

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Employment Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	20 July 2021
<b>Subject:</b>	Sickness Absence - Quarterly Report
<b>Report by:</b>	Peter Budd - Assistant Director of HR
<b>Wards affected:</b>	N/A
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Full Council decision:</b>	No

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## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee about the levels of sickness absence across the council and the actions being taken to manage absence and promote employee wellbeing.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are recommended to:

- Continue to monitor sickness absence, and ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism.
- Note the wellbeing activities undertaken to support attendance.
- Note the additional wellbeing activities specifically in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Note the change in absence levels across the organisation.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. Members will be aware that the council has been operating many services differently as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This has resulted in many staff working remotely. Compared to the start of the pandemic overall absence levels are down, however they have increased in some areas during the last two quarters.

- 3.2. The following section of the report will therefore note this quarter's sickness absence figures compared to last quarter (March 2021):

- The level of sickness absence for this quarter has increased slightly from 9.45 to 9.47 average days per person per year.
- Working time lost has increased from 2.59 to 2.65 per cent (excluding schools).
- Long term absence has increased from 6.47 to 6.67 average days per person per year.

- Short term absence has decreased from 1.62 to 1.56 average days per person per year.
  - 3 directorates have seen a decrease in absence levels this quarter.
  - 7 directorates have seen an increase in absence levels this quarter
  - The highest reason for sickness absence remains to be due to psychological (stress, anxiety and depression), however Neurology/Nervous system and Musculoskeletal (back and neck) are now listed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - Musculoskeletal absences are divided into three categories; if these were collated they would become the second highest ranked reason for absence (as was the case last quarter).
- 3.3. Absence levels by directorates for the period from June 2020 to May 2021 are attached in Appendix 1. A summary of reason for sickness absence for the last year is attached in Appendix 2.

#### 4. Wellbeing

- 4.1 This Quarter saw the findings of the Staff wellbeing pulse survey which we ran from the 23<sup>rd</sup> February until the 5<sup>th</sup> March. This survey included a number of questions normally completed in the annual staff survey but also saw a number of new ones to help understand the levels of health and wellbeing of staff across the council.
- 4.2 The findings showed that levels of anxiety, stress and nervousness had increased by 3% since June 2020. The levels of happiness saw little movement but there was a 1% increase in staff feeling happier. Over two-thirds of staff stated that they are satisfied with work at the moment, those working exclusively at home being most satisfied and those working both at home and workplace are least.
- 4.3 The majority of staff feel that they have the tools to work effectively, however fewer staff feel supported by the council this year (-7 percentage points), instead a higher proportion selected 'neither'. Over three-quarters of staff agree that their team are communicating well and staying connected and the majority feel supported to balance work and other commitments.
- 4.4 61% of staff are able to strike the right balance between work and personal time, a fifth do not feel they are able to achieve this. Over half of staff can manage their workload within their contracted hours, however almost a quarter disagree with this.
- 4.5 The vast majority of staff know where to access wellbeing support (85%) and 91% of staff had received communications about ways to support their wellbeing. Almost three-quarters of staff receiving wellbeing communications found them useful.

- 4.6 The Staff Wellbeing Coordinator has been working with teams to help understand the findings and put together action plans to manage and support the wellbeing of their employees. Actions have included increasing the number of Wellbeing Champions within teams, setting up staff focus groups and increasing the awareness of the online training packages available to staff and managers.
- 4.7 During the last quarter the council has continued to provide regular wellbeing updates to all employees. These updates have included information and resources on Carers week, Health and wellbeing training, Mental health awareness week, Time to reflect, Stress awareness month and new physical activity initiatives,
- 4.8 The last quarter saw us reflect upon the anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown. We organised and ran a campaign that asked staff to get together in their teams and take Time to Reflect, this involved employees sharing pictures of something that they were most proud of during the last year.
- 4.9 Solent Mind have continued to deliver their Supporting and managing mental health in the workplace sessions, 28 managers attended this quarter bringing the overall total to 180. They also provided a number of their Taking control of your mental health and Wellbeing webinars with 73 employees taking part, bringing the total attendees to 161.
- 4.10 The Learning and Development team have been planning new Managing Wellbeing sessions that will be piloted later on in the summer by the Adult services directorate. These sessions will cover self-care for managers, managing wellbeing and difficult conversations as well as good management practices with a number of case studies. The aim is to then run these sessions across all directorates of the council.
- 4.11 Portsmouth City Council's Wellbeing Champion programme continues to grow with particular increases from The International Port bringing the total to 60 employees across all directorates now volunteering for the role. The champion's role is to help implement and support staff wellbeing and the ongoing programme at PCC through raising awareness of wellbeing activities across the council, promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health.
- 4.12 The Lunchtime learning programme has continued to be very well attended and over the last quarter we have provided talks on Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Healthy Conversation skills, the councils Employee Assistance Programme and Employers for Carers.

**5. Reasons for recommendations**

5.1. To continue to improve employee attendance levels. To do this through monitoring sickness absence, understanding and engaging with the workforce to understand the reasons for improved attendance levels, continuing to improve employee wellbeing, which in turn will increase productivity, improve engagement and build a more resilient workforce.

**6. Integrated Impact Assessment**

6.1. Appendix 3

**7. Legal implications**

7.1. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

**8. Finance comments**

8.1. There is no significant cashable saving resulting from the reduction in sickness absence. However, there will be an improvement in productivity in terms of total days worked.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Sickness Absence

Appendix 2: Summary of reasons for absence

Appendix 3: Integrated impact assessment

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by: