
Report to: Overview & Scrutiny – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services

Date of Report:

Subject: Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance and Sickness

Report of: Chief Personnel Officer

Wards Affected: None

Is this a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No

Exempt/Confidential: No

Purpose/Summary

To provide a report to Overview and Scrutiny in respect of levels of discipline, grievance and sickness absence within the Council (excluding schools).

Recommendation(s)

Overview & Scrutiny - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services are recommended to:

- (i) Receive the report in terms of discipline, grievance and sickness absence levels.
- (ii) Note the latest information in respect of ongoing work.
- (iii) Note the particular initiatives currently being implemented relative to the management of sickness absence.

How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
3	Environmental Sustainability		✓	
4	Health and Well-Being		✓	
5	Children and Young People		✓	
6	Creating Safe Communities		✓	
7	Creating Inclusive Communities		✓	
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		✓	

Reasons for the Recommendation:

The recommendations reflect the request made by Overview & Scrutiny for information.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs N/A

(B) Capital Costs N/A

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Legal	
Human Resources	
Equality	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact on Service Delivery:

The management of the workforce is a crucial activity within the Authority.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted

The Head of Regulation and Compliance has been consulted

Are there any other options available for consideration?

None considered.

Implementation Date for the Decision:

N/A

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Background Papers:

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1 This report provides Members with an update on the levels of disciplinary, grievance and sickness absence within the Authority (excluding schools).
- 2 The management of the workforce is an important activity to ensure outcomes for our communities are achieved and to ensure that the workforce is appropriately managed and motivated.

SICKNESS ABSENCE – QUARTER 1, 1st April 2016 to 30th June 2016

3. Based on current records the total number of ‘available days’, from 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 (excluding schools), was 147,215 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days. Total sickness absence, both long and short term, was 7,471 FTE days which equates to 5.07%. This comprises 1.99% short term and 3.08% long term. The overall Corporate target is 4% (short term 2.2%; long term 1.8%), and as you will see from the attached graphs, the targets are currently exceeded.
- 4 Annex 1 graphically illustrates departmental performance (exclusive of schools) for the Quarter 1 period. Figures exceeding the short and long term targets are emboldened in a larger font within the tables below the graphs.
- 5 Annex 2 provides data across a period of 12 months to 30 June 2016 and therefore provides a wider analysis of absence levels across departments. However, organisational change within Sefton will impact on making direct comparisons across departments. Support is provided across all service areas, however, it has been identified that Adult Social Care, Children Social Care and Locality Services, in particular, require additional targeted support due to the reason for absence and nature of the work in these areas.

Reasons for absence & Referral to Health Unit Quarter 1 2016

2016/17 - Quarter 1					
	Reason for Absence (Short & Long Term)		Reason for Referral to HU (164 employee referrals)		
		%			%
1	Mental Health	19.10	Mental Health		40.20
2	Musculoskeletal	15.20	Musculoskeletal		32.90
3	Medical Illness	14.90	Medical Illness		11.00
4	Infections	13.70	Infections		3.70
5	Other	13.40	Post Operative		3.70
6	Post Operative	11.70	Bereavement		2.40

- 6 13.40 % of absence is currently being recorded as “other illness”. This is being addressed as it is important for managers to record the reason for absence. Not doing so may distort figures in other absence categories and may change the focus of how absence is targeted. Therefore, the option to select ‘other illness’ as a sickness absence reason will be removed from the absence system with effect from 1 January 2017. If managers are unsure about how to record absences they will be able to refer to the Health Unit for advice and guidance.

Initiatives

- 7 It was recently decided by the Strategic Leadership Team that concerted effort should continue in reducing levels of both short and long term absence through an array of initiatives and with this aim the following actions were determined;
- 8 A representative from Corporate Personnel Operations Team is attending each Departmental Management Team (DMT) with relevant sickness absence information for discussion and further action as required.
- 9 Statistical information is being provided to Heads of Service which will be filtered down to Senior Managers. The system in use for collecting data, and the reports run on sickness data will be examined for efficiency and suitability of use, with changes made if necessary.
- 10 Managers will continue to have their awareness of stress issues heightened and be encouraged to manage absence in accordance with agreed policies. Particular emphasis will be on analysing such issues within Adults and Children's Social Care.
- 11 The e-Learning and testing package, available to all 388 managers who have responsibility for dealing with sickness absence, will continue. Currently 62.6% have completed the testing and once the remaining 37.4% have completed the results will be analysed to enable targeted support to take place to fill any knowledge gaps.
- 12 Building on previous experience and actions, the Head of Corporate Resources is to reconfigure the Sickness Absence Panel inviting managers and Heads of Service to attend the panel to discuss particular issues or problem areas.
- 13 Targeted support will continue within departments to help with sickness absence. The Personnel Team work closely with departments providing information and advice and appropriate levels of support, advising managers on informal processes and assisting managers with the more formal and complex levels of sickness absence management. The Personnel team will continue to monitor sickness absence and will report to the Chief Personnel Officer any particular issues or trends that are cause for concern.

Managing Absence

- 14 The Council has a Sickness Absence Policy which will operate in a partnership approach with trade unions. These involve long term absence being dealt with in accordance with overall business need and short term absence being operated in accordance with recognised and agreed trigger points. All policies, where applicable, are subject to modification in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 15 Trade unions and management recognise the need for correct management of sickness absence to enable both support for employees to be appropriate and also for the lessening of demands upon employees who remain at work.

DISCIPLINARY, GRIEVANCE AND CAPABILITY

- 16 Annex 3 provides a breakdown of formal cases for January 2016 to October 2016.
- 17 The organisation enjoys a comparatively good level of cases and this reflects on the whole, both the good overall industrial relations environment, the partnership approach that is undertaken and also the work undertaken within departments.

SUSPENSIONS

- 18 In the period January 2016 to September 2016, 12 employees were suspended from the Authority (not including schools)
- 19 Suspension takes place in order to facilitate an investigation into matters which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct. Many investigations will also include a potential referral to a professional body such as the Health Care and Professionals Council. Personnel continue to press departments to resource investigations appropriately.
- 20 Whether a suspension is appropriate will be a decision taken by a Senior Manager with the advice of the Personnel Department.

CONCLUSION

- 21 Members are asked to note the levels of sickness for the Council for the 12 month period to 30 June 2016 and also Q1 of this financial year. As a result of these figures work is continuing to take a proactive approach to the management of both individual cases and trends within services and across the Council. In order to support this information is provided to Heads of Service and the Senior Leadership Board on a quarterly basis and the Sickness Absence Panel also meets regularly. With regard to the number of disciplinary and grievance cases at present these are not considered to be a cause for concern for the organisation when compared to benchmarked figures.