

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **11<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Report Subject: **Corporate Services Workforce Sickness Absence Performance**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Daniels, Leader / Executive Member**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director  
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Reporting Pathway								
DMT	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	Feb 2020	20.02.20			12/02/20	11/03/20		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the opportunity to consider and challenge relevant Portfolio 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.

### 2.3 Performance Information

- 2.3.1 The overall year end outturn figure for 2018/19 for 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.

- 2.3.4 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%.

2.3.5 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 recommended 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.

2.3.6 **Appendix 1** outlines the sickness performance information for the Corporate Services Directorate for quarter 1 and 2 of 2019/20 as well as summarising the position in 2018/19.

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

#### **3.1 Management Actions for Absence management 2019**

Staff are reminded of the policy in team meetings (recent one as result of Managers brief). Absence is discussed at Commercial Services Management Team Meeting and through regular meetings with OD Team and Senior Business Partner. Managers are reminded of the process for using ITrent.

#### **Communications and Marketing**

- Low levels of sickness in so normal absence management processes applied including return to work interviews.

#### **Customer Service and Benefits**

- Low levels of sickness in general so normal absence management processes applied including return to work interviews. An incident of longer term absence due to back pain. This was managed through a phased return and ongoing monitoring through weekly meetings.

#### **STT**

- Low levels of sickness in so normal absence management processes applied including return to work interviews.
- Pro-active support for member of staff experiencing anxiety included a temporary
- Reduction in workload
- Increased home-working for a number of weeks
- Short working days (time reimbursed)
- Occupational health referral
- Identification of a counselling service (time reimbursed to allow attendance)
- Identification of Mindfulness course (time reimbursed to allow attendance)

#### **Procurement**

- Low levels of sickness in so normal absence management processes applied including return to work interviews.

### **Business Support**

- Business Support identified as a 'hotspot' with 643 days of sickness
- A full managerial audit of sickness absence carried out to include managerial compliance and a review of long term sickness cases – Managing Attendance policy applied in full with return to work and absence review meetings completed
- Main reason for long term sickness was mental health issues as a result of personal stress. All cases now resolved with either a return to work or exit from the Council. One case was significant/complex and elongated because of the nature of the case
- Target set at 5.5 days
- Sickness absence is an agenda item at management and team meetings as well as 121 meetings with all supervisory management
- Staff encouraged to take preventative approach to avoid sickness absence e.g. Workplace assessments, signposting to support for mental health issues

### **Organisational Development**

- 60.9 days reported sick
- Target set at 5.5 days
- 2 people long term sick – mental health issues as a result of personal stress – both returned to work
- Managing Attendance policy applied in full with return to work and absence review meetings completed
- Sickness absence is an agenda item at management and team meetings as well as 121 meetings with all supervisory management
- Staff encouraged to take preventative approach to avoid sickness absence e.g. Workplace assessments, signposting to support for mental health issues

### **Social Care Workforce Development Service**

- 96 days reported sick
- 2 people long term sick during period, 1 with mental health issues as a result of personal stress and 1 was a broken collar bones – both returned to work
- Managing Attendance policy applied in full with return to work and absence review meetings completed
- Target set at 5.5 days
- Sickness absence is an agenda item at management and team meetings as well as 121 meetings with all supervisory management
- Staff encouraged to take preventative approach to avoid sickness absence e.g. Workplace assessments, signposting to support for mental health issues

### **Senior Management**

- Period of Post-surgery recovered managed through a phased return to work

### **Resources - General**

- Overall attendance positive with absence to Q2 at 3.46 days per person, within the target of 5.5 days.

- Managing Attendance policy applied with return to work and absence review meetings completed.
- Sickness absence is an agenda item at management and team meetings as well as 121 meetings.

There have been 20 absences in total 7 of which exceeded 10 days. Of these:

### **Accountancy**

- 5 long term absences (exceeding 10 days), 2 of which were related to Anxiety (of which 1 work related) and 3 minor operations and recovery periods.
- Referrals made to occupational health
- Identification of a counselling service & mindfulness course (time reimbursed to allow attendance)
- Phased return agreed including extended working from home

### **Internal Audit, Risk & Insurance**

- Low levels of sickness, absence management processes applied including return to work interviews.

### **Revenues**

- 2 long term absences (exceeding 10 days), relating to Anxiety (personal) and operation and recovery period.
- Referral made to occupational health
- Phased return to work agreed

### **Legal & Corporate Compliance**

- Low levels of sickness; normal absence management processes applied including return to work interviews.
- Proactive approach to prevention, particularly in terms of early identification of workplace issues.

### **Governance and Partnerships**

- Quarter 2 performance is below the target of 5.5
- Absence management is a standing item on the Managers team meeting agenda,
- 121 meetings also cover any specific issues with head of service.
- Managing Attendance policy applied with, return to work and absence review meetings completed.
- Referrals to occupational health are made where required
- Phased return to work plans established where required
- Preventative and proactive measures discussed including workplace assessments.

#### **4. Options for Recommendation**

4.1 The report will be considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, and any comments will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.

#### **4.2 Option 1**

That the Executive Committee consider the sickness absence performance information and proposed arrangements to improve attendance rates within the Corporate Services Directorate identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.

#### **4.3 Option 2**

That the Executive Committee agree the report and proposed arrangements to support the improvement in attendance.

#### **5. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

##### **5.1 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.

##### **5.2 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.

##### **5.3 Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

##### **5.4 Human Resources**

The staffing implications are detailed within the content of the report.

#### **6. Supporting Evidence**

##### **6.1 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.

##### **6.2 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.

##### **6.3 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.

- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term*** (forward planning)  
Options detailed in this report contribute directly to enabling the workforce for the future.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**  
The review of the Organisational Development Strategy will focus on prevention.
- 6.6 ***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.
- 6.7 ***Integration*** (across service areas)  
NA
- 6.8 **EqlA** (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.

## **7. Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 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 Head teachers.

## **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

### **Appendix 1 – Sickness Analysis Corporate Services**