

WIRRAL COUNCIL

EMPLOYMENT & APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – 17 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

MANAGING ATTENDANCE

1. Purpose of the Report

- To update the Employment and Appointments Committee on the current position around attendance management.
- To recommend a series of actions to improve our approach to attendance management.

2. 1 Current position on sickness for Wirral Council

The current data and performance on sickness absence is shown in the following appendices:

Appendix 1 shows the BVPI Absence figures for the year to 31st March 2010 including days lost.

Appendix 2 shows the BVPI Absence figures with trends for 2006/7 to 2009/10 showing detailed quarter performance for 2008/9 and 2009/10.

2.2 Analysis of performance

The data shows the following;

In 2009/10 absence levels fell to 8.8 days per employee (provisional figures) against the figure for the year to 31st March 2009 of 10.10 days.

Based upon 2008/9 end of year outturn, six of the seven departments have shown a reduction in sickness. The other departments (Finance) slightly increasing. The departments have put a good deal of effort into reducing these levels through enhanced reporting and active case management.

To continue to drive performance and lower the rates of absence we need to keep up the momentum apply the policy, and drive the well being agenda. These areas are discussed later in the report.

2.3 The cost of absence

The cost of absence can be calculated in a number of different ways; impact on staff for additional work covered or overtime payments

The approximate cost of absence not including teaching staff can be measured by calculating the monetary values of days lost, which last year can be equated to approximately £6m.

2.4 Analysis of the reasons for Sickness

The following table breaks down the most frequently reported reasons for sickness for the year to 31st March 2010. This data is important for us to understand the reasons for absence and how we can address the issues.

Sickness Reason based upon FTE days lost excluding Teachers

Reason	FTE Days lost 2009/10	%
Mental Health	16,360.95	17.82
Ear, Nose and Throat Problems	13,030.67	14.20
Medical Procedures	11,604.52	12.64
Muscular/Skeletal problems (exc back)	11,416.01	12.44
Abdominal Problems (Inc Digestive Tract)	11,173.31	12.17
Back Problems	5,007.63	5.45
Respiratory Problems	4,658.08	5.07
Neurological/central Nervous system	3,118.74	3.40

2.5 Issues identified

Mental Health remains the largest reason for sickness within the Council accounting for just under 18% of all sickness

The Council takes a positive approach to mental health. During the first half of this year a number of actions have been taken including raising staff awareness through road shows as part of our commitment to be a Mindful Employer referred to later in the report.

The Council undertakes a programme of preventative flu vaccinations targeted at those employees who have contact with vulnerable people. The Council work closely with the NHS to keep staff up to date with the latest information on the Pandemic. This also feeds into the business continuity work undertaken by Health, Safety and Resilience team.

Medical procedures account for over 12% of all sickness however this may in part due to the improvements made by the NHS in addressing their own targets.

The Council has for some time now had a physiotherapy service within its Occupational health contract. The service is well received with an average 15/20 appointments per month. Examples of good practice include regular manual handling training, DSE training, risk assessments, audits etc. however muscular/skeletal sickness still accounts for over 12% of all sickness. The emphasis in respect of muscular/skeletal sickness is changing as the workforce is evolving from a manual workforce suffering back complaints, for example, to a more sedentary non-manual workforce.

The work to further improve health and well-being is highlighted in paragraph 6.

3. Future Targets

2010/11	9.50
2011/12	9.20
2012/13	8.90

The above targets have been agreed as part of the Corporate Plan. It is proposed that those targets are reviewed once the outturn position for 2009/10 is confirmed.

4. Improving Performance

4.1 To further improve our performance in managing attendance it is proposed to develop three key areas of work.

1. Management information and data
2. Policy review and implementation
3. Pro-actively promote the health and well being of the workforce.

The recent Use of Resources Assessment on workforce and people issues delivered a probe into the Council's performance on absence to identify good practice and opportunities for development. Whilst the report is awaited, the areas considered are consistent with those identified below. The report will help to inform the improvements delivered.

4.2 Management Information and data

1. The improvement to the Management information will be delivered via the new HR/Payroll system. The reporting tool from Northgate, designed to complement the Payroll/Human Resource Management system will improve the production and presentation of management information greatly. The development of the reporting tool has been bought forward to realise the benefits more immediately.

Currently information is extracted and manipulated in spreadsheets. This is a time consuming exercise and reports have to be reproduced for each audience. Calculation of these reports can also take a long time and this is done differently across departments

2. The new reporting tool will give us a number of advantages;

- Reports are compiled overnight with the time consuming calculations being performed without the need of officer time.
- Reports only need to be produced once and Insight delivers the appropriate data based on audience, managers only see the data they are responsible for.
- Presentation is greatly improved with a suite of available charts and report templates helping to reduce the time taken to develop reports.
- Charts and reports provide “drill through” capability allowing managers to easily and quickly identify areas for concern and obtain detailed information for this area.

3. The new reports will be able to give us the more detailed information such as;

- Short term/long term comparisons
- Numbers hitting trigger points
- Top ten absences by departments
- Frequency of absence
- Numbers with no absence

4. The timetable for implementation is as follows;

Phase 1. July 2010 Standard reports available to a core team in HR for all department employees, available via circulation

Phase 2. September 2010 Standard reports available to departmental HR staff for all department employees

Phase 3. By April 2011 reports accessed directly by 700 managers and 130 school representatives.

4.3 Policy Review and Implementation

Policy Review

The original Managing Absence Policy was launched in 1998. Since then it has been updated to incorporate legislative requirements. The policy was written to address the current context.

A comprehensive review across the authority has shown differential application of the policy: Management information is produced for all DMTs with some good practice demonstrated in implementation of the policy including case conferences, quarterly attendance surgeries and focus meetings. Training is delivered across the authority but this has not been attended by all managers.

There are areas for review that have been identified to meet changes in performance and operational requirements.

The areas for consideration are;

- The requirements for contact when an employee is off sick
- The trigger levels before action is taken
- The referral to Occupational health
- The links to the capability procedure

Attendance Management working groups comprising representatives from Corporate HR and departments are currently underway to review policy and propose changes for further consultation.

Policy implementation

Following review of the policy, it is clear that in moving forward the following should be addressed:

- A policy that is more consistent with clarity of expectation
- One best practice training package which will include the revised policy, practical guidance and skills training.

A further report with full recommendations will be brought to the next committee in September.

5. Occupational Health Services

Occupational health Services are currently delivered through a contract with Aviva (previously Norwich Union). We are currently reviewing our requirements and have extended the contract for a further year to enable the review to take place.

6. Employee Health and Well Being

6.1 Health and Wellbeing Summary

The health and well being agenda is moving forward significantly in response to the following:-

- The national agenda to promote the health and well being of our workforce and the community following Dame Carol Black's Review 'Working for a Healthier Tomorrow' and the Government's response 'Improving health and work: changing lives' which advocates that the public sector must take the lead.
- Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2008/9 to 2010/11 has a long term, partnership vision : *A more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential.* Wirral has a rich history of partnership working to deliver improvements in the borough's health and well-being. We want to continue to build on this foundation to tackle the serious issues of continuing health inequalities and an ageing population.
- In reducing sickness absence real consideration has to be given to promotion of the Health and Well being of our employees. Our aim is to have present and healthy employees at work and this can be delivered best through a positive approach to health & well being.
- 91% of our employees are residents in the borough. Promoting their Health and well being directly impacts on our communities and a positive approach to health can also be taken into homes across the borough influencing wider numbers of people.

6.2 The Health and Well initiatives currently being delivered

- Departmentally led activities benefiting all employees

Already in place are a number of initiatives to support staff as part of this agenda. The invigor8 scheme run for residents through Sports Development is made available to our staff through corporate membership. Employees also have access to other activities such as Pilates and the cycle to work scheme.

- Employee Assistance Programme

The Employee Assistance Programme was introduced in April 2009 as a support mechanism for all staff. The EAP consists of a 24 hour/365 day a year helpline for confidential advice, information and counselling plus a website with useful information. Utilisation rates since its introduction has been slow. A wide ranging publicity campaign around EAP has been undertaken with Aviva and PPC worldwide the provider of the service including roadshows during April and Adult Learner's Week in May.

- Mental Health & Mindful Employer

Wirral Council have signed the Mindful Employer pledge.. In order to raise awareness of mental health issues a number of actions have taken place during the first half of this year. These include the development of a Stress Management e-learning programme (similar to the Equality package) to be launched in September 2010 following a pilot programme .

An ongoing promotional campaign (Time to Change) will help staff to consider the positive steps they can take for their own mental health, help them to understand how many of us (1 in 4) have suffered from mental health and how individuals and organisations can support mental health with the workplace. A series of lunchtime roadshows held during April across all departments within the Council informed and promoted more positive messages around mental health and was well received by employees, with thanks received from departments and the Chair of the Disability Forum.

- Policies-Flexible working

There are a suite of policies which support a health and wellbeing culture including flexible working, employment breaks, flexi schemes, flexible retirement and other packages of benefits around travel including cycle to work etc.

- Wirral Working4 Health

Wirral Working4Health is a scheme aimed at supporting employees on long term sick leave back to work or offering tailored support to employees to remain in work. . The scheme facilities a caseworker to work with the employee to access training,etc. This programme was piloted in CYPD and DASS and has now been rolled out to all departments in conjunction with Occupational Health.

- Health Promotions

The annual sporting event 'The John Parry Memorial Trophy' takes place in June. The purpose of the event is to highlight the importance of Men's Health Week - raising awareness and encouraging early detection of preventable health problems among men and boys as well as promoting Wirral's commitment to workplace health & wellbeing for all.

The role the workforce can play in promoting health & wellbeing is considerable, and Wirral is committed to promoting a culture that recognises and supports the fact that, for most people, work is good for health.

6.3 The future direction of the Well – being agenda

A further report will follow detailing the strategy and how the agenda links with the Managing Attendance Policy and performance.

7. Summary of Proposals

1. Management Information and Data

- Improvements to management information including levels of reporting, analysis and trends to enable managers to manage more effectively.

2. Policy Review

- Update to policy and guidance

3. Communications and Training

- One best practice training package including skills training

4. Employee Health and Well Being

- Co-ordinated approach to employee health and well being as part of a Fit4Wirral agenda

8.0 Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications arising out of this report.

9.0 Staffing implications

None arising from this report

10. Equal Opportunities implications

None arising from this report

11. Community Safety implications

None arising from this report

12. Local Agenda 21 implications

None arising from this report

13. Planning implications

None arising from this report

14. Anti-poverty implications

None arising from this report

15. Human Rights implications

None arising from this report

16. Social Inclusion implications

None arising from this report

17. Local Member Support implications

None arising from this report

18. Background Papers

None arising from this report

19. Recommendations

Employment & Appointments Committee is asked to:

1. Note the progress on managing absence and the need to continue to proactively manage the issues across departments
2. Support the proposals to further develop our approach to continuously improve performance

B Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

This report was prepared by Chris Hyams, who can be contacted on 691 8590.

Appendix 1

Sickness Days Lost based on BVPI definition			
All Employees			Sick Days lost per FTE Apr 09 - Mar 10
Department	FTE	Days Lost	
Children and Young People	3,805.78	36,400.72	9.56
Finance	790.10	9,524.42	12.05
Technical Services	330.57	2,510.87	7.60
Regeneration including culture	980.41	11,202.22	11.43
Social Services	1,122.17	17,352.32	15.46
Corporate Services	74.09	219.91	2.97
Law HR & Asset Mgt	194.49	1,202.89	6.19
Sub Total	7,297.58	78,413.35	10.75
Teachers	3,074.83	13,131.44	4.27
Managed Schools	620.20	5,203.00	8.39
Total (Provisional)	10,992.61	96,747.79	8.80

Appendix 2

BVPI Absence figures by Quarter for Departments												
Days Lost per FTE	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09					2009-10				
Department	Year	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Adult Social Services	18.23	16.73	4.47	4.86	5.50	4.80	20.33	3.76	3.66	4.46	3.82	15.46
Children and Young People	8.72	10.61	3.24	2.63	3.29	3.05	12.01	2.85	2.17	2.93	2.62	9.56
Corporate Services	5.82	7.28	0.22	0.19	1.90	1.40	4.72	1.17	0.45	1.01	0.70	2.97
Finance	9.31	9.95	2.32	2.92	3.69	3.06	11.74	2.43	2.72	3.68	3.66	12.05
Law, HR & Asset Management	N/A	N/A	0.00	0.00	2.57	2.59	9.37	1.85	1.84	2.02	1.89	6.19
Regeneration	8.02	11.73	2.63	2.97	3.44	3.29	12.33	3.10	3.18	3.11	3.11	11.43
Technical Services	8.41	9.10	2.36	3.63	3.79	3.45	14.33	1.78	1.58	1.90	2.40	7.60
Teachers	6.33	5.43	1.25	0.94	1.89	1.67	5.43	1.07	0.62	1.22	1.44	4.27
Managed Schools	7.52	9.95	2.49	2.49	2.49	2.10	9.59	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.37	8.39
Total	9.21	9.79	2.63	2.52	3.17	2.82	10.95	2.34	2.05	2.57	2.49	8.80
Actuals at scheduled time	9.21	9.79					10.10					8.80
Target	9.40	8.90					8.50					10.00

Notes

Reported BVPI calculated at scheduled time, 20th of month after quarter