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## Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

22 January 2018

Report of the Director of Customer & Corporate Services

### Attendance & Wellbeing Project – Update

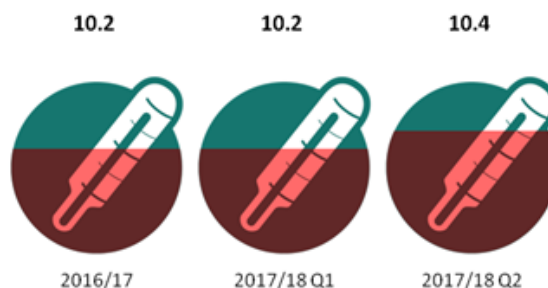
#### Summary

1. This report provides an update on work being undertaken to address sickness absence with a focus on attendance management and employee wellbeing.

#### Background

2. Following committee meeting in September 2017, committee members requested that progress of the project would be reported back and to outline the specific work activity underway to reduce the levels of sickness absence across the organisation.
3. The 12 month rolling average of sickness days per FTE (excluding schools) has increased slightly from 10.2 days at the end of June, to 10.4 days at the end of September. This also remains higher than the CIPD Public Sector average of 8.7 days.
4. The 12 month rolling average for stress related absence was 2.5 days per FTE at the end of Q1 but this has increased slightly in September to 2.8 days.

Average sickness days per FTE – CYC  
(Excluding Schools) – (Rolling 12 Month)



5. As previously reported, the priority for the second year is a focus on attendance management and to also concentrate on the council's wellbeing priority. The key activities in 2018 in relation to attendance and staff wellbeing include:
- The implementation of self service absence reporting into iTrent which will reduce the reporting burden for managers and assist with more accurate reporting and improved management information.
  - The delivery of a suite of learning for managers including attendance management training, disability awareness and support with difficult conversations.
  - Specific communication to ensure all employees have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding application of policy.
  - A review of the role of Occupational Health and counselling service.
  - An engagement campaign to promote an understanding of the benefits of proactive management of absence and help support managers and staff to deal with sensitive issues (e.g. mental health, support with cancer and terminal illness) and promotion of flexible working and work life balance to ensure staff have an understanding of wellbeing initiatives and how they access them.
  - Review of the current attendance management toolkit to consider improvements and determine if there are any recommendations to revise policy.

## **Current Position**

### **Implementation of self service absence reporting**

6. The iTrent Absence Management module is an extension of the People Manager module already widely used by managers across the council to authorise time and expense claims for staff. Managers will use it to record all sickness absence and other absence reasons, for example dependent care, unpaid leave. This will provide an improved absence history.
7. Work has been undertaken by HR colleagues from October 2017 to December 2017 to finalise the existing build work of the Absence module. This work has taken longer than expected due to issues identified in the testing phase and capabilities of the system which required some additional redesign work. The system is now developed and will go to the internal Corporate ICT board for sign off on the 10<sup>th</sup>

January 2018.

8. Final structural changes are required within iTrent to ensure the system accurately reflects the current organisational structure. The completion of this work will ensure that all sickness absence can be reported and is on track to support a roll out during February and March 2018.
9. To support the launch, drop-in sessions will be run by HR to ensure managers are familiar with the absence function of iTrent People Manager. Detailed guidance and communications for all staff will also be rolled out.

### **Management Information**

10. Currently sickness is reported to all managers in the organisation through a variety of mechanisms; within quarterly Finance and Performance Reporting; reports to Corporate and Directorate Management Teams; self service through the KPI machine; and requested exception reporting.
11. Since the last report, detailed work has been carried out by the Business Intelligence Team and Human Resources to make available additional information for managers (via the KPI machine), about employees under the managers supervision. It provides full establishment information including personalised data on incidents of absence, for team managers to see both individual and team absence in “real” time.
12. The management information is enabling the organisation to identify ‘hot spots’ and to target particular teams who require support with managing attendance. This project will complement the introduction of the iTrent absence reporting and will be launched at the same time as the self-service absence reporting functionality.

### **HR Support**

13. Across the Council there are many areas with good attendance and good practice however, there are some areas that require focused interventions as high levels of absence have been identified within these areas.
14. The management information has identified a ‘hot spot’ in Economy and Place. Additional HR resource has been provided to assist the directorate to address the particularly high levels of sickness absence and is providing intensive support, working alongside managers to understand the specific challenges within those areas of work.

15. The HR Officer supporting the project is based at Hazel Court on a regular basis and is providing bespoke training and support for the teams, proactively working with senior and operational managers, the HR advisory team and HR Occupational Health Advisor to identify areas of concern and possible solutions. This includes musculoskeletal disorders and potential interventions to improve the wellbeing of the workforce and improved attendance.
16. HR drop in sessions have been introduced for managers with the aim of supporting employee wellbeing whilst providing proactive, preventative interventions for specific absence cases.
17. In addition, drop in sessions will be available to ensure all employees have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding application of policy. These will be open to all staff, but initially will be targeted to the areas with high levels of sickness absence.

### **Learning and Development**

18. A suite of learning for managers has now been developed and includes attendance management training, disability awareness and support with difficult conversations.
19. Following attempts at raising awareness across the organisation, the courses to date have been well attended and positively received. Due to demand for the training, the programme has been extended to ensure learning needs are fulfilled and by the end of March, the number of managers attending courses overall will exceed 200. See table below:

<b>October 2017 - March 2018</b>		
Course Title	Number of courses	Number of delegates
Attendance Management	10	108
Disability Awareness (in employment)	4	46
Having Difficult Conversations	4	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>190</b>

20. Bite-size Disability Awareness training for all staff is also available and from February 2018 our current Occupational Provider will deliver training to support managers in Occupational Health processes.
21. Dedicated Communication and Engagement support is now in place in HR. The officer is developing a campaign to promote an understanding of the benefits of proactive management of absence and help support managers and staff to deal with sensitive issues (e.g mental health,

support with cancer and terminal illness) and promotion of flexible working and work life balance. This will support staff in their understanding of wellbeing initiatives and how they access them.

22. The council's intranet pages have been refreshed to enable staff to easily access information to support them in the workplace. Further work to develop the intranet and reach those staff that do not have easy access to the intranet is ongoing.
23. The review of the role of Occupational Health and counselling service is ongoing.
24. The attendance management toolkit has been reviewed and will be re-launched alongside the roll out of the iTrent Absence Module.

### **Consultation**

25. Trade Union colleagues continue to be part of the project team. Staff will be involved in focus groups throughout the project. Any proposed changes to policy will be consulted upon as required.

### **Council Plan**

26. The information outlined in this report is in line with the Council Plan and the People Plan which has health and wellbeing as a priority.

### **Implications**

27. **Financial:** There are direct costs associated with absenteeism in some areas due to the use of agency. Indirect costs are associated in relation to potential loss of productivity.
  - **Human Resources (HR):** If sickness absence is not tracked and managed appropriately, the implications for staff members could be significant if appropriate support or responses are not put into place, either through worsening absence or symptoms, or through litigation action taken against the council.
  - If absence reasons and volumes recorded in iTrent are not accurate, they cannot be relied upon to inform decision making and subsequent actions.
  - **Equalities:** The poor recording of sickness absence reasons and related management action could result in reasonable adjustments or occupational health advice not being provided where staff are covered by the Equalities Act in relation to disability.
  - **Legal:** See HR implications

- **Crime and Disorder:** None
- **Information Technology:** Matters relating to the HR system are covered in the report
- **Property:** None

### **Risk Management**

28. The main risks continue to relate to failure to record, track, monitor and put into place actions to monitor sickness, which may cause sickness levels to not be accurate, and in turn cause actions to be put in place that are not proportionate or in line with policy. Mitigations will be put in place as detailed in the main body of the report.

### **Recommendations**

29. Members are asked to:

- a. Note and comment on the contents of the report.

Reason: To understand the key issues and response to the recommendations to secure improvements in control arrangements around sickness absence.

- b. Consider receiving future updates and a specific report in six months.

Reason: To review the progress and impact of the project and the impact on attendance and wellbeing across the Council.

### **Contact Details**

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 8 Jan 2018

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** None

**Wards Affected:**

**All** ☒

**For further information please contact the author of the report**