

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance
DATE	31 January 2019
REPORT TITLE	Sickness Absence update
REPORT NUMBER	RES/19/051
DIRECTOR	Steve Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	David Forman
TERMS OF REFERENCE	4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report outlines the current sickness rates across the Council and suggested improvement activities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

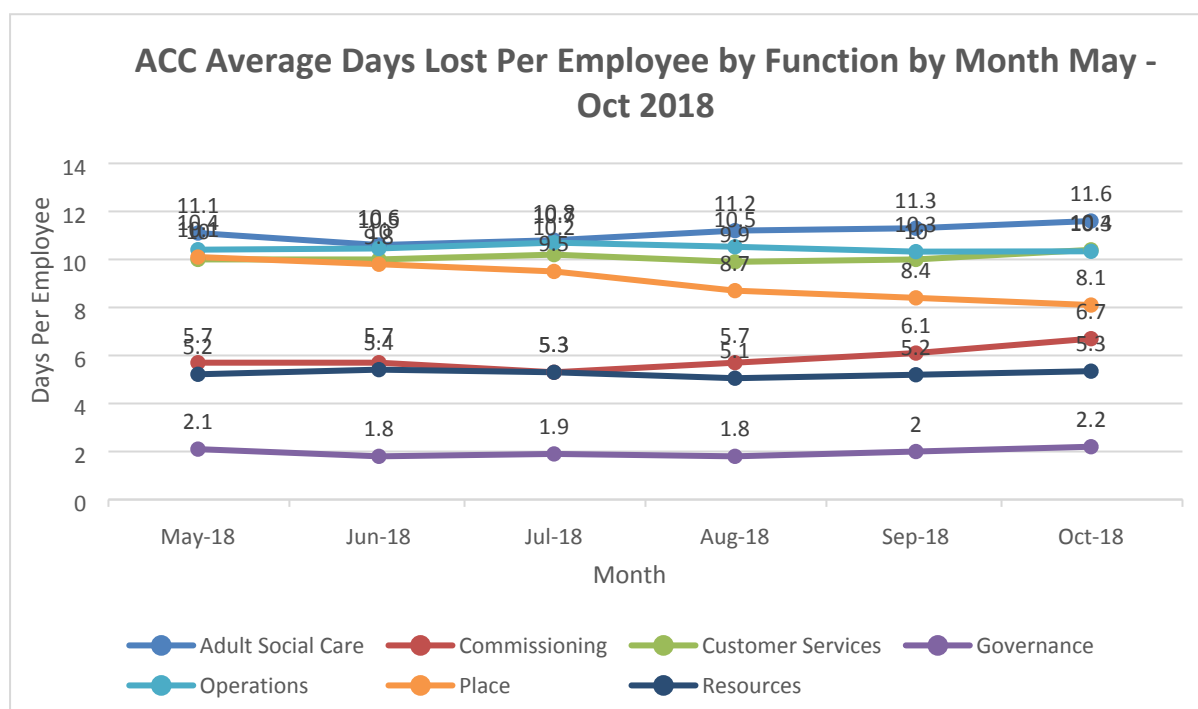
That the Committee :-

- 2.1 Note the sickness rates over the past 6 months; and
- 2.2 Endorse the approaches for reducing sickness absence across the Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report outlines absence information for the period May 2018 to October 2018 and proposes actions to more closely manage absence with the aim of making improvements.
- 3.2 Overall, the absence rate for the Council reduced by 0.08% over the reporting period May – October 2018. That is, in October 2018 the absence rate was 0.08% less than in May 2018. It can be seen in the graph below that over the past 6 months the average days lost per employee in 2 out of 7 functions have improved significantly, whilst 5 out of 7 have seen worsening figures. For example, the Place function saw a reduction in its absence rate of 19.8% in the reporting period. While the Commissioning function experienced a 17.5% increase in its average days lost per employee, due to the relatively low numbers of employees in this function the actual impact on the total for the Council has been minimal.

Sickness Rates over the past 6 months (change graph)



3.3 The tables shown below detail the breakdown of short-term and long-term absence across the Function structure in terms of average days absent per employee.

Services	Average Days Absent Per Employee					
	May 2018		June 2018		July 2018	
	Short-Term	Long-Term	Short-Term	Long-Term	Short-Term	Long-Term
Adult Social Care	5.2	5.9	4.9	5.7	4.9	5.8
Commissioning	2.9	2.8	2.7	3	2.6	2.7
Customer Services	4	6	4.1	5.9	4.1	6.1
Governance	1.9	0.2	1.8	0	1.8	0.1
Operations	3.9	6.5	4	6.5	4.0	6.8
Place	2.9	7.1	2.8	7	2.9	6.6
Resources	2.7	2.5	3	2.5	3.0	2.4

Services	Average Days Absent Per Employee					
	August 2018		September 2018		October 2018	
	Short-Term	Long-Term	Short-Term	Long-Term	Short-Term	Long-Term
Adult Social Care	4.9	6.2	4.9	6.5	4.9	6.8
Commissioning	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.4	2.9	3.9
Customer Services	4.1	5.8	4	6	4.1	6.2
Governance	1.7	0.2	1.9	0.2	1.7	0.6
Operations	3.9	6.7	3.9	6.4	3.8	6.5
Place	2.8	5.9	2.8	5.6	3	5.1

Resources	2.8	2.2	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.7
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3.4 When looking at the split between short-term and long-term absence, we find that all Functions, bar Place, have shown an increase in the rate of long-term absence over the reporting period. Given the reductions in the short-term rate for many Functions, it is anticipated that some of this reduction can be attributed to employees moving from short to long term absence.

3.5 The five main reasons for sickness absence, in terms of average days absent per employee, are shown in the table below:-

Reason	Average Days Absent Per Employee					
	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	September 2018	October 2018
Psychological	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7
Musculoskeletal	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9
Respiratory	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6
Gastrointestinal	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4
Neurological	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7

There has been an increase in days absent per employee of 17% for Gastrointestinal and 7% for Musculoskeletal reasons in the reporting period. There has been a reduction in days absent per employee for Psychological and Respiratory reasons in the reporting period by 7% and 11% respectively. From the table we can see that the top two reasons for absence in the Council are Psychological and Musculoskeletal. As such, a series of actions to specifically address these absence types are detailed in the table below.

3.6 While the People and Organisation cluster will continue to measure and monitor the reasons for and instances of sickness absence on a monthly basis, in order to manage sickness effectively managers must apply the Maximising Attendance policy, until the end of 2018, with the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy effective thereafter, as approved by SGC on the 1st November 2018. As such, the Council should to ensure that the following actions continue in line with absence policy and guidance –

Issue	Action	Owner	Measure	Supporting Actions
Psychological Absence	Promote and use Quality of Working Lives stress risk assessments to reduce stress in the workplace	Health and Safety	Number of risk assessments	Provide the Corporate Health and Safety team with relevant data to enable targeted interventions.
Psychological Absence	To undertake the range of activities relating to mental health as presented to the Staff	People and Organisation	Days absent per employee due to	To be detailed in the Employee Mental health Action Plan report

	Governance Committee as a separate report on this date		Psychological conditions Number of referrals to Occupational Health due to Psychological conditions Number of self-referrals to Employee Assistance Service due to Psychological conditions	being reported to the Staff Governance Committee
Musculoskeletal absence	Promote and use manual handling risk assessments to help reduce absence related to musculoskeletal issues	Health and Safety	Number of risk assessments	Provide the Corporate Health and Safety team with relevant data to enable targeted interventions.
Musculoskeletal absence	DSE assessments	All managers	Percentage of completed DSE assessments	People and Organisation to work in conjunction with corporate Health and Safety team to identify areas where DSE assessments are required and to track the completion rate of these.
Supporting Employees with absence	People and Organisation to work with Clusters on a monthly basis to ensure long term sickness is being actively managed and highlight measures such as physiotherapy, the workplace chaplaincy service which is provided by the City Chaplain and the "Time for Talking" Counselling	People and Organisation	Monthly monitoring and reporting of organisational absence statistics. Monitoring of uptake of support measures offered by the Council to address issues	Measure monthly on an ongoing basis Measure monthly on an ongoing basis

	Service which are available for employees		that may lead to employee absence. Monitoring of uptake of support measures offered by the Council to reduce the length of time an employee is absent from work	Measure monthly on an ongoing basis
Policy compliance	Timely completion of online absence recording	All managers	YourHR - time to complete online processes	Measure monthly on an ongoing basis
Policy compliance	Return to work meetings are held with employees on their return from a period of absence as soon as possible	All managers	YourHR - time to complete online processes	Use YourHR reporting functionality to identify areas of the organisation having issues completing return to work interviews promptly and offer support to speed up the process.
Policy compliance	Review meetings when employees hit sickness triggers should continue to be arranged and held	All managers	YourHR - time to complete online processes	Use YourHR reporting functionality to identify areas of the organisation having issues arranging absence review meetings, gain understanding as to why this is and then provide support to clusters based on this information.
Policy compliance	Continue to maintain contact with employees on long term absence	All managers	Managers log of employee contacts	Provision of trigger reports to clusters indicating which employees are on long term sickness absence

Occupational Health	Employees absent with underlying health problems continue to be referred to Occupational Health	All managers	Number of OH referrals.	People and Organisation to monitor and report on Occupational Health activity.
Organisational Reputation	Benchmarking of the Council's absence statistics against other Scottish Local Authorities	People and Organisation	Position of the Council in the Scottish Local Authority rank order	Compare Aberdeen City Council figure against other Scottish Local Authorities upon publication by the Improvement Service.
Gastrointestinal absence	Promotion of universal infection control toolbox	Health and Wellbeing Adviser	Number of comms activities	Health and Wellbeing Adviser to evaluate effectiveness of universal infection control toolbox and make improvements based on evidence.
Employee Good Health Group (EGHG)	Review of (EGHG) attendees to ensure all Functions are represented.	Health and Wellbeing Adviser	Percentage of Functions represented	Health and Wellbeing Adviser to utilise communications channels to ensure all Functions are represented on the Employee Good Health Group

3.7 In addition to the approaches above there are a number of Health and wellbeing activities which are already being utilised to support employees in the workplace. Those that are relevant to musculoskeletal include –

- **Pilates, Yoga, Tai Chi** - These exercise classes are self-funded by participants and have been running successful for over 12 months. The classes work on improving posture, mobility and flexibility of the spine which helps to reduce musculoskeletal aches and pain.
- **Spinal Care Workshop and Spinal Screenings** – This was delivered by Aberdeen Chiropractor Clinic and provided an overview of the spine, how to care for your spine and good postural practices. The uptake of

this pitstop was good with a significant number of the available spaces booked up. In May 2018 there were 20 available slots with 20 attendees and in September 2018 there were 20 available slots with 12 attendees. Due to the high demand for this session we have arranged for more sessions to take place next yet.

- **Onsite Chiropractic Clinic** - Following previous successful Spinal Care workshops, an onsite clinic once a month was planned so that employees could take advantage of the discount on offer.
- **Chair Based Yoga** - These sessions were chosen so that less able-bodied employees could join in with workplace exercise. The sessions are great for anyone who suffers for with musculoskeletal pain and for employees that spend all day at their desk. The classes give employees exercises they can do at their desks so keep then active at work.

Those that are relevant to Mental Health and Psychological support are -

- **Alternative Therapy Sessions** – sessions are offered to employees at a negotiated discounted rate, for employees to unwind physically and mentally during their working day as well as experience a service which they may not otherwise consider outside of work. The discounted therapy sessions and have been extended to meet employee demand.

Those that are relevant to Malignancy are -

- **Pitstop: Prostate Scotland** - The aim of the session was to provide information and to increase awareness of prostate disease and prostate cancer. The session was delivered in various areas that have a predominantly male workforce. The uptake was generally good particularly for the janitors and groundsmen.

The forthcoming programme for these activities is shown in appendix A.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The main implications arising from sickness absence are when alternative resources are required for cover purposes, and any corresponding impact on Council budgets will be reported within the quarterly Council Financial Performance report .

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	If no action is taken to support individuals and address absence trends there is a risk that absence increases. This may result in increased costs to the council i.e. through use of agency workers to cover absent employees	M	Actions as outlined above. Continued adherence to the corporate maximising attendance policy and guidance to ensure that absence is managed as per corporate guidelines.
Legal	Failure to record employee absence may result in non-reporting of notifiable instances of absence in relation to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013	L	Corporate Health and Safety team to continue to advise the Council compliance with Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013 Reporting requirements
Employee	Risk of low morale if colleagues are absent for a period of time. Risk of stress related illness as a result of employees covering absent colleagues' workloads	M	Implementation of maximising attendance policy and Occupational Health Contract to minimise absence levels The provision of, and signposting to, online stress reducing advice as well as face to face sessions concerned with stress reduction.
Customer	Service Delivery may be affected if absence is high in customer facing roles.	M	Use of peripheral staffing, such as agency or overtime, to assist with service delivery.

Environment	N/A		
Technology	N/A		
Reputational	Risk to Organisations reputation if absence levels are high.	M	Management of absence levels to ensure that they are kept to as low a level as possible.

7. OUTCOMES

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Workforce	The management of absence levels and the approaches within this report will help to reduce absence levels and to provide support to employees who are absent.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

10. APPENDICES

Health and Wellbeing Activities January to March 2019

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix A

Health and Wellbeing Activities January – March 2019

Month	Date	Activity	Location
January	Various dates	Wellpoint Kiosk	Marischal College West Tullos Schools
	10 th 17 th 24 th	Chair Based Yoga	3W01 Marischal College
	18 th (6wks)	Scottish Slimmers	3W02 Marischal College
February	9 th	Pitstop: Spinal Care and Personal Spinal Screenings	4W01 Marischal College
	13 th 20 th 27 th	Metafit	4W01 Marischal College
March	15 th	Pitstop: SAMH Five Ways to Mental Wellbeing	3W01 Marischal College
	13 th – 19 th	National Nutrition and Hydration Week	Online
EVERY WEEK	Everyday	Alternative Therapies	Marischal College Frederick Street Rosemount
	Every Tuesday	Pilates Classes	3W01 Marischal College
	Every Thursday	Tai Chi Class	3W01 Marischal College
	Every Thursday	Yoga Class	3W01 Marischal College
MONTHLY	Every 2 nd Tuesday	Mindfulness	4W02 Marischal College

	Every 2 nd Wednesday	Onsite Chiropractor Clinic	First Aid Room Marischal College
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