

**Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny
Management Committee**

9 November 2020

Report of the Head of Human Resources &
Organisational Development

Sickness Absence – Covid related

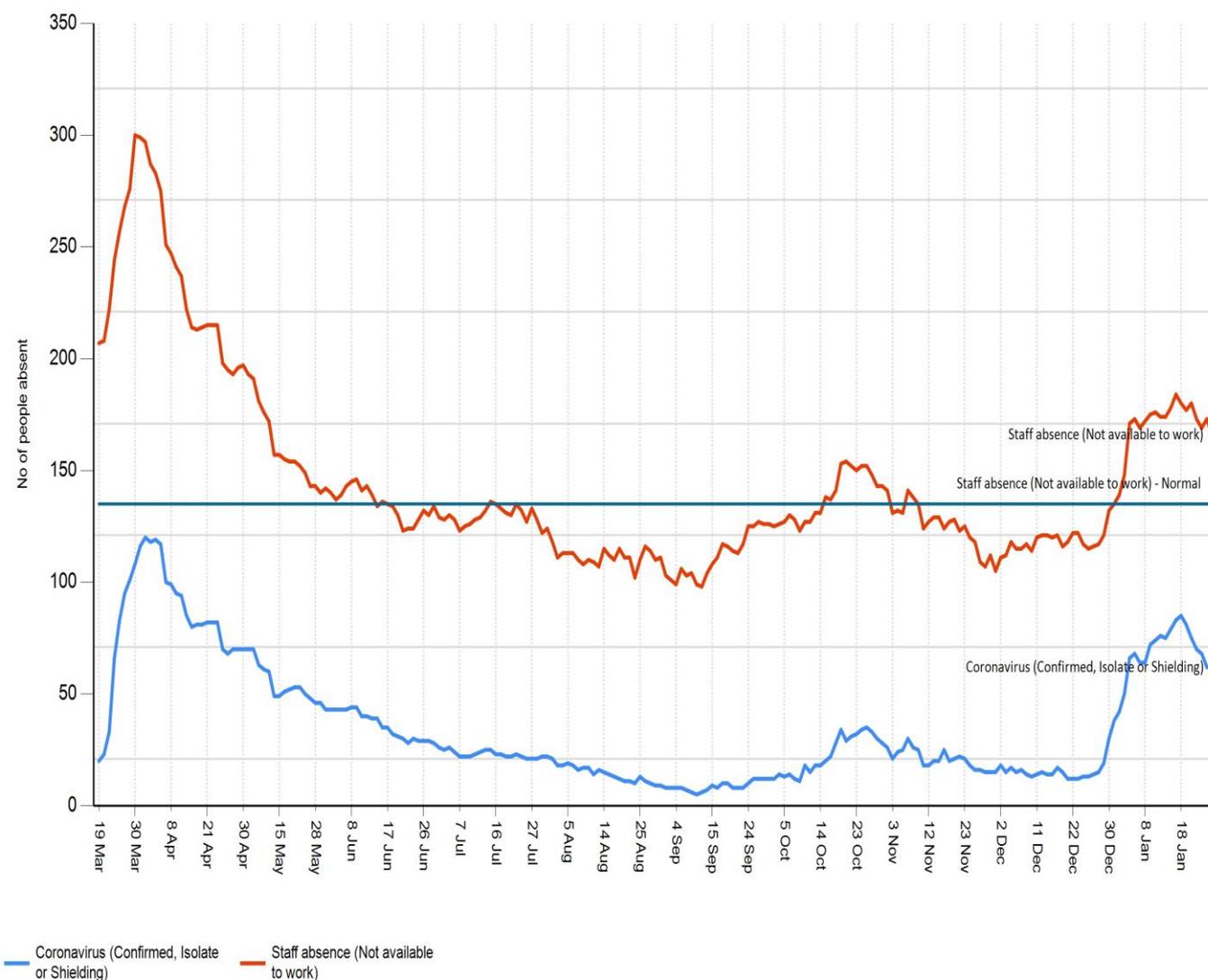
Summary

1. To provide members with an update on sickness absence levels, with a focus on Covid related absence.
2. To provide members with information on how the council continues to support staff affected by Covid during the pandemic.

Background

Absence Levels

3. The graph below shows the sickness absence rates since March 2020. At the start of the pandemic staff absence increased significantly with a number of staff not available to work. This was directly linked to coronavirus where staff were displaying symptoms and self isolating and unable to work from home.
4. The sickness absence rates across the council follows the national and local infection rate patterns, as can be seen, with a slight peak in wave 2 October time and then wave three being end of December into January 2021.
5. There is some confidence though that whilst rates have increased since end of December, they are not near the level we experienced in March / April.
6. There are staff that are self isolating but are able to work fully from home and therefore those will not appear in the figures, also those staff who have tested positive for covid but are well enough to continue to work from home.



Internal Mechanisms

7. Where staff report absent, due to covid related symptoms/positive test/self isolating, on the Day One Absence line, HR receive real time information. HR then make contact with each individual to obtain further information, including if they have been in work building or contact with colleagues or customers.
8. Information is then passed to the Councils Public Health team who do local track and trace. This identifies immediately if any other staff are affected and we can then advise other staff to self isolate if required.
9. This process is done with the individual members of staff and their supervisors/managers.

10. We have no concern that there is any transmission of the virus within the workplace from information that is available.
11. There are a number of measures in place to help stop the spread of the virus, following government guidance on safe workplaces and the message of Hands, Face and Space.
12. Risk assessments are carried out on buildings, individuals and specific workplace activity, as they would normally, but these are now updated with covid specific elements.

Testing

13. Staff who are not working at home 100% of their time are encouraged to access the symptom free testing in place across the city sites. We are aware that many staff are using these facilities.
14. HR and Public Health are working together to identify if symptoms free test kits can be provided to key staff at home, reducing the need for them to attend the York sites. This is still ongoing.
15. As with the public where staff have a positive result from the lateral flow test they then book a PCR test to confirm. Where results are positive they self isolate and report through to the day one absence line. HR then pick this up in real time.

Vaccination

16. Vaccinations have started across the staff group where their role falls within the category of Health & Social Care.
17. Public Health are working closely with the CCG and NHS Trust to ensure those staff are vaccinated.
18. We are aware that around 900 names have been provided to the CCG and staff are booking on for their vaccinations.
19. We are not currently holding the information where staff have received the vaccine. There are issues linked with GDPR and the holding of medical information. We are liaising with managers to establish an estimate of those who have received it against the numbers put forward.

Well Being

20. The committee is aware of the health & wellbeing measures that are in place as a result of previous papers received. All those measures continue to support our staff.
21. Keeping Well in 2021 was launched in January and we have had two weeks where free courses have been provided for staff to access, including Let Go and Laugh, How to Sleep Well, and Virtual Yoga.
22. These have been well attended with over 150 bookings.
23. We continue to look at ways to support staff health and wellbeing in addition to what we already provide.

Consultation

24. There was no consultation involved in the production of this report.

Council Plan

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

Implications

26. There are direct financial cost associated with health and wellbeing, mainly through the cost of absence. Managing Health & Well Being effectively will reduce this strain on resource.
27. HR implications are throughout health & wellbeing and ensuring that practice and policy is being consistently applied is essential.
28. There are no known Legal, ICT or other implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Risk Management

29. The main risks continue to relate to failure to record, track, monitor and put into place actions to monitor and manage well being, which may cause sickness levels to rise.

Recommendations

30. To consider the information provided in the report.

Reason: To inform the Committee of the absence directly relating to covid.

Contact Details

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Abbreviations

HR Human Resources

OD Organisational Development