

Title of meeting: Employment Committee

Date of meeting: 17 June 2014

Subject: Sickness Absence - Quarterly Report

Report by: Jon Bell - Head of HR, Legal & Performance

Wards affected: N/A

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this quarterly report is to update and inform Employment Committee on actions being taken that have a positive effect on the levels of sickness absence across Services.

2. Recommendations

- To continue to monitor sickness absence, on a quarterly basis, and to ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism.
- To implement the actions for improving sickness absence at the Port.

3. Background

- 3.1** In the period from 01 June 2013 to 31 May 2014 the level of sickness absence has decreased from 9.92 to 8.21 average days per person per year. This is against a corporate target of an average 8 days per person per year.
- 3.2.** Absence levels by Services for the period from 01 June 2013 to 31 May 2014 compared to figures prepared in June 2013 are attached in Appendix 1.
- 3.3** 7 of the 16 Service areas are over the corporate target of an average 8 days per person per year. 2 Services are over 10 days per person per year.

4. International Ferry Port

At the previous Employment Committee on 10 March 2014, members asked for an analysis of the sickness absence at the Port. The outcome of the review of sickness absence levels and the activities being taken to reduce these levels is attached in Appendix 2. Highlights from the report are:

- i. The main reasons for sickness absence at the Port are; Accident/industrial injury, Musculoskeletal, Heart Disorder, Respiratory problems.
- ii. During the last 12 months, 13 formal warnings have been issued under the Managing Absence Policy.
- iii. There have been 9 long-term sickness absence cases; two were a year in duration. One individual was granted ill health retirement, one has been dismissed, three have retired and one resigned. Two cases are on-going.
- iv. It is expected that the number of days lost will reduce by 296 days (27.95%) in the next 6 months due to the intervention of Port Management.
- v. It is predicted that the average sickness absence levels will be within the range of 8.4 to 9.4 by November 2014.

The following actions will be implemented;

- The Managing Director to communicate with Port employees on the current levels of sickness absence and future expectations on how non-attendance will be managed and continuous monitoring of the now established robust sickness absence management system
- A member of HR to conduct a 'Sickness Absence Management' briefing with managers and supervisors to ensure a consistent and robust approach.

5. Discussions with Unions

Following the Staff Joint Committee on 03 April 2014, HR has provided responses to the Trade Unions concerns about HR involvement at stage 1 and managers' competency through the number of absence brief/workshops held and planned.

The Unions have indicated that they will be providing a joint response of their proposals for absence management to the regular monthly meeting with HR for discussion.

6. Occupational Health training

Both managers and HR staff have been given an opportunity to meet with our new provider (NHS) to discuss the service and how both parties can work together, commencing with the larger services such as Housing and Property Services and Adult Social Care.

The objectives of the session are outlined below and this will allow us to optimise the use of the Occupational Health Service.

1. Clarify the purpose of the Occupational Health Service
2. Discuss when and how to refer individuals to Occupational Health
3. Complete referral forms
4. Identify options to call or complete Occupational Health referrals
5. Interpret Occupational Reports and recommendations

7. Health and Wellbeing

7.1 Staff Health Checks

Working jointly with Public Health, 100 Health Checks were offered to staff and were conducted in March/April 2014. These checks have initially been offered to staff in The Port, Housing and Property Services, Adults Social Care, Revenues and Benefits.

Whilst it was imperative to ensure staff remained anonymous we have been provided with a summary of the results and recommendations and will be working with service managers to develop more detailed action plans where necessary. The recommendations will also be used as part of the overall Health and Wellbeing strategy.

7.2 Flu Jabs

In the winter of 2013/14 981 members of staff took advantage of the vaccination campaign which equated to a final uptake of 11.9% including school staff. The highest uptake rate was in Health, Safety and Licensing (42%) and the lowest in Children's Social Care and Safeguarding (7.5%).

Analysis of staff sickness figures showed a 49% decrease in the number of working days lost due to viral illnesses lasting 5 days or more (as flu is not recorded exclusively) in the period October 2013 to December 2013 compared to April 2013 to September 2013. This is compared to a 40% increase during the same periods in 2012. However, we can't say for definite that this is due to the flu vaccination campaign as there were very low levels of flu infection in the community and PCC have recently prioritised the reduction of staff absence.

The scheme was funded by Public Health but it is anticipated that services will be asked to pay for this in future years.

7.3 Health and Wellbeing Workshop

A Health and Wellbeing workshop was held on the 13th May attended by 13 Senior Managers across the authority and also Trade Union representatives. This was a very positive session to start the process of developing a strategy for health and wellbeing that will be embedded across the authority.

The outcomes of this session will be fed into Strategic Directors Board (SDB) and Corporate Transformation Board (CTB) and action learning sets will be offered to share good practice.

A steering group will also be set up to continue the work, a series of staff focus groups and a wellbeing newsletter.

8. Reasons for recommendations

The continued monitoring of sickness absence and the identification of good management practices is an important part of maximising attendance, which will in turn increase productivity, improve engagement and build resilience.

9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

10. Legal implications

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

11. Finance comments

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 by Service

Appendix 2: Analysis of sickness absence at the Port

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

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Signed by: