

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny – Regulatory, Compliance & Corporate Services	Date of Meeting:	3 rd March 2020
Subject:	Levels of Disciplinary, Grievance and Sickness Absence 01.10.2018 to 30.09.2019		
Report of:	Chief Personnel Officer	Wards Affected:	None
Cabinet Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance & Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

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:

- (1) Receive the report in terms of discipline, grievance and sickness levels.
- (2) Note the latest information in respect of ongoing work.
- (3) Note the initiatives currently being implemented.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

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

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs N/A

(B) Capital Costs N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
N/A
Legal Implications:
N/A
Equality Implications:
There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Achieving the correct application of procedures, facilitating the protection of the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: N/A
Commission, broker and provide core services: Absences can have a detrimental effect upon core service delivery
Place – leadership and influencer: Correct workforce allocation allows leadership and influencing
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director Corporate Resources & Customer Services (FD5964/20) and the Chief Legal & Democratic Officer (LD4147/20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Annex 1 – Breakdown of Grievances, Disciplinaries, Dignity at Work and Capability for the Period October 2018 to September 2019

Annex 2 – Sickness Absence by Service Area for 01/10/2018 to 30/09/2019 (12 months period comprising Q3 & Q4 of 2018/19 plus Q1 & Q2 of 2019/20)

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

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.

DISCIPLINARY, GRIEVANCE AND CAPABILITY

3. Annex 3 provides a breakdown of formal cases for October 2018 to September 2019
4. 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 services .
5. A lot of effort is taken to avoid formal procedures where possible, which involves informal strategies through Corporate Personnel.

SUSPENSIONS

6. In the period October 2018 to September 2019, 11 employees were suspended from the Authority (not including schools)
7. 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. Corporate Personnel continue to press departments to resource investigations appropriately so that any suspension period can be limited.
8. Whether a suspension is appropriate will be a decision taken by a Senior Manager with the advice of the Corporate Personnel Department.

SICKNESS ABSENCE – 12 Month Period 1st Oct 2018 to 30th Sept 2019

9. Annual sickness absence data is formally collated April to March each year. For the purposes of this report, figures have been provided outside of that time frame as year end statistics will not be completed until after March 2020.
10. The 12 month figures supplied as an indicator are made up of Q3 and Q4 for 2018/19, plus Q1 and Q2 of 2019/20.
 - Based on current records, the total number of 'available' days from 1st October 2018 to 30th September 2019 (excluding schools) was 619,617 full time equivalent (FTE) days
 - Total sickness absence, both long and short term was 38,735 days, which equates to 6.25%

- This comprises 1.84% short term sickness absence and 4.4% long term sickness absence.
- The overall Corporate target is 4% (short term 2.2%, long term 1.8%)

- Annex 2 provides charts and data for this 12 month period analysed by service area.
- Organisation change within Sefton will continue to impact on making direct comparisons across departments. Support is provided across all service areas.
- Reasons for absence & Referral to Health Unit Oct 2018 to Sept 2019**

01.10.2018 – 30.09.2019				
	Reason for Absence (Short & Long Term)	%	Reason for Referral to HU (Employee Referrals exc. Schools)	%
1	Mental Health	22.4%	Mental Health	41.79%
2	Medical Illness	19.6%	Musculoskeletal	28.90%
3	Infections	18.0%	Medical Illness	14.76%
4	Musculoskeletal	15.4%	Bereavement	4.16%
5	Post-Operative	11.7%	Accidents	3.53%
6	Bereavement	6.4%	Infections	2.70%
7	Accidents	4.8%	Post-Operative	2.50%
8	Reproductive	1.7%	Reproductive	1.66%

Initiatives

- Strategic Leadership Board continues to monitor and encourage the reduction of levels of both short and long-term absence.
- A representative from Corporate Personnel Operations Team attends Departmental Management Team (DMT), with relevant sickness absence information for discussion and further action as required. It is noticeable that more targeted work seems to provide a benefit in reducing absence.
- Statistical information is provided to Heads of Service on a quarterly basis and on an ad hoc basis on request.
- Managers are encouraged to manage absence in accordance with agreed policies and to use the online testing package to fill any knowledge gaps. Briefing sessions and targeted training is arranged as required from the results of the online testing.
- Targeted support will continue within departments to help with sickness absence. In addition to the services already provided through the Health Unit, additional support can include specific intervention initiatives, for example; physiotherapy services targeted in areas where physical effort is a part of the role.

19. The Corporate 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 issues or trends that are cause for concern.
20. As a result of the Stress Survey, a programme of training has taken place in respect of Mental Health First Aid with the Corporate Training Team being trained as trainers. A wider programme of training courses within the organisation is to begin shortly from this cohort of trainers.
21. A programme involving the DWP is also to commence shortly involving extra support for employees to gain further help and assistance. This will involve (at no cost to Sefton) a dedicated consultant to sign post employees to a variety of interventions. This will be complementary to Occupational Health.
22. Departmental interventions have taken place within Cleansing and Children's Services to look at the application of procedures and how the Corporate Personnel Department can actively support Departments.
23. In-house Occupational Health support in providing counselling, CBT and other talking therapies, is providing interventions to the workforce.

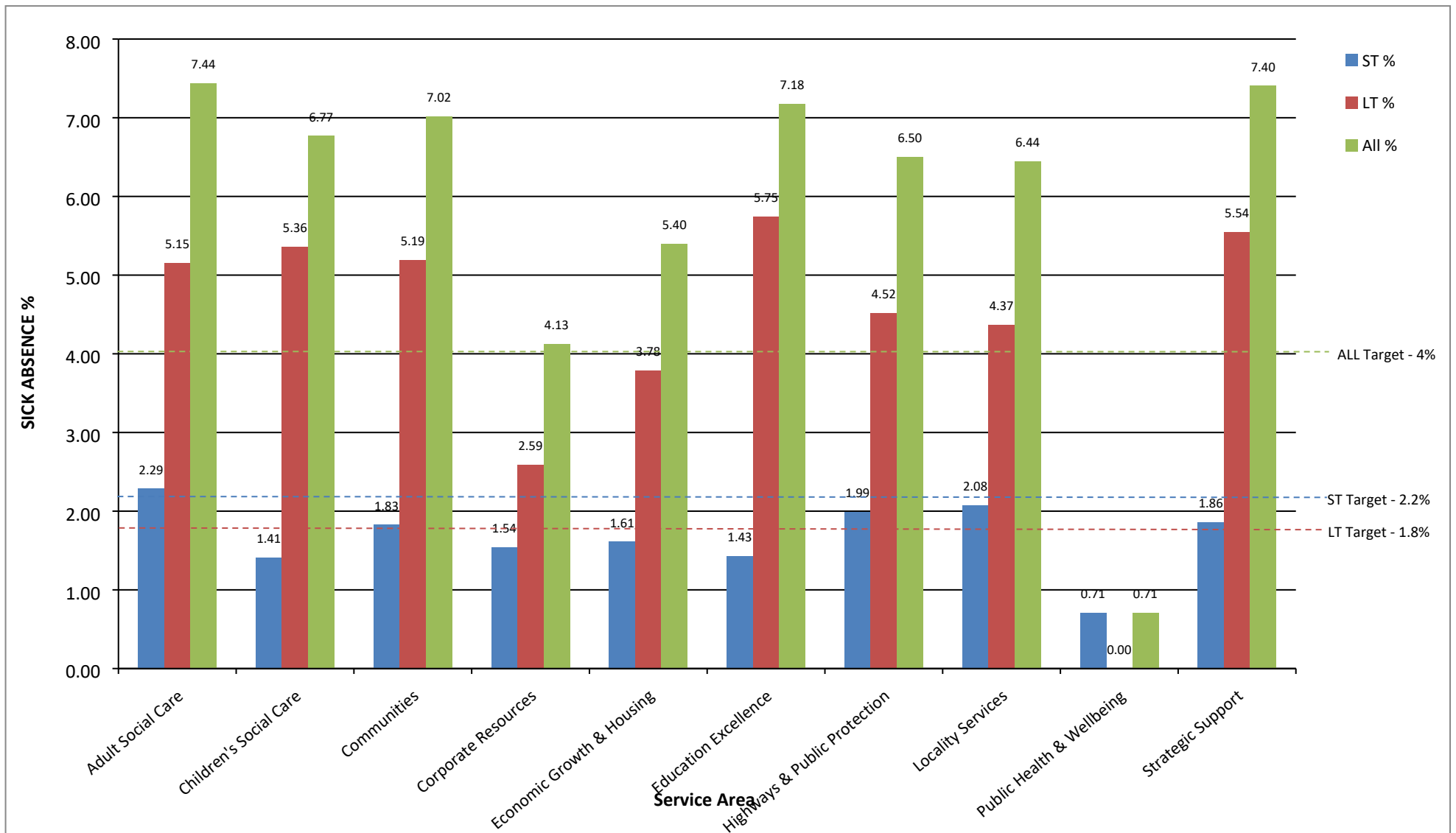
Managing Absence

23. The Council has a Sickness Absence Policy which operates in a partnership with trade unions. Long term absence is being dealt with in accordance with overall business need and short-term absence is operated in accordance with recognised and agreed trigger points. All policies, where applicable, are subject to modification in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
24. Trade unions and management recognise the need for correct management of sickness absence to provide appropriate support to lessen the demands on employees who remain at work.
25. A working group involving Corporate Personnel and trade unions is examining the procedural and cultural issues in terms of sickness absence and will continue the partnership approach in looking at support to employees and managers offered through the procedure.

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Sick Absence by Service Area for 01/10/2018 to 30/09/2019 (12m)

ANNEX 2



Service Area	Days Available	ST Sick Days	ST %	ST Episodes	LT Sick Days	LT %	LT Episodes	All Days Sick	All %	All Episodes
Adult Social Care	65,668.51	1,501.07	2.29	349	3,383.69	5.15	76	4,884.76	7.44	425
Children's Social Care	50,000.26	706.30	1.41	161	2,678.18	5.36	63	3,384.48	6.77	224
Communities	94,830.65	1,731.45	1.83	481	4,924.09	5.19	118	6,655.54	7.02	599
Corporate Resources	106,886.04	1,645.61	1.54	477	2,765.43	2.59	70	4,411.04	4.13	547
Economic Growth & Housing	35,353.07	569.42	1.61	180	1,337.97	3.78	24	1,907.39	5.40	204
Education Excellence	31,753.10	454.55	1.43	131	1,824.46	5.75	39	2,279.02	7.18	170
Highways & Public Protection	29,617.25	588.63	1.99	134	1,337.59	4.52	32	1,926.22	6.50	166
Locality Services	185,169.33	3,843.36	2.08	1260	8,088.38	4.37	286	11,931.74	6.44	1546
Public Health & Wellbeing	2,256.50	16.00	0.71	4	0.00	0.00	0	16.00	0.71	4
Strategic Support	18,082.58	336.52	1.86	85	1,002.49	5.54	18	1,339.01	7.40	103