

SUBJECT:	Sickness Absence Performance Indicator Update
REPORT OF:	Bob Smith, Chief Executive
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WARD/S AFFECTED	All

1. Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an update and analysis of staff sickness absence within the Councils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report.**

2. Content of Report

At its meeting on 19th June 2018 the committee asked for a report giving some analysis of sickness absence within the councils.

2.1 Sickness Absence Reporting

Sickness Absence figures are reported and discussed in detail at each meeting of the Joint Staffing Committee as part of the HR Update report. Joint Staffing Committee consider:-

- the current years/quarters absence figures;
- how this compares to previous quarters/years;
- how this compares with national figures in the private and public sectors;
- what the reasons for absence are and if there are any trends;
- what actions are being taken by managers and senior managers and the HR team to effectively manage sickness absence.

This information is now provided here for this Committees consideration.

2.2 Comparative Figures

- 2.2.1 The Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD) publishes an annual survey on sickness absence in the private and public sectors. The May 2018 survey published the findings for 2017. This reported that on average public sector employees had 8.5 days of absence in 2017 and the same in 2016. Absence rates were considerably lower in the private sector with 2017 showing an average of 5.6 days per employee. Although the public sector is the only sector not to report an increase in average absence compared to 2016.

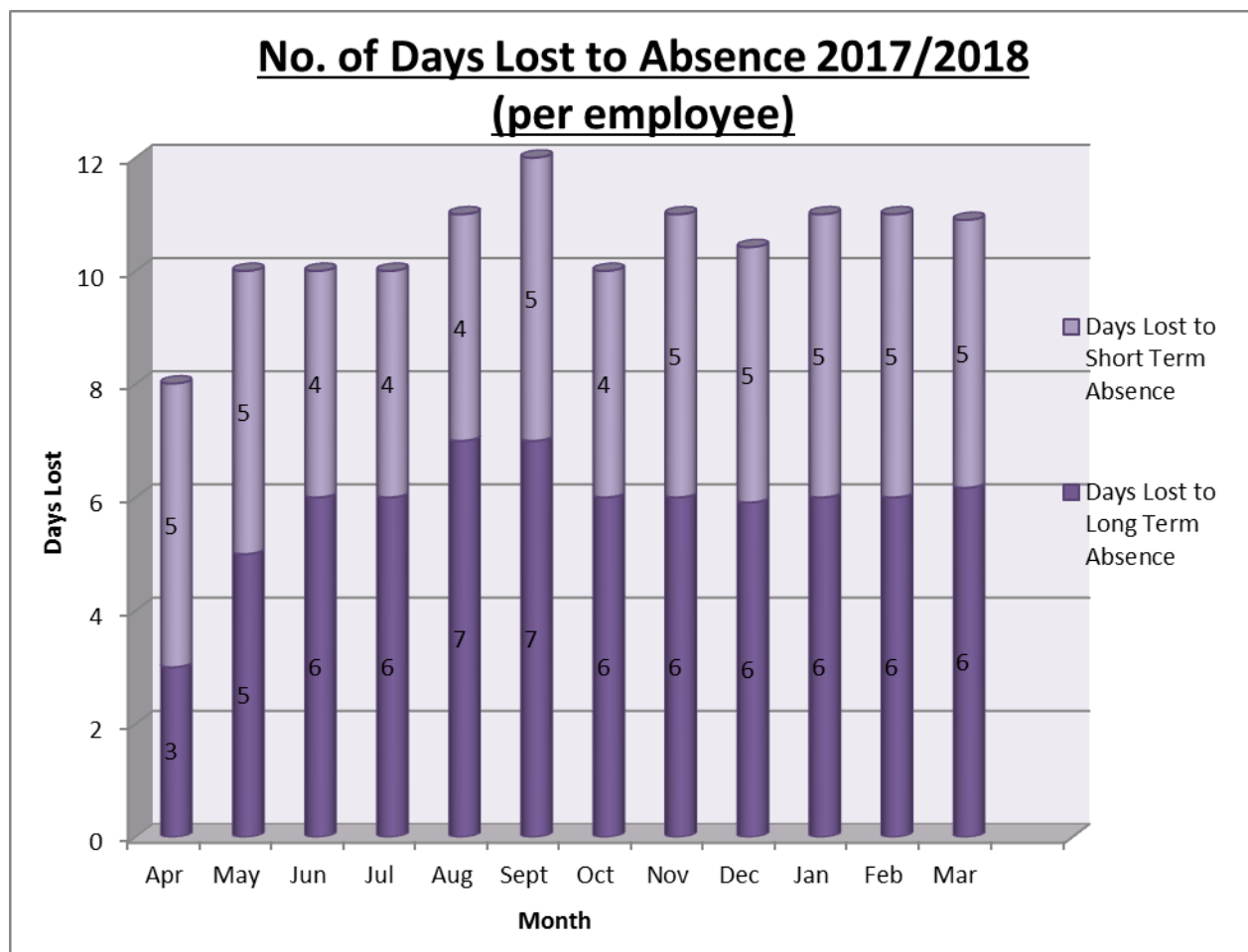
2.2.2 In 2017/18 WDC 6.81 on average a year per employee. AVDC are currently producing their figures and these have not been made available at the time of writing this report.

2.3 2017/18 Sickness Absence Figures

2.3.1 In 2017/18 the Councils moved from reporting on sickness absence separately to joint reporting. The sickness absence performance indicator is a maximum of 10 days on average per employee a year. From August 2017/18 this target was exceeded.

2.3.2 An analysis of the breakdown of the figures for 2017/18 showed that the rise in sickness absence levels from 2016 was largely due to an increase in a small number of employees on long term sick absences. However, these figures had also been affected by the Councils' practice to record staff as absent when undertaking phased returns to work. This practice, in line with usual practice elsewhere, has now been ended and the Sickness Absence Policy amended accordingly.

2.3.3 The table below shows a breakdown of the number of days lost due to absence per employee per month for the year 2017/2018 broken down into long term and short term sickness.



2.3.4 Short term absence is defined as “up to and including 20 working days absence” and long term absence is “over 20 working days absence”.

2.4 2018/19 Sickness Absence Figures

2.4.1 In 2018/19 sickness absence levels have fallen. I can report that in April, May, June and July the average number of days absent per employee, across the two Councils was as follows:-

	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug</u>
Short-term	2.76	2.70	2.36	2.10	
Long-term	3.00	3.60	3.92	4.05	
Total	<u>5.76</u>	<u>6.30</u>	<u>6.28</u>	<u>6.15</u>	

2.5 Actions taken to reduce sickness absence and support health and well-being

2.5.1 The Councils have taken a strategic and integrated approach to sickness absence and health and well-being. The objective has been to ensure robust and fair management of sickness absence and at the same time promote a health and well-being programme.

2.5.2 Sickness Absence Management: In the last 8 months the HR team and line managers have made a concerted effort to manage sickness absence to ensure a robust and consistent approach is taken. Sickness absence monitoring has become a regular part of day to day management practice which helps to ensure that the approach taken is sustained over time. This includes the following:-

- The HR Advisers are holding regular meetings with line managers and Heads of Service to support them in monitoring absence and taking the appropriate action to follow the Sickness Absence Policy and to ensure staff are aware of the support available to help them achieve good attendance;
- HR Advisers have run a series of workshops on “Promoting a Positive Attendance Culture” which all team leaders, supervisors and managers have been required to attend. To date 70 line managers have signed up and feedback from these has been positive. One of the key objectives of the workshops is to inform managers of the steps in the policy they must take e.g.:-
 - conduct return to work interviews after every absence,
 - hold informal absence meetings when staff hit absence trigger points
 - move to the formal stages of the policy if attendance is not sustained or improved
 - agree attendance targets and monitoring periods.
- HR Advisers provide regular reports to Management Team on all sickness absence cases (informal and formal) so that these can be monitored at a senior level;

- Absence management has become a regular item on all managers/team leaders meetings;
- Managing sickness absence has been supported by the ongoing provision of an OH service, Employee Assistance Programme, Mental Health First Aiders etc.

2.5.3 Health and Well-Being: In June 2018. The launch coincided with Mental Health Awareness Week and each day of that week we promoted different health and wellbeing initiatives e.g. Cycle to Work scheme, the choir, managing finances and debt advice.

2.5.4 In May we launched a workshop for all staff on mental wellness run by MIND called "It starts with you". Approx. 200 staff and managers attended these. This led to the introduction of Wellness Action Plans (WAPs). A WAP can actively help employees support their own mental health by reflecting on the causes of stress and poor mental health, and taking ownership of practical steps to help address these triggers. This process can also help manager to open up dialogue with employees, understand their needs and experiences and ultimately better support their mental health.

2.5.5 We have set up a Health and Wellbeing forum which will:-

- Annually review the Council's Health and Wellbeing Statement and agree an action plan to support this, ensuring this is focused on the right areas and is sufficiently challenging to deliver tangible and sustainable health improvements.
- Decide how we are going to evaluate the success of any new health or wellbeing before it is introduced. Effective measures will help identify what is, or isn't, working.
- Review progress against the action plan.
- On an agreed cycle, review Council data such as rates and reasons for sickness absence, Occupational Health referrals, participation in Council health and wellbeing activities etc. and identify any areas or staff groups that may need more targeted health and wellbeing interventions.

3 Consultation

N/A

4 Options

N/A

5. Corporate Implications

Good management of resources including employees leads to efficient and effective use of council finances and improved delivery of council services.

6. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Monitoring staff turnover, recruitment and sickness absences and ensuring all Council policies, procedures and practices are current, underpin the delivery of the Council's aims and management principles and ensure legislative compliance and best practice.

7. Next Step

Continue to monitor and update Committee Members on a quarterly basis.

Background Papers:	None.
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