

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Report Subject: **Education Workforce Sickness Absence Performance**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor J Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**  
**Lynette Jones, Corporate Director Education**

Reporting Pathway								
DMT	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	17.12.19	20.12.19			15.01.20			

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members of specific scrutiny committees the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge relevant Directorate sickness absence performance and the proposed actions for improvement.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Staff attendance is critical in delivering services and the Council's priorities and is a key performance indicator reflected in the quarterly Finance and Performance report. Improving attendance remains a key priority for the Council and is linked to the need to create efficiencies and improve service delivery.
- 2.2 Sickness absence within the Authority is identified as a key risk and it is acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively. Therefore, the need to reduce the impact and cost of sickness absence has been identified as a corporate priority.

## 3 Performance Information

- 3.1 The overall year end outturn figure for 2018/19 the Council was 12.66 days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee. An increase from the previous year's outturn of 11.2 days and exceeds the target set of 8.5 days.
- 3.2 Whilst sickness levels remain high it is important to note that the majority of employees have little or no sickness absence and attend work regularly. The vast majority of Council employees have excellent attendance levels as data indicates that 2463 employees attended work every day during the period from April 2018 to March 2019 with the Council having an attendance level of 94.3%.

3.3 A report reviewing workforce Sickness Absence Performance for the Council went to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations for improvement and also recommend the following; that processes be put in place for individual Directorates to report quarterly to their specific scrutiny committees for challenge and scrutiny on Directorate's sickness absence performance; and that the Executive Committee also have the opportunity to review this report.

3.4 **Appendix 1** outlines the sickness performance information for the Education Directorate (including schools) for quarter 1 and 2 of 2019/20 as well as summarising the position in 2018/19.

#### 4. **Directorate Comments/Actions for Improvement**

4.1 The data report is extremely helpful and is used diagnostically to ensure support is targeted well, particularly for cases of longer-term sickness absence in specific schools.

4.2 The Education Directorate undertakes regular weekly meetings with OD, finance, school improvement and officers from the legal department to ensure support is timely, appropriate and the relevant Council Policy is fully implemented.

4.3 Careful and effective management of longer-term sickness absence is of paramount importance to staff wellbeing and school effectiveness as a whole, which is why dedicated time is allocated to the careful and sensitive management of these cases.

4.4 Additionally, the Organisational Development division have provided Attendance Management Training as part of the Induction Process for Headteachers in October 2019 and HR Business Partners meet with all Headteachers annually during the Autumn Term to conduct annual workforce meetings, wherein sickness data is presented and discussed as part of these meetings.

4.5 Sickness performance data is also discussed at Strategic Headteachers Meetings.

#### **Actions**

4.6 The OD Team to provide bespoke Attendance Management Training as requested.

4.7 A working group to be created with a selection of Headteachers to review the current Attendance Management Policy.

4.8 The Education Directorate to continue to work with partners, as aforementioned, to effectively progress specific cases

5. **Options for Recommendation**
  - 5.1 **Option 1**

That the Scrutiny Committee having scrutinised the sickness absence performance information and proposed arrangements to improve attendance rates within the Education Directorate identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.
  - 5.2 **Option 2**

That the Scrutiny Committee endorse the report and proposed arrangements to support the improvement in attendance.
  
6. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
  - 6.1 ***Impact on Budget*** (short and long term impact)

There are direct and indirect costs of sickness absence which are a key driver in the Council's approach to effectively improve attendance at work.
  - 6.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The underperformance in relation to the high levels of sickness absence does present a significant risk in terms of the impact on front line service delivery and continuity through lost time and staffing changes. In addition, the financial implications associated with sickness absence directly impact on the Council's financial efficiency targets and the level of financial savings that the Council needs to achieve. Mitigating actions are detailed within the report.
  - 6.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications arising from this report.
  - 6.4 ***Human Resources***

The staffing implications are detailed within the content of the report.
  
7. **Supporting Evidence**
  - 7.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The detailed performance evidence is detailed in appendix 1 as well as the actions taken to address the level of underperformance.
  - 7.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Information included within the report will provide opportunity for the public to scrutinise the Council's performance and provide accountability across the Council.
  - 7.3 ***Involvement*** (consultation, engagement, participation)

Trade Union have been consulted on the sickness absence performance and are committed to working with the Council to improve attendance.

- 7.4 **Thinking for the Long term** (forward planning)  
Options detailed in this report contribute directly to enabling the workforce for the future.
- 7.5 **Preventative focus**  
The review of the Organisational Development Strategy will focus on prevention.
- 7.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**  
There are regular discussions with the national Human Resources Directors Network and regionally in terms of good practice or emerging practice in reducing sickness absence. There are early discussions with the WLGA to launch a project to learn from England any initiatives in relation to wellbeing.
- 7.7 **Integration** (across service areas)  
NA
- 7.8 **EqIA** (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)  
The review of sickness absence performance was carried out and included all employees of the Council.

## 8. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 8.1 Sickness absence statistics are reported to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and an annual performance report is presented to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. Directorate positions and actions for improvement will be reported to specific scrutiny committees. Biannual workforce profiles are discussed with Managers and Headteachers.

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Sickness Absence Monitoring – Quarters 1 and 2