

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 FOR 2019/20****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on quarterly performance information as at **31 December 2019** in relation to levels of sickness absence across the directly employed Nottinghamshire County Council's workforce.
2. To seek Members agreement to retaining the stretch target of 7.00 days average sickness absence per employee per annum for 2020/21.

Information

3. The report sets out the latest available sickness absence figures for the end of Quarter 3 2019/20 as at **31 December 2019**. A further report will be brought to May's Committee which will reflect the position for Quarter 4 as at 31 March 2020. The report also seeks to inform Members of the further work being undertaken to understand the levels and causes for absence broken down by departments across the Council's workforce. The figure for this period is **8.97 days**, up from the previous quarter's figure of 8.91 days. Over the last rolling 12 month period, the overall average number of days has increased slightly each quarter despite a range of activities undertaken to prevent or reduce the length of absences when they occur.
4. The table overleaf highlights the percentage of employees in each department who have had no sickness absence in the last 12 month period and also those who have had an absence of 4 weeks or more. The four week marker is the indicator of when an absence becomes considered as long term under the Council's agreed procedure. The table shows that over 45% of the workforce have no absence at all and the end column shows what level of absence is considered long term, that is, over four weeks long.
5. Members have previously agreed to retain the stretch target of an average of 7 days absence per employee. The various targets applied by the local boroughs and districts were discussed at January's Committee where it was identified that there was a range from 7.5 to 9 days per annum with none of those responding to the query currently meeting their target. It is important to retain a measure of progress or to identify trend data which indicates a deterioration in performance and our current target enables us to do so.

6. The next table shows the number of people who have left the Council's employment for reasons of ill health and for the last quarter this totals 33 people by way of ill health retirement or ill health capability termination. Thankfully there were no deaths in service for this period.
7. Members agreed to a refreshed employee health and wellbeing action plan at January's Committee and a report in May will update on further progress in meeting the newly identified actions.

| Dept. with headcount | % with no sickness | 4 weeks or more |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| NCC (7212) | 45.3% | 12.5% |
| Adult Social Care and Health (1811) | 32.5% | 16.6% |
| Chief Executive's (1251) | 40.5% | 10.7% |
| Children and Families (1812) | 51.6% | 12.1% |
| Place (2334) | 51.7% | 10.7% |

| | Dismissal Capability | Retirement Ill Health |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Adult Social Care and Health | 2 | 8 |
| Chief Executive's | 0 | 4 |
| Children and Families | 2 | 5 |
| Place | 4 | 8 |
| Total | 8 | 25 |

8. Members will note that stress continues to be the highest cause of absence across all departments except Place. We will monitor closely the impact of the introduction of the wellness action plan which was recently launched as an additional tool to our extensive provision of support for people experiencing health issues whilst at work.
9. The work with Public Health colleagues has been broadly scoped and we have jointly identified some pieces of work which support the revised approach of understanding our workforce levels of absence in the context of the wider population. The work will involve the following:
 - Currently reports to Personnel Committee report on a rolling quarterly basis. An analysis of the Council's absence data over a ten year timeline will enable us to determine a more defined time trend.
 - An analysis of how our data compares to other public sector organisations to determine whether we are consistent or an outlier to other organisations.
 - A brief evidence based review of how workplaces have intervened to reduce absence to further inform the actions we are undertaking.

Other Options Considered

10. The Council continues to explore alternative actions to determine what may have a more positive impact on reducing absence across all departments. We consider alternatives to our existing provision on an ongoing basis and we will adopt new initiatives as they are identified.

We use our existing HR and Council networks as well as the CIPD to understand current best practice in this area.

Reasons for Recommendations

11. The effective management of absence has a financial impact on the organisation in terms of lost productivity and cover costs. There is also a wider cultural impact if absence is ignored which can increase absence if unaddressed. The provision of a range of support mechanisms is critical to our positioning as an employer of choice to aid the recruitment and retention of a professional, committed, healthy workforce.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

13. There are no data protection or GDPR issues arising from this report as all the information contained is generic and cannot be attributed to individual employees.

Financial Implications

14. There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report. However, there is clearly a cost to absence and turnover so maximising the package of support with the intention of developing a more preventative strategy, has a strong business benefit to delivering this.

Human Resources Implications

15. The effective management of absence and the delivery of effective support for employees experiencing periods of ill health is a key business driver for the Council. It enables us to maximise performance but also to demonstrate the value placed on the contribution of the workforce. Whilst there are various legal obligations placed on employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable people to remain in work, there are also strong business reasons in terms of attracting and retaining quality employees who value the approach we have adopted as a caring employer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

- a) Agree to receive a further update report in May 2020 on quarter 4 performance with an update on progress against the employee health and well-being action plan.
- b) Agree to retain the target of 7 days absence for the period 2020/21.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (KK 17/02/20)

16. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (RWK 20/02/20)

17. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

HR Comments (GE 12/02/20)

The Human Resources implications are set out in the body of the report. Reducing overall absence remains a key priority area for the Council together with a package of initiatives to support employee mental health issues and wellbeing.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All