

Report to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel



SCRUTINY



Date of meeting: 19 June 2012

Subject: Sickness Absence

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Panel notes the report on sickness absence.

Executive Summary

1. This report provides information on the Council's absence figures for Q4, 2011/2012; it includes absence figures by Directorate, the number of employees who have met the trigger level, those who have more than 4 weeks absence and reasons for absence. The report also includes the outturn figure for 2011/2012.
2. The Council's target for sickness absence under KPI10 for 2011/2012 is an average of 7.75 days per employee. The outturn figures for 2011/2012 are set out in paragraph 10 of the report. The Council achieved the target for 2011/2011 as the accumulated figure is 7.58 days.
3. The Council's figure for Q4 is 2.21 days against a target of 1.98 days for this period. Figures for each Directorate are set out in paragraph 11 of the report.
4. During Q4, 5.9% of staff met the trigger levels or above, 28.3% had sickness absence but did not meet the triggers and 65.8% had no absence.
5. Currently, under the Council's Managing Absence Policy there are trigger levels for initiating management action in cases of excessive sickness absence. These are:
 - (i) during any 'rolling' twelve-month period an employee has had 5 or more separate occasions of absence; or
 - (ii) during any 'rolling' twelve-month period an employee has had at least 8 working days of any combination of un/self certificated, or medically certificated absences.
6. Members agreed at the March 2012 Panel to adopt a new target of an average of 7.5 days per employee for 2012/2013.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To enable members make decisions regarding actions to continue to improve the Council's absence figures

Other Options for Action

For future reports the Panel may wish to include other information or receive no report.

Report:

Introduction

7. The latest figures published by the Industrial Relations Service (for 2010) show that the average number of days taken as sickness absence in Local Government was 8 days compared to 6.5 days across all sectors. In manufacturing and production the average number of days was 6.2 and in private sector services the average was 6.2 days. (These figures have not been updated for 2011).

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9. In addition to the above a manager should consider referring an employee to Occupational Health when an employee has been absent from work for at least one month if there is no estimate when they will be fit to return, or if this is unlikely to be within a reasonable period.

Quarterly Figures 2010/2011 – 2011/2012

10. The KPI target for sickness absence was revised to 7.75 days for 2011/12. The Q4 figure of 2.21 days is above the target for this period of 1.98 days. However, the outturn figure for 2011/12 is 7.58 days which is below the annual target of 7.75 days. A revised target of 7.5 days has been set for 2012/13.

Table 1 below shows the absence figures for each quarter since 2010/2011.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Outturn	Target
2010/2011	1.88	1.81	2.15	2.01	7.85	8
2011/2012	1.86	1.64	1.87	2.21	7.58	7.75
2012/2013						7.5

Table 1

Directorate Figures 2010/2011 – 2011/2012

11. Table 2 shows the average number of days lost per employee in each Directorate. The target figure for Q4 is an average 1.98 days and 3 of the 7 Directorates are below this figure. Four Directorates are above this target.

12. The table also shows that 4 of the 7 Directorates are below the annual target of 7.75 days and 3 are above this target.

Directorate	Ave FTE	Average Number of Days Absence 2010/2011				Total Ave No of Days 2010/11	Average Number of Days Absence 2011/2012				Total Ave No of Days 2011/12
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Office of CE	20.9	0.25	0.51	2.12	1.42	4.3	1.39	1.93	2.34	1.43	7.09

Directorate	Ave FTE	Average Number of Days Absence 2010/2011				Total Ave No of Days 2010/11	Average Number of Days Absence 2011/2012				Total Ave No of Days 2011/12
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Office of DCE	47	0.92	2.09	2.35	1.99	7.35	2.08	2.12	1.71	1.92	7.83
Corporate Support Services	69.7	2.06	1.81	2.29	2.26	8.42	2.12	1.08	1.13	1.78	6.11
Environment & Street Scene	113	1.70	2.10	1.79	2.78	8.37	1.25	1.75	1.53	2.17	6.7
Finance & ICT	115.6	1.15	0.87	1.73	1.29	5.04	1.72	1.79	2.71	2.76	8.98
Housing	183.8	3.11	2.42	2.72	2.01	10.26	1.83	1.52	1.94	2.16	7.45
Planning	68.2	1.07	1.48	1.64	1.96	6.15	2.75	1.75	1.60	2.41	8.51

Table 2

13. This table is represented by a graph which can be found at appendix 1.

Long Term Absence 2011/2012

14. For this purpose long term absence has been defined as 4 weeks or over. During Q4 a total of 15 employees had 4 weeks or more absence. Eleven employees had one continuous period of absence, 2 employees had two periods of absence and 2 employees had 3 periods.

Table 3 provides further detail on these employees.

2011/12 Quarter	Left	Returned to work	Dismissed	Proposed Return date	Still Absent	Other Arrangements
Q4	0	73.2% (11)	6.7% (1)	0	6.7% (1)	6.7% (1) (deceased) 6.7% (1) (other duties)

Table 3

15. At appendix 2 there is a graph which sets out a breakdown of days lost to long term absence, those who met the trigger level and those below the trigger level. This graph shows that overall, 26% of lost time for Q4 was due to long term absence, 27% met the trigger level (and above to 19 days) and 47% was due to short term absence.

Reasons for Absence

16. Table 4 shows the reasons for absence, including the total number of days for both 2010/11 and 2011/12

Reason	Number of Days Q1	Number of Days Q2	Number of Days Q3	Number of Days Q4	Total Number of Days	Total Number of Days
	2011/2012	2011/2012	2011/2012	2011/2012	2011/2012	2010/2011
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion; include diarrhoea, vomiting and other gastro illnesses	282	295	200.3	208.6	985.9	716.5
Other musculo-skeletal problems; includes neck, legs or feet and arms or hands. Also include joint problems such as arthritis.	150.5	196.8	206.9	312.9	867.1	968.7
Infections, including viral infections such as influenza, cold, cough and throat infections	132.9	75.3	227.3	287.3	722.8	1298.8
Depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue. Includes mental illnesses such as anxiety and nervous debility/disorder (does not include stress)	60.6	42.3	87.4	18.8	209.1	468.2
Stress – Old description	91	0	0	0	91	357
Work related stress	58	30.7	2.9	22	113.6	N/A
Non Work related stress	29.1	59.7	16	0.8	105.6	N/A
Chest, respiratory; including asthma, bronchitis, hay fever and chest infections	89	62	26.1	94.3	271.4	212.7
Back problems	55.1	22.5	52.4	84	214	166.5
Neurological; headaches and migraines	41.1	42.7	26.4	49.2	159.4	158.1
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	34.5	32	39	30	135.5	126.7
Cancer, including all types of cancer and related treatments	30.4	22.6	29.2	125.9	208.1	97.7
Eye, ear, nose and mouth, dental; sinusitis	20.9	56.8	23.8	31.9	133.	133.4
Pregnancy	17.5	1	6.4	31	55.9	55.9
Heart, blood pressure, circulation	10	4.4	97.9	56	168.3	168.3
RTA	0	5	6.6	2.3	13.9	13.9

Table 4

Numbers of Absent Staff

17. Table 5 shows that there were fairly consistent numbers of staff who had no absence and those that had absence over the course of last year which has continued into this year. In Q4 (2011/12) the number of employees who had more than 8 days sickness absence increased compared to the previous 2 quarters, but is similar to Q1 figures. Approximately two-thirds of staff had no absence.

Quarter		Staff with no absence	Staff with 7 days or less	Staff with 8 days or more
1	2011/2012	71.2% (475)	23.7% (158)	5.1% (34)
2	2011/2012	73.3% (489)	22.8% (152)	3.9% (26)
3	2011/2012	66.6% (444)	29.5% (197)	3.9% (26)
4	2011/2012	65.8% (439)	28.3% (189)	5.9% (39)
1	2010/2011	71.4% (523)	24% (176)	4.6% (34)
2	2010/2011	73.7% (539)	22% (162)	4.3% (32)
3	2010/2011	65.2% (478)	29.9% (219)	4.9% (36)
4	2010/2011	66.8% (490)	28.9% (212)	4.3% (31)

Table 5

Queries Raised by the March Panel

18. At the March Panel, members raised a number of queries regarding sickness absence which are set out below;

18.1 Further information for employees with heart, blood pressure, circulation etc issues

During 2011/2012, thirteen employees recorded sickness absence under this category for a total of 168 days on 18 different occasions.

It is worth noting that absences for diabetes are also recorded under this category.

18.2 Accidents at Work

During 2011/2012 there were 10 accidents at work resulting in lost time. The number of days lost due to accidents was 192.5 days.

18.3 Long Term Absences

During 2011/2012 51 employees met the definition of long-term absence, of these employees 17 were absent for one occasion. The average number of days for those absent on one occasion was 54 days, the reasons for absence ranged from hospital procedures, treatments and recovery to stress (work and non work) to depression.

Resource implications:

N/A

Legal and Governance Implications

N/A

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

N/A

Consultation Undertaken

None

Background Papers

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel – Quarterly Sickness Absence Reports for 9 September 2010 to 20 March 2012.

Risk Management

Failure to manage sickness absence results in loss productivity and if it is significantly high could adversely affect the reputation of the authority.

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?

No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?

N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

N/A