



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MEETING	Executive Committee
DATE OF MEETING	30 July 2014
OFFICER	Lynne Swift, Director of People and Organisational Development
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Roger Reed
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Attendance Management Performance Improvements and Trends
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This report sets out the current position of the Authority in respect of Attendance Management and the significant improvements that have been made to-date to reduce non-attendance caused by sickness absence.</p> <p>The report also provides information on our performance in comparison to 29 other fire and rescue services who now participate in benchmarking.</p> <p>Overall absence rates for 2013/2014 have shown significant improvement.</p> <p>Average working days lost per person are 6.4 days compared to 10.5 in 2012/2013.</p> <p>In terms of total days lost there has been a 35 per cent improvement.</p> <p>Absence rates compare favourably to public sector and fire and rescue services.</p> <p>The primary reasons for the Authority's continually improving attendance management performance are due to focused and consistent management interventions, supported by more robust data capture and reporting processes, underpinned by revised employee welfare and occupational health arrangements. A more detailed analysis is summarised in Annex A of this report.</p> <p>Although the Authority's overall performance trends demonstrate significant improvement, in-house analysis and benchmarking comparisons confirm that further improvements are possible through a combination of targeted absence prevention measures, earlier response to absence trends and recognition of exemplary attendance.</p>
ACTION	Information.

<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Executive Committee note the Authority’s recorded attendance management performance trends, absence reductions to date, and plans for further improvements as detailed in Annex A.</p>								
<p>RISK MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>There are several risks to the Authority of high absence levels with the main ones being potential adverse impacts on operational resilience, higher than budgeted employee costs, inaccurate recording, employee morale and resource intensive case management.</p> <p>As resource levels become smaller, the potential risk increases, although the need for higher attendance is more important.</p> <p>These risks are mitigated by consistent use of the Authority’s Attendance Management Procedures, improved reporting and earlier intervention.</p> <p>The lack of a robust Attendance Management IT system which integrates with HR and resource planning systems is part of the Authority’s ICT strategy and will support improved reporting and earlier intervention in cases.</p>								
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>	<p>Based on the Occupational Sick Pay figures the cost of absence for the year 2013/2014 equates to £410,000 equivalent to 1.94 per cent of the total pay bill.</p> <p>The total cost of sickness payments for 2012/2013 was £574,000. There has therefore been a saving on sick pay costs of £164,000 (29 per cent).</p> <p>CIPD Absence Management Survey median direct cost of public sector sickness absence is £726 per employee for 2013. If these figures are applied to BMKFA headcount, then the comparative position is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="639 1469 1457 1753"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Headcount at March 2014 (headcount varies month by month)</th> <th>BMKFA Cost of Sickness Absence</th> <th>Comparative Public Sector Median Cost of Sickness Absence</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/2014</td> <td>618</td> <td>£410k</td> <td>£448k</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>These figures do not include the indirect costs of absence (for example, cover moves for operational staff and overtime payments to cover shortfalls).</p> <p>Other costs, which contribute to absence management, include the direct costs of interventions, Welfare Officer, Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Programme etc. is approximately £100k.</p>	Year	Headcount at March 2014 (headcount varies month by month)	BMKFA Cost of Sickness Absence	Comparative Public Sector Median Cost of Sickness Absence	2013/2014	618	£410k	£448k
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2013/2014	618	£410k	£448k						

	<p>The new Occupational Health provider breaks down expenditure and service provision on a monthly basis. This will be closely monitored to ensure value for money.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in the report.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	<p>Absence due to Safety Events is incorporated into the total statistics. Safety Event statistics are reviewed quarterly at the Health Safety & Welfare Committee.</p> <p>Accidents at work accounted for 111 days absence.</p> <p>The Director of People and Organisational Development is working with Middlesex University on conducting an Employee Health and Well-being survey in October 2014; a follow up on the 2012 survey .</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	<p>An initial analysis of employee protected characteristics of those absent compared to the full employee characteristics has highlighted that for the majority of protected characteristics there is alignment.</p> <p>In summary, the initial analysis has highlighted that although females account for 15 per cent of the workforce they account for 26 per cent of the absence. Following more in-depth analysis there does not appear to be any underlying reasons for this, and if one significant period of absence is removed from the data, the comparison is at an appropriate ratio.</p> <p>The new Fitness Testing Procedure, which is at final stages of consultation, will enable analysis on any diversity trends. Outcomes will be reported in the next annual report.</p>
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>This report provides the second full year of relevant absence data for 2013/2014, both for Authority employees and a comparison to other fire and rescue services. As trend data continues to build, it will inform employee health and well-being strategies and ensure value for money investment in occupational health and welfare support, which aligns with business priorities.</p> <p>Absence tracking and recording is gathered as a routine transaction within the People and Organisational Development Directorate and further initiatives are underway to improve data capture.</p> <p>On-call (Retained Duty System) employee attendance management processes have been subject to a wider review, and revised procedures are now in place for 2014 reporting.</p> <p>Quarterly reports are presented to the Performance Management Board to maintain the performance</p>

	<p>focus on improving attendance management. Absence data is also produced for managers on an ad hoc basis (for exception reporting) and will form part of a regular data pack provided by HR to departmental managers to support them in managing staff.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Improving attendance management is a corporate priority as set out in the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>High absence levels impact adversely on operating costs and performance levels; this at a time of reduced funding wastes valuable resources which could be used for service delivery and community safety improvements.</p> <p>A coordinated integrated approach is being taken to reducing absence levels as quickly and as effectively as possible.</p> <p>The aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise sickness absence levels • Reduce costs • Operate efficient, effective occupational health services to support return to work and absence prevention • Benchmark and set stretching targets to continually improve performance <p>CIPD Absence Management Surveys 2013 http://www.cipd.co.uk/research/absence-management</p> <p>Fire Authority Report meeting item10 - 18 December 2013 http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9C5494D2-846E-4CF3-B709-B6C055F0D449/0/ITEM10_AttendanceManagementPerformanceImprovementsandTrends.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Appendix 1 Attendance Management Trend Graphs</p> <p>Appendix 2 Comparison of BMKFA with other FRS</p> <p>Annex A Attendance Management Report</p> <p>Annex B National FRS Occupational Health Performance Report April 2013/March 2014</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>15 minutes.</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Geoff Bottle gbottle@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744464</p>