statistics from April to February 2013 together with a predicted outcome for the year, compliance with the Managing Attendance Policy and health and wellbeing initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the predicted outcome of sickness days per employee, measured against the agreed target is noted, together with trends, compliance data and activities being undertaken to reduce employee absence and support well being.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. The reduction of sickness absence is a key performance indicator for the Council in order to continually improve performance. In addition to managing attendance the Council has a responsibility for employee welfare which in part can be met by encouraging and supporting employees to look after their own health and well being.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Statistical Data

4. The Council’s sickness absence target for 2012-13 was agreed at 6 days absence per employee, set at this level following our lowest ever figure of 5.76 days per employee in 2011/12.

The total absence for April to February 2013 is 6.75 days per employee (2.98 short term and 3.77 long term). It is therefore estimated that the total outturn for the year will be 7.4 d/e. This is higher than our target but lower than the figure of 7.66 for 2010/11. However, the estimated total short term figure of 3.3 days/employee demonstrates that the lower levels of short term absence are being maintained and are comparable to last year (3.03) and significantly lower than 2010/11 (5.22). This reaffirms the effectiveness of the Council’s Managing Attendance Policy in relation to short term absence.
The main cause of the increase therefore relates to a higher level of long term absence over the year. At an estimated 4.1 d/e this will be the highest level it has been since 2008/9. In total 29 employees have had longer term absences this year (over 20 days). The majority relate to stress, anxiety or depression (38% of the absence reason). Two or three of these absences could be said to strongly relate to redundancy or disciplinary matters. There have also been a number of employees receiving treatment for cancer, stroke and heart problems. At present we have 4 employees currently absent long term who are being managed and monitored by managers, supported by the People and Development Team.

5. Analysis on the absence data continues to be done on a quarterly basis by the P&D Team and reports provided to Management Team – the last one being April to December 2012. Managers are reminded on a monthly basis of the reports available on HR21 in regard to managing the attendance of their employees. A monthly email goes to Heads of Service to highlight any outstanding SARs and FARs where appropriate. Statistics for each service unit for April to December is shown at Appendix 1.

6. The position at the end of December 2012 was reported to Management Team. Any non compliance with procedures was highlighted for their action. At December it was evident that although short term absence was being maintained at low levels, long term absence levels had risen and further information on this was provided.

7. In the year up to December 2012 Housing and Development Control have the highest short term and long term absence totals (11.08 d/e). Customer and IT services is the second highest overall (9.22 d/e), 68% of which was long term absence. Greenspace and Amenities' total of 7.03 d/e also has a higher percentage of long term absence.

8. In the last quarter of 2012 65.7% of employees had 100% attendance. This is less than the same period last year. Employees value their full attendance being acknowledged and the Council has again assessed full attendance for the 12 month period from January to December 2012 and written to 55.5% of employees. Whilst the total is less than last year (62.6%) this is still higher than in previous years.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
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<td>Q3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
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9. **Causes of Absence**

The top cause of absence for April for December continues to be Stress / Depression / Anxiety at 23.9% of the total actual sickness figure. Other Musculo Skeletal (13.1%) and Back and Neck (12.2%) were the second and third highest. Stress and Other Musculo Skeletal related illnesses are consistently in the top three categories in common with other organisations however the volume of these absence categories continues to be at much lower levels than in previous years.

In the year to date days lost due to stress, depression or anxiety has risen by almost 10% compared with last year however overall the total percentage, at around a quarter of all absences is much less than the 33% of 2009-10. It provides evidence that the Council’s well being strategy and initiatives continue to have a positive impact on stress related illnesses and absence levels generally.
Compliance

10. The People and Development Team provide information and reports to managers. The majority of managers now have ready access to information such as sickness absence records, sickness absence reviews, special and annual leave via HR21, which enables them to better manage their employees’ attendance. The People and Development team are on hand to provide additional information, advice and support as required.

11. **Sickness Absence Reviews (SARs)**
   At the time of analysis done in January 2013 19 employees (excluding those at the formal stage) were on the review system. This compares to 13 employees at the same time last year. Three SARs were overdue at the time of the analysis (Housing 1, Sport and Culture 1 and CEO 1). One has since been completed, one employee is absent and one is ending their employment at the end of March.

12. **Formal Attendance Reviews (FARs)**
   Also in December 13 employees were in the formal absence review process. There were 14 employees on this type of review at the same period last year. Six FARs were overdue at the time of the analysis and were reported to Management Team. Three have been put on hold due to redundancy of the employees or maternity related sickness, one has been completed and two in Sport and Culture are scheduled to take place this month. Both SAR and FAR positions are closely monitored by the P&D team.

13. **Long Term Absence**
   Long Term sickness represents 55% of the absence total up to February 2013. This was 47% in 2011/12 and, as detailed earlier, was at even lower levels in the 2 preceding years. All the 4 employees currently absent long term are being appropriately monitored and progressed. One of these employees is in the managing health review process.

14. **Summary**
   Short term absence levels are being maintained at low levels. This is a significant factor in maintaining lower absence levels overall and improving performance in the organisation. It is also evidence of the improved effectiveness of attendance management. The successful achievement of the IIP Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award in the summer of 2012 provides external verification that the Council is effectively managing the wellbeing of its employees.

   Long term absence has increased this year. There has been some impact as a result of redundancy and performance management/disciplinary issues (stress related illness) which have been worked through. One employee affected by ill health has elected to volunteer for redundancy and ended his employment early. We have had a number of cancer, stroke and heart related illnesses that have given rise to the increase overall. Whilst one employee continues to receive cancer treatment, it is pleasing to note that others are now well and back in work.

   Regular contact, support from managers and the People and Development Team, Occupational Health advice and agreed return to work plans are used as appropriate to assist employees in returning to work as soon as possible.
Compliance with procedures is being monitored closely with Directors and Heads of Service who are advised when it appears management actions have not been undertaken within agreed timescales.

15. **Well Being Strategy and Action Plan**

Following the achievement of the IIP Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award work continues in line with the agreed action plan. A presentation was given to the Wider Management Group in January, a wellbeing survey will accompany the employee survey due to be undertaken in June and plans for activities over the next 6 months are being firmed up.

Recent H&WB events include the establishment of a lunchtime running club to support the Council’s 10k Run, Rock up in Red – to raise awareness and money for the British Heart Foundation, Burnley Credit Union Christmas Savings promotion, and prostate testing to be undertaken on 20th March as part of cancer awareness month. The photography club and book clubs continue to meet and the badminton and yoga classes are continuing – all done in employee’s own time.

Having been awarded IIP Champion status the Council is also sharing information with other organisations, in the public and private sector around our work on health and wellbeing and the impact this has had on our organisation.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION**

16. Improved employee attendance and employees who are healthy and well enable the Council to have a more productive and cost efficient workforce. Expenditure on health and wellbeing training and promotions is managed from within agreed People and Development or service unit budgets.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

17. The Council’s Managing Attendance policy and procedures were last revised in 2010. Associated policies e.g. Grievance, Dignity at Work, Stress Management and Health and Safety policies are reviewed and revised in line with agreed timeframes. The Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan are being delivered as part of People, Law and Regulation’s agreed service plan. Policies referred to are available on the Council’s Intranet (Hub).

**DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

18. The People and Development Team are in regular contact with Service Units to support the management of employee absences. Trade Union members are part of the corporate Well Being Group.
19. Employee records containing exempt information
    Previous reports to Management Team and Better Services and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
    Managing Attendance policy and procedures
    Wellbeing Strategy

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<tr>
<th>FURTHER INFORMATION</th>
<th>General information, including statistics and this report can be found on the Hub under “Ask HR”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLEASE CONTACT:</td>
<td>Heather Brennan (7120)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALSO:</td>
<td>David Wilcock (7140)</td>
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