Sickness Absence – Project Scope

Background

Absence management (and in particular sickness absence) is a reoccurring 'hot topic' in the council and in the last few years there has been a scrutiny review, an audit, and various DMT/CMT discussions about how best to deal with specific issues identified.

Although the council has been through a significant period of change, our absence rates remain relatively static and on a par with other councils (although still high compared to the private sector and other councils who take a more proactive approach to absence management). However, as a proportion of the total, stress related absences have increased.

In response to the issues we have identified we have put in place a number of specific actions and interventions (policy review, manager development, health and wellbeing support etc.). But what we have not yet been able to progress is using an IT solution to support with the recording of absence.

We have now agreed that we are going to implement sickness absence recording via iTrent. It is a relativity basic functionality and does not include annual leave, but should provide managers with workflow notification (via email) at the various stages of employee absence management, trigger point notifications and MI.

For successful implement we need to re-launch our support to absence management so that this is not just seen as a new IT system recording solution and staff and managers understand the benefits of managing absence.

The specific actions from this project will feed into the next audit and governance scrutiny review which has asked for 'Absence Management Process update report'.

Project Scope

The project should draw on the promotion of existing support and resources, although some changes may be recommended to allow us to get the maximum benefit from the project. Areas to cover include:

- promote and create an understanding of the benefits of proactive management of absence
- promote and create an understanding of the requirements of the absence policy (and the role of the employee and the manager)
- implementation of iTrent manager self service
- manager learning and development opportunities
- the role of occupational health, counselling service and wellbeing
- creating the right culture for managers to be able to deal with sensitive issues (i.e. mental wellbeing issues)
- manager support / coaching to deal with absence issues (i.e. Employee Relations team)
- promotion of flexible working and work life balance
- engagement of and communication to the CYC workforce regarding all aspects of absence management

Outcomes

It is envisaged that the following benefits will be achieved:

- managers will be able to input all sickness input into iTrent, when an absence is reported to them
- managers will be send workflow emails which provide them advice regarding how to deal with absence issues and support the employee
- managers will be sent workflow emails which confirm when an employee has it a trigger point (and advice with what to do)
- managers will be sent MI regarding sickness absence in their area of responsibility to monitor any areas of concern
- staff and managers have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding absence management and have an understanding of why and how absence is managed
- staff and managers recognise the benefits of good employee health and wellbeing and know where to go to get support
- absence rates should decrease through better understanding and effective management of absence policy
- more accurate reporting and management information (this may identify an increase in absences reported)
- the Trade Unions can see the benefits of what we are trying to achieve and will support us in this