








Corporate Governance Committee
31 January 2020

Corporate risk 7.1 - If sickness absence is not effectively managed then staff costs, service delivery and staff wellbeing will be impacted.

Background

- Key corporate priority
- Wide range of initiatives and interventions in place
- Current levels of sickness absence remain a significant concern
- Levels of ‘stress/mental health/depression’ absence is a major factor
- Significant annual cost to the Council

Current corporate position

Dept	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 Q2	2019/20 Q3	Direction of travel since last quarter	Total FTE days lost 01/01/19– 31/12/19	Total cost of absence 01/01/19 – 31/12/19
Chief Executive's	5.55	6.99	6.03	6.38	7.60	6.93	5.53		1,254	£147,419
E&T	8.23	8.80	9.68	10.09	9.16	8.45	8.52		6,678	£592,996
C&FS	10.37	10.06	10.05	10.25	10.55	9.79	10.22		10,173	£1,165,405
Corporate Resources	7.86	6.95	7.94	8.12	7.39	8.12	8.87		10,246	£906,719
A&C	12.24	11.31	12.57	11.26	10.02	10.94	11.63		14,464	£1,392,507
Public Health	9.14	7.84	7.43	6.49	8.57	8.10	6.25		588	£67,039
LCC total	9.83	9.32	10.01	9.73	9.18	9.27	9.65		43,403	£4,272,085

Reasons for absence (top 5 + not disclosed)

% FTE days lost over a 12 month rolling period	2017/18 Q4	2018/19 Q1	2018/19 Q2	2018/19 Q3	2018/19 Q4	2019/20 Q1	2019/20 Q2	2019/20 Q3
Stress/depression, mental health	26.3%	26.8%	27.2%	28.5%	29.9%	29.9%	30.5%	29.7%
Other musculo-skeletal	16.6%	17.0%	17.6%	17.1%	16.6%	16.5%	14.8%	13.0%
Gastro- stomach, digestion	8.1%	7.8%	8.4%	8.3%	8.2%	8.6%	8.2%	8.4%
Cough, cold, flu	7.5%	7.9%	8.0%	7.8%	6.2%	6.0%	6.2%	6.3%
Cancer	2.8%	3.0%	3.0%	3.4%	4.4%	5.5%	5.8%	6.0%
Not disclosed	5.7%	4.8%	3.5%	3.0%	2.5%	2.5%	2.7%	3.9%

Approach

- Sustained programme of activity to understand and resolve causes of absence
- Ongoing policy and guidance review
- Dedicated resources including a senior HR lead
- Partnership working with trade unions
- Continued development and support for our managers, with focus on robust performance management

Robust governance framework

- Regular reporting to CMT
- Standing item on Employment Committee
- Quarterly reporting to Cabinet Briefing
- Lead Members – standing agenda items with Directors
- Departmental management teams – star chamber approach – complex cases

Summary of issues

- Absence remains above target of 7.5 days
- Recently, have seen lowest levels of absence for 5 years, but a number of areas increasing again
- Higher levels of seasonal viral illness
- High levels of stress/mental health/depression related absence and rising levels of cancer related absence
- Long term absence accounts for c60% of all absence

Wellbeing support

- Range of measures:
 - Promotion of the use of wellbeing support plans;
 - Revision of the Managers' guide on mental health & supporting employees;
 - Survey of staff within A&C and C&FS regarding stress and mental health absence – departmental action plans developed;
 - 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme being piloted as an addition to the existing in-house counselling service;

Attendance Management Intensive Support Project

- Dedicated resources focused on key areas across the Council, based on need
- Approximately a third of the Council has been in scope
- Ongoing training and specific case management support & coaching
- Most notable successes within E&T
- Resource being retained and refocused on the most complex cases

Peer Review

- Peer review by senior HR staff from North Yorkshire CC in August
- Headlines:
 - Consider future role of Intensive Support - *actioned*
 - Continue to develop management capacity / capability - *ongoing*
 - Address culture of ‘entitlement’ (to sick leave) and (arguably) risk averse culture – *ongoing via corporate communications plan*
 - Consider all factors which impact on sickness absence (e.g. teams with vacancies, quality of supervision / support, team morale etc) – *various solutions, including use of cultural assessment tool*
 - Consider how we use various aspects of our policy - *ongoing with trade unions*
 - Ensure there is a core, clearly understood wellbeing offer – *under review*
 - Review the Occupational Health contract – *underway*

Next steps

- Refocused HR support for managers
- Communications plan to facilitate key consistent messages
- Ongoing monitoring / management information
- Continued focus on wider performance management – all managers