



## EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

### ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

#### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee on the County Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of March 2021. Due to work on reporting, which is still in progress following the implementation of the Council's new Finance and HR system, the report contains the latest set of available figures as at 31 March 2021.

#### Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Attendance Management Policy supports this report. No changes to this policy are proposed.

#### Background

3. On 4 February 2021, the Committee considered the Council's absence position as at the end of November 2020.

#### Sickness absence – current position

4. The table below details the end of year sickness absence levels of the previous 4 years, quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 of 2020/21.

Department	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21 Q1 Jun 20	20/21 Q2 Sept 20	20/21 Q3 Dec 20	20/21 End of year Mar 21	Total FTE days lost 01/04/20 – 31/03/21	Total cost of absence 01/04/20 – 31/03/21
Chief Executive's	6.03	6.38	7.60	5.38	5.28	4.61	4.38	4.41	1,038	£135,376
Environment & Transport	9.68	10.09	9.16	8.88	8.46	7.85	7.47	7.04	5,666	£513,792
Children & Family Services	10.05	10.25	10.55	11.12	10.60	10.14	8.99	7.94	8,510	£1,059,565
Corporate Resources	7.94	8.12	7.39	9.39	8.25	7.25	6.40	5.54	6,443	£579,438
Adults & Communities	12.57	11.26	10.02	11.74	11.41	11.19	10.54	10.18	12,438	£1,208,438
Public Health	7.43	6.49	8.57	7.12	6.19	7.20	7.11	5.08	610	£74,161
<b>LCC total</b>	<b>10.01</b>	<b>9.73</b>	<b>9.18</b>	<b>10.08</b>	<b>9.48</b>	<b>8.94</b>	<b>8.20</b>	<b>7.51</b>	<b>34,705</b>	<b>£3,570,438</b>

ESPO	9.75	11.70	9.55	7.20	6.80	6.64	6.35	6.82	2,250	£203,050
EMSS	9.27	7.42	7.54	9.69	9.26	8.09	5.25	4.53	707	£69,684

5. At the end of the financial year 2020/21 the Chief Executive's, Environment and Transport and Public Health departments are below the corporate target of 7.5 days per FTE. The trend across all departments has been a decrease in absence during 2020/21 with the Council's total being at 7.51 FTE days lost.

### **Reasons for sickness absence**

6. Displayed in order of percentage of time lost (greatest first), the table below details the top 10 reasons for absence, plus the 'not disclosed' category.

Percentage of FTE days lost 12 months cumulative	2019/20 Sept 2019 Q2	2019/20 Dec 2019 Q3	2019/20 Mar 2020 Q4	2020/21 Jun 2020 Q1	2020/21 Sept 2020 Q2	2020/21 Dec 2020 Q3	2020/21 Mar 2021 Q4
Stress/depression, mental health	30.5%	29.7%	29.2%	28.5%	28.9%	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>
Other musculo-skeletal	14.8%	13.0%	13.1%	11.4%	10.5%	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>
Covid-19	n/a	n/a	1.4%	3.6%	5.6%	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>
Cancer	6.2%	6.3%	6.3%	7.0%	7.2%	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
Neurological	5.1%	4.8%	5.0%	4.8%	4.9%	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
Back and neck	5.5%	5.3%	5.3%	5.5%	4.9%	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
Gastro-stomach, digestion	8.2%	8.4%	8.4%	7.2%	6.6%	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
Viral infection, not cough/cold/flu	4.5%	4.7%	4.8%	4.4%	4.7%	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental & throat	4.1%	4.5%	4.5%	4.4%	4.0%	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
Cough/cold/flu	5.8%	6.0%	5.9%	5.0%	6.1%	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
<i>Not disclosed</i>	2.7%	3.9%	4.1%	3.6%	4.0%	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

7. Stress/depression, mental health has continued to be the highest reason for lost time due to sickness. Cancer and Covid-19 also continue to be in the top four reasons. Improvements have been made in the level of undisclosed absence.

### **Changing absence trends**

8. The Committee, at its meeting on 4 February 2021, reviewed and discussed the reduction in absence levels, in particular categories during the Covid-19 pandemic. The table below shows these categories over the pandemic period to 31 March 2021, compared with the same period the previous year.

<b>Reason</b>	<b>FTE days lost 24/03/19- 31/03/20</b>	<b>FTE days lost 24/03/20- 31/03/21</b>	<b>FTE lost difference</b>	<b>% change</b>
Cough/cold/flu	2740.2	965.6	-1774.6	-65%
Gastro-stomach, digestion	3648.0	1626.1	-2021.9	-55%
Other musculo-skeletal	5582.6	3748.0	-1834.6	-33%
Viral infection, not cough/cold/flu	2027.4	1418.3	-609.1	-30%
Back and neck	2431.9	1704.0	-727.9	-30%
Stress/depression, mental health	12990.4	10125.3	-2865.1	-22%
Cancer	2867.6	2559.3	-308.3	-11%
Covid-19	580.8	3417.3	+2836.5	+488%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32868.9</b>	<b>25563.9</b>	<b>-7305.0</b>	<b>-22%</b>

9. The trends which were identified initially in May 2020 have continued; instances of absences relating to cough/cold/flu have been 65% lower during the period detailed in the table compared to the previous year.
10. Gastro related illness, musculo-skeletal, viral and absence due to back and neck injury have also seen significant reductions over the pandemic period. It is possible to speculate these changes could be due to the lockdowns and social distancing preventing all types of illness caused by germs spreading, and homeworking enabling people to continue working with mild symptoms. Lockdowns together with the temporary closure or reduction of services could have led to individuals having less opportunity to have physical injuries and/or more opportunity to rest pre-existing conditions.
11. Time lost due to mental ill health over the pandemic period has been lower than the same period the previous year. Support for wellbeing will continue to be a priority across the Council.
12. Time lost because of cancer has decreased by 11% during the pandemic period compared to the previous year. NHS challenges in delivering timely cancer treatment during the pandemic may be impacting on our employees and we are taking action to support individuals appropriately at this difficult time.
13. Nationally, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reports that 2020 had the lowest levels of sickness absence across all sectors since it started recording absence data in 1995. The position within the Council therefore reflects wider trends.
14. Monitoring of changing absence trends will continue as the pandemic continues and people work in and interact with the community in different ways.

### Long and Short-term absence split

15. The table below details the number of FTE days lost due to absence and the percentage split of FTE days lost at the end of March 2021.

20/21 as at end of March 21						
12 months cumulative						
Department	Long term			Short term		
	FTE days lost	% FTE days lost	Individual occurrences	FTE days lost	% FTE days lost	Individual occurrences
Chief Executive's	552.59	54.3%	19	465.37	45.7%	92
Environment and Transport	3,654.75	61.0%	102	2,335.65	39.0%	503
Children and Family Services	6,518.87	68.7%	152	2,964.20	31.3%	618
Corporate Resources	5,233.28	62.0%	143	3,200.93	38.0%	828
Adults and Communities	8,823.05	67.8%	257	4,189.80	32.2%	894
Public Health	535.37	75.1%	10	177.49	24.9%	42

**Note: Long term is categorised as over 4 weeks of continuous absence.**

### Service level data

16. The table below provides details of the days lost per FTE at the end of 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 and at the end of quarter 1, 2, 3 and 4 2020/21 for service areas by department.

Department	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2020/21	2020/21	2020/21
Days per FTE	Year end	Year end	Year end	Year end	End of Q1	End of Q2	End of Q3	Year end
12 months cumulative	(Mar 17)	(Mar 18)	(Mar 19)	(Mar 20)	(Jun 20)	(Sept 20)	(Dec 20)	(Mar 21)
Chief Executive's	6.03	6.38	7.6	5.38	5.28	4.61	4.38	4.41
Planning and Historic and Natural Environment	3.81	4.04	14.92	9.57	9.46	5.00	2.59	0.79
Regulatory Services	6.95	4.87	6.2	7.24	7.03	5.99	6.05	6.30
Strategy and Business Intelligence	6.28	8.04	6.93	4.26	4.98	4.57	3.70	3.86
Democratic Services	10.69	8.91	14.81	6.70	4.97	2.95	1.67	1.07

<b>Department</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
<b>Days per FTE</b>	<b>Year end</b>	<b>Year end</b>	<b>Year end</b>	<b>Year end</b>	<b>End of Q1</b>	<b>End of Q2</b>	<b>End of Q3</b>	<b>Year end</b>
<b>12 months cumulative</b>	<b>(Mar 17)</b>	<b>(Mar 18)</b>	<b>(Mar 19)</b>	<b>(Mar 20)</b>	<b>(Jun 20)</b>	<b>(Sept 20)</b>	<b>(Dec 20)</b>	<b>(Mar 21)</b>
Legal Services	3.01	4.02	5.48	3.63	3.28	4.36	5.32	5.82
<b>Environment and Transport</b>	9.68	10.09	9.16	8.88	8.46	7.85	7.47	7.04
Highways and Transport	10.38	10.62	8.96	9.30	9.32	8.95	3.86	3.99
Environment and Waste Management	4.85	7.98	10.07	12.65	11.27	9.44	8.89	7.68
<b>Children and Family Services</b>	10.05	10.25	10.55	11.12	10.60	10.14	8.99	7.95
Education and SEND*	9.13	9.28	8.42	11.55	11.45	10.47	8.71	7.57
Children's Social Care & Targeted Early Help**	11.90	11.62	14.18	10.54	10.45	10.15	10.07	9.15
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	7.94	8.12	7.41	9.39	8.25	7.25	6.40	5.45
Finance, Strategic Property & Commissioning***	4.89	4.25	6.63	9.67	8.37	5.47	3.76	2.88
Corporate Services	4.68	5.88	4.18	4.84	4.45	4.46	4.38	4.07
IT, Comms & Digital, Commercial and Customer Services****	10.55	10.04	8.91	11.14	9.72	8.72	8.02	6.77
<b>Adults and Communities</b>	12.57	11.26	10.02	11.74	11.41	11.19	10.54	10.18
East care pathway	n/a	11.06	9.51	11.32	10.96	10.69	10.57	9.59
West care pathway	n/a	13.16	12.01	12.84	12.41	11.27	8.91	9.45
Commissioning and Quality	n/a	8.01	8.02	7.46	7.30	6.38	5.44	4.66
Promoting Independence	12.26	15.11	13.26	11.88	10.99	11.65	9.93	11.91
Personal Care and Support	15.62	11.99	13.86	18.10	18.76	20.55	22.10	21.15
Communities and Wellbeing	7.67	7.98	6.97	8.73	7.69	6.61	5.83	4.65
<b>Public Health</b>	7.43	6.49	8.57	7.12	6.19	7.20	7.11	5.80

\*from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 Education & Early Help changed to Education and SEND

\*\*from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 Children's Social Care changed to Children's Social Care & Targeted Early Help

\*\*\*from 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2020 Finance & Assurance changed to Finance, Strategic Property & Commissioning

\*\*\*\*from 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2020 Commercial & Customer Services to IT, Comms & Digital, Commercial & Customer Services

**Recommendations**

17. The Committee is asked to note the update provided on the Council's overall position on sickness absence as at the end of March 2021.

**Background papers**

18. Report to the Employment Committee 4 February 2021 – Attendance Management.  
<http://cexmodgov1/documents/s159534/Attendance%20Management.pdf>

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

19. None.

**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

20. There are no equalities and human rights implications arising directly from this report.

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