

Agenda item: 

**Title of meeting:** Employment Committee

**Date of meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015

**Subject:** Sickness Absence - Quarterly Report

**Report by:** Jon Bell - Director of HR, Legal & Procurement

**Wards affected:** N/A

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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### 1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this quarterly report is to update and inform Employment Committee on actions being taken that have an 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.**
- **Public Health to co-ordinate the flu jabs vaccination campaign for 2015 to encourage the uptake of vaccinations, especially where Directorates have contact with NHS defined risk groups or have particular low uptake in 2014. The cost of vaccinations to be covered by Directorates.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the last Employment Committee the corporate target was revised to an average of 7 days per person per year.
- 3.2 In the period since the last quarterly update in March 2015 the level of sickness absence has increased from 7.88 to 8.73 average days per person per year. This is against the new corporate target of an average 7 days per person per year. Members will understandably be concerned by the increase over the last quarter, which represents a change from the overall trend over recent months.
- 3.3. Absence levels by Directorates for the period from 01 June 2014 to 31 May 2015 are attached in Appendix 1.

3.4 As a result of the Senior Management Restructure, 14 Directorates have replaced 16 Services on 01 April 2015. Seven (including schools) of these Directorates are over the corporate target of an average 7 days per person per year. Four Directorates are over an average 10 days per person per year.

Due to the realignment and merging of previous Services into Directorates it is not possible to make like for like comparisons for all areas. However, it is clear that there have been significant increase in long-term absence in key areas, such as Adults Services and Children's Social care

3.5 Analysis of data indicates that over the last quarter there has been an increase in the amount of long term absence from 4.02 to 4.70 average days per person per year. However, over the last two years, long term absence has reduced from 5.88 to 4.70 average days per person per year. Short term absence has been stable at around 2.57 average days per person per year over the same period. A summary of the analysis has been included in Appendix 2.

3.6 There is no single event, such as an epidemic, or a number of singular events that have caused the increase in absence levels over the last quarter. So guiding members on specific interventions to effect levels of absence would not be objective at present. Further analysis is being carried out.

3.7 A table of reasons for absence over the last three years is included in Appendix 3. The analysis of the data indicates that the main reasons for absence have not changed dramatically, with the three main reasons; anxiety, stress and psychological, musculoskeletal and colds, flu and virus, accounting for 52-55% of all absences in each of the last three years.

3.8 HR continues to support managers with their efforts to maximise attendance by providing absence data and access to a responsive Occupation Health Service, as well as support with formal action meetings. HR are working directly with managers in those areas where sickness levels are increasing to understand the reasons and carry out targeted interventions where appropriate.

## **4. Occupational Health**

### **4.1 Fit for Work**

The Government has introduced Fit for Work to provide an occupational health assessment and general health and work advice to employees, employers (mainly small and medium sized organisations) and General Practitioners (GPs) to help individuals stay in or return to work.

The latest indications are the rollout of Fit for Work will start in the Wessex area, which includes Portsmouth, from the autumn of 2015. Therefore at this time it is not possible to comment on how the Fit for Work Scheme will complement, rather than replace, the existing occupational health provision and will fill the gap in support where that currently exists.

## **5. Health and Well Being**

### **5.1 Flu Jabs**

NHS Choices have indicated that over time, protection from the injected flu vaccine gradually decreases and flu strains often change. Therefore, new flu vaccines are produced each year which is why people are advised to have the flu jab every year.

Public Health co-ordinated the flu jabs vaccination campaign for 2014. The cost of vaccinations has been covered by Services.

Public Health conducted an internal flu jab survey in January 2015 to gauge how employees have or have not responded to the previous offer of free flu vaccinations. A summary of the findings from the survey are attached in Appendix 2

We have made recommendations to continue with the offer of free flu vaccinations in 2015 and on how the Council may improve on the uptake of flu jabs in 2014.

## **6. 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.

## **7. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **8. Legal implications**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

## **9. 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 Directorate

Appendix 2: Analysis of levels of absence year by year

Appendix 3: Summary of reasons for absence over the last three years

Appendix 4: Summary of internal survey on flu jabs

**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
NHS Choices - The Flu Jab	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/flu-influenza-vaccine.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/flu-influenza-vaccine.aspx</a>

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

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Signed by: