

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Employment Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Sickness Absence - Quarterly Report
<b>Report by:</b>	Alison Forfar - Interim Assistant Director 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 and causes of sickness absence across the council and the actions being taken to improve attendance and promote employee health and wellbeing.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are recommended to:

- Note the levels and causes of sickness absence over the last quarter.
- Note the activities and interventions undertaken to support attendance.
- Note the change in absence levels across the organisation.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. Compared to the start of the pandemic overall absence levels are down slightly, however they have continued to increase in some areas during the last three quarters.
- 3.2. The following section of the report will therefore note this quarter's sickness absence figures compared to last quarter:
  - The level of sickness absence for this quarter has increased from 10.11 to 11.37 average days per person per year.
  - Long term absence has increased from 6.20 to 6.27 average days per person per year.

- Short term absence has increased from 2.16 to 2.82 average days per person per year.
  - 1 directorate has seen a decrease in absence levels this quarter.
  - 10 directorates have seen an increase in absence levels this quarter.
  - The highest reason for sickness absence continues to be Coronavirus, psychological (stress, anxiety and depression) is now ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and Musculoskeletal (Lower Limb) is ranked 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 rolling year 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 During this quarter we have continued to promote a number of wellbeing campaigns, updated the wellbeing intranet pages and made training opportunities available to staff and managers.

Over the last quarter on average 57% of staff are reading our monthly wellbeing updates which contain information on national wellbeing campaigns, advice and resources.

- 4.2 The campaigns and wellbeing updates that have been promoted to staff this quarter have included details on, March the Month which aims to raise awareness of prostate cancer and Ian Diaper, Head of Operations at the Port shared his story to encourage men to see their GP if they have any of the symptoms. March's update also included information about NHS cancer screenings and the support available to anyone who has been affected by the events unfolding in Ukraine.

April was Stress Awareness month and guidance was provided for managing stress at work, and information and support for coping with stress outside of work. The updated stress risk assessment process was launched in April 2022, and this provides information about the support available and allows for a more detailed assessment to take place. The tools and resources available and promoted to staff and managers encourage a pro-active and preventative approach to be taken. The new risk assessment and supporting documents can be found under documents on the stress awareness intranet page.

The focus of May's update was Mental Health Awareness Week and the theme this year was loneliness. Information was provided on helping yourself and others

who are suffering from loneliness and where to get support. The update also featured information regarding the cost of living crisis. Financial wellbeing is important to overall mental wellbeing therefore plans are in place for an ongoing campaign signposting staff to sources of help and advice on financial matters.

The main focus of June's wellbeing update was Men's Health Week and top health tips were shared as well as information regarding events and resources available. Male members of staff were encouraged to complete a Man MOT which was a series of quick and easy health checks that can be completed at home. We also offered a free Men's Health Week yoga session.

Wellbeing updates have included details of our upcoming Lunchtime Learning sessions which focus on our current campaigns or important topics. Our Lunchtime Learning session in May 2022 highlighted the support available from our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and the recorded presentation has been uploaded onto our intranet page. A Lunchtime Learning session on the cost of living crisis and the support available to staff members will be taking place on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

- 4.3 The Learning and Development team have continued to provide training to managers on Managing Wellbeing in a Hybrid Team and Leading a Hybrid Team. These sessions have received lots of positive feedback and will continue to run throughout the year.

During this quarter we have facilitated two sessions of Managing Wellbeing in a Hybrid Team with 6 members of staff attending each of these. Some of the feedback received:

"Very interesting content delivered in a dynamic and easy to understand way"

"A very useful course and a timely reminder to listen"

"Very clear and interactive over teams"

We have also run one session of Leading a Hybrid Team with 8 members of staff in attendance and providing the below feedback:

"Good to hear other people's thoughts and an interesting exploration of the issues"

"Really interesting discussion and thought provoking, so many different things to consider in hybrid working and not one size fits all"

Solent Mind will be delivering one-hour interactive wellbeing training sessions across the year, and these are being promoted via our upcoming wellbeing updates. 181 staff members attended Solent Mind bitesize training during the past two years. Sessions this year include:

- Dealing with Change - Thriving in times of uncertainty
- Beat the Burnout
- Taking Control of your Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Building Resilience and Coping with Stress
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Overview
- Menopause and Mental Health

4.4 This quarter there have been some changes to the Wellbeing intranet pages including an update on the support available to managers from the Employee Assistance Programme and additional information on our money and debt advice page. A new intranet page, 'Managing Fatigue' has also been created. Work is in progress to update further pages and build upon the tools and resources available to managers to support the wellbeing of their staff.

## **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. This report does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment as there are no proposed changes to PCC's services, policies, or procedures included within the recommendations.

## **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: Director

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Sickness Absence

Appendix 2: Summary of reasons for absence

**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: