

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	18 December 2013
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 key improvements that have been made to date to reduce non-attendance caused by sickness absence.</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.</p> <p>These are 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> <p>On-going actions, plans for the next 6 months and considerations of longer term strategy and priorities are also outlined in Annex A to ensure that the improvement is sustained.</p>
ACTION	Information.

RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Authority's recorded attendance management performance trends, absence reductions to date, and plans for further improvements as detailed in Annex A are noted.
RISK MANAGEMENT	<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 hungry case management.</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</p>

	earlier intervention in cases.												
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>The total cost of sickness payments for BMKFA, made to employees for 2012/13 was £574K, equivalent to 3.25% of the total pay bill for that year.</p> <p>For the first two quarters of 2013/14 the comparable amount is £168K, which is equivalent to 1.92% of total paybill. The incidence of sickness absence is not evenly distributed over the whole year and therefore a simple multiplication of this figure would not be accurate. However, even if account is taken of this it is reasonable to deduce that the indicative trend is one of reducing incidence and cost of sickness to the Authority.</p> <p>The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD) Absence Management Survey indicates that the median direct cost of public sector sickness absence is £647 per employee for 2012 and £726 for 2013.</p> <p>If these figures are extrapolated and applied to BMKFA headcount, then the comparative position is as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>BMKFA Average Headcount (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>2012</td> <td>712</td> <td>£574k</td> <td>£460k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>632</td> <td>¹£400k</td> <td>£458k</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The BMKFA direct costs of interventions, Welfare Officer, Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Programme etc. is approximately £100k.</p>	Year	BMKFA Average Headcount (headcount varies month by month)	BMKFA Cost of Sickness Absence	Comparative Public Sector Median Cost of Sickness Absence	2012	712	£574k	£460k	2013	632	¹ £400k	£458k
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	There are no direct legal implications arising from these recommendations in the report.												
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Absences due to accidents are incorporated into the total statistics. Safety event statistics are reviewed quarterly at the Health Safety & Welfare Committee.												
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	A recent initial analysis of sickness absence statistics in relation to protected characteristics of employees absent in 2012/13 compared to the total workforce characteristics for the same period has highlighted one potential issue that warrants further investigation.												

¹ This figure has been adjusted from the first two quarters total to take account of seasonal variations in sickness absence patterns

	<p>Whilst females account for 20% of the workforce, they accounted for 33% of the recorded sickness absence in 2012/13.</p> <p>Further analysis work is planned for December 2013 to determine reasons for this apparent anomaly.</p> <p>Other known protected characteristics; primarily age, ethnicity and disability show expected alignment.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>This report provides the first full year of relevant absence data 2012/13 and the half year 2013/14. 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 was initially resource hungry due to bureaucratic processes, multi recording methods and inadequate systems. Actions already taken and further initiatives are underway to improve data capture.</p> <p>Retained Duty System attendance management processes have been subject to a wider review, following the part time worker regulations outcomes in relation to sick pay and revised procedures are now in place.</p> <p>Absence levels are published for managers and form part of agendas for departmental management meetings.</p> <p>Absence prevention measures have been introduced to compliment direct management interventions; eg: the Authority moving to a 'smoking free' workplace. The new occupational health services contract, awarded in August 2013 is geared to balance response to absence with prevention and for 2014/15 prevention measures will align more closely with the top 5 reasons for non-attendance.</p>

<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>Improving attendance management is a corporate priority as set out in the 2013/2014 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 2012 and 2013 http://www.cipd.co.uk/research/absence-management</p> <p>Health at Work – An independent review of sickness absence; Dame Carol Black and David Frost 2011 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-sickness-absence-system-in-great-britain</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Annex A Attendance Management report Appendix 1 Attendance Management trend graphs Appendix 2 BMKFA sick pay graph</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>