

People Select Committee
Review of Sickness Absence
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>The review supports the following Council policy principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention (in relation to tackling health inequalities, meeting the skills gap and improving access to job opportunities). • Creating economic prosperity across the Borough (in relation to the number of people able to work) <p>The review will also contribute to the following Council Plan 2017-2020 key objectives:</p> <p><i>Our Council</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. • Continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees. 	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>According to the Office for National Statistics, an estimated 137.3 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury in the UK in 2016. This is equivalent to 4.3 days per worker (the lowest recorded since the series began in 1993, when it was at 7.2 days per worker, the highest level over the reference period). Minor illnesses (such as coughs and colds) were the most common reason for sickness absence in 2016, accounting for approximately 24.8% of the total days lost – this was followed by musculoskeletal problems (including back pain, neck and upper limb problems) at 22.4%. Mental health issues (including stress, depression, anxiety and serious conditions) resulted in 11.5% of the total days lost.</p> <p>The CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) recently carried out an Absence Management Survey to gain an understanding of the public sector's approach to managing sickness absence. They reported that the average level of absence has decreased slightly in 2016 (Jan-Dec) when compared with 2015, dropping from 8.7 days lost per employee in 2015 to 8.5 days lost per employee in 2016. These figures are comparable with the Council's 8.3 days lost per employee in 2015-2016.</p> <p>Sickness absence is an issue that can affect all sections of the workforce, and continues to be a</p>	

challenge for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – initial analysis shows that the target for 2016-2017 (7.6 days average per FTE) may not be met. The increase in sickness absence, areas and reasons for sickness absence reflect similar trends in the other Tees Valley Local Authorities.

The aim of this review is to contribute towards a reduction in sickness absence by:

- analysing current performance
- understanding the underlying reasons for such absence
- reviewing the measures taken to reduce sickness absence and their effectiveness
- considering suggestions for improvement

In addition, a new SBC Attendance Management Policy is being drafted in 2016-2017 – the review has an opportunity to shape this policy.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What are the key causes of sickness absence?

What are the differences between service areas/departments in relation to sickness absence?

How do different job roles (e.g. manual, shift, office) impact on sickness absence, including the ability of staff to access wellbeing messages/advice and manage their own work lives (e.g. flexible working), as well as managers responding to sickness (re-allocation of work/backfilling)?

Long-term sickness absence – consideration of the policies around such cases.

As a preventative measure, is appropriate training in place for staff, and are workplace assessments being carried out (for example)?

What services are offered by the Council to support staff who demonstrate higher levels of sickness absence, are staff aware of these services, and how effective are they?

Winter health preparation and the availability of vouchers for flu jabs – is this working and how is take-up monitored?

What can we learn from other organisations/sectors?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, SBC Managers, SBC Staff.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

8 months.

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- 2015-2016 Workforce Data (including sickness absence)

- 2016-2017 Employee Health & Wellbeing Action Plan
- 2016-2017 Workforce Data (when available)
- Current Attendance Management Policy

New information:

- Existing employee support offer – Occupational Health / Insight Healthcare / Body2Fit – Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Workplace Assessments / Mindfulness Programme
- Better Health at Work Award
- Other Local Authority / private sector practice (Information from TV LA Group – led by Middlesbrough / Tees Active / Tees Valley Chaplaincy Service)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

HR

Background
Performance information
Current support

Health and Safety Manager – Derek McDonald

Statutory obligations

Occupational Health Nurse – Michelle King

Health surveillance work – vibration / lung function / driver medicals

Insight Healthcare / Body2Fit

Support services available for staff – awareness and effectiveness

Trades Union – Unison / GMB / Unite

Staff perspective

SBC managers / staff – Focus Groups

Staff perspective

Private sector – Tees Active

Their approach to sickness absence (preventative measures / how issues addressed)

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, staff forums, HIVE questionnaire.

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings – partner organisations and stakeholders

Focus Group – managers and staff

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Purpose of the Equality Duty: 'A workforce that has a supportive working environment is more productive'.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2018 ('Create fair employment and good work for all' section): 'Encourage employers to take forward health improvement initiatives that support their staff to be healthy' (Our objectives)

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2018 ('Delivering the Strategy section'): 'As significant employers in the area the Public Sector should review the workplace and surrounding environment to ensure it can support and promote health and well-being for both the workforce and the client groups we support'.

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

Effective sickness absence management should ensure that employees are supported to improve their individual wellbeing. Reducing sickness absence increases the efficiency of the Local Authority, and improves its ability to provide local services – it will improve the ability of the Council to undertake all aspects of its role in improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Borough.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	March/ April 2017	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	10.04.17	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	24.04.17	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	n/a	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	HR: Background / Performance / Current Support Health & Safety: Statutory Obligations Support Services: Occupational Health / Insight / Body2Fit Trade Unions SBC Focus Groups Private Sector Policies	} 22.05.17 } } 19.06.17 } } 31.07.17 (replacing 17.07.17)	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	18.09.17	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	September/ October 2017	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	16.10.17	Select Committee, Cabinet Member,

			Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	21.11.17	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	14.12.17	Cabinet/ Approving Body

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